

CREATIVE FIDELITY IN MISSION

Précis: Father General called the Jesuit provincials and assistants to Loyola for a workshop. Topics included the ignatian charism, long-range planning, and serving the universal mission across provinces. The keynote address printed here suggested changing from “refounding” to “creative fidelity.” This latter means enacting the original ignatian charism in the present world. It means pursuing what is the “greater service” in all planning. Creative fidelity will raise tensions in our lives, particularly between the larger global mission and local apostolic concerns. In the end, fidelity requires discernment in the Spirit.

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First of all, I would like to welcome you to Loyola for this meeting which the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation thought important enough to make obligatory. We must hope that it does not suffer the same fate as the Congregation of Provincials. That creation of General Congregation Thirty-One, after its first meeting at this very place in September, 1990, was suppressed by Decree 23 of the last general congregation! But, as a kind of consolation prize, that decree followed up the suppression of the Congregation of Provincials by mandating that, about every six years from the last congregation, the General convoke “a meeting of all provincials, in order to consider the state, the problems, and the initiatives of the universal society, as well as international and supra-provincial cooperation” (GC34, 486).

This meeting was convoked within the limits of time foreseen by the decree. The expression “all the provincials” has been interpreted in conformity with the practice adopted for participation at general congregations: all major superiors and all provincial conference moderators. The General

Counselors are participants too, as is, by way of exception because his help is indispensable, the Secretary of the Society. No other officials of the Curia, nor the Sectoral Secretaries, are in attendance.

This meeting has neither the tradition, the “formula,” nor the legislative powers of a congregation. It is a unique occasion for all those men who carry the weight of responsibility for the Society to make each other's acquaintance, to strengthen bonds of mutual aid and of apostolic collaboration, to share their experiences and their initiatives. It is especially an opportunity to reinforce interprovincial connections and to launch such efforts anew with a view to greater apostolic effectiveness at the supra-provincial level.

This meeting can take as its task what Decree 21 of the last congregation recommends being done together with provincials and moderators: discern “the greater needs of the universal Church” and establish “global and regional priorities” which are “to be taken into consideration as conferences and provinces establish their own respective priorities” (GC34, 461).

To make the meeting easier and to obviate finding ourselves without a focus, a “coetus praeivus” was constituted. This committee, in close collaboration with the General Curia, prepared an agenda to put at the disposal of the participants and a certain number of documents pertaining to questions we would have to discuss. The agenda was structured to leave room for personal or inter-assistancy meetings and to help us arrive at recommendations which the Society's central government could make its own. For the rest, since this is nothing more than a meeting, the way of proceeding can be questioned and modified without the restrictions and preliminary conditions which are imposed in the case of the various “Congregations”.

Creative Fidelity

It is not at all by chance that this meeting is being held at Loyola. To be sure, it seemed wise to avoid the Eternal City which, overrun by Jubilee Year Pilgrims, would not be the appropriate place to offer effective hospitality to such a gathering. But the choice of Loyola has an altogether positive significance for the Society: it means that this meeting by its return to

origins is in search of a new point of departure, a fidelity to the experience of Ignatius which is at the same time creative.

It is unimportant whether or not we use the currently “in” word “refounding.” That word only means that consecrated life is not called upon to repeat what the founder did, but to do what he would do today, faithful to the Spirit, in responding to the apostolic needs of our time. But in fact, this “in” word is clearly much more than just that; it is an admission of a malaise because something is not working right, a feeling that there is a disconnect between the desire to follow Christ and the way in which the spiritual legacy of the founder is actually lived out. We sense that the work of renewal and adaptation to modern culture is insufficient; that we must be more radical, as much in returning faithfully to our origins as in attending to the challenges of the present moment, and to what all that demands of us in terms of living out, here and now, the experience of our founder Ignatius.

If we want to translate in Ignatian language that passion for God and for God's kingdom which pushes us “courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity, and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world” (*Vita Consecrata*, 37), it would be better to put aside the concept of “refounding,” given the dynamic nature of Ignatian spirituality. Our experience of Ignatius is not that of a founder who builds on stable and enduring underpinnings, but of an animator, an inspirer who sends us out on one of the possible paths toward God. If “refounding” means to give or to restore a foundation to Consecrated Life, then we must recognize that for Ignatius the Society's foundation was not a rule or a doctrine, an organizational chart or an organization, but a source of living water which, in discerning the Spirit, gushes up ceaselessly anew, cooling and revitalizing for a greater service of God and God's kingdom of love.

