

## GC35. Decree 1

### “WITH RENEWED VIGOR AND ZEAL”

#### THE SOCIETY OF JESUS RESPONDS TO THE INVITATION OF THE HOLY FATHER

### I. A spiritual experience of consolation in the Lord

1. The 35th General Congregation experienced the deep affection of the Holy Father on two occasions, in his letter of January 10, 2008 and at the audience on February 21, 2008. Following in the footsteps of St. Ignatius and his companions, we gathered, the 225 delegates led by our Father General Adolfo Nicolás, as the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, to be hosted by the Vicar of Christ and to listen, with open hearts to what he would say about our mission. It was a powerful moment and a moving spiritual experience.

In his address, Pope Benedict XVI openly revealed his confidence in the Society of Jesus, as well as his spiritual closeness and deep esteem, in words that touched our hearts, stirring and inspiring our desire to serve the Church in this contemporary world marked “by many complex social, cultural and religious challenges.”<sup>1</sup>

2. These two events gave new clarity to the challenging task of the General Congregation. After the election of our Superior General, the largest part of our work was actually devoted to issues concerning our identity, our religious life, and our mission. As is its duty, the General Congregation attentively scrutinized the situation of our apostolic body in order to provide guidance that will enhance and increase the spiritual and evangelical quality of our way of being and proceeding. First in importance is our intimate union with Christ, “the secret of the authentic success of every Christian’s apostolic and missionary commitment, and especially of those who are called to a more direct service of the Gospel.”<sup>2</sup>

3. Our effort to be completely honest with ourselves and with the Lord included much of the dynamic of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises: it helped us discover and recognize our weaknesses and inconsistencies but also the depth of our desire to serve. This required that we reexamine our attitudes and our way of living.

4. However, this experience could not lose sight of the perspective that grounds it: our mission. Indeed, the transition from the First to the Second Week of the Exercises is a change in perspective: the retreatant experiences how his entire life has been embraced with mercy and forgiveness, ceases to concentrate on himself, and starts to “gaze upon Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and all the world assembled before him. He calls to them all and to each person in particular.”<sup>3</sup> Truly we are sinners and “yet called to be companions of Jesus as Ignatius was.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to Very Reverend Father Peter Hans-Kolvenbach (10 January 2008)*, §3

<sup>2</sup> *Letter*, §2

<sup>3</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 95.

<sup>4</sup> GC 32, D. 2, n. 1, (11).

5. For the delegates this was the spiritual effect of the allocution of the Holy Father at the audience on February 21<sup>st</sup>. In presenting to us with deep affection a dynamic vision of our mission and our service to the Church, he seemed to say: Turn your gaze to the future "in order to respond to the expectations the Church has of you."<sup>5</sup>

## II. Confirmed and sent on mission

6. With such powerful words, the Holy Father definitively placed the future of our mission before us, a mission expressed with complete clarity and firmness: the defense and proclamation of the faith, which leads us to discover new horizons and to reach new social, cultural and religious frontiers. As Fr Adolfo Nicolás noted in his words to the Holy Father, these frontiers can be places of conflict and tension that threaten our reputation, our peace, and our security. That is why we were so moved by the Pope's evocation of the memory of Fr. Arrupe. The Holy Father referred to his proposal that Jesuits be in service to refugees as "one of his last farsighted intuitions"<sup>6</sup>.

The service of faith and the promotion of justice must be kept united. Pope Benedict reminded us that the injustice that breeds poverty has "structural causes,"<sup>7</sup> which must be opposed, and that the source of this commitment can be found in the faith itself: "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8.9)."<sup>8</sup>

By sending us to "those physical and spiritual places which others do not reach or have difficulty in reaching,"<sup>9</sup> the Pope entrusts to us the task to "build bridges of understanding and dialogue,"<sup>10</sup> according to the best tradition of the Society, in the diversity of its ministries: "In its history the Society of Jesus has lived extraordinary experiences of proclamation and encounter between the Gospel and world cultures - it suffices to think of Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto De Nobili in India or of the "Reductions" in Latin America. And you are rightly proud of them. I feel it is my duty today to urge you to set out once again in the tracks of your predecessors with the same courage and intelligence, but also with an equally profound motivation of faith and enthusiasm to serve the Lord and his Church."<sup>11</sup> In a decisive manner Benedict XVI confirmed what our previous General Congregations have said of our specific mission of service to the Church.

7. In this light we can better understand why the Pope stresses so much - in his letter and in his allocution - that "The Church's evangelizing work therefore relies heavily on the Society's responsibility for formation in the fields of theology, spirituality and mission."<sup>12</sup> In an era of complex social, cultural and religious challenges, the Pope asks us to faithfully help the Church. This fidelity demands serious and rigorous research in the theological field and in dialogue with the contemporary world, cultures and religions. What the Church expects from us is sincere collaboration in the search for the full truth to which the Spirit leads us, in full adherence to the faith and the teaching of the Church. This help and this service are not confined to our theologians; they extend to all Jesuits, called to act with great pastoral

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<sup>5</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution to the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (21 February 2008)*, §1.

<sup>6</sup> *Allocution*, §8.

<sup>7</sup> *Allocution*, §8.

<sup>8</sup> *Allocution*, §8.

<sup>9</sup> *Allocution*, §2.

<sup>10</sup> *Allocution*, §5.

<sup>11</sup> *Allocution*, §5.

<sup>12</sup> *Letter*, §6.

sensitivity in the variety of our missions and apostolic work. They are manifest also in the institutions of the Society as a characteristic of their identity.

### III. The response of the Society to the call of the Holy Father

8. It is obvious that the Society can not let this historic moment pass without giving a response at the same high level as the ecclesial charism of St. Ignatius. The Successor of Peter told us of the confidence he has in us; for our part, we sincerely want to respond to him, as an apostolic body, with the same warmth and same affection he has shown us, and to affirm in a resolute way our specific availability to the “Vicar of Christ on earth.”<sup>13</sup> The 35th General Congregation expresses its full adherence to the faith and the teaching of the Church, as they are presented to us in the intimate relationship that unites Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.<sup>14</sup>

9. The 35th General Congregation calls all Jesuits to live with the great spirit and generosity that is at the center of our vocation: “to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross... and to serve the Lord alone and the Church his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth.”<sup>15</sup>

10. From the beginning of our formation and throughout our lives, we must be and remain men familiar with the things of God. Our desire is to grow now and in the future in the “interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely,”<sup>16</sup> especially in prayer and in community life and in apostolic work. As Nadal said, “La Compañía es fervor.”<sup>17</sup>

11. As we know, “mediocrity has no place in Ignatius’ world view.”<sup>18</sup> It is therefore essential to give young Jesuits a human, spiritual, intellectual, and ecclesial formation as deep, strong, and vibrant as possible to allow each of them to achieve our mission in the world with “a proper attitude of service in the Church.”<sup>19</sup>

12. To be authentically “contemplatives in action”, seeking and finding God in all things, we must continually return to the spiritual experience of the Spiritual Exercises. Aware that they are “a gift which the Spirit of the Lord has made to the entire Church,” we should, as we are called by the Holy Father, “focus special attention on that ministry of the Spiritual Exercises.”<sup>20</sup>

13. We are aware of the importance of the intellectual apostolate for the life and mission of the Church today, as Pope Benedict XVI has told us on several occasions since the beginning of his pontificate. We have heard his appeal and want to respond fully. In this context, we encourage our theologians to carry out their task with courage and intelligence; as we have heard the Holy Father say: “This is not of course a simple task, especially when one is called

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<sup>13</sup> Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit debitum* (15 July 1550), §3 (MHSI 63, 375).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 7-10 and the instruction *Donum Veritatis*, 6, 13-14.

<sup>15</sup> Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit debitum* (15 July 1550), §3 (MHSI 63, 375).

<sup>16</sup> *Spiritual Exercise*, 104.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jerónimo NADAL, *Plática 3<sup>a</sup> en Alcalá* (1561), §60 (MHSI 90, 296).

<sup>18</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., *To Friends and Colleagues of the Society of Jesus*, AR 20 (1991) 606.

<sup>19</sup> GC 34, D. 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Allocution*, §9.

to proclaim the Gospel in very different social and cultural contexts and is obliged to address different mindsets.”<sup>21</sup> Given the difficulties inherent in the task of evangelization in our time, it is important that they are disposed “in the most genuine Ignatian spirit of ‘feeling with the Church and in the Church’ – ‘to love and serve’ the Vicar of Christ on earth with an ‘effective and affective devotion’ which must make them his invaluable and irreplaceable collaborators in his service for the universal Church.”<sup>22</sup> To be missioned to this work at the new frontiers of our times always requires that we also be rooted at the very heart of the Church. This tension, specific to the Ignatian charism, opens the way to true creative fidelity.

14. In the light of Decree 11 of the 34th General Congregation and the final speech of Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach to the Congregation of Procurators in September 2003, we call each Jesuit to consider “the proper attitude of service in the Church”, which should be ours. This means recognizing, with honesty to ourselves and before God, that some of our reactions and our attitudes have not always been expressed as our Institute demands of us: to be “men humble and prudent in Christ.”<sup>23</sup> We regret, this, conscious of our common responsibility as an apostolic body. Therefore, we call on each Jesuit, with a resolutely constructive attitude, to strive with the Holy Father, to create a spirit of “communion” so that the Church can bring the Gospel of Christ to a world as complex and troubled as ours.

15. Recalling the Examen<sup>24</sup> and asking the Lord for the grace of conversion, we ask each of our companions to examine his own way of living and working at “the new frontiers of our time.” This examination will include the following: the demands of our mission “among the poor and with the poor;” our commitment to the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises; our concern for the human and Christian formation of a complete cross section of individuals; “that harmony with the Magisterium which avoids causing confusion and dismay among the People of God”<sup>25</sup> about the “themes, continuously discussed and called into question today, of the salvation of all humanity in Christ, of sexual morality, of marriage and the family.”<sup>26</sup> Each Jesuit is invited to acknowledge humbly his mistakes and faults, to ask the Lord's grace to help him live his mission and, if necessary, the grace of forgiveness.

16. The letter and the allocution of the Holy Father open for us a new epoch. The General Congregation gives us the opportunity to live “with renewed vigor and zeal the mission for which the Spirit willed it [the Society] in the Church.”<sup>27</sup> Conscious of our responsibility, in, with, and for the Church, we desire to love it more and help others love it more, , for it leads the world to Christ humble and poor and announces to every person that “Deus Caritas Est.”<sup>28</sup> We can not separate the love of Christ from this “sense of the Church,”<sup>29</sup> which leads “the entire Society to seek to integrate itself more and more vigorously and creatively in the life of the Church so that we may experience and live its mystery within ourselves.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Letter*, §5.

<sup>22</sup> *Allocution*, §7.

<sup>23</sup> Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit debitum* (15 July 1550), §6 (MHSI 63, 381).

<sup>24</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 32-43.

<sup>25</sup> *Allocution*, §6.

<sup>26</sup> *Allocution*, §6.

<sup>27</sup> *Allocution*, §2.

<sup>28</sup> BENEDICT XVI, encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*.

<sup>29</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 352-370.

<sup>30</sup> GC 33, D. 1, n. 8.

17. We acknowledge what the Lord calls us to be and to live with greater intensity, through the letter of the Holy Father on January 10<sup>th</sup> and his address at the audience on February 21<sup>st</sup>. "In the spirit of the fourth vow *in regard to missions* that so distinctively unites us with the Holy Father,"<sup>31</sup> we want to express our willingness to achieve what he invites us to put into practice and what he encourages us to continue or to initiate. We express our renewed availability to be sent into the Lord's vineyard, for the greater service of the Church and the greater glory of God. In asking the Lord for the power of his Spirit to do his will, all of us unite our voices to that of the Successor of Peter in praying with him:

"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
My memory, my understanding and my entire will,  
All I have and possess; you have given me, I now give it back to you,  
O Lord; all is yours, dispose of it according to your will;  
Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> GC 34, D. 11, n. 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 234.

## A FIRE THAT KINDLES OTHER FIRES

### Rediscovering our Charism

#### *Many Sparks, One Fire: Many Stories, One History*

1.- The Society of Jesus has carried a flame for nearly five hundred years through innumerable social and cultural circumstances that have challenged it intensely to keep that flame alive and burning. Things are no different today. In a world that overwhelms people with a multiplicity of sensations, ideas, and images, the Society seeks to keep the fire of its original inspiration alive in a way that offers warmth and light to our contemporaries. It does this by telling a story that has stood the test of time, despite the imperfections of its members and even of the whole body, because of the continued goodness of God, who has never allowed the fire to die. Our attempt here is to present it anew as a living narrative that, when brought into contact with the life-stories of people today, can give them meaning and provide focus in a fragmented world.

2.- The continued narrative of the Society has provided, over the centuries, the ground for numerous experiences of unity-in-multiplicity. We Jesuits are frequently surprised that, despite our differences in culture and context, we find ourselves remarkably united. Through prayerful discernment, open discussion, and spiritual conversations, we have again and again been privileged to know ourselves as *one* in the Lord:<sup>1</sup> one united, apostolic body seeking what is best for the service of God in the Church and for the world. This graced experience reminds us of the experience recounted in the Deliberation of the First Fathers. Our earliest companions, even though they considered themselves weak and fragile and originating from many different places, found the will of God together amid great diversity of opinion.<sup>2</sup> What enabled them to find God's will was their "decided care and alertness to initiate a completely open way" and to offer themselves fully to it for the greater glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Thus they began a narrative; they lit a fire, which was handed on in subsequent generations whenever people encountered the Society, enabling the personal histories of generations to become embedded in the Society's history as a whole. This collective history formed the basis of their unity; and at its heart was Jesus Christ. Despite the differences, what unites us as Jesuits is Christ and the desire to serve him: not to be deaf to the call of the Lord, but prompt and ready to do his most holy will.<sup>4</sup> He is the unique image of the unseen God,<sup>5</sup> capable of revealing himself everywhere; and in a tantalizing culture of images, he is the single image that unites us. Jesuits know who they are by looking at him.

3.- We Jesuits, then, find our identity not alone but in companionship: in companionship with the Lord, who calls, and in companionship with others who share this call. Its root is to be found in Saint Ignatius's experience at La Storta. There, "placed" with God's Son and called to serve him as he carries his cross, Ignatius and the first companions respond by

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Constitutions*, 671.

<sup>2</sup> *Deliberation of the First Fathers (1539)*, § 1 (MHSI 63, 2).

<sup>3</sup> *Deliberation of the First Fathers (1539)*, § 1 (MHSI 63, 2).

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 91.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3.

offering themselves for the service of faith to the Pope, Christ's Vicar on earth. The Son, the one image of God, Christ Jesus, unites them and sends them out to the whole world. He is the image at the very heart of Jesuit existence today; and it is his image that we wish to communicate to others as best we can.

### ***Seeing and Loving the World as Jesus Did***

4.- Fundamental for the life and mission of every Jesuit's mission is an *experience* that places him, quite simply, with Christ at the heart of the world.<sup>6</sup> This experience is not merely a foundation laid in the past and ignored as time moves on; it is alive, ongoing, nourished, and deepened by dynamic Jesuit life in community and on mission. The experience involves both conversion *from* and conversion *for*. Saint Ignatius, recuperating on his bed at Loyola, entered into a profound interior journey. He gradually came to realise that those things in which he took delight had no lasting value but that responding to Christ beckoning instilled peace in his soul and a desire to know his Lord better. But – as he came to see later – this knowledge could only be won through confronting the falseness of the desires that had driven him. It was at Manresa that this confrontation took place. There the Lord, who taught him like a schoolboy, gently prepared him to receive an understanding that the world could be seen in another way: a way freed from disordered attachments<sup>7</sup> and opened up for an ordered loving of God and of all things in God. This experience is part of every Jesuit's journey.

