

## Decree 7 of General Congregation 34 of the Society of Jesus

### Introduction

**194** 1. The “Proposals” of the Loyola Symposium<sup>1</sup> together with a substantial number of postulantes from provinces have manifested the Society’s desire to probe more deeply into the meaning and import of statements of recent general congregations which describe the vocation and mission of the brother within the body of the Society.<sup>2</sup>

**195** Responding to this desire, General Congregation 34 wishes to depict the role of the brother in a way that is more in accord with present reality, but always consistent with the description of the identity of a Jesuit given by Decree 2 of GC 32. In this way we intend to join fidelity to our origins with a renewal appropriate to the present moment.<sup>3</sup>

### Identity

**196** 2. The Jesuit brother is a man who has accepted the call of the Father to be a “companion of Jesus.” By his vows he consecrates his life freely to help the mission common to the apostolic, religious, and priestly body of the Society: “the service of the faith of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”<sup>4</sup>

**197** 3. From the very beginning of his conversion, Ignatius felt called to “help others,” to give himself entirely to the service of “the Eternal King and Lord of all.”<sup>5</sup> The group of companions, “friends in the Lord,” were to find in their discernment how they were to live their apostolic vocation in the Church: by founding a religious order.

**198** At that decisive moment, the apostolic experience of Ignatius and his companions was already linked to the exercise of priestly ministry. Their experience was articulated in the Formula of the Institute, which enumerates the ministries they would perform to fulfill the specific purpose of the new order: “to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his Spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth.”<sup>6</sup>

**199** But the mobility which apostolic universality demanded, the multiplicity of pastoral ministries, and especially the need for help in carrying out the mission led Ignatius to accept into the body of the Society a diversity of members, priests and brothers, all of whom would share the same vocation and contribute to the one mission.

**200** 4. From its beginnings the Society has conceived of itself as a universal “body.” This Pauline metaphor (cf. 1 Cor. 12, 12ff.), much loved by St. Ignatius and used frequently in the Constitutions to refer to the entire Society, expresses his idea of our vocation as both one and diverse.

**201** All members of the Society, in a variety of social and cultural situations, have been graced with the same call to follow Jesus poor and humble. We have all heard the same invitation to serve him in his Church; we have all been sent on the same mission.

**202** At the same time, Ignatius, “rejecting all egalitarianism and all uniformity . . . believed deeply in the diversity of vocations, which is based on the fact that God calls each one by name. It is only in this spirit of openness and acceptance that the various gifts which together make up the Society can blossom.”<sup>7</sup> For this reason Ignatius considered grades in the Society as different ways of being incorporated into the one body and fulfilling one and the same mission, without implying in any way differences of perfection or merit in the divine service.<sup>8</sup> So “the apostolic body of the Society is modeled, like that of the apostles, on union in diversity . . . *a diversity united by the bond of charity.*”<sup>9</sup>

**203** 5. Recent general congregations, in affirming the unity of vocation in the Society, have reminded us of the need to examine our attitudes so that diversity is not an obstacle to being truly “united, heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). This congregation repeats that call to make the integration of all Jesuits into the one body of the Society more complete and more effective everywhere. We must exert ourselves to discover the ways in which our communities and our apostolic activities, the places we live and work as priests and brothers, can express simply and transparently the oneness of vocation and mission in the Society.

**204** 6. Brothers, in the same way as priests, are integrated into the Society by reason of the one common call of the Lord to follow him in living out the evangelical radicality of religious life. But a vocation to religious life is distinct from a vocation to priesthood. “In some ways the religious brother embodies religious life in its essence, and so is able to illustrate that life with particular clarity.”<sup>10</sup>

**205** Therefore, the first and most important contribution of a brother is the gift of his own self, offered freely in service to the Lord.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, through a life that is manifestly religious, he offers a prophetic witness, in the Church and in the Society, to the world of today.

## **Mission**

**206** 7. The brother lives his religious vocation as one “sent.” He is essentially a man with a mission which he receives ultimately from Christ himself, through his superiors.<sup>12</sup> He carries out this mission as a member of an apostolic body completely dedicated “with God’s grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the member’s own souls, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid towards the salvation and perfection of the souls of others.”<sup>13</sup>

**207** As members of the same body, brothers share in and contribute to the one apostolic vocation through the personal call of the Spirit, and enrich the mission of the Society by their participation in what St. Paul called “the priestly service of the Gospel of God” (Rom. 15:16).

