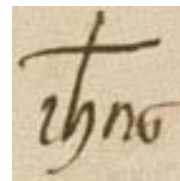


General Congregation 35



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Rome, February 7 2008, n. 12

FEBRUARY 4, 2008

The opening hymn of the morning prayer, in Portuguese, was very short but very pertinent to the present moment of GC35: *Coming and going, shadows and lights, all is grace, God guides us.*

The main topic of today's discussion was *The International Works entrusted to the Society by the Holy See*. General Congregation 34 mandated to Father General Kolvenbach to set up a Permanent Interprovincial Commission (CIP) made of Major Superiors in order to assist the Delegate of Father General in the governance of the inter-provincial houses and works in Rome. This work has its origin at the time of Saint Ignatius himself and has been considered a very important service to the universal Church. It is also a clear expression of the special relation of the Society with the Church and the Holy Father and of the vow of obedience to the Pope *in regard to the missions*. Benedict XVI has confirmed recently his expectations in this regard.

The Delegate of Father General for the inter-provincial houses in Rome, Father I. Echarte (Loyola Province), reported on the academic programs, the financial situation, the strategic planning and the difficulties that the various institutions are facing. Among the problems, the Delegate mentioned with particular emphasis the recruitment of professors and students.

The composition of the Delegation is complex : not all the Jesuit institutions in Rome fall under the Delegation. Some Pontifical Colleges (Brazilian, Latin American, and Polish) even if conducted by Jesuits, are not part of the Delegation. There also two other Delegates of Father General: for the Pontifical German-Hungarian College, Fr. W. Köster; and for the Pontifical Russian College, Fr. A. Zak. The complete list of the institutions which belong to the Delegation proper is as follows: Gregorian University; Biblical Institute; Oriental Institute; International College at Gesù; R. Bellarmino College; and, the Vatican Observatory (both at Castelgandolfo and Tucson).

The presentation emphasized the need to make the Provinces aware that the responsibility for the Roman works falls upon the whole Society of Jesus. Hence it is necessary that there be ongoing communication between the Delegation and the Provinces. The Permanent Interprovincial Commission (CIP) is expected to meet regularly. Provinces were encouraged to consider Rome as an appropriate place for the formation of scholastics and young priests.

FEBRUARY 5, 2008

On the anniversary of Father Arrupe's death, the opening prayer was inspired by the memorable words of Father Arrupe at the moment of his resignation as General.

- The report presented by Fr. Carlo Carneiro (Portugal) and Br. James Boynton (Detroit) began with quotations from the Holy Father and Father Kolvenbach:

'There are people who show us the way: Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier...' (Benedict XVI to the youth in Germany).

'The Ministry of vocation promotion is crucial and will determine the future of the Society of Jesus and the service it is called to offer to the Church' (Father General Kolvenbach in letter to the Society, September 1997).

- The situation of vocations in the Society is well known: we have around 500 new novices every year but the total membership of the Society continues to decrease. At the beginning of 2007 there were 19,216 Jesuits, a fall of 364 over the previous year.

- The decrease and the causes of it are shared by the majority of religious congregations and often mentioned. A question which did not receive a persuasive answer was the fact that fewer vocations come from our schools and other institutions.

- Confronted with this situation there are two attitudes among the Jesuits: some think that we should not engage in promotion of vocations because the vocation is a gift of God. It is clear, said the presenters, that the promotion of vocations is not a priority for all the Jesuits. Visibility of the Society by Jesuits by using clerical suits, or adding the S.J. after their names, or identifying themselves in public as members of the Society is not always adopted by some Jesuits.

- Since there are a substantial number of present or previous Provincials, the need for the promotion of vocations was not challenged. Rather they wanted to know the experience in other Provinces in promoting vocations. Questions regarding the alternatives of appointing full time or part-time promoters; one person or a team, concrete means and projects.

- The presence of young Jesuits in the institutions of the Society directed to the youth was considered an important aspect of the promotion of vocations.

- Together with the promotion of vocations and naturally connected with it, was the question regarding the "quality" of the candidates to the Society. The opinion was expressed that within certain limits, "quality" has different connotations according to the country or cultural environment.

- Recommendations to Father General included the integration of the promotion of vocations into the proposed Secretariat for the Youth.

- At the end of the session, the Secretary of the Congregation, Fr. Rotsaert, commented favourably on the efficient and expeditious process pace of the Congregation. If we continue in this way, he said, we may finish our work by March 1st.. His remarks were received with a murmur who some interpreted as a sign of approval while others thought that it was a of wishful thinking...
- The Assistancies were directed to prepare the “terna” of proposed Regional Assistants. Father General indicated that he will make the appointment soon after receiving the proposals. Then they will move to the election of the General (*ad providentiam*) Assistants.

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