

TOPIC FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Spiritual Depth

"All Jesuits are called to spiritual depth. We have many diverse personal qualities, but we must always try to deepen our relationship with God and with the world in which God is so active. The Church expects this depth of relationship from us. Being immersed in God's Spirit is more important than all our talents, academic degrees, or skills. It is also what makes our apostolic activity effective." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008.

D 1.10 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,” especially in prayer and in community life and in apostolic work. As Nadal said, “La Compañía es fervor.”

D 2.1 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.

D 2.2 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: 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. 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. 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. He is the unique image of the unseen God, 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.

D 2.3 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 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.

D 2.4 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. 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 realize 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 and opened up for an ordered loving of God and of all things in God. This experience is part of every Jesuit's journey.

D 2.6 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.” Starting from the contemplation of the incarnation 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.

D 2.8 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, 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. 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.

D 2.9 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. 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.

D 2.10 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. 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. 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. 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.

D 2.13 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. 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.

D 2.15 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.” 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. 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.

D 2.16 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. 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. 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.

D 2.26 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.

D 3.13 In Luke’s Gospel Jesus inaugurated his public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth. 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.

D 3.14 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 marginalized 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.

D 3.17 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 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.

D 3.18 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: 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.

D 3.19 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. Globalization 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*). 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," always attentive to the demands of the cultural context within which we carry out our mission.

D 3.20 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." 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."

D 3.21 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 Jesuits to give the *Spiritual Exercises*, "to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord" to lead people to a deeper relationship with God in Christ and through that relationship to service of his Kingdom.

D 3.22 We live in a world of many religions and cultures. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs and the tendency to homogenize 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, to listen carefully to all, and to build bridges linking individuals and communities of good will.

D 3.23 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.

D 3.24 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.

D 4.17 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."

D 4.19 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.

D 4.20 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.

D 4.31 The fourth vow, which Ignatius himself defined as "our beginning and principal foundation," 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.

D 4.32 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." 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." 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."

D 4.33 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*." However, both are rooted in the love we have for Christ our Lord, a love that extends itself to love for the Church and for "the one who holds the place of Christ our Lord for us." 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.

D 4.40 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" will increase.

D 4.41 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.

D 6.9 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.

D 6.10 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."



Reflection Questions on *Spiritual Depth*

1. Having read through the selections here, now think of your own attitudes and motives, do you find that they fall in line with the values and ideals expressed in these paragraphs from the Decrees?
2. As you end your prayer what one thing has especially caught your attention from the material presented? What does it say to you: something positive or negative? Something that encourages you along your "way of proceeding" or changes it?
3. Have you asked the Spirit of Jesus to enlighten you regarding the material presented ? Have you asked Mary to intercede with you in this regard?
4. We believe that GC 35 has been prompted by the Spirit to present the Jesuit values and ideals set out here for our inspiration--even though they are beyond our capacity to realize them without grace. In doing so, they recall the key statement in the opening paragraph of Part X of the Constitutions which says, "The Society was not instituted by human means and neither is it through them that it can be preserved and developed, but through the omnipotent hand of Christ, God and Lord. Therefore in Him alone must be placed (our) hope.....". Have you found this hope renewed for you as you prayed over these materials?

Scripture: Along with the material from the Congregation, it may be helpful to spend some time with a scene like the one in Mark's Gospel (Mark 9:14-24). Let it evoke from you the cry of the father in that scene: "Lord, help my unbelief, my lack of trust!"

TOPIC FOR THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Formation

"This is always a priority, both as a challenge and as a promise for our future and our apostolate. In response to GC 35's recommendations, we plan to work with conference or assistancy-wide commissions that take into account cultural continental differences." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008

D 1.3 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.

D 1.7 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." 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 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.

D 1.10 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," especially in prayer and in community life and in apostolic work. As Nadal said, "La Compañía es fervor."

D 1.11 As we know, "mediocrity has no place in Ignatius' world view." 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."

D 1.13 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 to proclaim the Gospel in very different social and cultural contexts and is obliged to address different mindsets." 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." 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.

D 2.9 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. 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.

D 2.10 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. 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. 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. 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.

D 2.18 Together with obedience, our Jesuit vows of poverty and chastity enable us to be shaped in the Church into the image of Jesus himself, they also make clear and visible our availability for God’s call. This availability is expressed in a variety of ways, according to 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. 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.

D 2.23 Recalling Father Jerónimo Nadal, we can say with him: the world is our house. 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.” 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.’ The entire world becomes the object of our interest and concern.

D 4.7 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. Part III 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.

D 4.8 Parts VI and VII of the Constitutions address formed Jesuits and propose the fundamental virtues of apostolic life in the Society: *discreta caritas* and the *magis*. The Part VI 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. The whole of Part VII 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 activity. 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.”