**208** The specific missions which brothers can be given include many of the functions and ministries which the Formula of the Institute enumerates as proper to the Society.

**209** These activities carried out by the first companions continue to inspire the Society today as well. GC 31 already affirmed that the apostolic activity of brothers is defined by those same principles which define the apostolate of the whole Society: attention to the greater service of God and the universal good.<sup>14</sup>

**210** Today the Society describes our Jesuit identity in terms of the need “to engage, under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time: the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes.”<sup>15</sup> Brothers, then, are intimately involved in every apostolic task of the Society through which this mission is carried out; they contribute to every kind of material and technical work at the service of the apostolate and of the body of the Society, and to the explicit proclamation of Jesus through spiritual help and conversation, the Spiritual Exercises, catechesis and teaching. They make themselves available to be sent to those who experience discrimination, to those deprived of dignity, to those without voice or power, to those searching for the meaning of their existence, to those whose faith is failing, to those who want to be told the Good News of Jesus, as well as to the communities and works which need their help in order to carry out the mission of the Society.

**211** 8. The rich history of brother saints and blessed and the multiplicity of tasks and ministries in which brothers have been and are engaged throughout the world clearly show the variety and complementarity which characterize the apostolic mission of the brother in the Society.

**212** It is appropriate that, along with the figure of brothers like Alphonsus Rodriguez and Francisco Garate, who achieved sanctity in domestic tasks, we make known the lives of others like James Kisai, Dominic Collins, and Nicholas Owen, who labored with dedication and generosity in the external ministries of the Society even to the surrender of their very lives. This will contribute to a more comprehensive image of the brother’s vocation and can attract new vocations.

## **Communion**

**213** 9. There have been significant advances since GC 31 in the integration and participation of brothers in the life and apostolic mission of the Society. Their formation has improved, they have been given responsibilities in important works and apostolic activities, they have been appointed to positions such as community and province consultors. Based on the positive results of these experiences, GC 34 encourages the whole Society to continue to move in the same direction: it is the best way to express the unity of vocation and mission in the body of the Society.

**214** 10. In some places the full realization of this integration still meets with resistance. Attitudes persist among us which call for conversion, and there is need for a greater esteem and appreciation of the brother’s vocation; attitudes and sociocultural prejudices alien to the Gospel must not color mutual relations within the Society.

**215** 11. If everyone—priests, brothers, and scholastics—shares in all aspects of community life, including faith, domestic tasks, relaxation, prayer, apostolic discernment, the Eucharist, and the Spiritual Exercises, we will truly become “friends in the Lord.” This sharing of life will help to build up communities of shared responsibility in our common following of Jesus, and complementarity in the one mission. To make this sharing a reality among us, we need human and spiritual maturity and a better formation in interpersonal communication.

**216** 12. Since the term “temporal coadjutor” is no longer in common use among us, GC 34 directs that in the future, in our official or other texts, only the term “brother” or “Jesuit brother” should be used, and not the term “temporal coadjutor.”

**217** 13. The congregation asks Father General, if he judges it helpful, to set up an office (secretariat) or appoint a priest or brother (counselor) to be in charge of all matters related to brothers, for a more effective implementation of what is prescribed in this decree and in those of previous general congregations.

## **Formation**

**218** 14. A reduced number of vocations ought not to result in lowered standards for admission to the novitiate. Those admitted to be brothers must be men of faith, committed to service, sufficiently mature, suited to life in community, and capable of being integrated into the body and mission of the Society.

**219** Where it is deemed necessary, prenovitiate programs are to be established which can help candidates achieve the level necessary to enter the novitiate.

**220** 15. GC 34 believes it may be helpful that provinces sometimes admit candidates to the grade of *Indifferent* so that, in the course of the novitiate, they can better discern their vocation to priesthood or brotherhood.

**221** 16. Those responsible for the formation of brothers should help them to focus their deepest desires, and to fix firmly in their hearts an appreciation of their vocation, a will to serve, and an enthusiasm for the mission of the Society.

**222** 17. Well-structured formation programs are to be established for Jesuit brothers, in order to prepare them adequately for life, service, and social integration within the Society. Such programs are to include the human, communitarian, spiritual, theological, pastoral, and professional dimensions. Some of those with the requisite qualities are to be prepared to work as province vocation promoters and *formatores*. When possible, for the sake of greater integration, brothers in formation are to live in the same communities as scholastics. Provincials are to follow the development of formation programs closely, applying these norms with suitable flexibility.

