



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Fidelity in the Church—Then and Now

GERALD M. FAGIN, S.J.

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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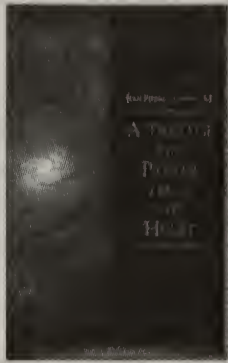
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FIDELITY IN THE CHURCH—THEN
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31/3 · MAY 1999



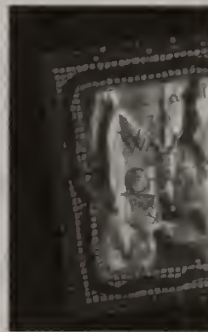
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Of all things . . .

Do you know which states in this country can boast the greatest number of Jesuits? And the ones that must content themselves with the least? Given that “our vocation is the travel to various lands” and given that every year one fifth of the American population moves, here are the numbers as quoted from the 1990 U.S. census and the most recent residency statistics of U.S. Jesuits. The ten states with the greatest density of Jesuits (in the numerical sense only, of course) are (1) California with 478, (2) New York with 441, (3) Massachusetts with 361, (4) Missouri with 201, (5) Washington with 179, (6) Illinois with 168, (7) Pennsylvania with 130, (8) Michigan with 127, (9) Ohio with 121, and (10) District of Columbia with 112. Though the last is not a state, it just beats out Wisconsin’s 111. The states with the lowest population of Jesuits are Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, New Hampshire, and South Carolina (with two Jesuits each), Delaware, Nevada, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Vermont (with one each), and, with nary a Jesuit within their borders, Michigan and Rhode Island. Do you know (or do you even want to know?) the place with the highest per capita number of Jesuits? Make a guess and then look at the end of these remarks for the answer.

To turn from the numerical present to the historical past, I spent two weeks recently in the Jesuit archives in Rome doing research for a chapter of a book on the generalate of Fr. Everard Mercurian, the fourth general (1573–80) of the Society of Jesus. My work centered on the general congregation, the third in our history, that elected him. Some of the material I found was central to the subject, some peripheral, some edifying, some sobering, some amusing. But for those who long for the good old early days of the Society, when our Jesuit schools were models of piety and when fervor reigned among Ours, three examples of *postulata* that came to that general congregation will at least give them pause. As to the schools, the Province of Lombardy, for instance, asked that a new responsibility be conferred upon the provincial in addition to those that were currently his. Henceforth, he should also oversee the music used in our colleges, and if he judged it unseemly—if not only the words but the music itself was scandalous—he was to order it removed from the school. As for the Jesuits themselves, remember that Ignatius had died only seventeen years before this general congregation, but the Province of Aragon was asking “that there be prisons in the Society into which delinquent Jesuits be thrown and in which in accord with the nature of their crimes they can, as opportune, at some length be made to suffer.” On the other hand, the Province of Naples requested that, while in some provinces severity existed and in others leniency, “the way of acting among Ours be uniformly kind and gentle in spirit so that prisons and shackles and other things like that would be far removed from the Society, granted that when there is need for it, Jesuits can for a time be confined to their rooms just as if they were in jail.” *O tempora! O mores!*

But the times and customs of the past also can and often do produce extraordinary men and works. Two recent books illustrate that point. The first is *José de Acosta (1540–1600): His Life and Thought* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999) by Claudio Burgaleta, S.J., of the New York Province. The introduction to the book begins, “José de Acosta (1540–1600) was one of the most renowned Spanish Jesuits of his time; he was also one of the most despised.” The book does full justice to this multifaceted Jesuit. Although almost unknown today to an English-reading public, Acosta was a missionary, diplomat, economist, natural scientist, philosopher, jurist, scholar of native languages, preacher, Jesuit provincial, confidant of Philip II, and, some supposed, an intriguer against Claudio Aquaviva, the Jesuit general. His three great “American” books, *De procuranda Indorum salute*, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, and *Doctrina Christiana y Catecumenos para instrucción de los Indios*, had been published in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish editions while he was still alive. Burgaleta rightly remarks that

Acosta was no saint and he often showed his shadow side. At times he was duplicitous, disobedient, imperious, and given to the comforts of the aristocracy. . . . [But he] was also a highly talented and even courageous man. He may have bordered on genius and at certain points during his tumultuous life he displayed heroic virtue. He was a prolific author, an elegant writer, a creative theologian, a honey-tongued orator, a skilled administrator, a nimble diplomat, and a zealous laborer for the salvation and evangelization of the Amerindians. For better and worse, he was the kind of man who gave rise to the legendary Jesuit.

