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FATHER GENERAL

After the meeting of the Roman Jesuits with Pope Francis on Jan. 3, 2014, we asked Fr. General his impressions. Here is his response.

On the third of January in the Church of the Gesù there was a Mass of thanksgiving for the canonization of Pierre Favre, one of the first companions of Ignatius and a co-founder of the Society of Jesus. Does this mean that the Society intends to continue promoting the canonization of Jesuits in order to increase the already large list of Jesuit saints?

This question seems to be unaware that in practically all Religious Orders there are one or two persons well qualified to make sure that the necessary requirements are fulfilled for the canonization of any individual who can contribute to the life of the Church with the inspiration of his or her own life. These persons, called "Postulators," study and prepare the process not only of other members of the same Religious family, but at times also take on the responsibility of lay persons or even other religious and ecclesiastics whenever their collaboration is requested. Naturally the Postulators work according to the principles or policies of their own Order. We believe that the fundamental good is the good of the whole Church and we take very seriously the fact that an individual enjoys popular devotion when we consider that person a candidate for canonization. If there exists a "popular devotion," we collaborate in the preparation so that it can be serious and well founded. Therefore, it can be said that we in no way seek to add to our list of saints in order to increase our prestige. That would be contrary to the good of the Church and for that reason unworthy of our vocation.

You wrote a brief letter to the Society after the Mass of the Feast of St. Ignatius with your impressions on the participation of Pope Francis who presided. What would you emphasize about his participation on this occasion?

I must confess that I very much liked the observation that Cardinal Vallini made in the sacristy before the celebration of the Mass. He said that this celebration was following paths of "extreme simplification." Pope Francis entered the church on foot as we priests are used to doing - he did not carry with him the crosier, the symbol of authority and of pastoral ministry, etc. The same thing happened on the feast of St. Ignatius in July. My interpretation is that among Jesuits he wanted to manifest that the direction comes from St. Ignatius and that he himself came as a "brother among brothers" to hear the word of God and to let himself be guided by it. In fact the majority of the Jesuits present (some 346) recognized themselves in the words of the homily and felt themselves addressed by Pope Francis in the intimacy of their hearts.

What were the central points in the homily for you Jesuits?

I cannot pretend to speak in the name of all those who heard the homily. For me there are four points the Pope touched on that invite us to pray over and plunge the depths. (1) First of all the necessity to center oneself on Christ, so essential to St. Ignatius and which explains why we carry the name of Jesus. To center oneself on Jesus in order to have his feelings, his heart - in order to empty oneself of self. (2) The Pope has defined the Jesuit as someone "restless," difficult to satisfy - even more, who will never think it is enough, that all has been accomplished, that the thought is closed. The Pope defined Jesuits as persons with an "incomplete thought," "always open," in such a way that only in the consciousness of the incomplete can we find peace. (3) The third point is an extension of the second in terms of being "men of great desires," something that touches profoundly both St. Ignatius and St. Peter Favre. Upon great desires will depend audacity, bravery, and the capacity to take great risks for the good of people and of the Church. We will not always end up on our feet, but without risk there is no life, or as the Pope says, without desires one goes nowhere. (4) The fourth point is already a theme of Pope Francis, but it stands out

in the context of this Mass with us. It deals with evangelization with kindness, fraternity, and love.

As can easily be seen, we stand before important challenges in which we must harmonize tension with interior peace, great desires with a manner that is fraternal and kindly in presenting the gospel. The Jesuit according to Pope Francis is a man in tension, conscious of being incomplete before Jesus and God, and as such longing for "something more." This tension, however, is interior and makes him always a "pilgrim for more," a man of desires difficult to satisfy. At the same time it makes him conscious of his interior lacunae, of his imperfection and his sin, of never being able to consider himself better than others, and for that reason he never sees himself as the perfect and demanding lover, but rather as being loved and forgiven "with the other."

Can you tell us something about how all this can be of influence in the celebration of the second Centenary of the restoration of the Society?

I can say with all truth that this is the style of the celebration. We want it to be a year of study and reflection. All the crises of history enclose a hidden wisdom that needs to be fathomed. For us, Jesuits, this is the commemoration of our greatest crisis. It is, therefore, important that we should learn from the events themselves, that we should discover the good and the bad in our behavior in order to revive those great desires the Pope spoke of and continue the work of Evangelization, refining our brotherhood and deepening our love.