D 4.12 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,” obedience lets us dedicate ourselves totally to what God loves and to those who are the object of God’s special concern.

D 4.36 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.

D 4.37 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,” is a virtue Jesuits need to accept peacefully the sometimes difficult demands of obedience.

D 5.31 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 programs 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.
- c) Principles of leadership in general.
- d) Management skills in areas such as: financial administration; human resources; planning; conflict resolution; confrontation; conducting meetings; crisis management; and media and public relations.
- e) Skills required for effective membership of a board of governance.

D 5.32 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.

D 6.7 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.

D 6.8 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:

D 6.8.1 What constitutes a Jesuit work, and how might it be sustained with other than Jesuits in leadership?

D 6.8.2 What are the necessary elements of formation needed by Jesuits and others to ensure growth in the spirit and practice of our mission?

D 6.8.3 What bonds might appropriately unite us as collaborators in mission who seek to serve together, with deepening affection, the mission given to the Society?

D 6.15 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.” In collaboration with others, in respectful dialogue and shared reflection, in labor 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.

D 6.16 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. 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*.

D 6.17 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.

D 6.18 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, 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.

D 6.19 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.



Reflection Questions on *Formation*

1. We have all heard more than once of many things that ought to be part of our lives after formation. Many of these same things are presented here in the selections from the Decrees.

--did you hear anything new in this regard?

--did you hear anything "old" that you now heard in a new way?

2. There is a kind of sequence in these selections: first, an emphasis on the centrality of Christ in our lives and a familiarity with the things of God; there follows an insistence on the importance of keeping a balance in our lives of prayer and service, which is the essence of our lives as "contemplatives in action;" finally, we are given a listing of a number practical and concrete things one might do to strengthen one's life in Christ.

--what especially caught your attention in each of these areas?

3. The selection D 4.8 makes an interesting connection. It speaks of Part VII of the Constitutions as "a demonstration of the fundamental principle of obedience, the magis." Had you made this connection before? Does it help you in your life of obedience?

4. Where did the Holy Spirit, through the materials gathered here under Formation, touch: your prayer life, the quality of your apostolic action, your need and desire for collaboration?

Scripture: One might find it helpful also to turn to chapter ten of Luke's Gospel and start with verse 17. Note how the disciples recognize that their success in ministry had its grounding in their acting "in the name of Jesus." Note, too, what Jesus adds regarding "success" in ministry: it is not so much, he says, a matter of having the devils subject to you as it is a matter of "having your names are written in heaven."

TOPIC FOR THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Leadership

"We have to prepare more Jesuits who can take positions of Leadership. We need to help them learn to take courageous but reasonable risks, and to facilitate their access to basic communication and management skills." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008

D 1.2 These two events (Benedict's letter and allocution) 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."

D 1.3 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.

D 2.10 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. 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. 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. 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.

D 2.26 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.

D 3.19 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. Globalization 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*). 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,” always attentive to the demands of the cultural context within which we carry out our mission.

D 3.37 In continuity with the recommendations 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.

D 4.25 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.

D 4.26 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.

D 4.49 In the spirit of subsidiarity, we recommend that major superiors respect the scope for decision making that appropriately belongs to the local superior.

D 4.50 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.

D 4.51 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.

D 5.30 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.

D 5.32 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.

D 6.8 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:

D 6.8.1 What constitutes a Jesuit work, and how might it be sustained with other than Jesuits in leadership?

D 6.8.2 What are the necessary elements of formation needed by Jesuits and others to ensure growth in the spirit and practice of our mission?

D 6.8.3 What bonds might appropriately unite us as collaborators in mission who seek to serve together, with deepening affection, the mission given to the Society?

D 6.11 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.

D 6.12 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.

D 6.14 Recommendation:

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.

D 6.20 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.



Reflection Questions on *Leadership*

1. What one thing especially spoke to you out of all the material cited from the Congregation's decrees?
2. While some of the citations deal explicitly with the leadership of people in authority, the citations as a whole imply that all Jesuits are called to leadership and should be ready to be leaders in the work area to which they have been missioned. Does it make a difference to read these citations in this way?
3. Picking up on what has been said in #2 above, it is worth noting that the word 'leadership' does not appear in the first several citations set out here. They deal rather with a person knowing himself, what he is about, etc. But is that not a basic requirement in a good leader, namely, to know who he is, what he is about, what his values and ideals are before trying to lead others?
4. Again, following up on #2 and #3 above, is it not important to be able to distinguish between being a leader and being someone in authority? Is it not important to recognize that all Jesuits will be leaders on their mission regardless of whether they have or do not have any formal, legal authority?
5. Do the above questions, then, lead into the following: what new dimensions/learnings about leadership in your own life and work have you discovered as you prayed over the material presented here?
6. In Part IX, chapter 2, of the Constitutions, we have listed the seven qualities Ignatius thought the Society should look for in selecting its superior generals. Perhaps this could be a good checklist in assessing your own leadership qualities.