As John O’Malley, S.J., says, the author introduces us to Acosta “especially by sketching the career of this brilliant man who in both Spain and in the New World moved in the highest circles of church and state . . . and he takes us into the cultural and theological milieu in which Acosta was formed and which he in turn helped form through his writings. . . . Acosta’s is an exciting story . . . to which Fr. Burgaleta provides lucid access.” I can only concur with that judgment.

The other book I wish to mention is a critical edition of the first version of *The Christian Directory* (1582) by that famous—indeed, some would say equally notorious and legendary—Elizabethan Jesuit leader and companion of Edmund Campion, Robert Persons. Dr. Victor Houlston, professor of English at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa, is its author and editor. The original title of Person’s book, *The First Book of the Christian Exercise, Appertayning to Resolution*, spells out what it is about, an attempt to persuade the reader to be resolute in the service of God. Ignatius in a letter to Isabel Roser in 1532 described what he thought was the basic aim of his embryonic Spiritual Exercises. People who made them had “deliberately chosen and . . . utterly resolved to engage themselves on behalf of God our Lord’s glory, honor and service.” Person’s book, as Houlston says, “can best be described as a full prose realization, the first in Europe, of the first week of the Spiritual Exercises.” Published anonymously but identifiably Catholic, this book met with so much success among Elizabethan Catholics, who needed all the resolve they could muster, that Edmund Bunny, a Protestant clergyman, produced a Protestant adaptation within two years after Person’s work had first appeared. Bunny’s Protestantizing version was reprinted no fewer than sixteen times

within less than two years, “provoking a squabble between rival printers and giving momentum to the newly founded Oxford University Press.” Dr. Houliston notes that if we include all versions, authorized and unauthorized, of Person’s book, it was probably the most popular devotional work to appear in English before 1650. This is a marvelously well done critical edition of the work. It may not be meant for easy, casual reading, but it presents “a key document in the understanding of the impact of the Catholic Reformation on England”; and it has as one of its purposes “to contribute to the understanding of Persons as a controversial and enigmatic major figure in the history of early modern England.”

As you may have guessed, the place with the highest per capita number of Jesuits is the District of Columbia, with one Jesuit for about every fifty-four hundred residents in the District. What that says about the District of Columbia or about the Society of Jesus I leave to the discernment of my readers. Perhaps some of them will care to enlighten us with letters about that circumstance.

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor

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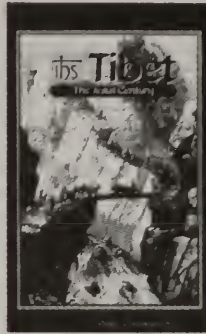
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WILLIAM A. BARRY, S.J.
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General Congregation 34 chose to keep the Jesuit Constitutions as Ignatius wrote them, but to indicate in the text those parts that had been abrogated, modified, or explained in the years since the first general congregation approved Ignatius’s document. And thus the authoritative version of the Constitutions that we now have includes both the constitutions that Ignatius wrote, and also a set of complementary norms. Fr. Barry has taken this authoritative version and from it selected sections that form a series of prayerful considerations, lasting over a period of some seventeen weeks (each subdivided into six days) and providing rich and abundant matter for consideration, discussion, and prayer. The goal of this book is to give access to such an interior knowledge of the characteristic Jesuit manner of acting, or “way of proceeding,” that one will almost instinctively act in this way.

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FIDELITY IN THE CHURCH—THEN AND NOW

Introduction

Fidelity in the Church has sunk deep roots in the tradition of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius's own love of the Church and commitment to the papacy laid the foundation for this attitude of heart; the Society's history of dedication to service in the Church has fostered this charism in the ministry of the Jesuits; the fourth vow taken by its professed members to be at the disposal of the pope for mission has given voice to this fundamental stance.