FROM THE CURIA

With Pope Francis for Saint Peter Faber. Pope Francis celebrated Mass on Friday 3rd January in the mother church of the Society of Jesus, the church of the Gesù, in Rome, to mark the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus and to give thanks for the enrollment of the first Jesuit to be ordained a priest, Fr Peter Faber SJ, in the list of the saints. About 350 Jesuits were present. In his homily, Pope Francis spoke of the particular way in which the Jesuit Order is marked - and desires to be signed - by the name of Jesus: "To march," he said, "beneath the standard of His Cross." Pope Francis went on to explain that this means sharing in and having Christ's very own sentiments. "It means," he said, "to think like Him, to love like Him, to see [things the way He sees them], to walk like Him - it means doing what He did, and with the same sentiments He had, with the sentiments of His heart." Pope Francis went on to discuss the great example of St Peter Faber, whose sainthood the Holy Father officially recognized and proclaimed on December 17th of last year. "Under the guidance of St. Ignatius," explained Pope Francis, "[the man who would become St Peter Faber, SJ] learned to combine his restless - but also sweet and even - exquisite sensitivity, with the ability to make decisions: he was a man of great desires, he recognized his desires and he owned them. Indeed, for Faber, it is precisely in the moment in which difficult things are proposed, that the true spirit that moves to action manifests itself." Pope Francis added, "an authentic faith always implies a deep desire to change the world."

APPOINTMENTS

Father General has appointed:

- **Father Rudolf Uher** Provincial of the Slovakia Province (SVK). Father Uher, at present Vice-Rector of the Most Saint Saviour College of Bratislava, was born in 1968, entered the Society of Jesus in 1990 and was ordained a priest in 1995.

- **Father José Frazão Correia** Provincial of the Portuguese Province (POR). Father Frazão Correia, at present Rector of the *Comunidade Pedro Arrupe* of Braga, was born in 1970, entered the Society of Jesus in 1995 and was ordained a priest in 2004.

- **Father Osvaldo Chirveches** Provincial of the Province of Bolivia (BOL). Father Chirveches, at present Superior and Master of Novices at Oruro, was born in 1971, entered the Society of Jesus in 1990 and was ordained a priest in 2000.

FROM THE PROVINCES

SOUTH SUDAN: The Situation of Jesuits in the Country

Father Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, Provincial of the Jesuit Province in Eastern Africa (AOR), writes about the war in South Sudan and the situation of Jesuits working there. Here are some excerpts. "From the reports that I have received, our companions in South Sudan are well and safe, albeit some have not been able to return after they had travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, for the Province Assembly in December 2013. Let us continue to pray for South Sudan and our companions in Juba, Rumbek and Wau. As you know from news reports, there is much anxiety and uncertainty fuelled by a panoply of rumours and speculations. The peace talks that have recently opened in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) offer a sign of hope, but this event seems to have little or no bearing on the situation on the ground. I have been in contact with our companions in South Sudan." After listing the Jesuits present in the country, Father Provincial continues: "Considering the present situation, I have suspended travel to South Sudan by AOR companions until further notice, that is, until there is clarity and relative stability in the troubled areas. Besides the challenge of insecurity, the logistics of domestic travel have become quite complicated. The companions who are in the country will remain in their respective communities and continue with their various ministries and apostolates as much as the situation allows; they will send out regular updates on the evolving situation. Also, I have requested the companions in the country to make contingency plans to prepare for any eventualities. This would include: adequate supply of food, water and fuel; personal security and security of our assets, as needed; communication (phone and internet); and evacuation, should this become necessary. Brothers, these are difficult and uncertain times in South Sudan... As a Province, we will do all that we can to continue to bear witness to the love, reconciliation, justice and peace of the risen Christ by our mission and ministry in South Sudan... In particular, we call on the international community not to abandon South Sudan; to ensure that adequate provision is made for the security and protection of innocent civilians, especially women and children; that there is sufficient humanitarian assistance for refugees and internally displaced people; and that appropriate pressure be exerted on the principals to the conflict to cease hostilities and resolve their differences through dialogue and peaceful political means."