Thus, as he codified his experience in the Constitutions, Ignatius could not avoid verbs of movement: “we think it necessary that constitutions be

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written to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service on which we have entered" [134]. Our faithfulness is inscribed in the creative experience of Ignatius, which is "a sure path toward God" on which Ignatius wanted us to run [582]; our creativity is founded on our "way of proceeding" which invites each of us to "examine what could be most helpful toward achieving the Society's aim" [803], "so that in everything God our Lord and the Apostolic See may be better served" [612].

If, then, we want to examine ourselves on this creative fidelity (or "refounding"), an initial question arises: Is my leadership of the province or region which the Lord of the Harvest has entrusted to me conditioned by maintenance of apostolic works, by keeping Ours happy, by a context of immobility or of rampant discouragement? Or is it instead "moved with a desire of serving" the Divine Majesty [540] and of "going forward in greater service to God"? [281, 424, 565]. Do we attempt new initiatives with the men whom the Lord gives us, or are we good administrators but without spiritual movement, without troubling spirits (*Sp. Ex.*, 6)? Are we perhaps insensitive to what is being brought to birth in the Church and in the world, and is seeking some initiative, some creative action from us? Without a doubt it can be said, exaggerating a bit the worry St. Ignatius expressed, that one ought to distrust a province which the provincial characterizes as tranquil or serene. It would be better for the province to be stirred up and doing something new for the greater glory of God.

St. Ignatius was not familiar with the expression "creative fidelity," but the apostolic tension it connotes defines the identity of the apostolic body of the Society from its origins until now.

Fidelity to the Society

Fidelity, first of all, to the gift of the Spirit which the Society of Jesus is to the Church in the world. Ignatius was keenly aware of that when he wrote: "The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it can be preserved and increased" [812]. The Society is entrusted to us as major superiors in a way that is precise and well defined.

But we do not direct the Society by personal whim or according to our own inspirations, even our better ones. The obedience which, as those in charge, we can and must demand is conditioned by our fidelity to the gift of the Spirit which the Society is, “relying on God our Lord whom it serves with the aid of his divine grace” [555], desiring only “the service of his Divine and Supreme Majesty” [190].

There are many other pathways to God, many other spiritualities, old and new, in the Church. But if the Lord has called us to be “incorporated into the Society” [59], something much more than being received into some association, fidelity to this apostolic body forbids any sort of double adherence. It urges us to explore the gift of the Spirit and to exploit it accurately. We do this by examining the experience of Ignatius and his first companions, by discerning how to make fruitful today our rich spiritual heritage, nourished incessantly by the Spiritual Exercises, our long, many-faceted apostolic tradition, and our particular way of proceeding which launched and sustains the dynamism of our apostolic religious life. But that in no way means closing ourselves up proudly in a kind of obstinate “restorationism”. It means making fruitful the gift which the Spirit has confided to us for the service of the Church in the world, by means of “all the good works which God our Lord deigns to accomplish through the entire Society for his greater service and praise” [114].

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So while believing deeply in dialogue and partnership, while being thankful for living in a society rich in pluralistic diversity, we must face the facts: we will have nothing to bring to this society or this dialogue if we do not permit ourselves faithfully to imbibe, as it were, the Ignatian charism. Not to repeat it mechanically, but to re-create it here and now at the service of the Church and the world. That is the reason we must insist that the characteristics of this charism are imprinted on all our formation, initial and ongoing, and why we must be vigilant in assuring that our manner of praying and acting, of discerning and governing, reflects the gift that the Spirit entrusts to us for his Church in the world of today.

Fidelity to the Mission

Fidelity to the Society's source of life, which is God [*Cons.*, 134], leads us to pose the question: Why did the Lord wish to create the Society? What is the *raison d'être* to which we must remain faithful? Or, more simply, what is it to be a Jesuit? The Thirty-Second General Congregation felt the need to raise this question, and it responded: "It is to know that one is a sinner, yet called to be a companion of Jesus as Ignatius was: Ignatius, who begged the Blessed Virgin to 'place him with her Son,' and who then saw the Father himself ask Jesus, carrying his Cross, to take this pilgrim into his company" (GC32, 11).