Yet we live in a time of questioning in the Church, a time when differing interpretations of Vatican Council II have led to a reexamination of the teaching of the council and the teaching or practice of the Church. People of goodwill and deep faith disagree on the centrality and meaning of certain moral and doctrinal teachings, with the result that discussions are polarized and dialogue breaks down. Strong voices in the Church call for a restoration of traditional teaching and a renewed commitment to orthodoxy, while other strong voices call for development and change in light of historical understanding and a need for inculturation. In this context, questions arise touching on the meaning of fidelity in our time. This is a topic that calls for respectful and frank discussion in the contemporary Society of Jesus and the entire Church.

The title of this essay refers to fidelity *in* the Church. Fidelity *in* the Church implies being faithful within the Church as one who shares in the life of the Spirit and struggles to remain faithful to the movement of the Spirit in the whole community. Fidelity *to* the Church implies being faithful

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to something distinct from oneself. Fidelity *to* the Church often is understood as fidelity to the magisterium or to the pope, although, of course, the Church is more than either of these realities. Throughout this essay the focus will be on fidelity *in* the Church, though an essential manifestation of that fidelity is fidelity to the magisterium and the pope. Fidelity is concerned not only with official Church teachings, but also with practices in the Church or ways of acting and living, such as liturgical practices, Church law, and ways of ministering.

The essay will examine two documents, separated by four hundred and fifty years, that express the Society's commitment to fidelity in and to the Church. The first—Ignatius's "Rules for Thinking with the Church"—is found in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The second—"On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church"—was approved in 1995 by the Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. These documents were written at different times in the Church and reflect different ecclesiologies and different cultural circumstances. Both speak of fidelity, but with differing nuances and practical applications. To give a contemporary theological context for the second document, I will describe some of the elements of a contemporary theology of Church authority in light of Vatican II. At the end, I will raise the question of what all this says to us in the Society and the Church today.

Fidelity Then—Ignatius and the Early Jesuits

To introduce the question, I would like to begin with two stories from the life of Ignatius. The first comes from the time shortly after his conversion. After his year at Manresa, Ignatius set out for the Holy Land, arriving there in September 1523. He tells us in his autobiography that "his firm intention was to remain in Jerusalem, continually visiting those holy places; and, in addition to this devotion, he also planned to help souls."¹ When he requested permission to stay, however, the Franciscan provincial told him that it was not possible; he would have to leave with the other pilgrims. Ignatius replied that "he was very firm in his purpose and was resolved that on no account would he fail to carry it out," convinced as he was that it was God's will for him to stay in Jerusalem (no. 46). The provincial responded that he had authority from the Apostolic See

¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim's Testimony: The Memoirs of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Parmananda R. Divarkar, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), no. 45.

to excommunicate anyone not willing to obey him. Ignatius immediately responded that he would obey and, in fact, left the next day. The voice of authority overruled Ignatius's own discernment.

The second story comes from much later in Ignatius's life, while he was general of the Society of Jesus. In 1546 King Ferdinand, who would later succeed Charles V as emperor, wanted to have Claude Jay, one of Ignatius's early companions, appointed bishop of Trieste. Ignatius, who was strongly opposed to Jesuits' assuming any ecclesiastical dignities, intervened with the King and then directly with Pope Paul III to block the appointment. The Pope, though kindly disposed toward Ignatius and the Society, replied that he had already decided to make the appointment, being convinced that his decision was surely from the Holy Spirit; by way of consolation, he urged Ignatius to have recourse to prayer. Ignatius did pray, but he also used every human means and every available influence, visiting a number of cardinals in Rome and eventually Madama, Margaret of Austria, the wife of the Pope's grandson, asking them all to urge the Pope and the King to change their minds. In the end, the Pope delayed the matter and the King capitulated. Jay never became a bishop. The clear decision of the Pope was never implemented.

These two stories dramatize that Ignatius was a person who loved the Church and was obedient to it, while maintaining a shrewd political sense. Ignatius would, in the end, obey, but he often went even beyond representing his opinion, not hesitating to use every available human means to ensure that his opinion prevailed.