TOPIC FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Creativity

"In considering Jesuit apostolates and communities, we keep hearing words like "universality," "future," "pluralism," "intercultural," "interdisciplinary," "frontier." "crisis." The rich and complex realities these terms point to cry out eloquently for creativity. We have to be able to bridge the divisions of our fragmented world, moving with ease into unforeseen situations, opening ever new possibilities of being human and of following Christ with joy." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008

D 1.7 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." 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 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.

D 1.13 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 to proclaim the Gospel in very different social and cultural contexts and is obliged to address different mindsets." 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." 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.

D 1.16 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." 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." We cannot separate the love of Christ from this "sense of the Church," 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."

D 2.1. 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.

D 2.10 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. 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. 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. 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.

D 2.22 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 together⁴⁸ 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. 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* and the more universal good. God is present in the darkness of life intent on making all things new. God needs collaborators in this endeavor: people whose grace consists in being received under the banner of his Son. ‘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.

D 2.23 Recalling Father Jerónimo Nadal, we can say with him: the world is our house. 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.” 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.’ The entire world becomes the object of our interest and concern.

D 3.1 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.

D 3.2 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."

D 3.3 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. 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. 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."

D 3.4 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.

D 3.5 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 labor with him.

D 3.6 In our desire to continue "serving the Lord alone and his spouse, the Church, under the Roman Pontiff," 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 fulfillment of your mission, in full fidelity to your original charism, in the ecclesial and social context that characterizes 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..."

D 3.7 In response to the challenging new contexts we face, we want to reflect further on our mission in the light of our experience.

D 3.8 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."

D 3.9 We live in a global world. GC 34 already noted the “growing consciousness of the interdependence of all people in one common heritage.” 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.

D 3.10 Globalization has also given birth to a world culture affecting all cultures; often this has resulted in a process of homogenization 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, has continued to shape the way the contemporary world and we Jesuits think and behave.

D 3.11 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 marginalized 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.

D 3.12 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.

D 3.17 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 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.

D 3.22 We live in a world of many religions and cultures. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs and the tendency to homogenize 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, to listen carefully to all, and to build bridges linking individuals and communities of good will.

D 3.23 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.

D 3.25 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, globalization 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.

D 3.26 A political consequence of globalization 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 marginalization 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.

D 3.27 Our commitment to help establish right relationships invites us to see the world from the perspective of the poor and the marginalized, 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 (Cor. 2: 8-9).” He invites us with a prophetic call to renew our mission “among the poor and for the poor.”

D 3.28 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 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.

D 3.35 This Congregation urges all Jesuits and all partners engaged in the same mission, particularly the universities and research centers, 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 new light on the appeal of the Holy Father that costs should be justly shared “taking due account of the different levels of development.”

D 3.39 While respecting provincial or regional priorities, these “preferences” indicate apostolic areas requiring “special or privileged attention.” In our present context, we may confidently say that they offer areas for the realization 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.

(iv) The *Inter-provincial Institutions in Rome* are a special mission of the Society received directly from the Holy Father. Ignatius wrote that we should “treat the missions from His Holiness as being most important.” 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.

(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.

D 5.1.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 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.

D 5.1.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.

D 5.5 Of particular importance in preparing the General Congregation are the meetings of Major Superiors of Presidents of Conferences, 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.



Reflection Questions on *Creativity*

1. What is your first and over-all impression after reading and praying over the material presented here on creativity?
2. We have become aware that the post-Suppression Society up to mid-Twentieth Century (like much of the Church and perhaps civil society, generally) was not known for a lot of creativity. However, the number of times GC 35 and Fr. Nicolás use the term "new frontiers" is indicative of a change, not just for some creative people, but for all of us. What does this suggest to you regarding your life and ministry?
3. The word 'creativity' is not used in most of the selections cited here, did that lead you back to citation from Fr. Nicolás' letter at the top of this section? He seems to be using the word as an umbrella term to cover such things as future, frontier, crisis, etc. What does that say to you regarding the fragmentation and divisions we encounter in ministry today and the need for creativity in approaching our work in a way that bridges these divisions? (cf. D 2.2, D 2.10, D 3.17).
4. GC 35 urges us, whether we work with youth or at the new frontiers of our times, to recognize the need for creativity in our approaches to ministry. What does this mean in your own ministry? What does this mean for you personally?
5. Along with the citations here, it may be helpful to draw on Scripture. Here the "eye-opening experience of Peter" as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles 10: 9-48, could be a useful subject for an Ignatian imaginative contemplation.

