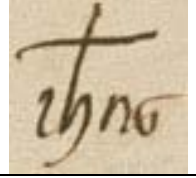


General Congregation 35



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Rome, January 7 2008, n. 3

THE OPENING OF THE 35 GENERAL CONGREGATION



In a solemn, and carefully prepared two hour ceremony in the Gesú, the mother church of the Society, the General Congregation took its first step.

Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the *Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, presided at the Eucharistic celebration. Father General, his counselors and the Secretary of the Society, concelebrated in the sanctuary. Cardinals Roberto Tucci, Thomas Spidlik and Urbano Navarrete, the three Jesuit Cardinals who reside in Rome were at the right side of the altar. The church was filled with members of the Congregation, Jesuits serving in Rome as well as members of religious congregations of Ignatian spirituality and the laity.

In his homily the Cardinal dedicated a “heartfelt gratitude” to Father Kolvenbach *for his fidelity, his wisdom, his righteousness and his example of humility and poverty*. In the rest of the homily, the Cardinal, using the Constitutions and the Spiritual Exercises, highlighted the core elements of Ignatian spirituality: its apostolic charism, obedience to the Holy Father and the *sentire cum ecclesia*. The Cardinal expressed sorrow and anxiety because in his estimation the *sentire cum ecclesia* is diminishing among some members of religious families.

Addressing himself directly to the Jesuits, the Cardinal mentioned “the many institutes of Consecrated Life who, following an Ignatian spirituality, pay attention to your choices: there are many future priests in your Colleges and Universities...There are

many people from both within and outside the Church who frequent your centers of learning seeking a response to the challenges which science, technology and globalization pose to humanity, with the hope of receiving a formation which will make it possible for them to construct a world of truth and freedom, of justice and peace...”

At the end of the Mass, accompanied by Father General, the Cardinal moved to the altar of Saint Ignatius. Above the altar is the magnificent statue of St. Ignatius hidden by the recently restored gloriously painted canvas of Brother Pozzo. The canvas, conceived with a touch of the theatrical taste of the time, was intended to hide this famous statue and reveal it only on special occasions. On this occasion, the canvas was lowered to reveal the statue. In front of the altar, Father General lit a lamp which will burn during the General Congregation as a symbol of the continuous prayer of the Society throughout the world.

At 15.00 on Monday afternoon the Assistancies met for a preparatory meeting; the formal opening of the Congregation took place 16.30.

The Italian communication media are following the development of the Congregation with great interest. Other parts of Europe will also receive similar information.

These are the first steps of the Congregation which are being followed with prayerful interest by many persons in and outside the Society of Jesus.

ELECTIONS



The official opening of the Congregation took place, under the presidency of Father General, at 16:30 January 7. According to the Formula of the Congregation the delegates must decide by a non-secret majority vote, whether the Congregation should be considered plenary and legitimate. The vote was positive and Father General moved to the next item: vote for the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary who will conduct the business of the Congregation until the election of the new Father General:

1) Results of the election, Father Luis Orlando Torres (Puerto Rico) is the Secretary and Father Ignacio Echarte (Loyola) is the Assistant.

2) As established by the Formula, a commission is formed to determine if anyone has aspired to the office of General; it is composed of the oldest members in religion from the ten Assistancies. The members are: Frs. Augustin Karekezi (Africa), Ramon Alaix (Southern Latin America), Jorge Ambert (Northern Latin America), Jose Changanacherry (Southern Asia), Adolfo Nicolás (East Asia and Oceania), Wendelin Köster (Central Europe), Elías Royón (Southern Europe), Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (Western Europe), Adam Zak (East Europe), and Vincent Cooke (United States of America).

3) The members of the committee charge with gathering information and submitting a report on the “lights and shadows” in the Society (*De statu Societatis*) are: Frs. E. Goussikindey (Africa), A. Palacio (Southern Latin America), J. Morales (Northern Latin America), M. Devadoss (Southern Asia), B. Nebres (Asia and Oceania), S. Dartmann (Central Europe), E. Royón (Southern Europe), M. Rotsaert (Western Europe), A. Zak (Eastern Europe), and B. Schaeffer (United States of America).

NOTE about previous communications:

Report n. 1 of January 4 2008: Prayer at the lighting of the lamp.

Report n. 2 of January 7 2008: Homily of Card. Rodé.

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