5.- While at Manresa, Ignatius had an experience at the river Cardoner that opened his eyes so that “all things seemed new to him”<sup>8</sup> because he began to see them with new eyes.<sup>9</sup> Reality became transparent to him, enabling him to see God working in the depths of everything and inviting him to “help souls”. This new view of reality led Ignatius to seek and find God in all things.

6.- The understanding that Ignatius received taught him a contemplative way of standing in the world, of contemplating God at work in the depths of things, of tasting “the infinite sweetness and charm of the divinity, of the soul, of its virtues and of everything there”.<sup>10</sup> Starting from the contemplation of the incarnation<sup>11</sup> it is clear that Ignatius does not sweeten or falsify painful realities. Rather he begins with them, exactly as they are – poverty, forced displacement, violence between people, abandonment, structural injustice, sin – but then he points to how God's Son was born into these realities; and it is here that sweetness is found. Tasting and seeing God in reality is a process. Ignatius had to learn this himself through many painful experiences. At La Storta he received the grace to be placed with the Son bearing the Cross; and so he and his companions were drawn into the Son's pattern of life, with its joys and with its sufferings.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. NC 246, 4°; 223 §§ 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Autobiography* 30.

<sup>9</sup> Diego LAYNEZ, *Letter about Fr. Ignatius (1547)*, § 10 (MHSI 66, 80).

<sup>10</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 124.

<sup>11</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 101-109.

7.- Similarly today the Society, in carrying out its mission, experiences the companionship of the Lord and the challenge of the Cross.<sup>12</sup> Commitment to “the service of faith and the promotion of justice”,<sup>13</sup> to dialogue with cultures and religions,<sup>14</sup> takes Jesuits to limit-situations where they encounter energy and new life, but also anguish and death – where “the Divinity is hidden”.<sup>15</sup> The experience of a hidden God cannot always be avoided, but even in the depths of darkness when God seems concealed, the transforming light of God is able to shine. God labours intensely in this hiddenness. Rising from the tombs of personal life and history, the Lord appears when we least expect, with his personal consolation as a friend<sup>16</sup> and as the centre of a fraternal and servant community.<sup>17</sup> From this experience of God labouring in the heart of life, our identity as “servants of Christ’s mission”<sup>18</sup> rises up ever anew.

### ***Our ‘Way of Proceeding’***

8.- To find divine life at the depths of reality is a mission of hope given to us Jesuits. We travel again the path taken by Ignatius. As in his experience so too in ours, because a space of interiority is opened where God works in us, we are able to see the world as a place in which God is at work and which is full of his appeals and of his presence. Thus we enter, with Christ who offers living water,<sup>19</sup> into the dry and lifeless areas of the world. Our mode of proceeding is to trace the footprints of God *everywhere*, knowing that the Spirit of Christ is at work in all places and situations and in all activities and mediations that seek to make him more present in the world.<sup>20</sup> This mission of attempting “to feel and to taste” (*sentir y gustar*) the presence and activity of God in all the persons and circumstances of the world places us Jesuits at the centre of a tension pulling us both to God and to the world at the same time. Thus arises, for Jesuits on mission, a set of polarities, Ignatian in character, that accompanies our being firmly rooted in God at all times, while simultaneously being plunged into the heart of the world.

9.- Being and doing; contemplation and action; prayer and prophetic living; being completely united with Christ and completely inserted into the world with him as an apostolic body: all of these polarities mark deeply the life of a Jesuit and express both its essence and its possibilities.<sup>21</sup> The Gospels show Jesus in deep, loving relationship with his Father and, at the same time, completely given over to his mission among men and women. He is perpetually in motion: from God, for others. This is the Jesuit pattern too: with Christ on mission, ever contemplative, ever active. It is the grace – also the creative challenge – of our apostolic religious life that it must live this tension between prayer and action, between mysticism and service.

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<sup>12</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> GC 32, D. 2.

<sup>14</sup> GC 34, D. 2, nn. 19-21.

<sup>15</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 196.

<sup>16</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 224.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 18:20.

<sup>18</sup> GC 34, D. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. John 4:10-15.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; also GC 34, D. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH, *Sobre la vida religiosa*, Havana (Cuba), 1 June 2007, p. 1.



10.- It is necessary for us to examine ourselves critically in order to remain mindful of the need to live faithfully this polarity of prayer and service.<sup>22</sup> However we cannot abandon this creative polarity, since it marks the essence of our lives as contemplatives in action, companions of Christ sent into the world.<sup>23</sup> In what we do in the world there must always be a transparency to God. Our lives must provoke the questions, “who are you, that you do these things...and that you do them in this way?” Jesuits must manifest – especially in the contemporary world of ceaseless noise and stimulation – a strong sense of the sacred inseparably joined to involvement in the world. Our deep love of God and our passion for his world should set us on fire – a fire that starts other fires! For ultimately, there is no reality that is only profane for those who know how to look.<sup>24</sup> We must communicate this way of looking and provide a pedagogy, inspired by the *Spiritual Exercises*, that carries people – especially the young – into it. Thus will they be able to see the world as Saint Ignatius did, as his life developed from what he understood at the Cardoner to the eventual founding of the Society with its mission to bring the message of Christ to the ends of the earth. This mission, with its roots in his experience, continues today.

### *A Life Shaped By the Vision of La Storta*

11.- Saint Ignatius had the most significant experience for the founding of the Society in the little chapel of La Storta on his way to Rome. In this mystical grace he saw clearly “that the Father placed him with Christ, his Son”,<sup>25</sup> as the same Ignatius had asked insistently of Mary. At La Storta, the Father placed him with His Son carrying His Cross, and Jesus accepted him saying: “I wish you to serve us”. Ignatius felt himself confirmed personally, and felt the group confirmed, in the plan moving their hearts to place themselves at the service of the Vicar of Christ on earth. “Ignatius told me that God the Father imprinted these words on his heart: ‘Ego ero vobis Romae propitius’”.<sup>26</sup> But this affirmation did not make Ignatius dream of easy paths, since he told his companions that they would encounter “many contradictions”,<sup>27</sup> in Rome, and perhaps even be crucified. It is from Ignatius’s encounter with the Lord at La Storta that the future life of service and mission of the companions emerges in its characteristic contours: following Christ bearing his Cross; fidelity to the Church and to the Vicar of Christ on earth; and living as friends of – and thus in – the Lord in one single apostolic body.

### *Following Christ...*

12.- To follow Christ bearing his Cross means opening ourselves with him to every thirst that afflicts humanity today. Christ is nourishment itself, the answer to every hunger and thirst. He is the bread of life, who, in feeding the hungry, draws them together and unites them.<sup>28</sup> He is the water of life,<sup>29</sup> the living water of which he spoke to the Samaritan woman

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH, *Sobre la vida religiosa*, Havana (Cuba), 1 June 2007, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> GC 33, GC 34.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pierre TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *Le Milieu Divin*, London, Collins, 1960 (original 1957), p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> *Autobiography*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Diego LAYNEZ, *Adhortationes in librum Examinis (1559)*, §7 (MHSI 73, 133).

<sup>27</sup> *Autobiography*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Mark 6:31-44 par.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. John 4:7-15.

in a dialogue that surprised his disciples because it took him, like free-flowing water, beyond the river-banks of what was culturally and religiously familiar and into an exchange with someone with whom custom forbade him to speak at all. Jesus, in his outreach, embraced difference and new horizons. His ministry transcended boundaries. He invited his disciples to be aware of God's action in places and people they were inclined to avoid: Zacchaeus,<sup>30</sup> a Syro-Phoenician woman,<sup>31</sup> Roman centurions,<sup>32</sup> a repentant thief.<sup>33</sup> As water bringing life<sup>34</sup> to all who thirst, he showed himself interested in every parched area of the world; and in every parched area of the world he can thus be welcomed, for all who are thirsty can understand what living water means. This image of living water can give life to all Jesuits as servants of Christ in his mission because, having tasted this water themselves, they will be eager to offer it to anyone who thirsts and to reach out to people beyond frontiers – where water may not yet have welled up – to bring a new culture of dialogue to a rich, diverse, and multi-faceted world.

13.- To follow Christ bearing his Cross means announcing his Gospel of hope to the many poor who inhabit our world today. The world's many 'poverties' represent thirsts that, ultimately, only he who is living water can assuage. Working for his Reign will often mean meeting material needs, but it will always mean much more, because human beings thirst at many levels; and Christ's mission is directed to human beings. Faith *and* justice; it is never one without the other. Human beings need food, shelter, love, relationship, truth, meaning, promise, hope. Human beings need a future in which they can take hold of their full dignity; indeed they need an absolute future, a 'great hope' that exceeds every particular hope.<sup>35</sup> All of these things are already present in the heart of Christ's mission, which, as was particularly evident in his healing ministry, was always more than physical. In healing the leper, Jesus restored him to the community, gave him a sense of belonging. Our mission finds its inspiration in this ministry of Jesus. Following Jesus, we feel ourselves called not only to bring direct help to people in distress, but also to restore entire human persons in their integrity, reintegrating them in community and reconciling them with God. This frequently calls for an engagement that is long-term, be it in the education of youth, in the spiritual accompaniment of the *Exercises*, in intellectual research, or in the service of refugees. But it is here, aided by grace and drawing on whatever professional capacities we may have that we try to offer ourselves to God fully, for his service.

14.- The Son's way of acting provides the pattern for how we must act in the service of his mission.<sup>36</sup> Jesus preached the Reign of God; indeed it was given with his very presence.<sup>37</sup> And he showed himself as having come into the world not to do his own will but the will of his Father in heaven. Jesus' entire life was a kenosis, and he approached situations by self-forgetfulness, seeking not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>38</sup> Thus incarnation and paschal mystery unfold in his life-pattern; his life-pattern will be ours also when we join with him. As companions with him on mission, his way is our way.

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<sup>30</sup> Luke 19:1-10.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 7:24-30.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 7:2-10; Mark 15:39.

<sup>33</sup> Luke 23:39-43.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. John 7:38.

<sup>35</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi* (30 November 2007), see paragraphs 4 and 35, for example.

<sup>36</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 91-98.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Matthew 12:28, Luke:11:20; 17:21.

<sup>38</sup> Mark 10:45.

15.- In following this way Jesuits today affirm all that has been specified regarding the Society's mission in the last three General Congregations. The service of faith and the promotion of justice, indissolubly united, remain at the heart of our mission. This option changed the face of the Society. We embrace it again and we remember with gratitude our martyrs and the poor who have nourished us evangelically in our own identity as followers of Jesus: "our service, especially among the poor, has deepened our life of faith, both individually and as a body".<sup>39</sup> As followers of Jesus today, we reach out also to persons who differ from us in culture and religion, aware that dialogue with them is integral also to our service of Christ's mission<sup>40</sup>. In every mission that we carry out, we seek only to be where he sends us. The grace we receive as Jesuits is to be and to go with him, looking on the world with his eyes, loving it with his heart, and entering into its depths with his unlimited compassion.

*In the Church and For the World...*

16.- Knowing ourselves to be sent with Jesus as companions consecrated to him in poverty, chastity, and obedience, although we are sinners, we listen attentively to the needs of people whom we seek to serve. We have been chosen to live as his companions in a single body governed by means of the account of conscience and held together by obedience: men of and for the Church under obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and our Father General and duly appointed superiors.<sup>41</sup> In all of this, our aim is to be ever available for the more universal good – indeed desiring always the *magis*, that which is truly better, for the greater glory of God.<sup>42</sup> It is this availability for the Church's universal mission that marks our Society in a particular way, makes sense of our special vow of obedience to the Pope, and makes us a single apostolic body dedicated to serving, in the Church, men and women everywhere.

17.- It is in its obedience, above all, that the Society of Jesus should be distinct from other religious families. One need only recall the letter of Saint Ignatius, where he writes: "We can tolerate other religious institutes outdoing us in fasting and in other austerities that they practise according to their Rule, but it is my desire, dear brothers, that those who serve the Lord our God in this Society be outstanding in the purity and perfection of their obedience, the renunciation of their will, and the abnegation of their judgment".<sup>43</sup> It is to the obedience of the *Suscipe* that Saint Ignatius looked in order to highlight what it was that gave the Society its distinctive difference.

*As An Apostolic Religious Community...*

18.- Together with obedience, our Jesuit vows of poverty and chastity enable us to be shaped in the Church into the image of Jesus himself,<sup>44</sup> they also make clear and visible our availability for God's call. This availability is expressed in a variety of ways, according to

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<sup>39</sup> GC 34, D. 2, 1.

<sup>40</sup> GC 34, D. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 352-370.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 23, *Constitutions*, 622.

<sup>43</sup> *Letter to the Jesuits of Portugal (26 March 1553)*, § 2 (MHSI 29, 671).

<sup>44</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18.

the particular vocation of each. Thus the Society of Jesus is enriched and blessed by the presence of brothers, spiritual coadjutors and professed fathers who together, as companions in one family – enlivened in particular by the presence of those in formation – serve the mission of Christ according to the graces given to each.<sup>45</sup> Thus we Jesuits live our consecrated lives in response to different graces. We minister sacramentally at the heart of the Church, celebrating the Eucharist and the other sacraments and preaching the word of God faithfully. We take this word to the very ends of the earth, seeking to share its riches with people everywhere.

19.- The differentiation of roles and ministries of Jesuits finds its necessary complement in a life of companionship lived in community. Our life together testifies to our friendship in the Lord, a sharing of faith and life together, above all in the celebration of the Eucharist. Following Jesus together acts as a pointer to the disciples *en mouvement* with their Lord. Jesuit identity and Jesuit mission are linked by community; indeed, identity, community, and mission are a kind of triptych shedding light on how our companionship is best understood. This companionship shows how people different in background and diverse in talent can live together as true “friends in the Lord”. Jesuit identity is relational; it grows in and through our diversities of culture, nationalities, and languages, enriching and challenging us. This is a process that we enter upon as we join the Society, and we grow in it every day. As we do so, our community life can become attractive to people, inviting them – above all the young – to ‘come and see’,<sup>46</sup> to join us in our vocation and to serve with us in Christ’s mission. Nothing could be more desirable and more urgent today, since the heart of Christ burns with love for this world, with all its troubles, and seeks companions who can serve it with him.

### ***A New Context – To New Frontiers***

20.- Serving Christ’s mission today means paying special attention to its *global* context. This context requires us to act as a universal body with a universal mission, realising at the same time the radical diversity of our situations. It is as a worldwide community – and, simultaneously, as a network of local communities – that we seek to serve others across the world. Our mission of faith and justice, dialogue of religions and cultures has acquired dimensions that no longer allow us to conceive of the world as composed of separate entities; we must see it as a unified whole in which we depend upon one another. Globalization, technology, and environmental concerns have challenged our traditional boundaries and have enhanced our awareness that we bear a common responsibility for the welfare of the entire world and its development in a sustainable and living-giving way.<sup>47</sup>

21.- Today’s consumerist cultures do not foster passion and zeal but rather addiction and compulsion. They demand resistance. A compassionate response to these cultural malaises will be necessary and unavoidable if we are to share in the lives of our contemporaries. In such changing circumstances, our responsibility as Jesuits to collaborate at multiple levels has become an imperative. Thus our provinces must work ever more together. So also must we work with others: religious men and women of other communities; lay persons; members of ecclesial movements; people who share our values but not our beliefs; in short, all persons of good will.

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<sup>45</sup> *Constitutions*, 511.

<sup>46</sup> John 1:39.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Globalization and Marginalization*, Rome, Social Justice Secretariat, February 2006, pp. 16-17.