With these stories as an imaginative context, we can consider the relationship of Ignatius and the first Jesuits with the hierarchical Church. In the first place, there can be no doubt that Ignatius and his first companions were deeply committed to the Church and to the pope. Even before Ignatius and his first companions in Paris had discerned the call to constitute a religious community, they vowed to go to Jerusalem to work among the people there or, if that was not possible, to go wherever the pope would send them. Their concern, however, was not primarily to manifest devotion to the pope, but rather to render a more universal service to the Church. The pope could best direct them to where the need in the Church was greatest.

When the Society of Jesus was approved as a religious order in 1540, the Formula of the Institute made it clear that service to the Church under the Roman Pontiff was an essential element of the Society of Jesus. Toward the beginning of this official document defining the nature of the Society, we

find the phrase “to serve the Lord alone and his vicar on earth.”² A few paragraphs later, the formula states that “this entire Society and each one individually are campaigning for God under faithful obedience to His Holiness [the pope] and the other Roman Pontiffs who will succeed him” (no. 3). The commitment to go wherever the pope would send them became the foundation of the Jesuit’s fourth vow.

The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus that Ignatius drafted in his final years also gave evidence that Ignatius’s attitude was to be totally at the disposal of the pope. In Part VII, on the mission and ministries of the Society, the first chapter deals with missions from the Supreme Pontiff. Ignatius states there that “to treat the missions from His Holiness first as being most important, it should be observed that the vow which the Society made to obey him as the supreme vicar of Christ without any excuse meant that the members were to go to any place where he judges it expedient to send them for the greater glory of God and the good of souls” (no. 603). The Church for Ignatius was the visible embodiment of the Lord, and the service of Christ was carried on under the direction of Christ’s visible representative on earth.³

We can perhaps hint at one source of Ignatius’s passion for faithful service in the Church. During his early years, dreams and images of adventure and romance filled his imagination as he read the great romance novels, such as *Amadis of Gaul*, and entered vicariously into the world of knights who did great deeds of courage in service of their king. Some of the values that shaped Ignatius’s life were rooted in these stories. Feudal values of this sort were at the heart of the relationship between lords and vassals—friendship, fidelity, courage, generosity, a desire to serve, and a willingness to suffer. Ignatius stood on the boundary between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: he was a medieval man able to move into a new world, yet the values of the medieval world still shaped his ideals and sensitivities. They motivated him after his conversion when he committed himself to following Christ in his Church under the Roman Pontiff. Just as a knight was faithful

² “Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus,” in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), no. 1 (p. 3). It is interesting to note that in the revised version of the Formula incorporated into the apostolic letter of Julius III in 1550, the phrase has become “to serve the Lord alone and his Church, his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth.” Service is now focused on the Church rather than on the Roman Pontiff. Hereafter, citations from the *Constitutions* will be indicated by *Cons.*

³ There is also a concern expressed in the *Constitutions* about safe and approved doctrine, though the motivation seems to be unity and growth among the members more than orthodoxy. See *Cons.*, nos. 273, 274, 358, 464, 671, 672, 814, 821.

in serving his king and a vassal in serving his lord, so Ignatius desired to be faithful in serving Christ in his Church.

This is not the place to examine in any detail Ignatius's theology of the Church as it emerged from his life experience and as it took shape in all his writings. In fact, as Philip Endean points out, "Ignatius himself came nowhere near formulating his vision of Church satisfactorily."⁴ Ignatius's ecclesiology was more a lived ecclesiology than a clearly articulated theology of the Church. This essay will focus, then, on a brief document that those trying to summarize Ignatius's attitude toward the Church often have recourse to—his "Rules for Thinking with the Church," one of a series of directives that Ignatius includes at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In addition to the rules for thinking with the Church, Ignatius also offers rules dealing with discernment, the distribution of alms, and scruples.

The *Spiritual Exercises* began as a record of Ignatius's religious experience at Manresa in 1521. When he left Manresa that year, the *Exercises* were largely finished. Ignatius did not compose the "Rules for Thinking with the Church," however, until his student days in Paris were drawing to an end, some thirteen or fourteen years after Manresa. Some of these rules were probably written only after he had arrived in Rome in 1537. They were the last substantial addition to the *Exercises*, but in no sense can they be interpreted as their culmination. In fact, Ignatius did not even think these rules should be proposed to everyone making the *Exercises*, but only to those who would find them helpful. It is well to bear in mind that the book of the *Exercises* was a handbook for the director, not a text for the one making the retreat.