This happy and inspiring reference to the experience of La Storta expresses well what we are called to become. Still, the general congregation is not content with it: rather, it chooses to engage itself in the struggle for faith and justice, making this engagement the essential characteristic of what Jesuits are and do today. Then the congregation found again a word dear to St. Ignatius, whose apostolic experience had given it a new meaning: *mission*. "A Jesuit, therefore, is essentially a man on a mission: a mission which he receives immediately from the Holy Father and from his own religious superiors, but ultimately from Christ himself, the one sent by the Father. It is by being sent that the Jesuit becomes a companion of Jesus" (GC32, 24).

When Ignatius used the word *mission*, he was careful to give it this precise sense. Though today the accent is almost exclusively on to whom one is sent, for Ignatius the primary stress is on the one who sends. In Ignatius' time the word *mission* was not yet used to speak about propagating the faith, preaching the gospel, announcing the Good News. When Ignatius presented himself to Pope Paul III in 1540, he expressed his desire to be sent, his availability to follow to any place the Lord who is sent to announce the Kingdom of God, still today, in "synagogues, villages and towns" (*Sp. Ex.*, 91). The last congregation took up the word *mission* in a determined way, highlighting its three dimensions: our mission and culture, our mission and justice, our mission and interreligious dialogue, and also underlining what we are: servants of the mission of Christ. And in its Decree 26, summarizing the characteristics of our way of proceeding, the

general congregation recalls that our “ideal is an unconditional consecration to mission, free of any worldly interest, and free to serve all men and women” and that “our mission extends to the creation of this same spirit of mission in others” (GC34, 558).

We must recognize that fidelity to the service of Christ's mission puts us, as a missionary body, in a delicate situation, facing difficult demands. First of all, when each of us sets about elaborating an apostolic plan for the province, or planning the future of our works, he naturally takes into account in one way or the other, as he reflects on what has to be done, the present possibilities and the limited available resources. But we are urged by fidelity to the Ignatian charism to make apostolic choices in function of the service we are to render—“the greater service” [*Cons.*, 623] to “aid souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end” [813], to “attain the ultimate end for which they were created [307], with our objective of greater universal good always kept in view” [466].

Next, when we want to learn from Ignatius how to particularize this greater universal good, how to choose concrete means of serving the mission of Christ, we observe that the *Constitutions* look to a horizon which is always open, a perspective always undefined. Ignatius never lets himself get trapped in only one determined work, or fixed in only one precise place. He makes it clear that he prefers this or that concrete form of service; he even sketches a sort of hierarchy where priority is given to the direct service of the Word of God, to help people to a personal encounter with their Lord, Creator and Saviour. But despite these priorities, he does not determine ahead of time the modalities of serving the mission of Christ. That remains a service at large, where fidelity to the Ignatian charism presses us to be continually inventive, incessantly on the move, for there is always more service to pursue.

It would be useful indeed to have a list of concrete forms of serving the mission of Christ: a kind of exhaustive enumeration such as province plans sometimes try to include. But the path Ignatius indicates is the choice of ministries which results simultaneously in a passion for Christ's mission, to be pursued today, and in a liberating indifference with respect to all concrete forms of service so we are able to choose the one which, given the

situation of the Church and the world here and now, is the greater service. If an apostolic plan is not the fruit of this tension, it will not guide a major superior in his choice. To be fruitful, a plan depends much less on numerous Jesuits than on men of genuine quality, human and spiritual. Too often, apostolic plans lack the true “indifference” needed; they try to satisfy everyone, maintaining what they dare not sacrifice in view of a greater good, forgetting to create a space for the free choice of upcoming generations so that they can craft the apostolic service which the future is already signaling. Doubtless that is why some procurators at the time of the congregation last September reported having the impression that major

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superiors did not know where they were going and sought refuge in managing everyday affairs, taking advantage of opportunities which happen to come their way and letting go of those with which they cannot deal.

This impression of certain procurators, this expressed judgment, does not take into account the fact that, in a mission, only the sender knows and marks out the pathway to be followed by the one whom he sends. Fidelity consists in walking at God's pace, day

after day, with enough vision gained from discernment to keep moving forward, and enough flexibility to change paths when the gentle breath of the Spirit leads us where and as it wants. In any case, the Jesuits confided to us by the Lord have a right to be sent on mission. The annual account of conscience to the major superior remains the privileged moment when one's personal mission—not to be identified with work alone—can be integrated into the province's apostolic plan. Since in the end everything depends on the spirit of mission—in the Ignatian sense of the term—which animates the province and each of its members, we will have to ask ourselves, as men given official responsibility, about what must be done in order that the Society clarify and deepen, define and make concrete its fidelity to the experience of Ignatius at La Storta which we have to live here and now in the service of Jesus Christ's mission.