22.- God has created a world with diverse inhabitants, and this is good. Creation expresses the rich beauty of this lovable world: people working, laughing, and thriving together<sup>48</sup> are signs that God is alive among us. However, diversity becomes problematic when the differences between people are lived in such a way that some prosper at the expense of others who are excluded in such a way that people fight, killing each other, and are intent on destruction.<sup>49</sup> Then God in Christ suffers in and with the world, which he wants to renew. Precisely here is our mission situated. It is here that we must discern our mission according to the criteria of the *magis*<sup>50</sup> and the more universal good.<sup>51</sup> God is present in the darkness of life intent on making all things new. God needs collaborators in this endeavour: people whose grace consists in being received under the banner of his Son.<sup>52</sup> ‘Nations’ beyond geographical definitions await us, ‘nations’ that today include those who are poor and displaced, those who are profoundly lonely, those who ignore God’s existence and those who use God as an instrument for political purposes. There are new ‘nations,’ and we have been sent to them.<sup>53</sup>

23.- Recalling Father Jerónimo Nadal, we can say with him: the world is our house.<sup>54</sup> As Father Kolvenbach said recently: “a stable monastery does not serve us, because we have received the entire world to tell about the good news...we do not close ourselves up in the cloister, but we remain in the world amid the multitude of men and women that the Lord loves, since they are in the world”.<sup>55</sup> All men and women are our concern for *dialogue* and for *proclamation* because our mission is that of the Church: to discover Jesus Christ where we have not noticed him before and to reveal him where he has not been seen before. In other words, we look to “find God in all things”, following what Saint Ignatius proposes to us in the ‘Contemplation for Achieving Love’.<sup>56</sup> The entire world becomes the object of our interest and concern.

24.- Thus as this world changes, so does the *context* of our mission; and new frontiers beckon that we must be willing to embrace. So we plunge ourselves more deeply into that dialogue with religions that may show us that the Holy Spirit is at work all over the world that God loves. We turn also to the ‘frontier’ of the earth, increasingly degraded and plundered. Here, with passion for environmental justice, we shall meet once again the Spirit of God seeking to liberate a suffering creation, which demands of us space to live and breathe.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 106.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 108.

<sup>50</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 97.

<sup>51</sup> *Constitutions*, 622.

<sup>52</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 147.

<sup>53</sup> Adolfo NICOLÁS, *Homily on the Day After his Election as Superior General of the Society of Jesus* (20 January 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Jerónimo NADAL, *13<sup>a</sup> Exhortatio Complutensis* (Alcalá, 1561), § 256 (MHSI 90, 469-470).

<sup>55</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH, *Homily Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, celebrating the anniversary of the approval of the Society of Jesus (27 September 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 230-237.

***Ite Inflammate Omnia***

25.- Legend has it that Saint Ignatius, when he sent Saint Francis Xavier to the East, told him: “go, set the world alight”. With the birth of the Society of Jesus, a new fire was lit in a changing world. A novel form of religious life came about, not through human enterprise but as a divine initiative. The fire that was set alight then continues to burn in our Jesuit life today, as was said about Saint Alberto Hurtado, “a fire that kindles other fires”. With it, we are called to set all things alight with the love of God.<sup>57</sup>

26.- There are new challenges to this vocation today. We live our identity as companions of Jesus in a context where multiple images, the innumerable faces of a fragmented culture, compete for our attention. They seep into us, take root in the fertile soil of our natural desires, and fill us with sensations that flow through and take control of our feelings and decisions without our awareness. But we know and proclaim one image, Jesus Christ, true image of God and true image of humanity, who, when we contemplate him, becomes flesh in us, healing our inner brokenness, and making us whole as persons, as communities, and as an apostolic body dedicated to Christ’s mission.

27.- To live this mission in our broken world, we need fraternal and joyful communities in which we nourish and express with great intensity the sole passion that can unify our differences and bring to life our creativity. This passion grows out of our ever new experience of the Lord, whose imagination and love for our world are inexhaustible. This love invites us to “participation in the mission of the One sent by the Father, in the Spirit, in an ever greater service, in love, with all the variants of the cross, in an imitation and following of that Jesus who wants to lead all people and all of creation to the glory of the Father”.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Luke 12:49.

<sup>58</sup> Pedro ARRUIPE, “*Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism*”, § 79, *AR* 18 (1980-1983) 150.

# CHALLENGES TO OUR MISSION TODAY

## SENT TO THE FRONTIERS

### I. RE-AFFIRMING OUR MISSION

1.- As servants of Christ's mission, we recall with gratitude the graces received from the Lord during the past years. In our lives together as Jesuits, we have experienced an ongoing process of renewal and adaptation of our mission and way of proceeding as called for by the Second Vatican Council<sup>1</sup>.

2.- Since the Council, the Spirit has led the whole Society gathered in General Congregations to the firm conviction that

“The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith. The integrating principle of our mission is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom”.<sup>2</sup>

3.- Reflecting on our experience during GC 34, we discerned that the service of faith in Jesus Christ and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom preached by him can best be achieved in the contemporary world if inculturation and dialogue become essential elements of our way of proceeding in mission.<sup>3</sup> We experience this mission as being part of the Church's overall mission of evangelization, “a single but complex reality” containing all these essential elements.<sup>4</sup> We want to re-affirm this mission which gives meaning to our religious apostolic life in the Church:

“Thus the aim of our mission (the service of faith) and its integrating principle (faith directed toward the justice of the Kingdom) are dynamically related to the inculturated proclamation of the Gospel and dialogue with other religious traditions as integral dimensions of evangelization”.<sup>5</sup>

4.- During the past years, the fruitful engagement of the Society in the dialogue with people belonging to different cultures and religious traditions has enriched our service of faith and promotion of justice and confirmed that faith and justice cannot be simply one ministry among others; they are integral to all ministries and to our lives together as individuals, communities, and a worldwide brotherhood.<sup>6</sup>

5.- Our pastoral, educational, social, communication and spiritual ministries have increasingly found creative ways of implementing this mission in the challenging circumstances of the modern world. Different ministries carry out the mission in ways that are appropriate to them. However, all have experienced mission as the grace of being “placed with the Son”. We remember with gratitude so many of our brothers and collaborators who have offered their lives generously in response to the call of the Lord to labour with him.

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> GC 34, D. 2, n. 14.

<sup>3</sup> GC 34, D. 2, nn. 14-21.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 41: “Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways”. Cf. nn. 52-54; 55-57.

<sup>5</sup> GC 34, D. 2, n. 15.

<sup>6</sup> GC 32, D. 2, n. 9.

6.- In our desire to continue “serving the Lord alone and his spouse, the Church, under the Roman Pontiff”,<sup>7</sup> we find confirmation in the words the Holy Father addressed to the members of this congregation:

“Today I want to encourage you and your brothers to go on in the fulfilment of your mission, in full fidelity to your original charism, in the ecclesial and social context that characterises the beginning of this millennium. As my predecessors have often told you, the Church needs you, counts on you, and continues to turn to you with confidence...”<sup>8</sup>

7.- In response to the challenging new contexts we face, we want to reflect further on our mission in the light of our experience.

## II. A NEW CONTEXT FOR MISSION

8.- The new context in which we live our mission today is marked by profound changes, acute conflicts, and new possibilities. In the words of the Holy Father:

“Your Congregation takes place in a period of great social, economic, and political changes; sharp ethical, cultural and environmental problems, conflicts of all kinds, but also of more intense communication among peoples, of new possibilities of acquaintance and dialogue, of a deep longing for peace. All these are situations that challenge the Catholic Church and its ability to announce to our contemporaries the Word of hope and salvation”.<sup>9</sup>

9.- We live in a global world. GC 34 already noted the “growing consciousness of the interdependence of all people in one common heritage”.<sup>10</sup> This process has continued at a rapid pace; as a result, our interconnectedness has increased. Its impact has been felt deeply in all areas of our life, and it is sustained by interrelated cultural, social and political structures that affect the core of our mission of faith, justice, and all aspects of our dialogue with religion and culture.

10.- Globalisation has also given birth to a world culture affecting all cultures; often this has resulted in a process of homogenisation and in policies of assimilation that deny the right of individuals and groups to live and develop their own cultures. In the midst of this upheaval, post-modernism, mentioned also by GC 34,<sup>11</sup> has continued to shape the way the contemporary world and we Jesuits think and behave.

11.- In this new world of instant communication and digital technology, of worldwide markets, and of a universal aspiration for peace and well being, we are faced with growing tensions and paradoxes: we live in a culture that shows partiality to autonomy and the present, and yet we have a world so much in need of building a future in solidarity; we have better ways of communication but often experience isolation and exclusion; some have greatly benefited, while others have been marginalised and excluded; our world is increasingly transnational, and yet it needs to affirm and protect local and particular identities; our scientific knowledge has reached the deepest mysteries of life, and yet the very dignity of life itself and the world we live in are threatened.

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<sup>7</sup> *Exposcit Debitum* (1550), § 3 (MHSI 63, 375).

<sup>8</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution to the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (21 February 2008), § 2 (Allocution).

<sup>9</sup> *Allocution*, § 2.

<sup>10</sup> GC 34, D. 3, n. 7.

<sup>11</sup> GC 34, D. 4, n. 19-24.



### III. CALL TO ESTABLISH RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS.

#### A MISSION OF RECONCILIATION

12.- In this global world marked by such profound changes, we now want to deepen our understanding of the call to serve faith, promote justice, and dialogue with culture and other religions in the light of the apostolic mandate to establish right relationships with God, with one another, and with creation.<sup>12</sup>

13.- In Luke's Gospel Jesus inaugurated his public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth.<sup>13</sup> Reading from the prophet Isaiah, and acknowledging being anointed by the Spirit, he announced good news to the poor, the release of captives, the recovery of sight by the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. With this action he rooted himself and his ministry in the tradition of the Jewish prophets who passionately proclaimed God's justice, the duty of the people of Israel to establish right relationships with God, with one another (especially with the least among them), and with the land.<sup>14</sup>

14.- In proclaiming God's message of love and compassion Jesus crossed over physical and socio-religious frontiers. His message of reconciliation was preached both to the people of Israel and to those living outside its physical and spiritual frontiers: tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, and persons of all kinds who were marginalised and excluded. His ministry of reconciliation with God and with one another knew no boundaries. He spoke to the powerful, challenging them to a change of heart. He showed special love for the sinner, the poor widow, and the lost sheep. The kingdom of God, which he constantly preached, became a vision for a world where all relationships are reconciled in God. Jesus confronted the powers that oppose this kingdom, and that opposition led him to death on the cross, a death which he freely accepted in keeping with his mission. On the cross we see all his words and actions revealed as expressions of the final reconciliation effected by the Crucified and Risen Lord, through whom comes the new creation in which all relationships will be set right in God.<sup>15</sup>

15.- Ignatius and his first companions understood the importance of reaching out to people on the frontiers and at the centre of society, of reconciling those who were estranged in any way.<sup>16</sup> From the centre in Rome, Ignatius sent Jesuits to the frontiers, to the new world, "to announce the Lord to peoples and cultures that did not know him as yet".<sup>17</sup> He sent Xavier to the Indies. Thousands of Jesuits followed, preaching the Gospel to many cultures, sharing knowledge with and learning from others. He also wanted Jesuits to cross other types of frontiers between rich and poor, between educated and unlearned. He wrote a letter to the Jesuits at the Council of Trent on how to behave and insisted that they should minister to the sick. Jesuits opened colleges in Rome and in the great cities of Europe, and they taught children in villages across the world.

16.- We are sent on mission by the Father, as were Ignatius and the first companions at La Storta, together with Christ, risen and glorified but still carrying the cross, as he labours in a world yet to experience the fullness of his reconciliation. In a world torn by violence, strife and division, we then are called with others to become instruments of God, who "in Christ reconciled the world to himself, not counting their trespasses".<sup>18</sup> This reconciliation calls us to build a new world of right relationships, a new Jubilee reaching across all divisions so that God might restore his justice for all.

17.- This tradition of Jesuits building bridges across barriers becomes crucial in the context of today's world. We become able to bridge the divisions of a fragmented world only if we are united by

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<sup>12</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 575.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 4:16 ff.

<sup>14</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, §§ 11-13.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19; Eph 2:16.

<sup>16</sup> *Exposcit Debitum* (1550), § 3 (MHSI 63, 376).

<sup>17</sup> *Allocution*, § 3.

<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19.

the love of Christ our Lord, by personal bonds like those that linked Francis Xavier and Ignatius across the seas, and by the obedience that sends each one of us in mission to any part of this world.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. OUR APOSTOLIC RESPONSE

18.- As servants of Christ's mission we are invited to assist him as he sets right our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation. "Our world is the theatre of a battle between good and evil", the Holy Father reminded us:<sup>20</sup> and so we again place ourselves before the Lord in the meditation on the Two Standards. There are powerful negative forces in the world, but we are also aware of God's presence permeating this world, inspiring persons of all cultures and religions to promote reconciliation and peace. The world where we work is one of sin and of grace.

#### Reconciliation with God

19.- The Spiritual Exercises invite us to a renewed and deepened experience of reconciliation with God in Christ. We are called to share, with joy and respect, the grace of this experience that we have received and that nourishes our hope. Globalisation and new communication technologies have opened up our world and offer us new opportunities to announce with enthusiasm the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom he proclaimed. Our ministries of the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the life of Christ in the sacraments continue to be fundamental for our mission and our lives together as Jesuits. They must be seen as part of the three-fold responsibility that lies at the heart of the deepest nature of the Church: proclamation of the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*).<sup>21</sup> In fulfilling this responsibility, we search for new forms of integral evangelization to "reach the geographical and spiritual places others do not reach or find it difficult to reach",<sup>22</sup> always attentive to the demands of the cultural context within which we carry out our mission.

20.- Globalization has hastened the spread of a dominant culture which has brought to many people wide access to information and knowledge, an enhanced sense of the individual and freedom to choose, and openness to new ideas and values across the world. At the same time, this dominant culture has been marked by subjectivism, moral relativism, hedonism, and practical materialism leading to a "erroneous or superficial vision of God and of man".<sup>23</sup> In many societies people find themselves increasingly alone and struggling to find meaning for their lives. This has become a new apostolic challenge and opportunity for us. In all our ministries, we are called to a more serious engagement with this reality and to broaden the spaces of a continuing dialogue and reflection on the relationship between faith and reason, culture and morality, and faith and society, in order "to make the true face of the Lord known to so many for whom it remains hidden or unrecognizable."<sup>24</sup>

21.- The rapid pace of cultural change has been accompanied by an interior emptiness as well as a new interest in popular religiosity, a renewed search for meaning, and a thirst for a spiritual experience often sought outside institutional religion. The *Spiritual Exercises*, which from the start have been a precious instrument in our hands, are today of invaluable assistance to many of our contemporaries. They help us to initiate and to progress in a life of prayer, to search for and to find God in all things, and to discern his will, making faith more personal and more incarnate. Our contemporaries are also helped in the difficult task of feeling a deeper sense of integration in their lives; the experience of the *Exercises* helps them achieve this by entering into a dialogue with God in freedom. We encourage

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<sup>19</sup> *Constitutions*, 655-659.

<sup>20</sup> *Allocution*, § 6.

<sup>21</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Allocution*, § 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Allocution*, § 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Allocution*, § 4.

Jesuits to give the *Spiritual Exercises*, “to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord”<sup>25</sup> to lead people to a deeper relationship with God in Christ and through that relationship to service of his Kingdom.

22.- We live in a world of many religions and cultures. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs and the tendency to homogenise cultures has strengthened a variety of forms of religious fundamentalism. Faith in God is increasingly being used by some to divide people and communities, to create polarities and tensions which tear at the very fabric of our common social life. All these changes call us to the frontiers of culture and of religion. We need to strengthen and support those Jesuits and collaborators actively involved in the fourfold dialogue recommended by the Church,<sup>26</sup> to listen carefully to all, and to build bridges linking individuals and communities of good will.