John O'Malley calls these rules "a manifesto of Ignatius's orthodoxy," an orthodoxy that was challenged more than once in his lifetime.⁵ The rules are clearly directed, though not by name, against some of the alleged opponents of the Church at that time—the Lutherans, the false mystics, and even some Catholics like Erasmus who criticized the Church.⁶

⁴ Philip Endean, "Ignatius and Church Authority," *The Way Supplement* no. 70 (Spring 1991), 79. In his article, Endean refers to the work of Raymond Schwager, *Das dramatische Kirchenverständnis bei Ignatius Loyola* (Zurich, 1970). Schwager's book and several other references given by Endean (see for example, pp. 88–89 n. 8) explore the question of Ignatius's ecclesiology. On Ignatius's view of Church, also see John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 296–98.

⁵ *First Jesuits*, 49.

⁶ See George Ganss, S.J., trans., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 197f. (endnote 163).

As we read these rules today, they may seem rigid and conformist; however, as O'Malley points out, "the doctrinal implications they contain do not differ from those to which Catholics of the sixteenth century would have subscribed."⁷ When they first appeared in the sixteenth century, they aroused little controversy, indicating that they were not regarded as an exaggerated form of orthodoxy at that time. They certainly have to be read against the background of a Church that saw itself under attack.⁸

The rules are ultimately concerned, not with unbending laws, but rather with attitudes regarding the Church and its teaching and authority. In fact, the traditional title, "Rules for Thinking with the Church," is misleading on several counts. First, Ignatius did not use that title. In the autograph text of the *Exercises*, the heading of the rules is "Toward acquiring the genuine attitude which we ought to maintain in the Church militant, the following directives should be observed." Further, the word "rules" refers, not to obligatory precepts, but rather to directives, suggestions, guides, or patterns. Also the word that we translate as "thinking" is *sentire*, which means a felt knowledge that guides one's activities or practices. In the words of George Ganss, "[I]t means cognition which is basically intellectual but is savored so repeatedly that it becomes also deeply emotional and 'satisfies the soul.'"⁹ In his recent translation of the *Exercises*, George Ganss speaks of "[Rules for thinking, judging, and feeling with the Church] to have the genuine attitude which we ought to maintain in the Church militant. . ." (no. 352). The rules, then, are really directives or suggestions to help develop a habitual attitude or outlook to guide one in serving the Church.¹⁰

We need not go through the rules in detail, but a general overview will be helpful. The first rule sets the tone for the rest. "With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church" (no. 353). This rule refers to the

⁷ *First Jesuits*, 49.

⁸ A further problem is to disengage the Ignatian understanding of Church and papacy from the later overlays of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century counterreform and nineteenth-century postrevolutionary and ultramontane interpretations. See John Padberg, S.J., "Ignatius, the Popes, and Realistic Reverence," *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 25, no. 3 (May 1993): 36f.

⁹ *Spiritual Exercises*, 199 (endnote 164), alluding to the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 2. Hereafter citations from the Ignatian text will be indicated by *SpEx*.

¹⁰ These ideas are further developed in George E. Ganss, "St. Ignatius's 'Rules for Thinking with the Church,'" *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 7, no. 1 (1975): 12-20. Also see *id.*, *Spiritual Exercises*, 197-200.

Church as the Spouse of Christ and our Mother, images that obviously evoke a feeling of love toward the Church.¹¹ Ignatius also refers to “the hierarchical Church,” though this description is rare in his writings.¹²

The rules are concerned to promote and preserve unity in the Church. They were written at a time when the Church was closing ranks against the Reformers. Thus rules 2 through 9 praise and recommend the very things that the opponents of the Church attacked: reception of the sacraments, the vows of religion, all the precepts of the Church, and Christian devotions, such as veneration of relics and images, pilgrimages, fasting and abstinence. Rules 10 through 12 encourage the proper attitude toward those in authority, the Church’s theology—both positive and Scholastic—and the saints.