**223** 18. Where a single province cannot manage such a program either because of a lack of resources or a reduced number of brothers, interprovincial or even interassistancy collaboration is recommended.

**224** 19. Brothers must have the opportunity to learn a foreign language, in accord with the recommendations of this general congregation found in the decree “Interprovincial and Supraprovincial Cooperation.”<sup>16</sup> This will enable better communication with companions from other regions and allow greater availability for certain international missions.

**225** 20. To be effective in mission, all Jesuits need to be well informed in all that pertains to their apostolic work; they also need to be supported in their faith life. Consequently, formed brothers are encouraged to attend programs of ongoing formation in spiritual and psychological renewal and in pastoral and professional development.

## Conclusion

**226** 21. GC 34 has introduced important changes in our law to achieve more effectively the integration and participation of brothers in the common vocation and mission of the Society. Among these changes, we note the following:

- a normative formulation of one specific vocation and mission: NC 6, ¶1, 1¼-3¼;
- eliminating the title “temporal coadjutor” in everyday language and in future official documents: NC 326, ¶4;
- special preparation for entrance into the novitiate, when this is necessary: NC 25, ¶2a;
- ordinarily, novitiate in common with scholastics: NC 43, ¶1;
- common formation in the novitiate for those aspects of our vocation which are common; separate formation for those which are distinct: NC 48, ¶¶2f.;
- abolishing the rule that forbids additional education after entrance into the Society, and new rules about studies: Examen [117]; NC 81, ¶3; 83, ¶3; 98; 243, ¶2f.;
- modification of those passages in the Examen and the *Constitutions* that refer to tertianship only for scholastics: Examen [119], *Const.* [514, 516];
- encouraging communities that include priests, brothers, and scholastics in order to promote fraternal union and union in the apostolic mission: NC 326, ¶¶3, 4c;
- granting passive voice for election as electors in a general congregation: GC 34, Decree 23, A. n. 2; this will be included in the revision of the Formulas for General and Province Congregations;

- abolishing the limitation on the number of brothers with final vows who can take part in a province congregation: implicitly in GC 34, D 23, D, n. 4; this will be included in the revision of the Formula for a Province Congregation.

227 22. At the same time we wish to recall that if true *communio* is to be fostered among all members of the Society, the first and most necessary requirement is an attitude of mind and heart which esteems and welcomes each Jesuit as a brother and friend in the Lord: “What helps most . . . towards this end must be, more than any exterior constitution, the interior law of love and charity which the Holy Spirit writes and engraves in our hearts.”<sup>17</sup>

- 
1. 12-24 June 1994; cf. AR 21 (1994): pp. 54-59. [Return to text](#)
  2. GC 32, D 7; GC 32, D 8; GC 33, D 1, nn. 72-76. [Return to text](#)
  3. Cf. Vatican Council II, *Perfectæ Caritatis*, n. 2; Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and Congregation for Bishops, *Mutuæ Relationes*, n. 11, AAS 70 (1978): p. 480. [Return to text](#)
  4. GC 32, D 4, n. 2. [Return to text](#)
  5. Cf. *SpEx* [95]. [Return to text](#)
  6. *Formula* [3]. [Return to text](#)
  7. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Address to the First Congregation of Provincials, AR 20 [1990]: p. 486. [Return to text](#)
  8. Cf. *Examen* [13]. [Return to text](#)
  9. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Vocation and Mission of the Jesuit Brother,” Loyola Symposium, *C/S*, n. 78 (1995), p. 12, citing *Const.* [624]. [Return to text](#)
  10. *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 3. [Return to text](#)
  11. Cf. Pedro Arrupe, “Contribution of Jesuit Brothers to the Apostolic Community of the Society,” AR 27 (1978): p. 381. [Return to text](#)
  12. Cf. GC 32, D 2, n. 14. [Return to text](#)
  13. *Examen* [3]. [Return to text](#)
  14. Cf. GC 31, D 7, n. 2. [Return to text](#)
  15. GC 32, D 2, n. 2. [Return to text](#)
  16. GC 34, D 21, n. 10. [Return to text](#)
  17. *Const.* [134]. [Return to text](#)
-