23.- We need to discern carefully how we carry out educational and pastoral ministries, especially among youth, in this fast-changing post-modern culture. We need to walk with young people, learning from their generosity and compassion so as to help each other to grow through fragility and fragmentation to joyful integration of our lives with God and with others. Volunteer work with and for the poor helps young people to live in solidarity with others and find meaning in and direction for their lives.

24.- Since Christ’s death and resurrection has re-established our relationship with God, our service of faith must lead necessarily to the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom and to the care of God’s creation.

### **Reconciliation with one another**

25.- In this global world, there are social, economic, and political forces that have facilitated the creation of new relationships among people, but there are other forces which have broken the bonds of love and solidarity within the human family. While many poor people have been lifted from poverty, the gap between rich and poor within nations and across national boundaries has increased. From the perspective of those living at the margins, globalisation appears to be a massive force that excludes and exploits the weak and the poor, which intensifies exclusion on the basis of religion, race, caste, and gender.

26.- A political consequence of globalisation has been the weakening of political sovereignty experienced by many nation-states all over the world. Some states feel this phenomenon as a particular type of global marginalisation and the loss of national respect. Transnational interests, unconstrained by national laws and often abetted by corruption, frequently exploit the natural resources of the poor. Powerful economic groups foment violence, war, and arms trafficking.

27.- Our commitment to help establish right relationships invites us to see the world from the perspective of the poor and the marginalised, learning from them, acting with and for them. In this context, the Holy Father reminds us that the preferential option for the poor “is implicit in the Christological faith in a God who for us became poor, to enrich us with his poverty (2 Cor 8:9)”<sup>27</sup>. He invites us with a prophetic call to renew our mission “among the poor and for the poor”<sup>28</sup>.

28.- The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we build bridges between rich and poor, establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests. Our intellectual apostolate provides an inestimable help in constructing these bridges, offering us new ways of understanding in depth the mechanisms and links among our present problems. Many Jesuits in educational, social promotion, and research institutions, together with others engaged directly with the

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<sup>25</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. GC 34, D. 5, n. 4: dialogues of life, action, religious experience, and theological exchange.

<sup>27</sup> *Allocution*, § 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Allocution*, § 8.

poor, are already committed to this work. Still others have helped in the growth of corporate social responsibility, the creation of a more humane business culture, and economic development initiatives with the poor.

29.- Among the defining characteristics of our globalized world are new communications technologies. They have a tremendous impact on all of us, especially the young. They can be powerful instruments for building and supporting international networks, in our advocacy, in our work of education, and in our sharing of our spirituality and our faith. This Congregation urges Jesuit institutions to put these new technologies at the service of those at the margins.

30.- Our response to these situations must come from our deep faith in the Lord who calls us to work with others for the Kingdom of God, for the establishment of right relationships among people and with creation. In this way we cooperate with the Lord in building a new future in Christ for a “globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization”.<sup>29</sup>

### **Reconciliation with creation**

31.- Following the directive<sup>30</sup> of GC 34, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach commissioned a study and invited all “Jesuits and those who share our mission to show ever more effective ecological solidarity in our spiritual, communal, and apostolic lives”.<sup>31</sup> This invitation calls us to move beyond doubts and indifference to take responsibility for our home, the earth.

32.- Care of the environment affects the quality of our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation itself. It touches the core of our faith in and love for God, “from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying”.<sup>32</sup> It might be said that St. Ignatius teaches us this care of the environment in the Principle and Foundation<sup>33</sup> when speaking of the goodness of creation, as well as in the *Contemplatio ad Amorem* when describing the active presence of God within creation.<sup>34</sup>

33.- The drive to access and exploit sources of energy and other natural resources is very rapidly widening the damage to earth, air, water, and our whole environment, to the point that the future of our planet is threatened. Poisoned water, polluted air, massive deforestation, deposits of atomic and toxic waste are causing death and untold suffering, particularly to the poor. Many poor communities have been displaced, and indigenous peoples have been the most affected.

34.- In heeding the call to restore right relationships with creation, we have been moved anew by the cry of those suffering the consequences of environmental destruction, by the many postulates received, and by the recent teaching of the Holy Father and many episcopal conferences on this issue.

35.- This Congregation urges all Jesuits and all partners engaged in the same mission, particularly the universities and research centres, to promote studies and practices focusing on the causes of poverty and the question of the environment’s improvement. We should find ways in which our experiences with refugees and the displaced on one hand, and people who work for the protection of the environment on the other hand, could interact with those institutions, so that research results and advocacy have effective practical benefits for society and the environment. Advocacy and research should serve the poor and those who work for the protection of the environment. This ought to shed

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<sup>29</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *From the Justice of Each Comes the Peace of All, World Day of Peace Message (1 January 1998)*, § 3.

<sup>30</sup> GC 34, D. 20, n. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., *We Live in a Broken World. Introduction, Promotio Iustitiae* 70, April 1999.

<sup>32</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message of Peace (1 January 2008)*, § 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 230-237.

new light on the appeal of the Holy Father that costs should be justly shared “taking due account of the different levels of development”.<sup>35</sup>

36.- In our preaching, teaching, and retreat direction, we should invite all people to appreciate more deeply our covenant<sup>36</sup> with creation as central to right relationships with God and one another, and to act accordingly in terms of political responsibility, employment, family life, and personal lifestyle.

## V. GLOBAL PREFERENCES

37.- In continuity with the recommendations<sup>37</sup> made by GC 34, and to respond effectively to the global challenges described above, this Congregation has emphasized the importance of structures for apostolic planning, implementation, and accountability at all levels of the Society’s government.<sup>38</sup>

38.- During the last years the Society has made a concerted and generous effort to increase inter-provincial cooperation in a variety of ways. In this context, GC 34 stated that “Fr. General [...] in his regular contacts with Provincials and with the Moderators of the Conferences will discern the greater needs of the universal Church and will establish global and regional priorities”.<sup>39</sup>

39.- While respecting provincial or regional priorities, these “preferences” indicate apostolic areas requiring “special or privileged attention”.<sup>40</sup> In our present context, we may confidently say that they offer areas for the realisation of the mission orientations provided by this decree. In consultation with the Conferences of Major Superiors, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach decided on the following apostolic preferences:

- (i) *Africa*. Aware of the cultural, social, and economic differences in Africa and Madagascar, but also conscious of the great opportunities, challenges, and variety of Jesuit ministries, we acknowledge the Society’s responsibility to present a more integral and human vision of this continent. In addition, all Jesuits are invited to greater solidarity with and effective support of the Society’s mission of inculturating faith and promoting more justice in this continent.
- (ii) *China* has become of central importance not only for East Asia but for the whole of humanity. We want to continue our respectful dialogue with its people, aware that China is an important key for a peaceful world and has great potential for enriching our faith tradition, as many of its people long for a spiritual encounter with God in Christ.
- (iii) The *intellectual apostolate* has been a defining characteristic of the Society of Jesus from its beginning. Given the complex yet interrelated challenges that Jesuits face in every apostolic sector, GC 35 calls for a strengthening and renewal of this apostolate as a privileged means for the Society to respond adequately to the important intellectual contribution to which the Church calls us. Advanced studies for Jesuits must be encouraged and supported throughout formation.

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<sup>35</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the day of Peace (1 January 2008)*, § 7.

<sup>36</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the day of Peace (1 January 2008)*, § 7.

<sup>37</sup> GC 34, D. 21.

<sup>38</sup> GC 35, D. 5, nn. 12, 18 -21.

<sup>39</sup> GC 34, D. 21, n. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., “*Souhais de Noël et de Nouvel An: Nos préférences apostoliques*” (1 January 2003), *AR* 23,1 (2003) 31-36: “[The choice of apostolic priorities] has been accomplished in prayerful discernment, identifying some of the most important and urgent needs, those that are more universal, or those to which the Society is being called to respond more generously”.

- (iv) The *Inter-provincial Institutions in Rome* are a special mission of the Society received directly from the Holy Father.<sup>41</sup> Ignatius wrote that we should “treat the missions from His Holiness as being most important”.<sup>42</sup> This Congregation reaffirms the commitment of the Society to the Houses and Common Works of Rome as an apostolic preference of the universal Society. To serve that mission most fruitfully, there should be ongoing strategic planning and evaluation by the institutions and by the Society.<sup>43</sup>
- (v) *Migration and Refugees*. Ever since Fr Arrupe called the attention of the Society to the plight of refugees, the phenomenon of forced migration for different reasons has increased dramatically. These massive movements of people create great suffering among millions. Therefore, this Congregation reaffirms that attending to the needs of migrants, including refugees, internally displaced, and trafficked people, continue to be an apostolic preference of the Society. Moreover, we reaffirm that the Jesuit Refugee Service adhere to its present Charter and Guidelines.

40.- We invite Fr. General to continue to discern the preferences for the Society, to review the above preferences, to update their specific content, and to develop plans and programmes that can be monitored and evaluated.

## VI. CONCLUSION

41.- Our mission is not limited to our works. Our personal and community relationship with the Lord, our relationship to one another as friends in the Lord, our solidarity with the poor and marginalised, and a life style responsible to creation are all important aspects of our lives as Jesuits. They authenticate what we proclaim and what we do in fulfilling our mission. The privileged place of this collective witness is our life in community. Thus, Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission.<sup>44</sup>

42.- An apostolic body that lives in creative obedience and in which the members know how to appreciate their collaborators in mission gives a powerful witness to the world. Our ministries and institutions are the first place where faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which we profess, should be incarnated through the justice of our relationships with God, others, and creation.

43.- In this global context it is important to highlight the extraordinary potential we possess as an international and multicultural body. Acting consistently with this character can not only enhance the apostolic effectiveness of our work but in a fragmented and divided world it can witness to the reconciliation in solidarity of all the children of God.

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<sup>41</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Pontifical Gregorian University (3 November 2006)*, AR 23,4 (2006) 696-697.

<sup>42</sup> *Constitutions*, 603.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. GC 34, D. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., “*Sur la vie communautaire*” (12 March 1998), AR 22 (1996-2002) 276-289.

# OBEDIENCE

## IN THE LIFE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

### Introduction

1. Obedience is central to the mission and union of the Society of Jesus and a special bond of obedience links the Society to the Holy Father, “the successor of St. Peter and vicar of Christ on earth” as St. Ignatius was accustomed to call him. Therefore, the Society must constantly deepen and renew its life of obedience. The last four General Congregations of the Society have not been silent on this theme, and the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation confirms their directives and norms.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we feel the need to add a word of encouragement and guidance adapted to our present circumstances and to respond to the request of Pope Benedict XVI that we reflect on the fourth vow.<sup>2</sup> To do so, we will begin, as the Second Vatican Council instructs us,<sup>3</sup> with a reflection on the Sacred Scriptures and the charism of our founder.

### The Experience of St. Ignatius and the First Companions

2. We find the origins of the mysticism of service of St. Ignatius and his First Companions in their experience of the Spiritual Exercises. In the meditations of the First Week,<sup>4</sup> they came into contact with the merciful love of God extended to them in Christ. Through the contemplations of the Second Week and especially the invitation of the Eternal King,<sup>5</sup> they felt called “to make offerings of greater moment...offering their whole selves for this labor”.<sup>6</sup> In the Meditation on the Two Standards,<sup>7</sup> they asked to be placed under Christ’s standard in order to “put into practice their union with Christ and his power as a grace of the Spirit of the Lord”.<sup>8</sup> Each of them wanted to feel “that he thinks with Christ’s thoughts, wills with Christ’s will, and remembers with Christ’s memory; that he is and lives and acts no longer as himself but completely in Christ”.<sup>9</sup>

3. The First Companions’ desire to accompany Christ and to wear themselves out in his service so that all men and women might be saved and freed from their suffering and slavery took on concrete form in the vow they took at Montmartre in 1534. If their plan to travel to the Holy Land did not come to fruition, they promised to place themselves at the disposal of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Complementary Norms* [NC] 149-156, 252-262; GC 31, D. 17; GC 32, D. 11; GC 34, D. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH, *The Holy Father’s response (21 February 2007)*, Letter to all Major Superiors and electors of GC 35, 2007/03.

<sup>3</sup> Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 45-47.

<sup>5</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 91-100.

<sup>6</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 97, 96.

<sup>7</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 136.

<sup>8</sup> Jeronimo NADAL, *Orationis Observationes*, § 308, Michael Nicolau (edit.), Roma, IHSI, 1964, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Jeronimo NADAL, *Orationis Observationes*, § 308, Michael Nicolau (edit.), Roma, IHSI, 1964, p. 122.

the pope so that he might use their help as he thought would be for God's glory and the salvation of souls.<sup>10</sup> This offering of the First Companions was confirmed in the vision at La Storta where, through St. Ignatius, the Eternal Father gave them to his Son as his companions and promised to be propitious to them in Rome.<sup>11</sup> In this way, God responded to their unceasing prayer, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, to be placed with the Son.

4. When the pope decided to send the First Companions on various missions that would involve their separation from each other, they asked whether they should unite themselves as a body. According to the *Deliberation of the First Fathers*, they unanimously decided, after prayerful discernment, to become a body in which each would care for the others, strengthening their bond of union through mutual knowledge and sharing in each others' lives.<sup>12</sup>

5. Before their priestly ordination in 1537, the First Companions had taken vows of poverty and chastity. In 1539 they asked whether or not to take a vow of obedience to one of the group at the same time that they dedicated their entire will, understanding, and strength to carrying out the missions they received from the pope. Their answer to this question was also affirmative. After prayerful discernment, they concluded that vowing obedience to one of them would allow them "to follow the will of God in all things with greater certainty and with greater praise and merit".<sup>13</sup>

6. The papal bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* is the Church's confirmation of this foundational experience. That is why the only way the Society can be true to the historical and mystical experience of the First Companions is "to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth".<sup>14</sup>

7. The goal of the spiritual formation outlined in the Constitutions is to prepare Jesuits in formation for apostolic life in the Society and to deepen the apostolic life of the body of the Society on mission. The Third Part of the Constitutions introduces the novice to spiritual and apostolic discernment. It confronts him with the demands of a life lived in companionship at the service of the apostolate and offers him an opportunity to grow in faith and trust in the Lord, to understand the obstacles to human and spiritual growth, and to avail himself of the spiritual means to overcome them.<sup>15</sup>

8. The Sixth and Seventh Parts of the Constitutions address formed Jesuits and propose the fundamental virtues of apostolic life in the Society: *discreta caritas* and the *magis*.<sup>16</sup> The Sixth Part insists that passionate love for Christ must become incarnate in obedience to the pope and superiors in the Society whose commands the formed Jesuit should obey as if they come from Christ because it is for love of Christ that he obeys.<sup>17</sup> The whole Seventh Part is a demonstration of the foundational principle of obedience, the *magis*. Here the emphasis is on discernment, freedom, and creativity in seeking the will of God and engaging in apostolic

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<sup>10</sup> *Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 85.

<sup>11</sup> *Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 96; Jerónimo NADAL, *Exhortationes in Hispania (1554)*, § 16 (MHSI 66, 313); Diego LAYNEZ, *Adhortationes in librum Examinis (1559)*, § 7 (MHSI 73, 133).

<sup>12</sup> *Deliberatio primorum Patrum (1539)*, § 3 (MHSI 63, 3-4).

<sup>13</sup> *Deliberatio primorum Patrum (1539)*, § 4 (MHSI 63, 4).

<sup>14</sup> Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit Debitum (1550)*, § 3 (MHSI 63, 375).

<sup>15</sup> *Constitutions*, 260; NC 45 §1; GC 32, D. 6, n. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Constitutions*, 582.

<sup>17</sup> *Constitutions*, 547, 551.



activity.<sup>18</sup> Thus, fidelity to obedience becomes the way the Jesuit incarnates the values of the Gospel and of the Spiritual Exercises: availability for being at the service of the Kingdom of God and freedom to be a “man for others”.