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

FIRST TOPIC : *Intellectual Apostolate*

"Seriousness in intellectual work has always been important in Jesuit life and ministry. It has influenced our ability to serve the Church and secular culture. It may require structural and attitudinal changes that will affect many of our policies, from the promotion and screening of vocations to the selection of apostolic fields. Serious intellectual work and reflection will affect our global capacity to give the level of excellence that evangelization needs today." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008.

D 1.7 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." 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 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.

D 3.8 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."

D 3.9 We live in a global world. GC 34 already noted the "growing consciousness of the interdependence of all people in one common heritage." 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.

D 3.10 Globalization has also given birth to a world culture affecting all cultures; often this has resulted in a process of homogenization 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, has continued to shape the way the contemporary world and we Jesuits think and behave.

D 3.11 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 marginalized 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.

D 3.12 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.

D 3.20 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.” 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.”

D 3.21 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 Jesuits to give the *Spiritual Exercises*, “to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord” to lead people to a deeper relationship with God in Christ and through that relationship to service of his Kingdom.

D 3.23 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.

D 3.28 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 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.

D 3.35 This Congregation urges all Jesuits and all partners engaged in the same mission, particularly the universities and research centers, 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 new light on the appeal of the Holy Father that costs should be justly shared "taking due account of the different levels of development."

D 3.39 While respecting provincial or regional priorities, these "preferences" indicate apostolic areas requiring "special or privileged attention." In our present context, we may confidently say that they offer areas for the realization 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 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." 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.

(iv) The *Inter-provincial Institutions in Rome* are a special mission of the Society received directly from the Holy Father. Ignatius wrote that we should "treat the missions from His Holiness as being most important." 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.

(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.



Reflection Questions on *Intellectual Apostolate*

1. It is important at the outset to clarify the use of the term "intellectual apostolate." For many it is almost automatically taken to be the equivalent of "higher education." It is not so understood here. For some others it is understood in even a narrower sense as a synonym for our Roman Institutions which the final citation might confirm (cf. D3.39.iv). It is not so limited here. Rather a re-reading of many of the citations gathered here should make it clear that both Pope Benedict and the Congregation are speaking of and appealing to the Society's tradition of taking a thoughtful, intellectual, systematic approach to any of our apostolic works. How have you understood the term?
2. What was your overall reaction to the citations gathered here? Did any one thing especially catch your attention, touch you?
3. Did anything contained in the citations gathered here prompt you to say: I need to change? I need to alter my approach to my work? I need to plan and do things differently?
4. Did what you read strengthen the desire expressed in the Formula of our Institute where it speaks of "(serving) the Lord alone and the Church, His spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth.?"
5. Did anything you read prompt you to want to engage in some continuing education so that you have the possibility of taking a more informed approach to your apostolic work?
6. In general, did you find your way of proceeding confirmed by what you have reflected on and prayed over here?

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

SECOND TOPIC: *Community Life*

"GC 35 noted a new accent in Jesuit understanding of community life: community AS mission. This will need attention in the coming years so that our communities become more and more visible, open and closer to the people. We will have to develop a new awareness of the triptych: Identity, Mission, Community. This will be quite a challenge in a world of individualism." General's letter, Oct. 19, 2008.

D 2.2 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: 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. 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. 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. He is the unique image of the unseen God, 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.

D 2.3 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 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.

D 2.17 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 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." 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.

D 2.18 Together with obedience, our Jesuit vows of poverty and chastity enable us to be shaped in the Church into the image of Jesus himself, they also make clear and visible our availability for God's call. This availability is expressed in a variety of ways, according to 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. 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.

D 2.19 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 tryptich 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,’ 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.

D 2.27 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.”

D3.41 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 marginalized, 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.

D 6.25 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. 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.

D 6.26 GC 35 affirms that this experiment was meant to be spiritual and mission focused, 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.’

D 6.27 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 GC 34 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.

D 6.28 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 deserve our continued spiritual accompaniment as well as our support for their apostolic service.



Reflection Questions on *Community Life*

1. From all the material presented here was there any one thing that especially caught your attention and that you lingered over?
2. The Congregation speaks of looking at Community Life itself as mission. What does that say to you regarding the community you are in and your own participation in it?
3. In Part VIII of the Constitutions Ignatius addresses the issue of community (though he never uses the word) with these strong opening words: "The Society cannot be preserved, or governed, or, consequently, attain the end it seeks for the greater glory of God unless its members are united among themselves and with their head." What does this say about unspoken divisions in the Society we are all aware of but choose to ignore?
4. In his homily at the close of the Congregation (pg. 97 of the Documents) Fr. Nicolás seems to think the Congregation moved beyond "unspoken divisions." Rather, he underscores both the diversity (of cultures, languages, etc.) that existed in the Congregation's membership but also the union, mutual respect and love that gradually emerged as members of the Congregation lived and worked together. Interesting that this is the first thing the General mentions! How and why did this union come about in the Congregation? How could it be replicated in a local community?
5. Drawing on scripture, one thinks in this connection of what has been called "the divided community" that Matthew addresses in his gospel. And so, a slow, prayerful reading of Matthew 18: 1 - 35 might not be out of place during this week.