Creativity for the *Magis*

Ignatius would perhaps have been astonished at the expression *creative fidelity*. In his spirituality of *magis*, creativity is inscribed on the very heart of the fidelity to follow the Lord who is always en route. The *Constitutions* themselves—drawn up as the itinerary of progressive incorporation into the apostolic body of the Society—testify to Ignatius' sensitivity to new challenges, new needs, new requests as we meet changing national and international circumstances, shifting ecclesial and cultural situations. Following Ignatius, “every son of the Society will always act and react in a consistently Jesuit and Ignatian way, even in the most unforeseen circumstances” (GC34, 562). This is because in the midst of the equally complex challenges and opportunities of today's world, when the Jesuit discerns God's signs of the times, he discovers an apostolic need for creativity. The last Congregation—probably exaggerating a bit in relation to our lived reality, but with an accurate grasp of Ignatian spirituality—affirmed that

Jesuits are never content with the status quo, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to discover, redefine, and reach out for the *magis*. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed. Indeed, ours is a holy boldness, 'a certain apostolic aggressivity,' typical of our way of proceeding (561).

This is how creative fidelity in the Ignatian sense looks, at least in principle. One or other of us, or perhaps each of us, may have difficulty in recognizing his province in this missionary spirit ever on the lookout for the *magis*. Even so, it will repay us, in order to know better and to discuss among ourselves the spiritual state of the Society, to place in relief some aspects of this creative tension.

Creativity in the Tensions of Life

For if we want our lives to be faithful to the Ignatian charism, we must expose ourselves to a whole series of tensions which Ignatius introduced into consecrated life and which make it fruitful. Contemplation in action, universal availability and the inculturation which is inevitably local, gratuity in mission and goods held for the apostolate, the Spirit which inspires and the Spirit which speaks through the Church, discernment in common and obedience, solidarity with the poorest and education of tomorrow's elite, the desire to have many vocations and the inevitably reduced number of those who respond to the demands of the mission proper to us Jesuits. It would not be hard to add to the list of these tensions which mark our apostolic life disturbingly. It is a life lived in the world and at the heart of humanity, like the life of the Lord's apostles.

Here at Loyola, we can remind ourselves with gratitude that Ignatius, while clear about the need for a gospel radicality expressed in some forms of breaking with the world, was called by the Spirit to inaugurate a consecrated life whose radicality expressed itself in companionship with those who are in the world, in the name of the Lord who "loved them to the end"

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(Jn 13:1). It was a companionship in "the service of God our Lord by helping souls who are His" [*Cons.*, 204], and it was to "embrace all kinds of persons, to serve and help them in the Lord" [*Cons.*, 163]. Ignatius knows that this presence to the world carries risks with it. The tensions inherent in our apostolic consecrated life easily lend themselves to dichotomies, compromises or ambiguities

which distort our mission and render it inoperative. In the spirit of Ignatius, the Society's focus on God cannot be separated from its focus on those who are in the world. It can only have the one if it has the other, too. All its apostolic radicality is expressed in the vigor with which it experiences as creative the tensions inevitably arising between its fidelity to God and its fidelity to those who are in the world. Its visibility cannot be based on a radical breaking with the world; it has to reside rather in a presence. And

that presence has to be living, speaking and acting; it has to expose itself to the anguish and the questioning of men and women in the world; it has to be in solidarity with them in their joys and sufferings, their hopes and their miseries, all in the name of a Lord who loves them to the furthest stretch of a love that is chaste, poor, and obedient.

It is for Him and for them that we bear with all these tensions, which ought usually to render our life and our mission fruitful and creative, but can also paralyze or divide us. That will happen if we do not dare to find nourishment in the questions the world poses and the doubts the people of God experience, and to face those questions and doubts squarely so as to discern what to do and what choices to make. It is up to us to see if, in our provinces and at the interprovincial level, there is space for prayerful discernment and open dialogue, for sharing and exchange, in order to be able together to find our path and to overcome the tensions which are part of our mission. It is up to us as well to see to what extent we ought to make known to those who are in the world what is at stake in our discussions, so that we can proclaim the Good News to them, in season and out of season, or denounce injustice in solidarity with them and for their sakes.