### Theological Aspects of Obedience

9. Before all else, our obedience seeks to fulfill the will of God. Its foundation is personal love for Jesus Christ who has deigned to choose us as his companions. The Holy Spirit, who has freely poured this love into our hearts, inspires in us a desire to identify ourselves with Christ and gives us the strength to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”.<sup>19</sup> This desire “to clothe ourselves with the same garb and uniform of the Lord”<sup>20</sup> situates us in the mysticism of the Third Degree of Humility.<sup>21</sup>

10. Our religious vows place us with the Lord and move us to follow him in fidelity to the mission of announcing the Kingdom conferred on him by the Father. From the first moment of his existence, Jesus’ life was oriented to the Father: “Here I am; I have come to do your will”.<sup>22</sup> Jesus has “no other food but the will of the Father”.<sup>23</sup> Knowing himself sent by the Father “that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life”,<sup>24</sup> Jesus does not act of himself but only does “what he sees the Father doing”.<sup>25</sup>

11. Jesus’ fidelity to his mission brought him into conflict with human sinfulness and injustice, and it led him to “death, death on a cross”.<sup>26</sup> Conquering even his resistance and weakness, “Abba, let not my will but your will be done”,<sup>27</sup> Jesus became the source of salvation for all by fulfilling the Father’s will. “Although he was Son he learned obedience through suffering and having been made perfect became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him”.<sup>28</sup>

12. To be joined with Christ as his companions in obedience to the will of the Father allows us to become servants of his mission of evangelization. Obedience frees us to give ourselves exclusively to the service of the Gospel. By freeing us from our own “affections, desires and interests”,<sup>29</sup> obedience lets us dedicate ourselves totally to what God loves and to those who are the object of God’s special concern.

13. To be joined to Christ as his companions in obedience and in mission, in poverty and in chastity, makes us witnesses to the Kingdom and its values.<sup>30</sup> At the same time that we

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<sup>18</sup> Ignatius’s instruction to the Jesuit sent to be patriarch of Ethiopia breathes the atmosphere of the Seventh Part. “All this is proposed under the heading of advice. The patriarch should not consider himself obliged to comply with it. Rather, he should be guided by *discreta caritas*, taking into account the circumstances of the moment and the unction of the Holy Spirit which should be his principal guide in everything”. (MHSI 36, 689-690).

<sup>19</sup> Philippians 2:5.

<sup>20</sup> *Constitutions*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 167.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrews 10:7.

<sup>23</sup> John 4:34.

<sup>24</sup> John 6:40.

<sup>25</sup> John 5:19.

<sup>26</sup> Philippians 2: 8.

<sup>27</sup> Mark 14: 36.

<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 5: 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 189.

<sup>30</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 44.

work for the growth of the Kingdom in this world, we await its fullness as a gift God alone can give. Renouncing the use of this world's goods as if they were our own, and putting our affections and our entire freedom at the service of the Kingdom, we contribute to making the Kingdom we long for a reality here and now.

14. The incarnation of the Son of God in human history invites us to see God in all things and leads us to understand that he can make use of all things in carrying out his saving work. This is why our discernment must take into account our historical, social, and personal circumstances; it is in the midst of them that God calls us to fulfill his will.

15. When created realities have been distorted by sin and injustice, however, they can cease to express the goodness of God and can become impediments to our response to the Lord's call. This is why some degree of participation in Jesus' *kenosis*<sup>31</sup> will never be absent from our lives. Like Jesus, we spend ourselves day after day, trustfully handing ourselves over to the will of God who has shown us so many proofs of his love, even though at times he may seem far from us<sup>32</sup> or hidden from us by the effects of sin.<sup>33</sup>

16. By his resurrection, the Lord continues to be present in the Church through the Spirit, and through the Church he continues to make his voice heard. "Whoever hears you hears me and whoever rejects you rejects me".<sup>34</sup> The Church is the mediation of the Word of God and the sacrament of our salvation in spite of the imperfections of her children. It is through the Church that the Christian finds God, and we profess obedience in the Church in order to serve God. Within the Church, the Society is a privileged place where the will of God is manifested to us; it becomes our "pathway to God".<sup>35</sup>

17. We will only be able to live our vow of obedience as freedom and true self-realization if the mystical experience of passionate love for Christ, the one who is sent by the Father and who is obedient to the Father's will, remains alive in us and if we daily renew our unconditional commitment to be his companions. It is precisely our love for Jesus Christ that will make our work in service to his mission fruitful, because "the means which unite the instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded well by his divine hand are more effective than those that equip it in relation to human beings".<sup>36</sup>

### **Our Contemporary Context and Its Challenges**

18. Many positive values prized by our contemporaries are essential to living religious obedience according to our Jesuit way of proceeding: respect for the human person and for human rights, willingness to engage in dialogue marked by freedom of expression, openness to creative alternatives, the desire to build community, and the longing to live for something greater than oneself. But our culture is also marked by a tendency to exaggerated self-sufficiency and individualism that create difficulties for the practice of religious obedience.

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<sup>31</sup> Philippians 2: 5-8.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

<sup>33</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 10:16.

<sup>35</sup> Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit Debitum* (1550), §3 (MHSI 63, 376).

<sup>36</sup> *Constitutions*, 813.

19. Faith in Jesus Christ teaches us that self-realization comes from self-giving and that freedom is not so much the power to choose as the power to order our choices toward love. At the same time, love for Jesus Christ and the desire to follow him call us to trusting commitment. Commitment to the Word Incarnate cannot be separated from commitment to the concrete mediations of the Word that are at the center of our lives, the Church and the Society which exists to serve the Church. At times, however, our desire to commit ourselves to the Lord in personal trust is not matched by our desire to commit ourselves to the Church or to the body of the Society and its way of proceeding.

20. An exaggerated desire for autonomy has led some to various expressions of self-sufficiency and lack of commitment: lack of availability to our superiors, lack of prudence in the expression of our opinions, lack of a spirit of cooperation in our approach to the local Church, and even disaffection from the Church and the Society. Some have used the language of discernment to excuse a desire to determine their own mission, forgetting that discernment in the Society is a communal exercise that takes into account a multiplicity of voices but reaches its completion only in the conferral of a mission by the superior.

21. The patterns of our contemporary world have their effect on the exercise of authority as well. The way in which our world prizes productivity can lead to overwork, and this can lead to distraction and lack of attention to the human person. The exercise of authority can be reduced to an exercise of power that marginalizes others or to a demand to be heard that is not matched by sufficient willingness to listen. We know these tendencies disfigure many structures and relationships in our world; we cannot imagine we will be immune from their influence when obedience places us in positions of authority within the Society or in institutions through which the Society carries out its mission.

22. These attitudes exist around us and within us. However, many of them are far from the spirit of the gospel, far from the spirit of obedience the Society wishes to foster in its members, and far from the ideal of obedience our way of proceeding presupposes.

### **Some Specific Aspects of the Practice of Obedience in the Society**

23. The practice of obedience in the Society has its roots in the spiritual experience of Ignatius and the first companions. Drawn together by the Spiritual Exercises, they came to have but one goal: to be sent on mission in the image of the Son and so serve the Lord in companionship. Therefore, obedience in the Society is grounded in the desire to be sent effectively, to serve completely, and to create ever stronger bonds of union among ourselves.<sup>37</sup>

24. These three strands come together in the account of conscience. For this reason, the account of conscience is essential to the practice of obedience in the Society.<sup>38</sup> A Jesuit reveals to his superior all that is happening in his soul, the graces that he has received and the temptations he has undergone, so that his superior can more prudently and confidently send him on mission. The account is repeated annually so that the Jesuit and his superior can evaluate and confirm that mission together.

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<sup>37</sup> NC 149-156.

<sup>38</sup> NC 155 §1.

25. This degree of transparency is possible because our superiors are also our companions. Ignatius wanted superiors to love their companions. To love is to act responsibly. Jesuits bear the responsibility to reveal themselves completely to their superiors; superiors bear the responsibility to hear their brothers attentively and to dialogue with them honestly. This is especially true when a Jesuit humbly represents to his superior any difficulty he has with the mission he has been given, a practice Ignatius valued and encouraged.<sup>39</sup>

26. The trust that marks obedience is mutual. Jesuits make an act of trust in their superiors when they obey; superiors make an act of trust in their brothers when they send them on mission. This trust is grounded in the superior's appreciation of the Jesuit he sends as someone who discerns; that is, someone who seeks familiarity with the Lord through prayer, desires freedom from disordered attachment, and thus opens himself to the guidance of the Spirit in an on-going quest to discover the divine will.

27. Because Ignatius knew and trusted the prayerful desires of the Jesuits he sent on mission, he left much to their discretion.<sup>40</sup> Following the example of Ignatius, the Society expects that Jesuits will exercise creativity in carrying out their mission as they see circumstances require, that they will go beyond what has been asked in the true spirit of the *magis*.<sup>41</sup> Thus the superior's trust expresses itself in effective delegation, and the Jesuit who obeys knows he can rely on his superior's openness to creative initiatives he might propose.<sup>42</sup> This is why obedience in the Society has rightly been described as an exercise of creative fidelity.<sup>43</sup> It is creative, because it calls on the individual's freedom and resourcefulness. It is fidelity because it calls for a generous response to the directives of the superior whose duty it is to make decisions "keeping in view the purpose of the Constitutions, which is the greater divine service and the good of those who live in this Institute".<sup>44</sup>

28. A consideration of the practice of obedience would be incomplete if it were limited to the relationship between the superior and the individual Jesuit. The community has its role to play. We obey our superiors in community so that our common life can effectively support our mission and become a sign of the possibility of human communion our world so sorely needs.<sup>45</sup> The community is also a privileged place for the practice of apostolic discernment, whether through formally structured communal discernment<sup>46</sup> or through informal conversation that has the more effective pursuit of the mission as its goal. Such discernment will help us not only accept our personal missions but also rejoice in and support the missions received by our brothers. In this way, our common mission is strengthened and the union of minds and hearts confirmed and deepened.

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<sup>39</sup> *Constitutions*, 543, 627.

<sup>40</sup> *Constitutions*, 633-635.

<sup>41</sup> *Constitutions*, 622-623.

<sup>42</sup> GC 31, D. 17, n. 11.

<sup>43</sup> All of this clarifies the significance of phrases like "an old man's staff" or "*perinde ac cadaver*" that can be found in the Constitutions. The context makes it clear that to obey is not to become lifeless; rather, it is to offer oneself to be carried by the mission conferred by the superior. "For in this way the obedient man ought joyfully to employ himself in any task in which the superior desires to employ him in aid of the whole body of the religious order". (*Constitutions*, 547).

<sup>44</sup> *Constitutions*, 746.

<sup>45</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., "*Sur la vie communautaire*" (12 March 1998), AR 22 (1996-2002) 276-289.

<sup>46</sup> NC 150-51.

29. For Ignatius and for the Jesuit, obedience is both grace and gift. It is a path to which we are called by the Lord, and it is the Lord who enables us to follow this path in his service. A personal history of generous response to the grace of obedience allows a Jesuit to serve joyfully and effectively.

### **The Fourth Vow of Obedience to the Pope with Regard to Missions**

30. Ignatius and the First Companions offered themselves to the Vicar of Christ to be sent on mission out of a “desire to serve the Church in the most beneficial way possible”.<sup>47</sup> By means of the fourth vow pronounced by the professed, the whole body of the Society puts itself at the disposition of the ministry of the Successor of Peter “for distribution into the vineyard of Christ our Lord”.<sup>48</sup> In this way, we achieve greater availability to the divine will and offer the Church better service.

31. The fourth vow, which Ignatius himself defined as “our beginning and principal foundation”,<sup>49</sup> expresses what is specific to the Society: total availability to serve the Church wherever the pope sends us. The fourth vow also makes clear the place of the Society in the Church. It gives the Society structural incorporation into the life of the Church by linking its charism as an apostolic religious order to the hierarchical structure of the Church in the person of the pope. It is through this vow that the Society participates in the universal mission of the Church and that the universality of its mission, carried out through a wide range of ministries in the service of local churches, is guaranteed.

32. According to the Constitutions, “the entire purport of this fourth vow of obedience to the pope was and is with regard to missions... for having the members dispersed throughout the various parts of the world”.<sup>50</sup> This is the matter of the vow. But the Constitutions also invite us to distinguish ourselves in obedience “not only in the matters of obligation but also in others even though nothing else be perceived except an indication of the superior’s will without an expressed command”.<sup>51</sup> This is thoroughly congruent with Ignatius’s ideal of obedience, which holds “that obedience is imperfect in which there does not exist, in addition to the execution, agreement in willing and judging between him who commands and him who obeys”.<sup>52</sup>

33. The availability promised in the fourth vow is distinct from the Ignatian spirituality of “the proper attitude we ought to have in the Church” or “*sentire cum ecclesia*”.<sup>53</sup> However, both are rooted in the love we have for Christ our Lord, a love that extends itself to love for

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<sup>47</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution to the Members of the Society of Jesus (22 April 2006)*, AR 23,4 (2006) 677.

<sup>48</sup> *Constitutions*, 604.

<sup>49</sup> *Declarationes circa missiones (1544-1545)* (MHSI 63, 162); Peter FABER, *Memoriale*, n. 18 (MHSI 68, 498); GC 31, D. 1, n 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Constitutions*, 529 and 605.

<sup>51</sup> *Constitutions*, 547. Although the reference in the *Constitutions* is to obedience to Jesuit superiors, the Thirty-First General Congregation applies the citation to obedience to the pope. “With all our force and energy we should strive to obey first the Sovereign Pontiff and then the superiors of the Society ‘not only in matters of obligation, but also in others, even at the mere hint of the superior’s will, apart from any express command.’” (GC 31, D. 17, n. 10).

<sup>52</sup> *Constitutions*, 550.

<sup>53</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 352. Cf. GC 34, D. 11; final allocution of Father Kolvenbach to the 69<sup>th</sup> Congregation of Procurators (Loyola, 23 September 2003), AR 23,1 (2003) 431-438.

the Church and for “the one who holds the place of Christ our Lord for us”.<sup>54</sup> This is why we speak of being united with the pope effectively and affectively. Taken together, the fourth vow and our ecclesial spirituality move us to offer the service asked of us by the pope.<sup>55</sup>

34. The Society is deeply grateful to God for its vocation to serve the Church and derives great consolation from the innumerable examples of generous Jesuits who offer their lives in service to the mission of Christ throughout the world, making themselves available for missions from the Holy Father and collaborating with local churches under the guidance of their pastors. In the name of the whole Society, the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation asks the Lord’s pardon for those times when its members have been lacking in love, discretion, or faithfulness in their service of the Church. At the same time, this Congregation affirms the Society’s commitment to grow daily in love for the Church and availability to the pope.

### **Obedience in Daily Life**

35. This Congregation does not want to repeat everything set down about obedience in the Constitutions and Complementary Norms; neither does it want to repeat the directives on obedience to be found in the decrees of the most recent General Congregations. However, we do wish to offer some advice that can assist us in our present circumstances so that we can continue to distinguish ourselves in the perfection of our obedience<sup>56</sup> as St. Ignatius urges us.

#### *Jesuits in Formation*

36. The Thirty-Fifth General Congregation invites Jesuits in formation to live their progressive incorporation into the Society with joyful hearts, reproducing the First Companions’ fruitful experience of being friends in the Lord and committing their lives to generous service of all men and women, especially those most in need.

37. We encourage Jesuits in formation to grow throughout the stages of formation in the spirituality of obedience and in availability for placing their lives and freedom at the service of the mission of Christ. It will be good for them to take advantage of the opportunities for self-abnegation that community life, constant and rigorous dedication to studies, and other aspects of their experience will doubtless provide. Self-abnegation, “the fruit of our joy at the approach of the Kingdom and the result of a progressive identification with Christ”,<sup>57</sup> is a virtue Jesuits need to accept peacefully the sometimes difficult demands of obedience.

