

INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHORS PRESENT THEMSELVES

“A KIND OF TRIPTYCH”

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND MISSION CG 35

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“We are the Society of Jesus”, the first jesuits had no doubt that the only head of their group was Christ; this name had been confirmed to Ignatius on various occasions in supernatural visions and they had adopted it after serious discernment among all the companions.

Read article, “*We are of the Society of Jesus: Our identity and mission*”.

Francisco José Ruiz Pérez, S.J.

As Jesuits we are required to examine our personal way of appropriating the mission received. We must recover the spiritual vision of our apostolic praxis, whatever form it takes – concrete ministry, apostolic work or service within the Community. This spiritual vision will help us to greater discernment concerning not so much the *what* of our mission, but the *from where* and *why*.

Read article, “*From community life to mission – the way back*”.

INTRODUCTION

Mario de França Miranda, S.J.

Will the emergence of subjectivity, cultural individualism, the dominance of the economic factor and the phenomenon of globalization in present-day culture actually affect *the configuration of the Society* in the years to come? [...] our *mission* must be made concrete in diverse ways, our *communities* must act in the face of the new challenges presented by society, and our consciousness of being Jesuits (*identity*) will consequently continue to be the same in a new historical context...If we have had the courage to introduce the needed changes, then we will be in continuity with the earlier generations.

Read article, ***“A new configuration for the Society of Jesus. The Institution Responding to Sociocultural Change”***.

Urbano Valero, S.J.

Community life, from being thought of as a life in common regulated by multiple disciplines, became a life in common knit together and energised by deep inter-personal relationships on all levels, - human, spiritual, apostolic, - among members of a community sharing a common identity and mission.

Read article, ***Identity, community, mission. Reflections around “a kind of triptych”***.

Simon Decloux, S.J.

To seek an identity other than “companions of Jesus”, to define ourselves in some way in reference to what we could draw, in the usual worldly way; or from the activity which defines our place in today’s (secularised) society, would this not risk relegating to second place the total consecration of our lives to God in response to His call? And is it not natural that our being-together, our belonging to a brotherly community renders each of us visibly what he has chosen to be and remain as a companion of Jesus? Is it not equally natural that commitment to one or other apostolic service gives us in turn our place beside the Lord, who does ceaselessly

INTRODUCTION

present himself to us “in a humble place, beautiful and gracious” (Sp Ex 144)?

Read article, “*Identity, community, mission Their links within the Society of Jesus*”.

Rosa Carbonell, RSCJ

Our identity as religious of the Sacred Heart, union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus, is inseparable from our apostolic mission lived in community: to help the world to know the immense love of this Heart.

Read article, “*The one who lived it, gives witness. Reflections about a change of identity*”.

Samuel Yáñez

The Ignatian layperson meets Christ in the Spiritual Exercises. The layperson’s awareness of the process seems very relevant (...). The Ignatian layperson meets Christ in community. He/she must, therefore belong in some way to a community which goes beyond the individual experience (...) The lay Ignatian lives an apostolic life in community. At times one faces the disjunction between daily lay life as mission, and the commitment to apostolic service above and beyond ordinary daily life.

Read article, “*Discipleship, in Community, for Mission*”.

Paul Oberholzer S.J.

Not only does our identity differ from that of our first fathers, and the first Jesuits – there is also a difference between the identity fixed in legal and founding sources, and the identity perceived through the social and cultural environment. All these aspects made up and still form our identity, a dynamic component to which we refer ceaselessly with a new and open spirit, aware that the Society of Jesus continues to be historic (geschichtlich – developing continuously through time). Read article, “*Identity, Mission and Community: some historical reflections*”.

INTRODUCTION

Some extracts from the decrees of GC35

The largest part of our work was actually devoted to issues concerning our identity, our religious life and our mission. The GC 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 being and proceeding. (GC35, D 1, 2).

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 [...]. 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. (GC35, D.2, 3).

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 (*Identity*) if we are united by the love of Christ our Lord, (*Community*) by personal bonds like those that linked Francis Xavier and Ignatius across the seas, and (*Mission*) by the obedience that sends each one of us in mission to any part of this world, (GC35, D3, 17).

The community is also a privileged place for the practice of apostolic discernment, whether through formally structured communal discernment or through informal conversation that has the more effective pursuit of the mission as its goal. Such discernment will help us not only accept our personal missions but also rejoice in and support the missions received by our brothers. In this way, our common mission is strengthened and the union of minds and hearts confirmed and deepened. (GC35, D.4. 28)