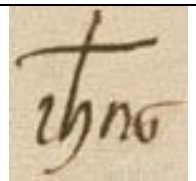


# General Congregation 35



S.J. Press Office, Rome, Italy, Tel. +39-06-68977.289, [infosj@sjcuria.org](mailto:infosj@sjcuria.org)

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## RESIGNATION OF FATHER PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH



During the first formal session of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation, held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, addressed the electors with these words:

*With the blessing of the Holy Father granted the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2005 and after having obtained a positive vote from the Assistants for provident care and from the Provincials of the whole Society on the seriousness of the reasons to resign, I present now to the judgement of the General Congregation my resignation as Superior General of the Society of Jesus.*

*As stated in article 362 of the Complementary Norms: although the Superior General is elected for life and not for any determined time,- he may nonetheless in good conscience and by law resign from his office for a grave reason that would render him permanently unequal to the labours of his post. I feel that the Society of Jesus has the right to be governed and animated by a Jesuit in full capacity of his spiritual and corporal gifts and not by a companion whose energies will continue to diminish because of his age -soon 80 years old- and because of the consequences of that age, especially in the area of health. Even if the Constitutions and the Norms do not mention it, may I add that the election of a new General will give the Society God's grace of renewal, or to express it with the words of Saint Ignatius "una nueva devoción", "nuevas mociones".*

*The discussion and the vote on the resignation will take place at the eve of the four days of “murmurations” to be fixed by the deputation “de statu Societatis”. In a less formal and a more fraternal way the decision of the General Congregation will be communicated to the whole Society. So much for the resignation.*

The 14<sup>th</sup> of January was the day designated by the Steering Committee for the formal consideration and vote on Father General's expressed desire to resign. Father Valentín Menéndez as the chair, invited the electors to ask the four Assistants *ad providentiam* for clarifications regarding the reasons given by Father General for his resignation. At the end of the questions there was a brief period of silent personal prayer before ballots were cast.

After a pause, Father General, who had left during the voting, returned to the aula. Father Valentín Menéndez informed him of the ballot's result that manifested the respectful assent of the Congregation to the reasons which had moved Father General to present his resignation. Then Father Menéndez, on behalf of the Congregation of the Society, thanked Father Kolvenbach for his 25 years at the helm of the Society with the following words:

*Now that General Congregation 35 has accepted your resignation, it is fitting that this same Congregation gathered here today express, in the whole Society's name, its profound gratitude to you for your crucial service, as missioned by the Lord, to the Church and to the Society.*

*First of all, we wish to tell you how edified we are with your manner of submitting your resignation, namely, in that freedom of spirit that frames the Gospel and the Exercises. The example you give us today, of course, is very different from what commonly is found in a world characterized by the clinging to, and fighting for, positions of power and prestige. Our charism and legislation are not good merely because they propose beautiful ideals, but precisely because there are people who know how to embody and live them.*

*We are most especially grateful to you for the way in which you governed the Society following the difficult 1981 Pontifical intervention. Since then, you have known how to navigate the Society with serenity, recognizing how to balance fidelity to the Church with fidelity to our way of proceeding as expressed in our Constitutions and the most recent General Congregations. The words we heard in Cardinal Rodé's homily, which represent the thinking of the Church, clearly express the Holy See's esteem for you and your leadership during these past years.*

*We also appreciate the charism of union that you and your governance have represented for us, especially in light of the Society's ever greater plurality and cultural diversity. While living that freedom of spirit typical of our manner of proceeding and in the midst of cultural diversity, of varied ways of feeling and thinking, and through different historical contexts, you have maintained the union of the Society's corporate body. You have kept that union by being respectful of others, by means of your wise and balanced counsel, and by your inspiring presence in every province.*

*The trust that you have shown through your governance, not only to your curial staff but also to all of the provincials, has created a fraternal and collaborative setting. This broad setting has indeed affected the entire body of the Society and expresses very well one of our ideals, namely, to be, all of us together, companions of Jesus.*

*May our Creator and Lord reward you for your faithful service during nearly a quarter of a century. Additionally, we ask that the Lord continue to bless you in whatever new ministry He grants you for His greater glory.*

*In GC 35's name and that of the whole Society, and with all of our heart, we say: thank you very much, Fr. Kolvenbach! We are proud of you and of your service during these difficult, but exciting years the Lord has seen fit to give us.*

The last words of Father Menéndez were followed by a long and warm applause that all the Delegates, standing, dedicated to Father Kolvenbach.



With the humor which never seems to fail him, Father Kolvenbach thanked the Delegates *for the elegant way you have found to fire me*. Then turning to more serious things, with the sobriety and clarity which we have become accustomed to, he spoke in this way:

*Dear Fathers and Brothers,*

*Today the General Congregation has thought it well to accept my resignation as General Superior of the Society of Jesus. At the end of these nearly twenty-five years of service, I want first of all to thank the Lord, who – to use the words of Saint Ignatius – has truly been propitious to me at Rome, in leading a Society He has called into service for his greater glory.*

*I am also most grateful for the privilege of having met and accompanied so many friends in the Lord, who in their many diverse vocations have always shown themselves to be true servants of the Mission of Christ.*

*No single Jesuit should feel himself excluded from this profound sentiment of recognition. Nonetheless I would like to thank in a particular way those in the General Curia who have helped me day after day over many years in carrying out my responsibilities for the Society, as well as all the Major Superiors spread throughout the entire world.*

*Earlier I was able to express my great thanks to the Holy Father for his apostolic orientations which have allowed the Society to continue our mission “under the banner of the cross and under the Vicar of Christ on earth”.*

*Let us be grateful to the Lord that despite a disconcerting diversity of persons and cultures, of desires and works, our union of minds and hearts has never failed, and, despite an increasing fragility, the Society retains the capacity of apostolic dialogue before the challenges of the modern world in proclaiming the one Good News.*

*On this eve of the election of my successor and of the many decisions that the General Congregation will have to make, I unite myself with the prayer with which Saint Ignatius finished his letters: "May God our Lord in his infinite and supreme goodness be pleased to give us his abundant grace, so that we may know his most holy will and entirely fulfill it."*

And thus, the twenty-four year, four month ministry of focused and single-minded care for and stewardship of the universal Society of Jesus by Father Kolvenbach has come to an end.

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