

INTRODUCTION

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The grace of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus

The grace of a general congregation is revealed through the long personal and community search for the Lord. This search begins long before, and during the preparation for the provincial congregation and then during the General Congregation itself; and long afterwards as the many documents produced and decrees emitted are discussed and implemented. This grace, which finds its way into the Church and into today's emerging culture, is both a *gift received from God and a task to be carried out*.

It is a gift of the Holy Spirit where "Our lives and activities must find their vitality in God without whom we can do nothing, in the same way as the branches draw the life-giving sap from the vine. Jesuits involved in a multiplicity of works must form a prayerful body, in which both personal and community prayer have their place. In his promotion of this mystique of service, Ignatius was fully aware of the limits of "this least Society" (Const. 1, 134, 190, 638) that the Lord is visibly leading in his holy service. He drew confidence from the affirmation of Saint Paul (2 Cor 12, 9) that God "will grant sufficient grace and that his power is at its best in our weakness". (De Statu Societatis: Our Ministries. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. Loyola, November 2005).

The grace of the general congregation is also a task which facilitates the implementation of the discernment process: listening, spiritual conversation and mutual exploration in the spirit of the Deliberation of the First Fathers. As Jesuits, we do this on our own and in collaboration with

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so many partners in mission with whom we envisage our future apostolic thrust and work.

As an apostolic body, as the Society of Jesus today, we are invited to purify our motivations and "...to prepare and dispose the soul to remove all inordinate attachments" (SpEx 1). Thus we grow in interior freedom to detect and discern the "signs of the times" and take heed of the Lord's new call.

"In providing you with this information about the constitution of these commissions, [Social Apostolate, Juridical Questions, Laity, Obedience, and Community Life], ... I renew my invitation to *the whole Society to take part in the preparation of the General Congregation*, certainly with prayer, which is the most important means, but also *in the process of discerning, with study and with fraternal sharing about our way of life and our apostolates*. An important part of this preparation will be the Provincial Congregations, which will undoubtedly benefit from knowing that others are discerning and reflecting upon the themes indicated above during this time leading up to the General Congregation." (GC35 Preparatory Commissions. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., 07 July 2006)

This issue of the "Review of Ignatian Spirituality", and others that follow before the next General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in early 2008, seek to deepen the "Composition of Place" of this graceful event. This "Composition of Place" touches upon: our history of salvation as a religious order as we re-read the workings of the Spirit present in the previous thirty-four general congregations; the realities that shape the world in which we live and serve; and the Church's and the Society's reality and mission. Thus, the grace of the 35th general congregation that we are praying for becomes a part of our daily life, and interacts with our community lives and apostolic works. We pray that the contribution in these editions assist us to be ready to receive this grace "...with great and generous spirit offering all our striving" (SpEx 5).

"May the preparations of the 35th. GC be made in the light of the jubilee year which reminds us that the Society, now as in the past, is guided by the sole desire to serve God our Lord, in the trust that His Divine Majesty will want to make use of it. The General Congregation and the Provincial Congregations

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that prepare it have no other aim than to allow us to rediscover, through Ignatius, Francis Xavier and Pierre Favre, the way to become more authentically companions of Jesus, whose identity is intimately linked to their mission (GC 34, 26), in and for the Church of the Lord. To this end, in keeping with n. 693 of the Constitutions, I ask that all “commend earnestly to God our Lord” the successful outcome of the Congregation “for his greater service, praise, and glory.” (Convocation of the 35th GC. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., February 2, 2006).