THE SIXTH WEEK OF LENT: AN EXCHANGE

FIRST TOPIC: *Address of His Holiness Benedict the Sixteenth*

TO THE 35TH GENERAL CONGREGATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

21 FEBRUARY 2008

Dear Fathers of the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus,

1. I am happy to welcome you today as your demanding work is coming to an end. I thank the new Superior General Father Adolfo Nicolás, for having conveyed your feelings and your effort to respond to the expectations that the Church places in you. I referred to them in the message addressed to Reverend Father Kolvenbach and – through him – to your Congregation at the beginning of your labors. I thank Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach once again for the precious service he has rendered to your Order for almost a quarter century. I also greet the members of the new General Counsel and the Assistants who will help the Superior in his delicate task of religious and apostolic guidance of your Society.

2. 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 a 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. I very much hope, therefore, that the entire Society of Jesus, thanks to the results of your Congregation, will be able to live with a renewed drive and fervor the mission for which the Spirit brought it about and has kept it for more than four centuries and a half with an extraordinary abundance of apostolic fruit. Today I should like to encourage you and your confreres to go on in the fulfillment of your mission, in full fidelity to your original charism, in the ecclesial and social context that characterizes this beginning of the millennium. As my predecessors have often told you, the Church needs you, counts on you, and continues to turn to you with confidence, particularly to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach. Those words of Paul 6th have remained engraved in your hearts: “Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and exposed fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the social trenches, there has been or is confrontation between the burning exigencies of humanity and the perennial message of the Gospel, there have been and are the Jesuits” (3 December 1974, to the 32nd General Congregation).

3. As the Formula of your Institute states, the Society of Jesus was founded chiefly “for the defense and propagation of the faith.” At a time when new geographical horizons were being opened, Ignatius’ first companions placed themselves at the Pope’s disposal “so that he might use them where he judged it would be for God’s greater glory and the good of souls” (*Autobiography*, n. 85). They were thus sent to announce the Lord to peoples and cultures that did not know him as yet. They did so with a courage and zeal that still remain as an example and inspiration: the name of St. Francis Xavier is the most famous of all, but how many others could be mentioned! Nowadays the new peoples who do not know the Lord or know him badly, so that they do not recognize him as the Savior, are far away not so much from the geographical point of view as from the cultural one. The obstacles challenging the evangelizers are not so much the seas or the long distances as the frontiers that, due to a mistaken or superficial vision of God and of man, are raised between faith and human knowledge, faith and modern science, faith and the fight for justice.

4. This is why the Church is in urgent need of people of solid and deep faith, of a serious culture and a genuine human and social sensitivity, of religious priests who devote their lives to stand on those frontiers in order to witness and help to understand that there is in fact a profound harmony between faith and reason, between evangelical spirit, thirst for justice and action for peace. Only thus will it be possible to make the face of the Lord known to so many for whom it remains hidden or unrecognizable. This must therefore be the preferential task of the Society of Jesus. Faithful to its best tradition, it must continue to form its members with great care in science and virtue, not satisfied with mediocrity, because the task of facing and entering into a dialogue with very diverse social and cultural contexts and the different mentalities of today's world is one of the most difficult and demanding. This search of quality and human solidity, spiritual and cultural, must also characterize all the many activities of formation and education of the Jesuits, as it meets the most diverse kinds of persons wherever they are.

5. In its history the Society of Jesus has lived extraordinary experiences of proclamation and encounter between the Gospel and the cultures of the world – suffice it to think of Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto de Nobili in India, or the “Reductions” in Latin America – of which you are justly proud. Today I feel I have the duty to exhort you to follow in the footsteps of your predecessors with the same courage and intelligence, but also with as profound a motivation of faith and passion to serve the Lord and his Church. All the same, while you try to recognize the signs of the presence and work of God in every part of the world, even beyond the confines of the visible Church, while you endeavor to build bridges of understanding and dialogue with those who do not belong to the Church or who have difficulty accepting its position and message, you must at the same time loyally fulfill the fundamental duty of the Church, of fully adhering to the word of God, and of the authority of the Magisterium to preserve the truth and the unity of the Catholic doctrine in its totality. This does not apply solely to the personal task of each Jesuit; since you work as members of one apostolic body, you must be attentive so that your works and institutions always maintain a clear and explicit identity, so that the purpose of your apostolic work does not become ambiguous or obscure, and many other persons may share your ideals and join you effectively and enthusiastically, collaborating in your task of serving God and humanity.