SYRIA: Working for Peace

Despite the war that lacerates Syria for many years now, the Jesuits in Homs are working for peace, dialogue and solidarity. Fr. Ghassan Sahoui, director of the Educational Centre in Nouzha, addressed these concerns to the Vatican Radio. "We Jesuits, together with the Sisters and about 100 collaborators, work in an educational centre for humanitarian aid. We have about 700 children of 6 to 14 years of age plus a Centre for the handicapped. We welcome everybody without any difference of religion. There are Christians, Muslims, Sunnis, Alawites. We live and feel this solidarity between us. We do not want the war any more: we all try to live and help each other even if there is war and sadness. We feel a certain joy in living together, in fighting together against enmity and hate, which unfortunately in Syria is growing increasingly among all groups. This Centre is an example that we offer as a "bridge": we work together for humanity, for children and families. They can meet together here: this Centre serves as a true bridge between Sunnis and Alawites. We Christians, like all other people of good will, we want only peace. Here we try to put aside the political dialogue and political topics and try to live and help people on the ground, concretely. Stop to weapons, to blood, because we cannot live like this. Still many deaths, many more victims: Enough! Enough!"

VATICAN: Pope Francis named Person of the Year

Pope Francis has been named Person of the Year by *Time* magazine, after just nine months in office. He is the third pope to have been honoured in this way: Popes John XXIII and John Paul II were also named Person of the Year by *Time*, in 1962 and 1994 respectively. According to *Time's* managing editor, Nancy Gibbs, since his election in March of this year, Pope Francis had pulled "the papacy out of the palace and into the streets ... Rarely has a new player on the world stage captured so much attention so quickly - young and old, faithful and cynical." *Time* describes Pope Francis as a "septuagenarian superstar" who "makes masterly use of 21st century tools to perform his 1st century office". Vatican spokesman Fr Federico Lombardi SJ said it was "a positive sign" that one of the international media's most prestigious recognitions had been given to "a person who proclaims ... spiritual, religious and moral values and speaks out forcefully in favour of peace and greater justice. "The Holy Father is not looking to become famous or to receive honours, but if the choice of Person of Year helps spread the message of the Gospel - a message of God's love for everyone - he will certainly be happy about that."

1814-2014 RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOCIETY

The *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* (ARSI) of the General Curia in Rome has opened a special website for 2014. It offers historical texts on the Suppression and Restoration of the Society. Please visit:

<http://www.sjweb.info/arsi/ARSI-1814/1814.cfm>. The website of ARSI: <http://www.sjweb.info/arsi/>

MADAGASCAR: Meeting of the Bicentenary

As part of its commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Restoration of the Society of Jesus, the Province of Madagascar organized a colloquium on the 17th and 18th of October, at the St Michel's College of Amparibe-Antananarivo. Its theme was: to revisit the history of the Jesuits in Madagascar, in order to give new dynamism to our spiritual life and to our missionary spirit. Many dignitaries, collaborators and other friends of the Jesuits came from all over the country to participate. After a word of welcome by the Rector of the College, Fr. Roger Marcel Randrianimalala, SJ, Fr. Provincial, Pierre André Ranaivoarson, SJ explained why this colloquium was held. The guests then had the opportunity to visit the exhibition in which the history of Jesuit presence in Madagascar and their works was shown. Two conferences were given in the afternoon. The first one dealt with the suppression of the Society in the world and in France. It was presented by Fr. Provincial. The next conference was given by Fr. Cyrille Rasolo SJ, on the Jesuits in Madagascar before the martyrdom of Jacques Berthieu (1896). During the second day, Fr. Prospère Ratovomanarivo SJ, Rector of our college in Fianarantsoa spoke about the Jesuit presence in Madagascar before Vatican II, that is, during the period from 1896 to 1965. The second conference of the day, by Fr. Fulgence Ratsimbazafy, SJ, Rector of the scholasticate in Antananarivo, considered the Jesuits in Madagascar in the light of the Second Vatican Council. The colloquium ended with the hymn on the Bicentenary of the restoration of the Society, composed by Fr. Hilarion Rakotoarison, SJ, and sung by the choir *Canto Magis* of the scholasticate of Tsaramasoandro.

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