The Tension of Global versus Local

At this meeting of all the major superiors of the Society, one tension ought to be of particular interest to us. At the time of his visit to Georgia last year, John Paul II presented it as the tension which will mark the next millennium. It is the tension between the globalization which is ongoing and the local realities which are at risk. At many levels, from economy to religion, the world is becoming more and more a global village. On the level of information, for example, globalization allows us to find out rapidly what is happening in the world; that generally produces a reaction of worldwide solidarity. On the level of religion, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are becoming almost inevitable. For how could the growing union of our race which is an increasing possibility both from a human and a divine perspective, not be a possibility at the religious level? Thanks to immigration and emigration, tourism and volunteerism, research work and

the analysis of modernity, humanity is on the move. In the face of that, all immobility, all sectarianism, is becoming anachronistic. At the level of politics, countries are discovering themselves to be more and more interdependent; they are forming unions or blocks to face global challenges together. For its part, the Second Vatican Council, nudged by the Spirit, rediscovered the Church as a communion in the Spirit, solicitous for all the churches and open to the Spirit at work in the whole of humanity and filling the entire universe.

While welcoming gratefully this movement toward globalization as a chance for growing brotherhood, John Paul II also highlighted its negative aspects. Globalization risks plunging ahead without respecting cultures, nations, languages or even persons in their due distinctiveness. Especially at the economic level, globalization is judged rather negatively, since a market economy gone global does not function for the benefit of everyone. It looks to its own development, and so it makes the rich richer and the poor still poorer. So globalization itself is proposed as an object of our discernment, with aspects undeniably positive but also dangerously negative.

St. Ignatius' vision was unabashedly global: "our vocation is to travel through the world and to live in any part of it whatsoever" [*Const.*, 304]. Because he wanted to deal with the universal good, which is always the greater good, *mission* for Ignatius could not be anything but the mission of a universal apostolic body, gifted with global apostolic availability. Even when we are responsible for a clearly defined corner of the Lord's vineyard, we are challenged by the Ignatian charism not to close ourselves up in it, not to isolate ourselves from the universal body of the Society. Just the opposite: we will always work from the perspective of a mission which prolongs and broadens the mission of Christ, and so will always be open to embracing the whole world. Open, too, to the many-sided gratuity of the gift God makes of himself to all of humanity, in and through Christ. It is in that spirit that we will have to intensify interprovincial collaboration and supraprovincial cooperation. It would be regrettable if, in this meeting at Loyola, we were pressured to work together only out of unavoidable necessity brought on by the lack of qualified personnel or by the complexity of our institutions. May we reinforce or put in place interprovincial or

supraprovincial structures as the expression of our union of minds and spirits, of the solidarity and cohesiveness of a single universal apostolic body, at the service of the universal Church in the midst of the world.

The Tension of Collaboration between Provinces

There is one tension we must live concretely. We are to think globally, but our activity will be in function of a particular place, of local realities. We cannot choose between the global and the local; we have to live the tension between universal good and particular good. It is up to us, though, whether this tension will be destructive or fruitful for the good of humanity. St. Ignatius did not hesitate to confront the Society with this apostolic tension; he demanded universal availability and at the same time he mandated an apprenticeship in the language and culture of that small plot where the Master of the vineyard has sent his missionary. In the spirit of Ignatius, globalization ought to lead, not to uniformity but to union, to a communion in the Spirit which makes a Pentecost event out of the rich and disconcerting diversity of local Churches, of schools of theology and currents of spirituality, of cultures and languages, of vocations to lay, clerical, and consecrated life.

The temptation exists, as we are very well aware, to entrust this union to a centralizing administration as something imposed or as a substitute for true brotherhood in mission. But our concern for the universal, taking off from the particular for which we are responsible, ought rather to galvanize us to create and develop interprovincial and supraprovincial initiatives which will work to build up union, mutual communication, common vision, and participation in common projects so as to accomplish the common mission the Lord has entrusted to us.

As much as we stay away from a structured federation of provinces, the *Constitutions* open the doors wide, despite appearances, to Conferences of Major Superiors' broadening their apostolic perspectives and their manner of operating. In the coming millennium, it is these conferences which will have to support the tension, among other Ignatian tensions, between a globalization which as it advances must respect due particularity,

and local realities which in defending their rights must avoid individualism, fundamentalism, and other “isms” like them. A new mission awaits us there.

Manifestations of Creativity

The Thirty-Fourth General Congregation asked this meeting to examine the state, the problems, and the initiatives of the universal Society [486]. So I would like finally to indicate in what ways creative fidelity shows itself in the Society as well as in the whole of consecrated life of which the Society is a part.

First of all, we should recognize gratefully what has been done for years—and is still being pursued with great interest—in terms of the return to our sources. The results allow us to open ourselves as Jesuits to the challenges of the future. It is our job to make known those results both within the Society itself and to all those men and women who wish to find inspiration in this “gift of the Spirit” to the Church.

Secondly, we should note the generally positive attitude toward problems connected with vocation recruitment; admission and perseverance; the increasing shakiness of our institutional work; the decline in quality of services rendered or expected; and the growing number of cases of sickness or fatigue, aging or accidents. This positive approach is seen as much in the full integration of those who offer themselves to the mission of the Society, in accord with Ignatius' own wish, as in a more aggressive policy of vocation promotion: this last, accomplished especially through prayer that the Lord of the Harvest send new workers for his mission and also by putting into action the Lord's own invitation to “come and see,” thanks to a determined effort to live our consecrated life authentically, thanks also to a generous openness to what the Spirit says to us through the expectations of the young who are the future. It is this positive approach, too, which shows itself in our desire to concentrate our efforts on the essentials of our own mission, while we encourage men and women who are not members of the Society to participate broadly in Christ's mission.

We ought to keep in mind as well the three creative dimensions of our mission elaborated by the last general congregation as responses to the Holy Father's appeals for specific help from us for the new evangelization. Ours is a mission which integrates closeness to and service of the poor. It is a mission founded on dialogue, not imposing but proposing the good news in constantly new forms of connecting and sharing with those who believe otherwise than we. It is a mission which, through the living processes of inculturation even in one's native land brings in our day the gift of the creating, redeeming love of Christ to a world which thirsts for God even while it walks steadfastly away from God's Good News. Reading the annual reports of major superiors, one sees that the directions taken are well chosen and supported, but that there remains ample room for creativity, for opening ourselves still more radically and more generously in our actions to him who is the true "way which leads men to life" (*Examen Const.*, 101).

Still another sign of creativity is the way the Society welcomed the invitation to live community life, where we come together for mission, in a manner more characteristic of missionaries. Creative fidelity to the Ignatian charism cannot be the business of one isolated Jesuit. It supposes a union of minds and spirits embodied in life and action carried on together as companions of Jesus. And in fact the ex officio letters this year witness to a real desire, on the part of the young but also of the not so young, to share the call of the Lord which unites us and the mission which, through his Spirit, he continues to entrust to us. Even if in the course of this meeting we concentrate on interprovincial and supraprovincial collaboration, it is clear that we want to be able to count on a Society and on companions who live in communities of availability and brotherhood, of solidarity and hospitality, as just one apostolic body. The collaboration we want will remain a dream if we lack the patient effort to get at the underlying problem of a community life still too often infected by the virus of individualism. But in this area too, we have embarked on a creative path toward building com-

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munities which are brotherly and missionary, according to our way of proceeding.

I come finally to the last sign of creative fidelity in the Society and other religious families: the prayerful discovery of discernment to hear what the Spirit is telling us, here and now. The source of the prayer which accompanies and guides this discernment is more and more the word of God, the Scriptures. To say it as Ignatius would: we must contemplate unceasingly the mysteries of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, to know him intimately but also to discover his way of fulfilling the mission received from his Father. We cannot build the Kingdom except in the spirit and manner of acting of the Lord, who has an understanding of what is effective which is totally different from the one we arrive at naturally. The last general congregation confirmed this: "Today, as always, it is deep personal devotion to Jesus, himself the Way, that principally characterizes the Jesuit way of proceeding" (GC34, 539). But this devotion also bears on the way in which the One sent by the Father accomplished his mission. Contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's life places us with him so that, in the face of all the problems which touch our mission—especially, in our days here, those of interprovincial and supraprovincial collaboration—we become capable, through his Spirit, of making the choices Christ made. And of making them, in these days of a new millennium, in creative fidelity to Ignatius, from whom we learned all this.

This, then, is the source of the fidelity and the creativity which we will have to explore and exploit as if anew, inspired by the conversion of Ignatius, for the greater glory of God.