38. We encourage *formatores* to help Jesuits in formation understand and live the mystical source of obedience: an unconditional love for the Lord which will bring them to a desire to serve him in fulfilling the Father’s will. We ask *formatores* to help Jesuits in formation become progressively aware of the demands of a life of obedience: transparency with superiors, esteem for the account of conscience, the responsible exercise of personal

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<sup>54</sup> *Constitutions*, 552.

<sup>55</sup> *NC* 253.

<sup>56</sup> “We can tolerate other religious institutes outdoing us in fasting and in other austerities that they practice according to their Rule, but it is my desire, dear brothers, that those who serve the Lord our God in this Society be outstanding in the purity and perfection of their obedience, the renunciation of their will, and the abnegation of their judgment”. *Letter to the Jesuits of Portugal* (26 March 1553) (MHSI 29, 671).

<sup>57</sup> *NC* 223 §4.

initiative, and a spirit of discernment which accepts the decisions of the superior with good grace.

39. The spirituality and tradition of the Society require that Jesuits be filled with a spirit of obedience to the Holy Father as an essential characteristic of our mission and identity. Jesuit spiritual and ecclesial formation should emphasize availability for mission and “the proper attitude we ought to have in the Church” as established by the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Formed Jesuits*

40. The Thirty-Fifth General Congregation invites formed Jesuits to grow in interior freedom and trust in God. In this way, their availability to go to any part of the world and undertake any ministry “of more universal scope and from which greater fruit can be expected”<sup>59</sup> will increase.

41. The Congregation encourages all Jesuits to strengthen their affection for the pope and their respect for the pastors of the Church and to correct any faults that might exist in this regard.

42. Similarly, the Congregation asks all Jesuits to recognize with gratitude the service local and major superiors offer the Society and to support them in their task.

43. It is of vital importance that all Jesuits consider the account of conscience essential for the practice of obedience and that they offer it according to the guidelines set down by Father Kolvenbach in his letter to the Society of February 21, 2005. Because “the mission is conferred, confirmed, or changed”<sup>60</sup> in the account of conscience, it should be given in the first place to the major superior. However, what the letter says in regard to opening one’s conscience to the local superior should also be noted: “A Jesuit may always open his conscience to his local superior – and indeed the latter would be permitted to request this if need be”.<sup>61</sup>

44. We ask Jesuits to refer to the local superior all questions that lie within his competence and not take these questions directly to the major superior.

45. In our present circumstances, it is not infrequent that Jesuits find themselves serving in works of the Society under a director of the work who may or may not be a Jesuit. In either case, Jesuits owe directors of the work complete, loyal cooperation in what pertains to their office. Jesuits are to make every effort to contribute to maintaining the work’s Jesuit identity.

46. The Congregation wishes to express its profound gratitude to formed Jesuits of advanced years who have given their lives to the service of the Church. We also wish to remind them that they are as closely identified with the Lord when they serve him with reduced energies or even in sickness and suffering as they were when they went about

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<sup>58</sup> GC 34, D. 11

<sup>59</sup> *Constitutions*, 622.

<sup>60</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., “*Le compte de conscience*” (21 February 2005), AR 23,1 (2003) 558.

<sup>61</sup> Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., “*Le compte de conscience*” (21 February 2005), AR 23,1 (2003) 558; *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, 16, AR 22 (1996-2002) 369.

“proclaiming the kingdom in towns and villages”.<sup>62</sup> Those whose primary task is to pray for the Church and the Society are truly on mission, and their contribution to the Society’s well-being and its service of the Kingdom can never be overemphasized, for they provide an example of placing oneself entirely in the hands of God, which can only inspire and console their brothers.

### *Superiors*

47. The General Congregation encourages major superiors to exercise their roles with confidence and joy, to assign Jesuits to their mission with clarity, and to show interest and care for the Jesuits they send on mission.

48. When major superiors name non-Jesuit directors of works, they should not only take into account candidates’ professional competence but also their understanding and commitment to our mission and way of proceeding.

49. In the spirit of subsidiarity, we recommend that major superiors respect the scope for decision making that appropriately belongs to the local superior.

50. The General Congregation wants to emphasize once more the importance of the role of the local superior. Local superiors need to receive the formation and preparation necessary for their mission. In this regard, major superiors are responsible for offering regular and timely courses and programs to prepare local superiors.

51. The local superior shares with the whole community responsibility for the care and formation of Jesuits who have not yet pronounced final vows. Local superiors are asked to take special care to request the account of conscience twice a year, to provide for the renewal of vows, and to ensure a community atmosphere that encourages the Jesuit in formation to grow as a person and as a religious.

52. It is important that community life be governed by clear directives. Local superiors should collaborate with their brothers in working out and putting into practice a daily order and guidelines for common life. These practices should be evaluated at the time of the major superior’s annual visit or other appropriate times.<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion**

53. Along his pilgrim way from Loyola to Rome, Ignatius prayed unceasingly to Mary, Our Lady, asking her to obtain for him the grace to be received under the banner of her Son.<sup>64</sup> In her expression, “Behold the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word”,<sup>65</sup> Mary shows us how to live in total availability and to place our whole lives at the service of her Son. In her instruction to the servants at Cana, “Do whatever he tells you”,<sup>66</sup> Mary points out for us the basic orientation that should guide our lives. For this reason, the Society has always seen in Mary a model of obedience.

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<sup>62</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 91.

<sup>63</sup> *NC* 319, 324.

<sup>64</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, 147.

<sup>65</sup> Luke 1: 38.

<sup>66</sup> John 2: 5.



54. Through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, of St. Ignatius, and of the great company of brothers who have lived their lives of obedience with a love so profound that it has even led some to martyrdom, the Society rededicates itself to the practice of obedience “for the greater service of God and for the more universal good”.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Constitutions*, 618, 622.

# GOVERNANCE AT THE SERVICE OF UNIVERSAL MISSION

## Introduction

1. General Congregation 35 establishes three principles to guide our consideration of governance in the Society of Jesus based on the experiences of recent decades and our apostolic mission:

a) *Our governance structures and ways of proceeding should flow from a perspective of greater universality.* This is in keeping with the directions set by previous General Congregations<sup>1</sup> and responds to the accelerated pace of globalization, the transnational and multicultural dimensions of the challenges facing the Church, and our desires to work more collaboratively throughout this universal Society.

b) *Structures of governance should be streamlined, modernized, and made more flexible where possible.* The Society is organized in function of its mission. We will serve that apostolic mission more effectively by simplifying some structures and procedures of governance, using modern methods of communication and collaboration, and introducing increasingly flexible structures at various levels.

c) *Changing circumstances require a better articulation of Ignatian values and ways of proceeding in our contemporary life and work.* Such changes as apostolic collaboration with others, the separation between apostolic institutions and community, and the development of an inter- and supra-provincial level of some ministries demand certain clarifications about how to exercise governance so that it might continue as genuinely Ignatian.

Following from these principles, we offer some concrete directions for the different levels and organs of our current structure of governance.

## I. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

### General Congregation

2. The General Congregation directs and authorises the General to undertake, in anticipation of General Congregation 36, a comprehensive revision of the *Formula of a General Congregation (FCG)*, and of the *Formulae* of the Congregation of Procurators and of the Province Congregation.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. GC 31, D. 48, n. 8; GC 32, D. 4, n. 81; GC 33, D. 1, n. 46; GC 34, D. 21.

3. The revised *FCG* should be approved by GC 36 in its first sessions. After consulting with the Major Superiors and receiving the approval of the General Council by deliberative vote, Father General may approve revisions in the *FCG* that would take effect before GC 36, as well as any related changes in the *Formulae* of the Congregation of Procurators and the Province Congregation.

4. The revision should, in accord with the principles enunciated in the introduction (cf. n. 1), aim at better facilitating the effective, responsible, and adaptable use of the rich diversity of human and material resources that are employed in the preparation and conduct of a General Congregation, for the service of the life and mission of the universal Society. The revision should also respect, among other things, the following:

a) The threefold character of the General Congregation as

a.1. the body which elects the General and which has a major role in the choice of the members of the General Council;

a.2. the highest instance of giving expression to the self-understanding of the universal body of the Society at a given moment; and

a.3. the supreme legislative body of the Society.

b) Given the traditional conviction that a General Congregation is an exceptional occurrence in the governance of the Society, its work should be confined to “matters of greater moment” (*FCG* 1 § 2).

c) The importance of the whole Society’s being represented in the General Congregation, especially in the Congregation *ad electionem*. In this context, at least two other matters are to be respected:

c.1. the number of elected members being greater than that of the appointed and *ex officio* members combined (cf. GC 34, d. 23 A, n. 1);

c.2. the presence of an adequate number of Brothers as electors.

d) With regard to the duration of the General Congregation: the need to balance, on the one hand, a responsible use of limited resources, and, on the other, the creation of an atmosphere of Ignatian discernment in the proceedings.

e) The need for a more thorough preparation of the General Congregation, especially in the work leading to the formulation of the *Relationes Praeviae* and the report *De Statu Societatis*, but without prejudice to the freedom of the General Congregation itself to determine the content of its deliberations. Such preparation may require the role of a Province Congregation in preparing for a General Congregation to be expanded.

f) The rapid development of means of communication, as they affect both the preparation and the conduct of Congregations.

5. Of particular importance in preparing the General Congregation are the meetings of Major Superiors (cf. GC 34, d. 23 C, n. 4), of Presidents of Conferences (cf. GC 34, d. 21, n. 25), of electors of each Assistancy or Conference, and assemblies of various apostolic sectors. Each of these bodies could make a substantial contribution in the preparation of the General Congregation.

6. The Congregation of Procurators should be maintained, as representing the “rank and file” of the membership of the Society. As indicated above, however, its *Formula* should be reviewed along with and in consequence of the revision of the *FCG*.

## Central Governance

### *Principle*

7. The Superior General is a source of unity in the universal body of the Society.<sup>2</sup> The Congregation recognizes the rich diversity in the Society’s membership and the inculturation necessary and proper for carrying out our mission within the universal Church and in an increasingly globalized world. As governance in the Society is always measured in an appropriate balance of union and diversity, the office of General must be exercised in a manner which respects diversity while placing it at the service of our universal mission and identity.

### *Reorganization*

8. The General Congregation confirms the procedures to elect the four Assistants *ad providentiam* and to renew Father General’s Council determined by GC 34, d. 23 E, II, 1.

9. In order that the General may have the most effective support for carrying out his responsibilities, he is directed by this General Congregation to undertake a comprehensive review of the central governance of the Society, with a view to reorganization for the service of mission.

10. Included in the purpose of this review is the provision of the resources and staff needed to handle the ordinary business of the Society, while allowing the General the opportunity to do comprehensive apostolic planning and to animate the whole body of the Society.

11. This review should take account of but is not limited to:

- a) the framework provided by *NC 380-386*;
- b) the need for communication among the various persons and groups mentioned in *NC 380-386*, as well as between these persons and the General;
- c) the need for coordination and articulation of the functions of these persons and groups;

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<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions*, 666, 719.

d) the importance of avoiding unnecessary “bureaucratisation” or unnecessary multiplication of officials and secretariats;

e) the importance of developing appropriate job profiles, which would involve regular articulation of goals and expected outcomes, together with an effective mechanism for review and evaluation.

12. The General is encouraged to look to ways in which finances might be used more effectively and equitably for the service of the international mission of the Society.

13. A professional and comprehensive strategy needs to be developed to improve our internal and external communications, so as to facilitate governance, foster cooperation, and enhance the effectiveness of our universal mission.

14. The General is encouraged, in undertaking this review of central governance, to make use of the best professional assistance that is available within and outside the Society.

#### *Evaluation*

15. The General is asked to develop instruments and programs for assisting all those in governance (central, conference, provincial and local) to review the effective implementation of and accountability for their proper responsibilities. *Practica Quaedam* is to be updated to reflect these developments.

16. A review of the progress made in these matters should be included in the agenda of subsequent meetings with Presidents of Conferences. A more comprehensive report should be made at the next meeting with Major Superiors.

### **Conference of Major Superiors**

#### *Principles*

17. Since we are aware that “today many problems are global in nature and therefore require global solutions”<sup>3</sup>, we consider the Conferences of Major Superiors –at present Africa and Madagascar, East Asia/Oceania, Europe, Latin America, South Asia and USA– to be a significant initiative in the governance structure of the Society<sup>4</sup>. While recognising the authority of the General for universal mission, we hold the conviction that today cooperation among Provinces and Regions to realise the apostolic mission of the Society is an undeniable necessity.

18. The Conferences are expected to continue to be structural means that foster in all Jesuits a sense of universal mission, while facilitating union, communication, a common vision among the superiors, and inter- and supra-provincial cooperation. In order that the Conferences may respond more adequately to these aims, the following principles should be observed:

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<sup>3</sup> NC 395 § 1. Cf. also NC 395-400.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GC 34, D. 21, nn. 21-28.

- a) Conferences are structures oriented for mission and not mere instruments of inter-provincial coordination. They must continue doing apostolic planning at the inter-provincial level, taking into account the apostolic preferences of the universal Society. This apostolic planning is the result of discernment among the Major Superiors of the Conference, should be approved by the General, and should be evaluated and revised periodically.
- b) Conferences are structures of cooperation among Provinces and Regions regarding specific inter- and supra-provincial aspects of mission (common works, formation centres, networking, inter-provincial teams, geographical regions, etc.). While Conferences do not constitute a new level of government between the General and the Provincials, they offer an opportunity to enhance the governance of Provincials by enabling them to care for the mission of the Society beyond their own Provinces.
- c) Conferences have followed varying courses of development in the Society due to regional differences. The Statutes of each Conference should, therefore, respect those differences and take into account the following:
  - c.1. The Statutes are to be approved by the General and should include the following points: the membership, their rights and duties, the matters that come under the Conference's competence, the method of making decisions, internal structures, the authority and duties of the President (in accordance with nn. 19-23), and in general, whatever is considered necessary for an expeditious and efficient functioning of the Conference.
  - c.2. Each Conference should adapt its Statutes in accordance with the orientations of GC 35.
- d) Conferences should have the resources necessary to attend to the financial needs of works and houses dependent on the Conference.

#### *President of the Conference*

19. The General appoints the President after appropriate consultation with the Major Superiors of the Conference. He has the faculties of a Major Superior to carry out the specific responsibilities entrusted to him by the Statutes of the Conference.
20. The principles of unity of governance (*cura personalis, cura apostolica*), subsidiarity, and sufficient authority to exercise one's office, are to be applied appropriately to the role of Presidents of Conferences in this way:

#### a) *Assignments:*

- a.1. In the area of his competence as defined in the Statutes, the President has authority to request and to assign persons from the Provinces or Regions needed for the activities and works dependent on the Conference. A basic criterion to make these

assignments is that, all other things being equal, the needs of Conference activities and works have priority over those of individual Provinces<sup>5</sup>.

a.2. Respecting the centrality of the account of conscience in missioning, any such assignment requires the consultation of the man's Major Superior, who is the one who makes him available for a mission in the Conference.

a.3. In those rare situations in which the President and the respective Major Superior cannot come to an agreement regarding an assignment, the matter should be referred to the General for resolution.

b) *Decision-making:*

b.1. In the area of his competence as defined in the Statutes, the President is to make decisions as he sees fit, after having heard and considered attentively the views of the members of the Conference.

b.2. Although the President is endowed with the proper faculties to make decisions, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of his moral authority with the Provincials, which will enable him to propose objectives for collaboration and to promote discerned consensus among the Provincials. He himself needs to be an especially good leader, prudent, tactful, and considerate (cf. *Const.* 667).

c) *Relations with Provincials and Regional Superiors:*

c.1. The existence of Conferences with their Presidents, as well as their decision making authority in the inter- and supra-provincial sphere, implies that Provincials and Regional Superiors are involved in a new way of interconnection and interdependency, and are oriented toward cooperation.

c.2. The President does not have any direct authority in the internal governance of the Provinces nor does he supervise it. Provincials depend directly on the General. They are accountable to him in what concerns the internal governance of Provinces; they are accountable to the President in the strict area of his competence.

c.3. In exercising apostolic leadership, the President should be involved, as appropriate, in the apostolic discernment of Provinces and Regions.