The last five rules deal with complex and controverted doctrinal topics such as predestination, faith and works, grace and freedom, and give advice on how to speak of these topics prudently. The concern of Ignatius was that the people not be led astray.

These rules were not written for the general public, but for a select group of people making the Exercises. One way to interpret them is as a set of guidelines for someone nearing the end of the Exercises who now desires to labor with Christ and spread the reign of God and wants to do this in union with the visible Church. Such a person would be working among those who oppose the Church, its teachings, and its practices. In the same way, these directives offer external or more objective criteria in making an election, thus helping to balance the more subjective discernment of spirits at the heart of the election process. Ignatius believed that the discernment of God’s will included a discernment of the interior movements of the heart, but he also proposed certain objective criteria, such as the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.¹³

¹¹ In his other writings, Ignatius had a preference for the Pauline image of the Body of Christ and, in the *Constitutions*, the image of the vineyard of the Lord (see *Cons.*, Part VII, on mission and ministries). O’Malley notes that “[i]n his [Ignatius’s] catechesis, the Church was simply ‘a congregation of the Christian faithful, illumined and governed by our Lord’” (*First Jesuits*, 297). None of these images focus attention on the structures of the Church.

¹² See O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, 297. According to Philip Endean, Yves Congar believes that Ignatius invented the term “hierarchical Church.” (See Yves Congar, *L’Eglise de Saint Augustin à l’époque moderne* [Paris, 1970], 369.)

¹³ There is some evidence to suggest that the rules were not designed for use during the Exercises, but rather as guidelines for the time after the Exercises. See Endean, “Ignatius and Church Authority,” 78.

Before we move to the more recent history of the Society of Jesus, I think it would be helpful to recall Ignatius's lived experience of the Church and observe how the author of these quite straightforward rules for thinking with the Church dealt with the popes of his time. In "Ignatius, the Popes, and Realistic Reverence," John Padberg makes the point that we must read the rules of Ignatius in the context of examples of Ignatius's actual dealings with the popes (20). What did the attitudes proposed mean in practice? How in reality did Ignatius understand reverence for the pope, obedience, service, and thinking with the Church? Examples from Ignatius's life reveal that the lived relationship of Ignatius to the papacy was far more complex than a simple reading of the rules would lead us to believe. We cannot understand the mind and certainly not the actions of Ignatius by merely appealing to the rules or even to other writings of Ignatius.

To make his point, Padberg offers four examples from the life of Ignatius in which he disagreed with different popes and actively set about using every possible means to change their minds. One can argue that in the end Ignatius would have obeyed, and in one case he did; but in three of the four instances, Ignatius eventually got his own way, and in the fourth, even though he finally consented, he did so without at all agreeing that what had been commanded was good or wise.

The first example is the story of Claude Jay I have already mentioned. Even though the Pope clearly stated that he had made a decision and that the decision was from the Holy Spirit, Ignatius acted upon the Pope's invitation to pray, but did not confine himself to prayer alone. He brought formidable pressure to bear on the King and the Pope to reconsider, with the result that Jay never became a bishop. Padberg gives two other examples of Ignatius's opposition to Jesuits' becoming cardinals and a fourth example of his opposition to the decree of a curial commission about missioning a Jesuit to a certain place when Ignatius judged that such an assignment would be harmful to the man involved. These stories are further examples of what Padberg calls Ignatius's "realistic reverence" in his thinking with the Church and responding to the wishes of the Holy See. Of course, these stories are not concerned with issues of doctrine but with issues of practical living in the Church; however, they are instances where Ignatius disagreed with the judgment and directives of those in authority. Ignatius resisted Jesuits' being appointed to ecclesiastical offices because he wished to maintain the Society as a mobile group of men available for mission, uninvolved in ecclesiastical politics and ambitions.

