

Introduction:

The 4 UAPs are problematic.¹ They have been promulgated by the General as the fruit of a relatively long and extensive process of discernment. We are told that they are not a ‘to-do-list’, nor are they the same as priorities, but orientations. We are invited to use them as an instrument for renewal and discernment throughout the whole Society.² Yet, on first reading, they appear quite unexceptional. In fact, in many ways they are distinguished by their familiarity. Can they hold our attention and renew our apostolic energies over the next ten years?

In this paper I wish to argue that the very familiarity of the UAPs offers a key for understanding and appropriating them. Even though we may be engaged in works and ministries that embody them, familiarity is not the same as knowing or understanding. The significance of the UAPs does not lie directly with their content but with their mode of appropriation. They invite us into a process of discernment which is a genuine search for where and how the Spirit is working in us and in our world.

In a characteristically Ignatian way, they do not disclose their graces all at once, but require us to undertake the ‘labour and work’ of discovery, reflection and distillation. Such a process needs time and it can only happen with sustained

¹ Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs): 1: To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment. 2: To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice. 3: To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future. 4: To collaborate in the care of our common home.

² RPG, Letter of Promulgation. 2019/06, A.

attention. It requires a hermeneutic which is more communal than individual, for it is often in and through conversations that understanding, insight and a sense of the Spirit moving among us occurs.

I

Recognising the Spirit's Gift:

Although they are presented as 'universal' orientations for discernment, they will necessarily produce different spiritual as well as practical fruit in each particular situation. Whether in the experience of the Church or the Society, we can see that the Holy Spirit is always creative. The mark of the Spirit is not so much an outward uniformity but a deeper inward harmony. The *koinonia* of hearts and minds does not require a conformity of practice but a recognition of the same Spirit at work. This is best reflected in the horizon or *telos* to which all our activities are directed and by which they can be judged. With the gifts that the Spirit gives comes a responsibility to use those gifts for the building up of the whole Body. Recognition of this corresponding 'gift of responsibility' is critical if the gift is to be used well. It would not make sense to discern a direction or make a choice and then remain indifferent to it.

The Theological Character of Discernment.

In some way, the grace of discernment belongs to everyone who seeks to do God's will. It is, therefore, always a theological act, whatever means may be used to practice it. However, we must be careful to ensure that the means are in attunement or fit with the end, otherwise discernment can be made into just a temporal decision-making process. For this reason, it is important to realise that, in a profound way, the primary experience of discernment is that of having entered into God's economy of salvation. At some level, often more intuitive than

rational, we have seen something of God's action and presence in our world. As in the Contemplation on the Incarnation, this can come to us through the world itself. Here, there is no *a priori* programme, but one that plunges us into the experiential realities of our world. We are not asked to rush to find solutions, but to 'see' (*ver*) and 'consider' (*considerar*) how the Triune God hears and sees our world in all its truth, despite the strategies of illusion and disguise. As the Exercises teach us, it is only when we comprehend the truth of our sinfulness that we can fully comprehend the depths of God's loving mercy. Indeed, it is this love which manifests God's own truth in loving self-gift, becoming poor to share in our poverty. It is the very 'discernment' of this Truth which gives energy to mission, shaping it to serve the greater good of salvation. That process of contemplation, of seeing, considering, pondering, asking for that affective understanding of the Divine Truth and Love, is the great school of discernment.

In the process of discernment the sapiential economy of God's salvific love in the life and mission of Jesus Christ is opened up for us. This is why all discernment must seek to locate itself within this economy for only in this school does the 'discernment of spirits' make sense. So, the question becomes: how do the UAPs open up this economy for us? How can they be a way for us to enter into it more deeply in service of our mission?

A Convergence of the Spirit.

The answer to this question begins when we can trust the UAPs. I believe that their very familiarity is an answer. It means that we have been living with them for some time, and this is significant for recognising God at work.