6. As you well know because you have so often made the meditation “of the Two Standards” in the Spiritual Exercises under the guidance of St Ignatius, our world is the stage of a battle between good and evil, with powerful negative forces at work, which cause those dramatic situations of spiritual and material subjection of our contemporaries against which you have repeatedly declared your wish to combat, working for the service of the faith and the promotion of justice. These forces show themselves today in many forms, but with particular evidence through cultural tendencies that often become dominating, such as subjectivism, relativism, hedonism, practical materialism. This is why I have asked you to renew your interest in the promotion and defense of the Catholic doctrine “particularly in the neuralgic points strongly attacked today by secular culture,” some of which I have mentioned in my letter. The issues, constantly discussed and questioned today, of the salvation in Christ of all human beings, of sexual morale, the marriage and the family, must be deepened and illumined in the context of contemporary reality, but keeping the harmony with the Magisterium, which avoids creating confusion and bewilderment among the People of God.

7. I know and understand well that this is a particularly sensitive and demanding point for you and not a few of your confreres, especially those engaged in theological research, interreligious dialogue and dialogue with contemporary culture. Precisely for this reason I have invited you, and am inviting you today, to further reflect so as to find again the fullest sense of your characteristic “fourth vow” of obedience to the Successor of Peter, which not only implies readiness to being sent in mission to far away lands, but also – in the most genuine Ignatian sense of “feeling with the Church and in the Church – to “love and serve” the Vicar of Christ on earth with that “effective and affective” devotion that must make of you his precious and irreplaceable collaborators in his service of the universal Church.

8. At the same time I encourage you to continue and renew your mission among the poor and for the poor. Unfortunately new causes of poverty and exclusion are not lacking in a world marked by grave economic and environmental imbalances, processes of globalization, caused by selfishness rather than by solidarity, by devastating and absurd armed conflicts. As I had the opportunity to repeat to the Latin American Bishops gathered in the Shrine of Aparecida, “the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the christological faith in a God that has made himself poor for us, so as to make us rich by his poverty” (Cor. 2: 8-9). It is therefore natural that whoever wishes to make himself a companion of Jesus, really share the love of the poor. For us the choice of the poor is not ideological but is born from the Gospel. The situations of injustice and poverty in the world of today are countless and dramatic and it is necessary to try to understand and combat in the heart of man the deeper causes of the evil that separates him from God, without forgetting to meet the more urgent needs in the spirit of the charity of Christ. Taking up one of the latest intuitions of Father Arrupe, your Society continues to engage in a meritorious way in the service of the refugees, who are often the poorest among the poor and need not only material help but also the deeper spiritual, human and psychological proximity especially proper to your service.

9. Finally I invite you to reserve a specific attention to the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises that has been characteristic of your Society from its origins. The Exercises are the fountain of your spirituality and the matrix of your Constitutions, but they are also a gift that the Spirit of the Lord has made to the entire Church: it is for you to continue to make it a precious and efficacious instrument for the spiritual growth of souls, for their initiation to prayer, to meditation, in this secularized world in which God seems to be absent. Just in the last week I have myself profited of the Spiritual Exercises together with my closest collaborators of the Roman Curia under the guidance of your outstanding confrere Cardinal Albert Vanhoye. In a time such as today’s, in which the confusion and multiplicity of messages, the speed of changes and situations, make particularly difficult for our contemporaries to put their lives in order and respond with joy to the call that the Lord makes to everyone of us, the Spiritual Exercises represent a particularly precious method to seek and find God in us, around us and in everything, to know his will and put it into practice.

10. In this spirit of obedience to the will of God, to Jesus Christ, that becomes humble obedience to the Church, I invite you to continue and bring to conclusion the work of your Congregation, and I join you in the prayer that St Ignatius taught us in the Exercises – a prayer that seems to me too great to the point that I almost dare not say, but which all the same we must always propose to ourselves anew: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all I have and possess; you gave it to me, I now give it back to you, O Lord; all is yours, dispose of it according to your will; give me your love and your grace; that is enough for me”.

THE SIXTH WEEK OF LENT: AN EXCHANGE

SECOND TOPIC: *The response of the Society to the call of the Holy Father*

D 1.8 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.” 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.

D 1.9 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.”

D 1.10 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,” especially in prayer and in community life and in apostolic work. As Nadal said, “La Compañía es fervor.”

D 1.11 As we know, “mediocrity has no place in Ignatius’ world view.” 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.”¹

D 1.12 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*.”

D 1.13 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 to proclaim the Gospel in very different social and cultural contexts and is obliged to address different mindsets.” 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.” 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.

D 1.14 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.” 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.

D 1.15 Recalling the Examen 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” 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.” 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.

D 1.16 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.” 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.” We can not separate the love of Christ from this “sense of the Church,” 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.”

D 1.17 We acknowledge what the Lord calls us to be and to live with greater intensity, through the letter of the Holy Father on January 10th and his address at the audience on February 21st. “In the spirit of the fourth vow *in regard to missions* that so distinctively unites us with the Holy Father,” 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.”

THE SIXTH WEEK OF LENT: AN EXCHANGE

THIRD TOPIC: *Homily of Father Adolfo Nicolás*

AT THE CHURCH OF THE GESÙ
CLOSURE OF THE GENERAL CONGREGATION 35
6 MARCH 2008

I shall deliver this simple homily in Italian. I do not know whether that will put you at ease or make you uncomfortable.

Right now we are filled with the experience which we have lived for the past two months. This morning, in a prayerful and grateful spirit, we heard some reflections on this experience, an experience of incredible diversity, perhaps the greatest diversity we have ever had in the history of our General Congregations.

Along with this diversity we have experienced a strong desire to listen to others, to be open with others so different from ourselves. We have also experienced the will to change. And, yes, we have changed. We have changed in our points of view, in the drafting of our texts and in our discussions. We have developed an attitude of greater attentiveness to others. In such a large and diverse community we have rarely witnessed so much rejoicing in the joy of others and so much sadness in the suffering of others. We have prayed for one another.

The first reading of the day invites us to go to the source of this experience and to make it fully Christian. The logic of the Christian experience is very clear. God is love, and so we too love. God is mercy, and so we too show mercy. God is good, and so we too desire to be good. If we do not love, we really do not have anything to say. Here we discover, I think, the root and source of our identity and our mission. Here is our *raison d'être*. Why do we want to love the poor, to help the lonely, to console the sad, to heal the sick and to bring freedom to the oppressed? Simply because this is what God does. Nothing else. As the Holy Father told us, love for the poor does not have an ideological but a Christological basis. It is the very essence of Christ. Christ has taught us how he acts, how he lives, how God loves—and we try to learn.

Another thing which John's letter tells us is that this is not something sporadic, something we do in a fleeting moment when we feel strong, even heroic. No, it is a constant in our lives. The letter invites us to "remain" in love. This word is repeated several times in the letter. In order for God to "remain" in you, you must "remain" in love. For Christ to "remain" in you, you must be united with others. There is a play of words as the concept of "remaining" is repeated several times.

The invitation which we have received in our Congregation and in today's liturgy is to become new persons—persons who "remain" with our insights and who "remain" with the contacts we have established with the Lord through one another.

In the document in which we considered our charism, we say that in looking at Jesus we understand who we ought to be. "Remaining" in him. We all know that it is not through guidelines or directives written for others that the Church and the Society will change. They will change if we know how to become new persons. The question is not what we wish to do in community, but what kind of community men we need to become in order to "remain" obedient men, men who know how to discern, men who are always companions, always. Not with some people whom we choose

to be our collaborators, but to be companions of others always and everywhere—ready to serve, ready to offer solidarity. Men who live continually in love and in service. “To love and to serve in all things.” How often we have sung these words in the past two months! In all things, this is not an act of heroism; it is a way of life. This is what we have prayed for these two months.

The Gospel takes us still further. It tells us that everything we have done is for mission. I did not choose the Gospel text for our Mass here in the Gesù. Others chose the mission of Christ as the text. At the very heart of the sending is the “remaining.” We are sent, as you have discussed these days and indicated in the documents. We are sent because we have entered into Christ and it is Christ who has sent us. The mission has its source, its *zampilla* as the Italians say, in our encounter with God, but it ends in others. It begins with Christ and ends with others—in their joys, in their hopes, in their sufferings. Then Mark tells us: make universal what you have experienced these two months during the General Congregation. This love and this concern for one another must now be extended to all we meet. This collaboration, this mutual help must become our way of life. This is not easy. Perhaps some of you are familiar with the power point which features letters written to Jesus by little children. One letter reads, “Jesus, how do you manage to love everybody? There are only four of us at home and we don’t do very well at loving one another.” We know what this means. At least we have accomplished it among the 225 of us. But how do we keep doing it in our local communities, in our Provinces and with our collaborators, unless we remain in love?