21. The President is also the Major Superior of the common houses and works of the Conference, which the General has designated as such. In this sense,

a) the President, together with the other Major Superiors, has the responsibility to provide the human and financial resources needed for houses and works dependent on the Conference;

b) the President hears the manifestation of conscience of the Jesuits assigned on a stable basis to common houses and works;

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<sup>5</sup> The second sentence of GC 34, D. 21, n. 24 is thus modified.

c) the President has the responsibility for the ongoing formation and health care of the Jesuits assigned to common houses and works.

22. The President of the Conference attends a General Congregation as an *ex-officio* elector.

23. The Presidents of Conferences shall meet together with the General at least once a year, or whenever called by him for consultation on important matters<sup>6</sup>.

## II. PROVINCE GOVERNANCE

### The nature of the Province

24. While our vocation is to the universal Society, Provinces have been established for greater apostolic effectiveness and more effective governance so that the specific articulation of a Jesuit's mission is the direct result of the animating leadership of the Provincial.

Essential in this governance is the manifestation of conscience, conducted in an atmosphere of transparency and trust that enable the Provincial to assign men to specific ministries after discerning carefully how the holy desires, needs and gifts of his men meet the needs of the Province's apostolic plan and works alongside those of the Conference as well as the apostolic preferences established by the General.

25. Through the centuries, the structure of Province governance has had much to commend it in apostolic and administrative efficiency; respect for varied cultural, linguistic, national and regional traditions; and the effective uniting of *cura personalis* with *cura apostolica*. Given today's globalized context within which Jesuits exercise ministry, sophisticated communications technologies, growing apostolic networks, and transnational realities, new challenges and new opportunities for ministry require reflection, formation, and concerted action that enables us to think and act across Province and even Conference boundaries.

This constantly evolving context calls for greater and better coordination and cooperation among Provinces (for example, in apostolic planning and financial administration) at the service of our universal mission. It also suggests a need for consideration of how Provinces can best be governed including the regular evaluation and review of effective governance, apostolic plans, administration of apostolic resources, and engagement with other Provinces through Conference structures (cf. *supra* nn.19-20).

26. With a view towards better serving our universal mission, the General Congregation requests the General to commission a process of reflection on Provinces and Province structures which will lead to practical proposals for adapting this aspect of our governance to today's realities. This commission's responsibility should include a comprehensive review of the criteria for the establishment (cf. *NC* 388), reconfiguration, and suppression of Provinces and Regions. The criteria would include numerical and geographic size, age distribution, availability of effective leadership for governance and formation, financial viability, and

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. GC 34, D. 21, n. 25.



capacity for developing a comprehensive apostolic plan which meets local, regional, and universal needs. The progress of this commission's work should be presented at the next meeting of Major Superiors.

### **Province and Local Church**

27. It is particularly important that the Provincial actively pursue good communication and harmonious relationships with the Bishops of the local Churches in which we serve. This would include the expectation that local superiors and directors of works be encouraged to do their part in the fostering of such relationships.

### **Province Planning and Decision-Making**

28. The Society's law (cf. especially *NC* 354 § 1) strongly encourages a participatory and discerning approach to decision-making at all levels, including that of the Province<sup>7</sup>. So that this approach may be even more effective, care needs to be taken that:

- a) it remain clear that it is the appropriate superior, not a consultative body, that makes the final decision (cf. *NC* 354 § 1).
- b) there be sufficient clarity about the process for planning and decision-making, with the specific roles of various commissions and officials being adequately communicated to members of the Province.
- c) the role of the Province Consultors, as laid down in universal and proper law<sup>8</sup>, be respected. This role should not be eroded by the responsibilities rightly given to staff, officials, or commissions.
- d) the Commission on Ministries (cf. *NC* 260 § 1) be an effective instrument for apostolic planning and its review, especially as this relates to established works and ministries of the Province, the creation of new apostolic works, and the ongoing apostolic formation of collaborators.
- e) the legal and economic aspects of any decision should be considered.
- f) there be structures for implementation and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of Province plans.

### **Apostolic Works of the Province**

29. Another critical aspect of the Provincial's governance is comprehensive care for the Province's apostolic works, including a thorough evaluation of their contribution to the Society's mission and of their Jesuit character. These works should be visited regularly by the Provincial (or his delegate) (cf. *NC* 391 § 3), a report of which is to be included in his letters

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for Provincials*, 30-35, *AR* 23,1 (2003) 297-298.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for Provincials*, 30, *AR* 23,1 (2003) 297.

to the General. When the director of a work is someone other than a Jesuit, that director is expected to report on the work during the Provincial's visitation. A comprehensive articulation of the relationship between apostolic works (including international works of the Society) and the Province is expected and would include written agreements as helpful or required.

### **Training for Leadership**

30. Leadership in the Society today is a very demanding ministry. The need for international cooperation, new structures for partnership with others, and heightened expectations about the quality of community life are only some of the factors that call for new attitudes and new skills in superiors and directors of works at all levels of governance. Specific formation for Jesuits and others in positions of leadership is needed.

31. Ongoing formation in such attitudes and skills will often take place at the Province level, although there will also be many occasions when Conference-wide programmes will be extremely helpful. Critical areas for such training include:

- a) Principles of Ignatian leadership, including the practice of apostolic discernment in common.
- b) Formation in an attitude that enables one to work as a member of a team<sup>9</sup>.
- c) Principles of leadership in general.
- d) Management skills in areas such as:
  1. financial administration
  2. human resources
  3. planning
  4. conflict resolution
  5. confrontation
  6. conducting meetings
  7. crisis management
  8. media and public relations
- e) Skills required for effective membership of a board of governance.

32. In addition to leadership training courses or workshops, there is great value in using forms of apprenticeship and mentoring. In appropriate ways potential leaders can be identified and be put in situations where they can learn from an experienced and wise leader.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for the Relationship between the Superior and the Director of the Work*, 16, AR 22 (1996-2002) 386-387.

### III. LOCAL GOVERNANCE

#### Local Superior

##### *Principles*

33. The effectiveness of the local superior is critical to the apostolic vitality of the Jesuit community as a sign to the world of the Reign of God which we proclaim by our lives together. For Ignatius, love for the members of his community was to be the distinguishing mark of the Jesuit Superior<sup>10</sup>. From that starting point, the Superior can encourage the mission of apostolic men and ensure the quality of religious and community life that enables them to fulfil their mission<sup>11</sup>.

In a spirit of service, the Superior supports the members in their apostolic responsibilities and religious lives as servants of Christ's mission. These duties require an intimate knowledge of each man made possible by regular spiritual conversation and, where appropriate, manifestation of conscience. With such aids, the Superior can help each Jesuit to see how his apostolic work, assigned by the Major Superior, is properly integrated into the universal mission of the Society, promoting the sense of apostolic solidarity of all the community members, even of those who may be engaged in very diversified activities<sup>12</sup>.

34. From his privileged place at the heart of the community, the superior is also responsible, together with each member, for developing its apostolic life. Concretely, this commits the local superior to lead his community in a Jesuit common life characterised by the celebration of Eucharist, prayer, faith sharing, communal discernment, simplicity, hospitality, solidarity with the poor, and the witness that "friends in the Lord" can make to the world.

The General Congregation insists once again on the importance of the mission of local superior and emphasises the relevance of the points described in the *Complementary Norms*<sup>13</sup>.

##### *Challenges*

35. Actual practice has not always followed the guidelines presented in the *Complementary Norms*. The General Congregation recognizes that several factors jeopardize the proper fulfillment of the mission entrusted to the local superior:

a) Communities are of different types: in some of them, Jesuits have received very different missions in a great variety of places; other communities are closely linked with the life of a particular apostolic work (directed by a member of the community or by another); other communities mix a number of Jesuits involved in the one apostolic work and other Jesuits whose missions take place in other institutions.

b) It is fundamental that every Jesuit be able to maintain a direct relationship with his Major Superior; but ready access to modern communication technologies can facilitate

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, 11, AR 22 (1996-2002) 368.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, 33, AR 22 (1996-2002) 373.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. NC 403 § 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. NC 148, 151, 226, 323, 324, 349-354, 403, 406-407.

bypassing the local superior to directly communicate with the Major Superior in ways which undermine the proper relationship with the local superior.

c) It is often too easy to minimize the importance of decision making at the local level by concentrating too much authority at the provincial level, in apparent violation of the principle of subsidiarity in governance.

d) In some circumstances, relationships between local superiors and the director of the work, whether Jesuit or not, are a source of confusion and even conflict.

### *Recommendations*

36. The General Congregation recommends that, in each Province or Conference of Major Superiors, formation sessions be developed in order to assist new superiors to come to an understanding of their mission and to learn practical ways of carrying out that mission.

37. The General Congregation recommends that Major Superiors set up regular meetings of local superiors, with the following objectives: to promote mutual support among superiors; to encourage discernment among those in charge of apostolates; and to facilitate ongoing formation in the mission of local superior.

38. The General Congregation recommends that Major Superiors allow for proper application of NC 351 by assuring that the Superior's primary responsibility is the animation of the local community.

39. The General Congregation recommends that superiors acquire a good knowledge of the *Guidelines for Local Superiors*. They are to make a responsible application of the *Guidelines* (i.e. adapted to the local situation), with particular attention given to the proper use of the house consult<sup>14</sup>.

### **Superiors and Directors of the Work**

40. The relations between superiors and directors of the work must be developed in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Relationship between the Superior and the Director of the Work*; these must be adapted to the local context in dialogue with the Major Superior.

41. The superior must have a clear awareness of his responsibility regarding apostolic works and be prepared to exercise it. The director of a work must know to which superior or Provincial delegate he is called to give an account of his apostolic action.

42. It is important for the Major Superior to consider ahead of time the ways in which the relationship between the director and the relevant local superior will develop<sup>15</sup>. Often this relationship will also be formed with those in charge of institutions which are under the jurisdiction of civil law. Account must be taken of the requirements of both civil and canon law, and the relations between the two.

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<sup>14</sup> *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, 18, AR 22 (1996-2002) 369-370.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Guidelines for the Relationship between the Superior and the Director of the Work* 18, 19, 23, 26-29, AR 22 (1996-2002) 387-388; NC 406 § 1-2.

## COLLABORATION AT THE HEART OF MISSION<sup>1</sup>

### Encouraging the dynamism initiated by GC34

1. When Jesus wanted to teach his disciples about the power of the word of God, which every Jesuit ministry proclaims, he began: “Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow”.<sup>2</sup> He explained how some seed falls upon rocky ground, some among weeds, and other upon fertile soil where it yields a rich harvest. In his allocution to the members of GC 35, Pope Benedict XVI stressed the importance of the mission in which we are all engaged: “make the face of the Lord known to so many for whom it remains hidden or unrecognisable”.<sup>3</sup> He told us that the Church needs the Society, counts on it to “reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach”.<sup>4</sup>

2. As men sent by the Vicar of Christ, we are led more and more to offer our gifts and to share with others the Good News of the Kingdom. Following the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, the Society of Jesus has been transformed by a profound movement of the Spirit. Recognising this, GC 34 approved the decree, “Cooperation with the Laity in Mission”, that both affirmed and encouraged apostolic collaboration, calling on Jesuits to cooperate with others in their projects and in ours<sup>5</sup>. GC 35, reviewing our own life and service to the Church, and noting how the seeds which have been scattered through the inspiration of GC34 are yielding a harvest “thirty, sixty, and even a hundredfold”,<sup>6</sup> renews our commitment to apostolic collaboration and to a profound sharing of labour for the life of the Church and the transformation of the world.

3. We are humbled and grateful that so many—inspired as we have been by the vocation of Ignatius and the tradition of the Society—have chosen both to work with us and to share our sense of mission and our passion to reach out to the men and women of our broken but lovable world. We are enriched by members of our own faith, but also by people from other religious traditions, those women and men of good will from all nations and cultures, with whom we labour in seeking a more just world. Rich is the harvest. In many countries, important Jesuit works depend largely on the generous, loyal, and skilled collaboration of women and men of diverse religious and humanistic convictions. As the Holy Father affirmed our ministry and mission, saying to us, “The Church needs you”, we must in turn look to our collaborators in mission and say, with gratitude and affection, that the call we have received is a call shared by us together.

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1 ‘Collaboration in mission’ is described in different ways in various languages across the Society: Ignatian apostolic partners, partnership in mission, companions, collaborators, co-workers, colleagues. The common aspiration is apostolic companionship based on discernment and oriented towards service. In this document, we have simply used the word ‘collaboration’.

2 Mark 4:3.

3 BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution to the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (21 February 2008)*, §4 (Allocution).

4 *Allocution*, §2.

5 GC 34, D. 13, n.7.

6 Mark 4:8.

*Challenges & Responses since GC34*

4. Since GC 34 we have learned much. In some regions the development of collaboration has been limited because the participation of lay people in the local Church is minimal. In other regions, where Christians are in the minority, the challenge rests on bringing an awareness of the Ignatian charism to those whose spiritual experiences are often far different. Furthermore, in places oppressed by mass culture, the distractions of exaggerated individualism and consumerism have encouraged resistance to the powerful call of community and service found in our mission. Furthermore, our own uncertainty, born of the changing face of our ministries in a time of growing collaboration, has led to some hesitation and even resistance to a full engagement with the call of GC 34.

5. At the same time, the powerful spirit acknowledged and encouraged by GC 34 has not been idle, and for every challenge greater creativity and zeal have been the response. Numerous programmes of Ignatian formation have grown up around the world, adapted to various religious and cultural contexts. The foundational grace of the Spiritual Exercises is more widely available and provides a common language and experience, in which collaboration in mission is rooted and inspired. Increasing numbers of Jesuit works are directed by committed lay people, by other religious, and by diocesan clergy. The members of the Society — priests and brothers, those formed and those in formation — have a greater awareness of shared responsibility with others for the mission and ministry of the Society. Further, the Society has been enriched by our encounter with diverse communities of dialogue and cooperation. Lay and religious, women and men, indigenous persons and those of different religious and spiritual experiences: all these have changed us and nurtured in us a greater sense of the God “in whom we live and move and have our being”.<sup>7</sup> The grace of these years is reflected in both more extensive and deeper apostolic collaboration, which places all—Jesuits and others—with the Son.

6. The seeds of mission sown by our collaboration have actually yielded a rich harvest, for the Ignatian charism serves not just the Society but the whole Church. We are aware of the contribution of this Ignatian charism in forming an apostolic laity, a development called for by the Vatican Council and identified by GC 34 as “a grace of our day and a hope for the future”.<sup>8</sup>

**Orientations for Furthering Collaboration**

7. While GC 34 recognized the Spirit’s movement and opened for us fresh avenues to implement our mission through more profound collaboration with the laity, the current Congregation recognizes the more diverse community of those with whom we have been called to share this common mission. The seeds sown by grace are growing in many ways and in many lands, and we wish to support this growth, while also indicating some other ways by which that growth might be fostered.

8. In this Decree we wish especially to reflect upon the way in which collaboration in mission calls us to a new and often challenging renewal of our ministries. This renewal demands that we address the following questions:

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7 Acts 17:28.

8 Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 29; GC 34, D. 13, n.1.

- 8.1 What constitutes a Jesuit work, and how might it be sustained with other than Jesuits in leadership?
- 8.2 What are the necessary elements of formation needed by Jesuits and others to ensure growth in the spirit and practice of our mission?
- 8.3 What bonds might appropriately unite us as collaborators in mission who seek to serve together, with deepening affection, the mission given to the Society?