The process which eventually resulted in the UAPs was initiated by GC 36 and

began formally in 2017.³ The fruit of this discernment, not just for members of the Society but for our collaborators, was promulgated in February 2019. I think, however, it would be a distortion to see the UAPs only within this relatively short timeline. It is possible to trace their presence – often embryonic – shaping the Society’s life since the Second Vatican Council.⁴ When the UAPs are placed in this perspective, reading them in the light of the Magisterial teachings of all the Popes since Vatican II, especially Pope Francis, we can see the consistent pattern of a dynamic, responsive apostolic discernment within the Church and the Society. The UAPs, too, can be seen to capture a movements and longings with secular cultures is another confirmation from ‘the signs of the times’. Thus, while the discernment of the UAPs in 2019 represents a graced moment of explication, it also represents a moment of convergence and confirmation. I suggest that what we can see in these movements is a **convergence of the Spirit**.

It is in terms of this convergence of the Spirit that I wish to propose a pneumatological lens for looking at the UAPs. It is something that is already identified in the letter of promulgation.⁵

It is not possible here to develop a full pneumatology of mission which would also require us to explore the Trinitarian nature of the Spirit’s person. Yet any

³ GC36. D2. §14.

⁴ Following Vatican II, CG 31 undertook an extensive renewal of the Society’s life and ‘way of proceeding’. That desire for an ever-deeper understanding of our life, character and mission has proved a continuous theme of all the General Congregations up to this point. For this reason, the 1st UAP remains foundational. It always finds expression in subsequent General Congregations. With different degrees of clarity and different emphases, UAPs 2-4 can be seen as emerging over the last 50 years. Cf. Patxi Alvarez de los Mozos, *Serving The Poor, Promoting Justice*, (2018), Mensajero). The commitment to ‘youth’ and the ‘transitional generation’ is strongly present in CG31 but seen mainly in terms of our educational institutions. Cf. GC.35 D3. §18- 36. The same lines can be traced for ecology. Cf. CG32. D4.27; GC34. D20; GC.35 D2.22; D3.31. Also issues for Ordinary Government; CG36. D1.29. Likewise, for the Church before *Laudato Si*, for example, *Octogesima Adveniens* § 21. For a comprehensive exploration of the history of ecology in the Magisterium cf. Jaime Tatay, *Ecología Integral*, (2018) Madrid, BAC.

⁵ The letter of promulgation specifically recognises that the process through which the UAPs emerged was ‘guided by the Spirit.’ Cf. RPG, Letter of Promulgation. 2019/06, II. This is an important letter because it is also witness to the experience and authenticity of the discernment by the Society’s Government.

examination will show that the experience of the Spirit cannot be separated from that of mission and the way mission itself glorifies God, in life and in deed. This is most clearly seen in the person of Jesus, but it is also given in the disciples and, indeed, in the power bestowed upon the Church at Pentecost and subsequently integral to every Christian life.

The mission which the Spirit confers and sustains has a dynamic structure of sending and response. Both aspects take up human freedom and become visible in the world and in history when they converge in act which gives shape, or incarnates, in the Christian life. **Spirit-sent/Spirit-responsive mission** has its origins in love and is an act of love - *caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor.5:14) - there can be no effective mission unless the human response is free. Personally, and as a community, we must give our 'fiat.' This, too, is the gift of the Spirit, 'for freedom, Christ has set us free' (Gal.5:1; Rom.8:2). The freedom that the Spirit offers for mission will always be a participation in the freedom that Christ has expressed in his self-donation for the life of the world. It can be no less than God's creative and redemptive love, a performative active salvific love which heals, renews and sanctifies the whole created order. In such a way, all mission which lives in this movement of the Spirit will be a participation in the Triune mission of love which is active in the world.⁶

Freedom '*en Christo*' is an active freedom which must inevitably make the Church literally the cross-roads in history. It is sent as an utterly new grace into the world as the sure means of its healing and elevation but it cannot be conformed to it. For this reason, discernment is intrinsic to the life of the apostle and dynamic

⁶ Freedom (*eleuteria*) is a key concept for Paul. Behind its use in Galatians is the notion of redemption – as a slave is redeemed from slavery. Here, Paul clearly has in mind freedom from the Law and from sin but it also has a richer sense, when read within Paul's soteriological understanding, as a participation in Christ's own freedom, who is the originator, a donator of our gift or grace of freedom. cf. also the commentary on UAP 2, RPG, Letter of Promulgation. 2019/06, B.

creativity of mission. Discernment is necessary for the community that seeks to live in history without becoming a prisoner of it. This highlights the eschatological nature of discernment and mission. In so far as they express the determination to seek God's will they are events or seeds of the coming Kingdom and actualisations of the Lord's own eschatological prayer: "Thy Kingdom come." Christian freedom in mission is eschatological. In this context, the mission of the Society will itself possess an eschatological character. For the Society, mission moves within response to the call of Christ and the renewed heart, mind and will of the Principle and Foundation, the dramatic eschatology of the Two Standards, and the consoling confirmation of the creative eschatological plenitude of the Contemplatio. Together they map the way in which we realise our mission in time.⁷

The Temptations that Christ faces at the very beginning of his public ministry are a paradigm for all mission that lives in the creative tension of the 'cross-roads' which becomes visible in moments of witness (*martyrion*). In the movement of sending and response, the Spirit claims the Christian and the Church as its own: The Church belongs only and solely to Christ. It has no status in the world except as servant of the Kingdom that Christ brings in poverty and powerlessness. This has consequences for how the Church (and the Society) understands itself and its relationship to secular structures.⁸ Ultimately, mission will always subvert any attempt to subsume the Church within a political system or vision.

Of course, rather than producing a world-rejecting Church, mission, in faithfulness to Christ, requires that we are sent to the very heart of suffering creation and humanity, working and sacrificing for 'the life of the world'. In this way, mission not only has a transformative and generative power in history, it is always, in some

⁷ Cf. RPG, Letter of Promulgation. 2019/06. III.

⁸ Giorgio Agamben, in his analysis of Pilate's 'judgement' of Jesus, sees this more strongly in terms of the way secular history stands in judgment of salvation history. *Pilato e Gesù*, (2013), Milano: Nottotempo srl. pp. 54-60; 82.

form, epiphanic: it discloses the presence of Christ. As Barth expresses it, “[God’s Revelation] is not, therefore, an event which has merely happened and is now a past fact of history...it is also an event happening in the present, here and now.” Or, “The yesterday of Jesus is also today.”⁹

The ‘sites’ of encounter.

In the context of mission then, we can see that the UAPs not only act as orientations, they also become ‘sites’ of encounter. We must read them from ‘both sides’ as points in which the Spirit working within the Church and the Society meets the Spirit working in the world. Read from this side, they not only represent a sending but a call. In them, we can hear the intercession of the Spirit crying ‘out of the depths’ in suffering and alienation. In these ‘cries’, we hear our world yearning for life, recognising its need for healing, seeking that which lifts it out of its despair and anxiety.¹⁰ The UAPs shape our mission through a contemplative listening to what the Spirit is saying to us from within those spaces. This is a yearning which cannot be expunged from the human heart without destroying it.¹¹

Despite all the secular narratives which formally seek to exile God and declare humanity a ‘God-free zone’, the world cannot deliver on its vision of an unrestricted progress to the ‘good life’ through reason, science and economic

⁹ CD (ET), II/1. P.262; III/2. P.466-68.

¹⁰ The ‘secular’ is both a fluid and complex concept. It is not only about politics or philosophy but it has unarticulated cultural forms as well. It is beyond the scope of this essay to engage fully with the discourses re. the secular, but for useful ‘maps’ cf. Charles Taylor (2007), Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003), Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Le Pèlerin Et Le Converti: La Religion En Mouvement* (1999), Paris, Flammarion, and *Catholicisme, La Fin D’un Monde* (2003) Paris, Flammarion.

¹¹ Placuit Deo § 5-6 (2018) Congregation for the Faith.

wealth.¹² The grand narratives of secular auto-soteriology – the new Pelagianism – have given way to the realism of the post-modern critique of power. As Nietzsche and Foucault both recognised, truth is the product of power not reason and so the primary question is not ‘What is Truth?’ but ‘Whose truth?’ This comes into its own in our globalised world of hyper-communication, which intensifies the question, e.g. ‘Fake News.’

The hermeneutic of suspicion, which is a response to this shift, is also a necessary guard against the manipulative strategies of power systems and the serpent voices which promise the secular version of Eden. Even so, it also exposes the fact that the secular cannot, of itself, produce a telos which is independent of the systems of power and the interests they represent. Ultimately, this deficiency which rejects transcendence leaves the individual in subjection to the very systems of power which claim to liberate.

If we live in a radically disenchanted world and are rightly suspicious of all forms of re-enchantment, the shadow of nihilism must underlie all strategies of critique and resistance (Rom.5:12). At best, we are left with a sort of intellectual and political guerrilla war against the hegemonies, but within the present frame of secular meaning there can be no victory. To the inevitable cultural weariness that this situation must entail, we can add the evident fragilities of social institutions which are also subject to the hermeneutic of suspicion. In these situations, societies become vulnerable to the return of old ghosts in new forms – fascism, totalitarianism, populism – presenting themselves as alternatives worthy of trust. In belief as well as in politics and economics they offer a renewed sense of identity

¹² For a succinct descriptive summary of the ‘grand narratives’ of secular atheistic modernity cf. *Gaudium et Spes* §12,

and security.¹³ For this reason the first UAP is indispensable.¹⁴ It is not only about ‘showing the way to God’, it is also the key to the other three. It is only within the first UAP that we can effectively understand the cry of the human soul that rises up within the complexity, suffering and fragility of our world.

Within the first UAP, we are able to hear the cry of Christ to us from *within* the world. As in Matthew 25: 14-46, it is not so much about showing the way to God, but discovering that God is showing the way to us. If we remove it, then even a successful commitment to the other three UAPs, virtuous and urgent though they are, reduces the Society (and the Church) to a global NGO. Should this happen we may retain our success in terms of the world but lose our identity as apostles, the servants of Christ’s mission.¹⁵

But neither can the first UAP be separated from the other three: it is only when taken together that the true value and dignity of the human person can be actively upheld. Together, all the UAPs firmly ground us in a profound integral Christian humanism which does not depend on any political theory or philosophical fashion. In Christ we see the value of every human person; an infinite value because it is God’s own self that has revealed it not only in the act of creation but in the sacrifice of the Cross and the glory of the resurrection to which all humanity is heir. This value cannot be negotiated or given a price only on the value which God has set for every person can a genuinely humane society be built. A secular world, which sees the person only in terms of their productivity and materiality, has no capacity for grasping this nor can it understand the depth of human

¹³ Cf. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (2018), London: Viking.

¹⁴ In his letter confirming the UAPs, Pope Francis emphasised the foundational status of 1: *To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment.*

¹⁵ GC34. D2. Servants of Christ’s mission. Of course, we also desire and seek the good that comes from humanitarian work at all levels and this too is part of the Kingdom.

yearning; it can only stifle it. Instead of a sacred gift of intrinsic value, the person becomes instrumentalised. His or her life falls under the will of the State and can be dispensed with once it is judged of no further service or convenience. This can always be presented as a 'humane' and 'liberating' opportunity; simply granting recognition to the autonomy of the individual. In reality, it is an exercise in the instrumental sovereignty of the State. For this reason, our mission is to the whole person, body and soul.¹⁶ A vision of an integral humanism has never been more needed, not only to resist all forms of reductionism which leave the person vulnerable to the pragmatics of the State, but to keep the transcendent dignity and destiny of the human person in the memory of humanity.¹⁷

At the same time, the secular world, too, is the realm of God's salvific action. Through its own search for integrity and truth, the Spirit can purify the Church by calling it to account before the world. In preserving its own identity, the secular confers a freedom on the Church and teaches it how to resist the allure of power. Yet, if the secular is to realise its own vision of freedom, it must come to see that God is not its enemy but the very condition of the end that it seeks. The UAPs place us at the centre of this dialogical movement. It, too, is the reconciling work of the Spirit.

In all of this, we can begin to see how the UAPs take us into a deeper encounter with our cultures and our world. It is an encounter with Christ who has gone before us and with his Spirit that is already at work. This means that the UAPs are not only 'sites' of encounter in all their richness, they also open up to horizons of hope.¹⁸

¹⁶ Placuit Deus §7, 14-15. Deus Caritas Est §31ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Deus Caritas Est §28 a.

¹⁸ Placuit Deus §5-6.

II

An Unexpected Hope:

Without hope, freedom becomes diminished, the imagination grows stale, the ever-more crowded 'now' ceases to be a refuge and becomes a form of emptiness which consumes in a parody of living. The more difficult we find it to believe in a positive future, the more difficult it becomes to change the present.

Faith is not only the characteristic of a religious temperament, it is a necessary capacity for every human being to function socially, psychologically and intellectually. If despair is the absence of faith then, at this level, it will take its toll on everyone, whether they consider themselves religious or not. It results in an alienation which is interior as well as social. However, if humanity's hope is derived only from its own transitory conviction and self-affirmation, it has no secure foundation. It must remain subject to an underlying fatalistic nihilism that haemorrhages the life-spirit and erodes the will and the intellect. The symptoms are already present in all the exploitative and displacement behaviours which have come to characterise much of contemporary society.

If the UAPs can become sites or spaces of encounter with the generative presence of faith, they can also be the roads of freedom which open into hope. The hope they bring is not founded on any Utopian dream or therapeutic technique. It is grounded on the reality of Jesus Christ and the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. Such hope it is an event that comes to us in very midst of our histories. It is a power that raises us up from our hope-less determinisms and gives us the capacity and the courage to begin again in a new way. It does not ask us to forget or erase the past, but to redeem it by carrying it into God's Triune future, the fullness of life. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "*Here too we see as a distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future: it is not that they know the*

details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well."¹⁹

The Kairos of Hope and Freedom:

At the very heart of the Exercises lies the truth that, by the grace of Christ, we can change, we can make a new beginning, we can 'be born again'. We can receive again the gift of our freedom to live in and serve the new life of the future that is Christ. Faith becomes the work of hope, which liberates from despair, and all the cycles of violence which it generates; it opens the way to the new dynamic relationalities of reconciliation. The future with which the Risen Christ comes to meet us is always an encounter with an 'unexpected hope'.²⁰ It is a gift and can be received only in humility and gratitude. Nevertheless, it is one that others can hold for us in faith until we can receive it for ourselves.

"Holding hope" in ourselves and for others is the task of faith carried in mission. It is given us in the UAPs, especially in their 'verbs of solidarity'— to show, to accompany, to walk, to collaborate. They describe our disposition of service to the world; for even in the darkest places of despair, we are charged with the life of Christ and the revivifying power of the Holy Spirit.²¹ As such, they also disclose the depth of the '*koinonia*' in which all created things live in a liberative inter-

¹⁹ Spe Salvi §2

²⁰ Cf. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Inoubliable et l'inespéré* (1991), Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, esp. chapter 4. ET. Jeffrey Bloechl.

²¹ These 'verbs of solidarity' also open up opportunities and approaches for ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. A full development of how the UAPs might be a resource for these fields is beyond the scope of the present paper.

dependence, the life of the Kingdom still “present in mystery.”²²

Faith can only receive this gift with an absolute and total trust. This moment is the ‘Emunah’ of encounter: the ‘My Lord and My God’ of Thomas in the upper room, the ‘Rabboni’ of surprise, joy, humble acceptance and sending of Mary Magdalen in the garden. Then, caught in such a moment we too can step into the future without fear and the world is opened before us.

If we are to accept the gift that we have been given in the UAPs, we will need to have a sustained renewal of the Society. We will need to recover again the generative power of the Exercises and the art of discerning as community. Before we can live those ‘verbs of solidarity’ with others, we must learn to live them with each other. Here we will need to rediscover the art of spiritual conversation: how to listen to the Spirit moving in each member, leaving behind our prejudices and fear of losing control, resisting the temptation to determine in advance what can or must be heard. We must allow the ‘magis’ of desiring to serve God to capture us again, to let it be greater than our other desires. We will only find a way of doing this if we trust the Spirit and the grace of our charism made real in the faithfulness of our brothers and those who serve with us.²³ If we can do this, recognising the voice of the Spirit speaking to us through others, we may discover that the UAPS are indeed ‘Emmaus’ roads for us all.

James Hanvey SJ

Secretary for the service of Faith.

Curia Generalizia, Roma.

²² Lumen Gentium §3. ‘*seu regnum Christi iam praesens in mysterio*’.

²³ RPG, Letter of Promulgation. 2019/06 A.