The Gospel also indicates how we are to carry out our mission. I will limit myself to the most important points because the vision presented is very dynamic. As I have already said, it is a dynamism which begins in us when we go out to others. Something happens in others and then it is beyond us. The results are there, not here. The vision is very modern. The fruit is not “input” but “output.” First of all, go. Go to the whole world. We have spoken of frontiers, or the periphery. The Gospel tells us: Go, go. We have indeed gone and we have encountered many problems and made many mistakes at the frontiers. I could tell you about my mistakes, but I know that there have been other mistakes as well. We have come to understand that “going” does not mean simply getting on a plane but entering into the culture, into the life of the people. “Going” means study, research, entering into the life of the people. Solidarity, empathy, inculturation, respect for others. Going to the whole world turns out to be more difficult than we had thought. We feel like children. Perhaps we have discovered the Kingdom of God.

We are then told: Go and proclaim the Gospel. We have done so—sometimes well, at other times not so well. But then we have understood that proclaiming the Gospel requires that the Word of God be visible. It is not enough to proclaim it with our lips. Visibility is necessary, visibility in our life, in our work, in our openness to others, in service, in forgiveness, in compassion, in reconciliation, in our capacity to help others become healthier, freer, more human. And the Gospel continues. Something happens. People have faith. Those who believe are transformed. This is where Saint Ignatius can be a great help to us. Ignatius saw this. Faith is not something exterior. Faith transforms. Faith is something which has happened to each one of us from the moment we became Christians, from the moment we became Jesuits. This has been a process of transformation, an all-embracing process, a process which changes the person and a process which opens the doors to hope, to love and to the risk of caring for others. When the Gospel touches us, we change. Something happens and we all grow.

The Gospel goes on to say that this is salvation. It is not a matter of saying, “If I believe, I will be saved.” That is far too external. If I believe, I am already saved. To believe, to enter into this

process means to find salvation. Ignatius understood this very well. This is the very essence of Ignatian pastoral practice, whether in a parish, in education, in the spirituality of our houses. Salvation consists in interior change, in interior transformation. Ignatian pastoral care, based on the Spiritual Exercises, consists precisely in helping people to change interiorly. From this interior change of heart comes the change in feet, hands, service, work and love for others.

The end of the Gospel states that there will be visible signs. These signs will be in those who believe, not in the missionary who may already have been forgotten. The center of attention, therefore, is those whom we serve. Believers will find that their lives have been changed. The signs are the result of faith, of a life that has been transformed. Perhaps our challenge today is to discern the signs of the Gospel. Nowadays we do not handle snakes! What, then, are the signs? Justice, peace, compassion, solidarity, reconciliation and human dignity. When these have become universal, when everyone has access to these most human elements of our lives, these will be the signs. The Gospel tells us that our mission is to go and proclaim the Gospel which transforms the human person. The signs will follow. In yet another passage the Gospel states that “by their fruits you will know who is true and who is not.” Our question, then, must always be this: What signs do we need in our parishes, our schools, our services and all our works?

Now I conclude for today. I believe that we are all aware that we have had a great experience. The Word of God, however, invites us to go to the source of this experience and to make sure that it is being transformed into mission, an all-embracing mission, a mission which will continue to bear fruit in others. To return home with less than this cannot justify the two months we have spent together, guided by the Spirit and seeking to find God’s will in all things. We pray, therefore, that this experience as well as the Word of God we have heard today will bear fruit in transforming our own lives and the lives of others, so that the faith which we communicate may always be a transforming faith. This is what I ask for all of us.



Reflection Questions on *An Exchange*

**An opportunity to reflect and pray over three interrelated documents:
The Allocation of Pope Benedict
The Congregation's Response to the Pope
The homily of Fr. Nicolás at the closing Mass of the Congregation.**

[N.B. The questions here will be few and they will be directed to reading (especially the allocation and the Congregation's response) for what they are...a dialogue. Fr. Nicolás' homily is not directly part of that dialogue but it is related, being his initial reflections on the common topic here: the work of GC 35.]

1. In his allocation the Pope makes several explicit requests not just of the Congregation but also through the Congregation of the whole Society. Have you been able to identify these requests?
2. Two questions occur regarding the Congregation's Response to the Pope (D 1.8-17)
 - Have you identified the various responses of the Congregation?
 - How does the Congregation's response maintain the dialogue with Pope Benedict?
3. As mentioned above, Fr. General's homily at the closing Mass of the Congregation is not directly part of the Papal-Congregation Dialogue. However, in this context, where we are dealing with the work of the Congregation, it is interesting to know what Father's initial impressions are of the Congregation's work. He provides another perspective, which admittedly is an initial one, but interesting and informative for us. Have you recognized his perspective and the different events and happenings he emphasizes?
4. In the end, does any one thing (maybe several) stand out for you from this Exchange and, if so, how would you formulate it for yourself?