*What Constitutes and Sustains a Jesuit Work?*

9. The heart of an Ignatian work is the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. Indeed, any work may be said to be *Ignatian* when it manifests the Ignatian charism: i.e., when it intentionally *seeks God in all things*; when it practices Ignatian discernment; when it engages the world through a careful analysis of context, in dialogue with experience, evaluated through reflection, for the sake of action, and with openness, always, to evaluation. Such a work does not rely necessarily upon the Society of Jesus for its Ignatian identity, though it may affiliate with the Society in partnership through networks and other structures.

10. An *Ignatian* work can be said to be *Jesuit* when it has a clear and definitive relationship with the Society of Jesus and when its mission accords with that of the Society by a commitment to a faith that does justice through interreligious dialogue and a creative engagement with culture. In such a context, the mission of the work, whether administered by a Jesuit or by another who shares this commitment, will be “ultimately accountable to the General of the Society through appropriate lines of authority”.<sup>9</sup>

11. The leadership of a Jesuit work depends upon commitment for mission and can be exercised by Jesuits or by others. Such leaders must have a commitment to the mission of the Society as realized in the particular work, though they may be of religious or spiritual traditions different from our own. Clarity about the mission of each apostolic work and the respective roles of all parties prevents misunderstandings, promotes greater accountability, and builds teamwork. All those in leadership should understand and affirm these varied responsibilities in order to be better able to participate in the discernment and decision-making processes regarding matters of mission.

12. In developing a relationship between the Society and a Jesuit work, it is vital that Major Superiors engage and support those entrusted with leadership, whether Jesuit or other. Regular dialogue, conducted in a spirit of trust and with respect for appropriate subsidiarity, serves to promote discernment, accountability, and a clearer sense of collaboration for mission. Further, the Provincial or others should provide such leaders important information and directives from the wider Society of Jesus, thus encouraging a broader vision of mission and a better understanding of apostolic priorities and criteria.

13. The local Jesuit superior and local Jesuits do much to foster the connection between a Jesuit ministry and the Society. All Jesuits, but especially those assigned to a work, can help to foster a spirit of discernment and collaboration by their example and their willingness to share their lives with others. Likewise, our communities, as apostolic centres and not as mere residences, are called to explore how their hospitality may promote collaboration.

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<sup>9</sup> *Guidelines for the Relationship between the Superior and the Director of the Work*, 9, AR 22 (1996-2002) 385; *Instruction on the Administration of Goods*, 109-111.

14. Recommendations:

- a) We encourage Father General to revise the *Guidelines for the Relationship Between the Superior and the Director of the Work* to provide effective support for all those in positions of responsibility, whether Jesuit or others, and assist all parties in the understanding of their various roles and responsibilities. This document should recognize the multiplicity of contexts and give parameters that foster unity while allowing appropriate diversity.
- b) We encourage Major Superiors (and Conferences, where appropriate) to develop provincial or regional guidelines for endorsing and sponsoring Jesuit works.
- c) We encourage Major Superiors (and Conferences, where appropriate) to develop tools to evaluate the effectiveness of Jesuit ministries in accomplishing their mission.
- d) We encourage local Jesuit communities to explore ways of offering hospitality and support for the development of collaboration in mission.

*What are the Elements of Formation for Collaborative Mission?*

15. Collaboration in mission has resulted in abundant blessings for the apostolates and the Society of Jesus. Being with apostolic collaborators in mission encourages us to live more fully and authentically our Jesuit religious vocation. Ultimately, we bring to these relationships our own identity as men of the vows and of the Constitutions, men whose experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* has bound us to one another and to a particular “pathway to God”.<sup>10</sup> In collaboration with others, in respectful dialogue and shared reflection, in labour alongside those similarly engaged who walk a different pathway, we come to know our own journey better and to follow it with new zeal and understanding.

16. From the earliest stages of Jesuit formation and throughout our lives as Jesuits, training in collaboration must be experiential, not only informing our understanding of ministry but molding our identity as men for others who are also men with others.<sup>11</sup> The vital role of collaboration for our way of proceeding as Jesuit ministers has implications for the content and methodology of formation as well as for the role of *formatores*.

17. Likewise, the importance of collaboration in mission means that all Jesuits, as men on mission, must also be men of collaboration. On-going formation in this area should be encouraged and supported within provinces and throughout Jesuit conferences. When undertaken together with collaborators, programs of professional development and spiritual enrichment can help us deepen our sense of common vision and our unity in mission.

18. The formation of Jesuits for collaboration, however, must be accompanied by a parallel formation of those with whom we minister, so that they might deepen their understanding of the mission they share with us. Diverse programs that respect and draw upon the wisdom and experience of the participants allow for a personal appropriation of the mission of the Society. Respecting various levels of connection and understanding, these programs invite each person—whether employee or volunteer, newly arrived or veteran,

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<sup>10</sup> *Exposcit Debitum* (1550), §3 (MHSI 63, 376).

<sup>11</sup> GC 34, D. 13, n. 4.



Christian believer or member of another faith community, or person without a religious affiliation—into a deeper awareness of his or her place in the Ignatian and Jesuit mission.

19. Such formation should provide professional skills, develop a special understanding of Ignatian spirituality regarding mission, and include opportunities for growth in the interior life. Part VII of the Constitutions, the Complementary Norms, and the Autobiography of St. Ignatius provide important insights, although the Spiritual Exercises is always primary.

20. A final dimension of formation for mission involves programs of preparation and support for collaborators in leadership positions. All those in leadership positions have a special relationship with the Society of Jesus. Since their challenging work is important for the mission of the Society, they need ongoing support and care from the Society and one another. Furthermore, they should receive suitable formation in the distinctive dimensions of our way of proceeding, especially the integration of apostolic discernment in decision making.

21. Recommendations:

- a) We encourage Conferences and Assistancies to examine the program of Jesuit formation to ensure that all men in formation have appropriate experience of collaborative ministry.
- b) We encourage Major Superiors (and Conferences, where appropriate) to assist in the continuing development of opportunities and structures for the on-going formation of Jesuits in collaborative ministry.
- c) We encourage Major Superiors (and Conferences, where appropriate) to assist in the continuing development of opportunities and structures for the formation of others who collaborate in the mission of the Society.
- d) We encourage Major Superiors (and Conferences, where appropriate) to ensure the development of opportunities and structures for the appropriate formation of those in leadership positions in Jesuit ministries.

*What Connections Might Make our Work More Fruitful?*

22. As means of communication develop, the Society works more effectively as an international body and seeks synergies in service of its universal mission. Jesuits are often engaged beyond their province boundaries in national and international networks and in collaboration with a variety of persons, including other Jesuits. Some of these international networks such as Jesuit Refugee Service, Fe y Alegría, and the African Jesuit AIDS Network are works of the Society. Others are collaborative projects. In all such works, however, the good accomplished is multiplied by participation of the Society in collaboration with diverse parties united in a common mission.

23. GC 34 invited the Society to develop an “Ignatian Apostolic Network”<sup>12</sup> among persons and associations that share an Ignatian commitment to service in the Church. In those places in which the Society has responded zealously to this call, cooperation is growing in programs for formation as well as in the discernment, planning, and execution of common projects. These networks enable men and women with common concerns to share their experience and make use of their expertise. In this they realize the ever-widening possibilities

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12 GC 34, D. 13, n. 21.

of our networking. Moreover, the Ignatian tradition, when expressed by various voices—women and men, religious and lay, movements and institutions, communities and individuals—becomes more welcoming and more vigorous, capable of enriching the whole Church.

24. The Society desires strong relationships in mission with as many collaborators in the Lord's vineyard as possible. Those asking to be more closely linked with the mission of the Society<sup>13</sup> normally come to this desire through an experience of the Spiritual Exercises.

25. Among the many different forms of collaboration, GC 34 considered a specific 'closer personal bond' between individuals and the Society, whereby a lay person could be missioned by a Provincial. This relationship implies mutual commitments by the Society and the individual.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes called a 'juridical bond,' this manner of collaboration was authorized and recommended by GC 34 for an experimental period of 10 years, subject to evaluation by GC 35.

26. GC 35 affirms that this experiment was meant to be spiritual and mission focused,<sup>15</sup> rather than legal or canonical. Over the last 13 years, the experience of this specific form of 'closer personal bond' has not been widespread in the Society, nor was there much demand for it. Some individuals became devoted to our common mission in this way, and they have contributed much to it. Occasionally, however, misperceptions arose as to what mutual expectations were, and collaborators without such a relationship wondered whether their manner of collaboration was somehow less valued than those with the 'closer personal bond'.

27. GC 35 acknowledges with sincere gratitude the contribution that has been made to the Society of Jesus and its mission by these experiences. However, after reviewing them, the Congregation concludes that it is preferable no longer to promote the special kind of spiritual bond which GC34 described in D.13, n.23-25. Those who already have entered into this closer personal bond with the Society should be able to continue in it as long as local provincials discern with them that it is the best way to proceed in mission. But this option for such a specific 'closer personal bond' should no longer be open to new candidates. As we continue to accompany those desiring to work in the mission of the Society, we can encourage them to live their vocation in one of the many ways of collaboration with which the Church has been blessed, especially since Vatican II has so clearly spelled out the mission of the laity in the Church. Among these are an increasing number of associations inspired by Ignatian spirituality.

28. We note with gratitude and joy the many autonomous associations with whom we share a spiritual bond, the fruit of which is greater and more effective service to the mission of Christ in the world. Among these, the Christian Life Community has roots that are deep in the charism and history of the Society. We wish to continue to support CLC in its journey towards ever greater apostolic effectiveness and collaboration with the Society. Likewise, other Ignatian groups, including Jesuit alumni/ae associations, various Jesuit volunteer organizations, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Eucharistic Youth Movement, and many others

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13 Cf. Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., "*Concernant les laïcs associés*" (25 February 2003), AR 23,1 (2003) 102-103.

14 GC 34, D. 13, nn. 23-25.

15 This bond between the Society and the individual "is by its nature spiritual and apostolic, not legal". Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., "*Sobre la 'vinculación jurídica' de los laicos a la Compañía*" (17 March 1999), AR 22 (1996-2002) 530-533.

deserve our continued spiritual accompaniment as well as our support for their apostolic service.

29. Recommendations:

- a) We encourage the Society's government at all levels to explore means by which more effective networking might take place among all apostolic works associated with the Society of Jesus.
- b) We encourage the Society's government at all levels to explore with other communities of Ignatian inspiration, both religious and lay, ways to promote and support an "Ignatian Family" or "Ignatian Community" which will have a common vision of service, will promote networks of mutual support, and will foster new and closer forms of collaboration locally, regionally, and internationally.
- c) We encourage Superiors, especially Major Superiors, to seek ways to support and accompany CLC and other Ignatian inspired autonomous associations locally, regionally, and nationally.

## Conclusion

30. In his day, St Ignatius gave shelter to the homeless of Rome, cared for prostitutes, and established homes for orphans. He sought collaborators and with them established organizations and networks to continue these and many other forms of service. To respond today to the pressing needs of our complex and fragile world, many hands are surely needed. Collaboration in mission is the way we respond to this situation: it expresses our true identity as members of the Church, the complementarity of our diverse calls to holiness,<sup>16</sup> our mutual responsibility for the mission of Christ,<sup>17</sup> our desire to join people of good will in the service of the human family, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is a grace given to us in this moment, one consistent with our Jesuit way of proceeding.

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16 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, 12.

17 1 Cor 12:12 ff.

# THE THIRTY-FIFTH GENERAL CONGREGATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008

The Reverend Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ  
Curia Generalizia della Compagnia di Gesù  
Borgo Santo Spirito 4  
CP 1639 ROMA

Dear Father Kolvenbach

The Peace of Christ!

On the morning of Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March, shortly before you took your leave of us, we had the opportunity to thank you in person for the outstanding contribution you made to our Society during your twenty-four years and more as Superior General. Our farewell came from the heart: both the warm words of Fr Nicolás and our spontaneous and affectionate response expressed not only our sentiments but those of our brother Jesuits around the world.

We could not end this General Congregation, however, without providing you with this written record of our gratitude and esteem, one which gives brief and no doubt inadequate expression to our conviction that your years as General have been a great grace for us. For this grace, we now give God thanks as we shall no doubt continue to do for a long time to come.

Many of us have reason to know something of the burdens carried by those in leadership positions in the Church and of the increasing complexity of their work. As over the years we have set about our many tasks, we have been unfailingly supported by your own devotion to duty. This involved a daily schedule of work that would have taxed a man many years younger than yourself.

We have all benefited from your wisdom, your sense of humour, your precise attention to detail and from your already legendary capacity to remember people and places in our provinces often better than we can ourselves. On a number of occasions during this Congregation, we have had reason to appreciate once again the fruits of your profound sense of *sentire cum ecclesia* and of your devotion to our vocation “to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross...and to serve the Lord alone and his Church, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on Earth”.

Your governance was also always personal. Your many letters, your lunches with those visiting the Curia, and your visits to our provinces and regions, where you met so many Jesuits and collaborators, shook as many hands and participated in numerous meetings, made the central government of the Society present to us in a way that has both inspired us and encouraged us.

The challenges that faced the Society in the years of your generalate were considerable. These were years of rapid change both in the Church and in the wider world, changes from which the Society could not be, nor would wish to be, immune.

It was your gift to motivate us to take up the opportunities for mission provided by these new contexts. As our work expanded on the new geographical frontiers of the Church, we also explored those equally challenging frontiers where many faiths and cultures meet. While it was always your way to support provincials in the exercise of their local responsibilities, you nonetheless challenged us to respond generously to the universal mission of the Society and to put our sometimes scarce resources at the service of the greater need. The development of conferences of major superiors, which you promoted, and the apostolic preferences for the whole Society, which you identified, will surely enable this more universal perspective to come to still greater prominence in the years ahead.

It was always your desire to encourage the Society in its life with the Lord and in its fidelity to the Ignatian charism. To this end, you wrote us many inspirational letters, on aspects of formation, discernment, poverty, community life and the Eucharist, to name but a few. These were all the more valuable to us because they were clearly informed by your own personal prayer and reflection.

In these letters, as in your articles, addresses, talks and homilies, you taught us to ground ourselves in the experience of the first companions. At the same time, you demonstrated an acute understanding of the challenges which face those who live our life today. What you have written will nourish the quality of our religious life for many years to come. The attention you gave to bringing the *Complementary Norms* to fruition, moreover, will long remain a sign to us of the care we should have for the *Constitutions* of our Society.

Meanwhile, you also encouraged us to be not only “men for others” but “men with others”. You have seen, as we have, so much new energy and enthusiasm coming to our service of the Church from those many others who have also been called to follow the path of Ignatius and with whom we now more readily, and more constructively, collaborate in mission.

Nowhere has this collaboration borne more fruit than in our service of the poor, not least in our accompaniment of refugees and forced migrants. The work of the Jesuit Refugee Service has, with your unflagging support, expanded considerably during your years as General. It is just one of the many ways in which we give witness both to a faith that does justice and to our conviction that we cannot be companions of Jesus unless we are also companions, as he was, with those who have least.

During the Jubilee Year which you opened in December 2005, you reminded us that our vocation is above all a missionary vocation, as it was for Francis Xavier, which has its origins in that ever deeper encounter with Jesus himself in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. This vocation finds its expression in that warm and devoted companionship epitomised by Peter Faber: a companionship with Jesus, with one another and with those whom it is our privilege

to serve as we engage in our mission of faithful service to the Church. This was the vocation you promoted amongst us and you did so, first and foremost, by embodying it yourself.

May the Lord bless you with safe travels, good health, and many years of happiness as you return to serve the Church and the Society in the Lebanon.

While assuring you of our continued prayers, our very best wishes and our profound gratitude, we remain

Your devoted brothers in Christ

The Members of the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus