

LAUDATIO
ON THE DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA ACADEMIC TITLE AWARDING TO
VERY REV. FR. ARTURO SOSA ABASCAL, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF
THE SOCIETY OF JESUS¹

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Reverendissime Domine, Domine Generalis!
Domine Rector Magnifice! Domine Praesidens Magnifice!
Excellentissimi Domini Archiepiscopi et Episcopi!
Illustrissimi Domini Prorectores et Domini Decani!
Reverendissimi Professores! Venerabiles Hospites!

In hoc Regno nostro eruditionis instituendaeque in liberalibus disciplinis iuventutis, Collegium societatis Jesu, in Civitate Coloswar erigendum atque construendum statuerimus, [...], cuius maxime decori atque utilitati consultum semper esse cupimus, [...] ut et ornamento et commodo illi sit.

“In an effort to advance the sciences and to propagate the liberal arts among our youth, we have decided to establish and to construct a Jesuit College in the city of Cluj, in the sincere hope that this college may prove to be an advantage and an ornament to the city,” writes Kristóf Báthory in his letter to the Magistrate of the city of Cluj, dated 5 May 1580. One year later, on 12 May 1581, István Báthory, King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania, signed the founding document of the Jesuit College and *Academia Claudiopolitana*, which states that students of the institution may study both towards a bachelor’s and a master’s degree and a doctorate, as it is legal and customary in the academies of Italia, Gallia, Hispania, and Germania. Two years later, Pope Gregory XIII founded the *Seminarium Pontificium ac Regium (Papal and royal seminary)*, thereby granting the already extant Jesuit Academy of Cluj the rank of university. “By the apostolic authority vested in us,” the Pope writes in the founding document, “we hereby establish

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a college, or seminary, in the city of Cluj-Napoca which excels all other cities of Transylvania... This college, and seminary, is to be like the colleges and seminaries we have previously caused to be founded in the regions of Bohemia, Polonia, and Germania.” The Academy of Cluj immediately rose to prominence among the universities of Europe and, with the founding act of the Holy See, was also recognized as one in a line of eminent pontifical universities. From the very beginning, the founders of the first true university in Transylvania dared to dream big, despite living in unfavorable historical times that offered few bright prospects. The collaboration of the Jesuit Order proved to be the key to success. The freshness, dynamism, intellectual and spiritual vigor of the order that had been founded a mere four decades earlier set the scene for our university. István Báthory had first encountered Jesuits during his captivity in Vienna between 1565 and 1567, and the duke was deeply impressed by the consolation and encouragement these fathers extended to him. The Jesuit penchant for organization characterized their university curricula from the beginning. Their central curriculum was well thought out and meticulously developed, enabling the Society of Jesus to build a unified educational system international in scope. Their universities, our own university included, stood open to international relations. This receptivity to foreign scholars greatly improved the quality of the faculty who hailed from cities as diverse as Rome, Vilnius, Vienna and Cracow, among others. The first rector of the university, Polish-born Jakab (James) Wujek, was a scholar of international renown whose translation of the Bible into Polish remained the authoritative edition for the next three centuries.

In the early seventeenth century, the erudite Jesuits were forced to leave Transylvania, but they were allowed to continue their academic work in Cluj-Napoca from 1698 until the suppression of the Order in 1773.

Today, 250 years later, we are gathered in the imposing Aula Magna of what once was the ancient Jesuit college to celebrate a joyful occasion. It is our honor and privilege to award Very Rev. Fr. Arturo Sosa Abascal, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, an honorary doctorate and the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa*.

Arturo Sosa Abascal was born in 1948 in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. Father Abascal joined the Society of Jesus in 1966, was ordained to the priesthood in 1977, and pronounced his final vows in 1982. He studied philosophy and theology at the Andrés Bello Catholic University of Caracas and at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. In 1990, Father Abascal received his doctorate

in political sciences from the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas. Of his numerous important positions of leadership, I wish to highlight only three. Between the years 1996 and 2004, he served as the Provincial of Venezuela. From 2004 to 2014, he was the rector of the Catholic University of Táchira, and he has functioned as the Superior General of the Society of Jesus since 2016. Father Abascal has taught at several institutions of higher learning, including Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas, the Central University of Venezuela, and he served as guest faculty at Georgetown University in Washington DC. Jesuit spirituality, intellectual apostleship, collaboration with others, solidarity with the most vulnerable (with a special concern for migrants and refugees), and the advancement of reconciliation and dialogue are at the heart of Father Abascal's ministry.

The formational and educational work of the Society of Jesus is recognized and highly valued the world over. Jesuits operate over 3,400 educational institutions and more than 100 boarding schools and dormitories across the globe. Over 200 of these are institutes of higher learning. Several members of our own university received their education at renowned Jesuit institutes of learning, undergoing a distinctively Jesuit spiritual formation. This simple fact is ample proof that the educational and formational ministry of the Society of Jesus, far from being a mere figment of a glorious past, is a powerful force for good in the world today. Jesuit spirituality places great emphasis on the responsible use of freedom, the importance of a personal relationship between students and teachers, the joy of learning, which opens the gateway to a lifelong love of study and an unceasing readiness to improve oneself on an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level. A Jesuit education is value-based and encourages students to know, to love, and to accept themselves, as well as to come to know the world around them so that they may live an active life of service to others. Although Jesuit institutions welcome individuals from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds, the person of Jesus Christ serves as the universal example of true humanity whose life and teachings are a source of encouragement and devotion to all. Our own university is committed to cultivating Jesuit spirituality, and we - as Romania's biggest, oldest, and highest-ranking university - are proud to represent the Jesuit educational tradition in academic circles today. We do so not only out of historical obligation but out of a deep and heartfelt conviction.

The Most Reverend Arturo Sosa Abascal, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, is a genuine embodiment of the Jesuit spirit. For this reason, we deem him worthy of the title of *Doctor Honoris causa*. We, heirs to a venerable Jesuit institution, are proud to welcome the Superior General of Society of Jesus, stationed in Rome, as a member of our academic community in Cluj.

Reverendissime Domine Generalis! Ad multos annos!

Omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam!