STATEMENT FROM THE JESUITS AT THE SECOND ASSEMBLY OF THE PROVINCE OF BRAZIL

"I want to see justice roll on like many waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing river." (Am 5:24).

We, more than three hundred Jesuits from Brazil, gathered at our National Assembly from July 25 to 27, 2017, to celebrate the third anniversary of the new Province of Brazil, cannot fail to express our concern and indignation at the way in which the ruling classes are controlling the economic, social and political crises that plague the country and are affecting the entire Brazilian population, especially the most impoverished. The corruption and promiscuity that exist between public and private interests in the spheres of the established powers of government scandalize the majority of the Brazilian people and undermine the legitimacy of the executive and legislative branches. At times, even the legitimacy of the judiciary branch has come under scrutiny because of its evident biases.

Socioeconomic inequality in recent years has worsened significantly. In addition to the 14 million people who are unemployed, at least 10 million workers are underemployed or have given up looking for work. Many people, who managed to overcome poverty, are once again in need of social assistance. The upsurge of inequality produces increasing violence of every kind throughout Brazilian society - violence against people, families and life itself, drug trafficking and other illicit businesses, excesses in the use of police force, corruption, tax evasion, embezzlement of public goods, abuse of economic and political power, the manipulative power of the media and environmental crimes.

The idolatry of money, according to Pope Francis, gives primacy to the market, both to the detriment of the human person and to the detriment of labor (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 53-57). It is not fair to subject the state to the market in the name of national development. When the market governs, the state becomes weak and ends up subjected to the perverse logic of financial capital. As Pope Francis warns us, the purpose of "money is to serve and not to govern" (Evangelii Gaudium 58).

In the effort to overcome the current grave situation, reforms are necessary. These reforms gain legitimacy when they adhere to the logic of dialogue among all members of society, conscious of the common good. For this reason, the Labor and Social Security Reforms sent to Congress lack legitimacy. Other proposals pending before Congress, often as interim measures, such as the "liberation" of deforestation, the "legalization" of urban and rural land grabbing, the commodification of lands for foreign corporations, and the "granting" of indigenous lands and Quilombolas to agribusiness, are all affronts to the Federal Constitution that guarantees rights and citizenship for all. The adjustments of this (dis) government to serve the market, as well as the domain of agribusiness, explained in the CPI (Commission of Parliamentary Inquiry) of Funai (National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples) and Incra (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform), create more space for increased violence and more deaths to occur in the countryside and in the cities, as recently reported. Social and popular movements, as well as institutions that defend the rights of the excluded, are being criminalized and falsely denounced.

Today, this situation challenges the mission of the Jesuits in Brazil. We are committed to maintaining our presence among the most impoverished and excluded, as well as analyzing the causes of the persistent situation of inequality and the rampant exploitation of nature. In hope and solidarity with the people, we are committed to overcoming the abyss of socio-environmental inequality. We feel called to remain faithful to the Gospel, which impels us to recognize and denounce structural and historical injustices, especially the great social debt owed to the weak and vulnerable. With an unrelenting hope in better days to come we want to collaborate in the construction of a just Brazil.

Itaici, Indaiatuba / SP, July 27, 2017.