The point of these stories is not to portray Ignatius as disobedient or lacking in the proper attitude toward the hierarchical Church, but rather to dramatize that Ignatius saw the actions described in these examples as

completely compatible with his rules and his profound reverence for and love of the Church. As Philip Endean points out, “[T]he understanding of the Church by which Ignatius lived was a great deal more subtle, interesting and plausible than that which we find on the surface of his writings.”¹⁴ In other words, Ignatius’s attempts to gain approval for the ministry proper to the Society and to prevent Jesuits from being appointed bishops may teach us at least as much about his ecclesiology as do his writings. On one level, there is an inevitable tension in Ignatian spirituality between commitment to the Church and the magisterium and commitment to personal discernment and decision making; but as Ignatius points out in his rules, both values do in the end work together because it is the same Spirit at work in both (no. 365).

The first challenge we face, then, in light of Ignatius’s words and actions is to interpret properly and grasp how he understood his relationship to the Church and the Holy See and how he acted upon this understanding. That in itself is a difficult task. There is a temptation to read into Ignatius a nineteenth-century ecclesiology embodying a hierarchical model of the Church. Furthermore, as we read these rules today in the context of historical consciousness, pluralism, and post-Vatican II models of the Church, we must ask to what extent these rules are conditioned by the theology and the experience of the Church of their day. What are the essential elements of the Jesuit charism and what are the elements that no longer apply? What does it mean to think with and in the Church today? What does it mean to be faithful to the Ignatian vision and charism in our world and culture?

These challenging questions demand serious and thoughtful discussion in the Society and in the Church as a whole. How does contemporary theology address these questions and how has the Society of Jesus answered in an official way the questions about the meaning and interpretation of the Rules for Thinking with the Church today? The pages to follow will lay a foundation for this discussion, first, by sketching a contemporary theology of magisterium, and then by summarizing the attempts in recent Jesuit history since Vatican II to deal with these issues in the official teaching and decrees of general congregations of the Society of Jesus, in particular, in the decree of the Thirty-fourth General Congregation on service in the Church.

¹⁴ “Ignatius and Church Authority,” 76–90.

Fidelity Now

Elements of a Contemporary Theology of Magisterium

“Magisterium” refers to the role and authority of the teacher. In the Church it refers to the office of teaching that is at the service of God’s word. During the Middle Ages St. Thomas spoke of two kinds of magisterium, the magisterium of the bishops and the magisterium of the theologians.¹⁵ The bishops possessed authority by virtue of their office, whereas the theologians derived their authority from their knowledge of theology. In the last few centuries, however, the term “magisterium” has become associated almost exclusively with the teaching role and authority of the hierarchy, in particular with the pope and the bishops. This pastoral teaching authority is founded on a belief that the bishops are authoritative witnesses who share in the mandate which Jesus gave the apostles and who are assisted by the Holy Spirit when they teach. Their role is to listen to the word, guard it, and explain it, and, in that way, to pass on what they have received.

Many questions can be raised about the basis of this teaching authority, the various forms of its exercise in the Church, and the subject matter appropriate for it; but I cannot pretend here to present a fully developed theology of magisterium.¹⁶ Rather, I will present some notions that are foundational for further reflection on teaching and learning in the Church. The notions will also provide a background for reading the document of GC 34 on service in the Church. To develop these notions, I will rely extensively on a recent work on this subject, *Teaching with Authority*, written by Richard Gaillardetz.¹⁷

In this book, the author reconsiders the meaning and role of the magisterium in the Roman Catholic Church in the light of Vatican II. At

¹⁵ *Quodlibet* III, 9, ad 3.

¹⁶ For a fuller understanding of magisterium, see Ladislav Orsy, S.J., *The Church: Learning and Teaching* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), and Francis Sullivan, S.J., *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1984). Francis Sullivan has also written the entries on “Magisterium” in the following dictionaries: *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph Komonchak (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 617–23; *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 614–20; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard McBrien (San Francisco: Harper, 1995), 805–7.

¹⁷ Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997). His work incorporates previous studies on the magisterium and attempts to base a contemporary theology of the magisterium on a renewed theology of Church.

the heart of his reflections are two basic principles: (1) that God's word has been given to the whole Christian community and not to only a chosen few and (2) that a proper understanding of the structures and functions of teaching authority must be rooted in a theology of the Church as communion. These two principles give expression to the theology of revelation and the theology of Church articulated in the documents of Vatican II.¹⁸

The first principle acknowledges that the word of God is addressed to the whole people of God. Prior to Vatican II, revelation was understood primarily as a series or collection of propositional statements. Revelation was, to a large extent, identified with statements of faith or doctrines that called for assent from the believer. These doctrines were articulated in Church councils and in magisterial teaching, and the role of the believer was to accept these statements as God's word addressed to the community. Obviously, the articulation of faith into doctrines and official teachings is one aspect of revelation and a necessary part of the life of a community. Revelation does have cognitive content and can be formulated into statements of faith. Vatican II, however, shifted the emphasis from this propositional understanding of revelation to an understanding of revelation as God's personal self-communication in Jesus. Revelation is first of all an invitation to all people to enter into communion with the triune God. Revelation is not primarily a body of knowledge or a series of truths communicated by those with the authority to teach. It is an encounter with God, a self-disclosure of himself to all and an invitation to a personal relationship of love. Faith is not primarily an assent to truths, but a response of trust and commitment to God.¹⁹

The propositional understanding of revelation that equates revelation with doctrinal statements lends itself to a hierarchical view of revelation in which teaching is handed down from the teaching Church to the learning Church. The response of the learning Church is assent to the statements or doctrines given, motivated by the authority of the teacher rather than by the authority of what is taught. But once it is accepted that God's word is given to the whole community by the power of the Spirit, then God's word cannot be restricted to a few leaders within the Church, but must be received and articulated in a context of dialogue. This is not to deny the proper role of authoritative teaching, but to place it in the broader context

¹⁸ Many other ideas merit discussion in relation to this topic; for example, the teaching role of the bishop, the relation of the bishops to the pope, collegiality, levels of Church teaching, dissent and assent. Gaillardetz discusses these and provides a bibliography for further reading on these topics.

¹⁹ For a fuller discussion of this, see Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority*, 69–100.

of a community of conversation. As Gaillardetz puts it, “[T]he word of God emerges within the whole Church through a complex set of ecclesial relationships in which all the baptized, professional theologians, and the college of bishops play important roles” (xi). In other words, the word of God emerges within the whole Church.

The second principle that grounds a contemporary theology of the magisterium is the imaging of the Church as communion. Clearly, *Lumen gentium*, Vatican II’s document on the Church, shifted the emphasis from an understanding of the Church as institution to an understanding of the Church as communion. The central image of the People of God highlights the Church as a covenant community that develops throughout history, a pilgrim people with roots in the past and an unfolding future. The image also stresses the communality of all people in their baptism. Structures and offices and the diversity of ministries in the Church must be understood in light of this common vocation of all Christians. The council members consciously placed the chapter on the People of God before the chapters on the hierarchy and the laity to emphasize that clergy and laity are all part of God’s people and that structures and offices are at the service of the community.

This focus on the people of God, however, must be understood in light of the deeper reality of the Church as a communion founded in the Trinity. The first chapter of *Lumen gentium* speaks of the Church as mystery. Rather than focus first on the Church as institution, the council members decided, as Gaillardetz notes, “to reassert that the reality of the Church goes beyond its structures and laws to participate in the ineffable presence of God. . . . The innermost reality of the Church, its participation in the triune life of God, shifts from background to foreground” (6). This means that all relations in the Church should reflect and mediate the relations in the Trinity that are mutual and reciprocal.

Through the Church we are invited to communion with God and one another. The notion of communion was a central concept at Vatican II. Gaillardetz points out that “[t]he council retrieved this notion of communion from the biblical and patristic concept of *koinonia* or *communio*” (8f.). He goes on to explain that “*koinonia* is usually translated as ‘fellowship,’ ‘communion,’ or ‘participation.’ The biblical authors employed the word *koinonia* primarily to describe humankind’s participation in the divine life of God” (9). We are all called through the Son and the Spirit to share in the triune life of the God of love and communion. But the notion of communion is not restricted to communion with God. Gaillardetz remarks that in St. Paul “[t]he term *koinonia* expressed the fundamental connection between participation in the life of God and participation in Christian community” (10). The Church is a fellowship of believers called together by the Spirit.

All Christians are called to live in communion with God and with one another. This is the foundational reality of Church that is prior to any structures or offices in the Church.

Vatican II presented the temple of the Holy Spirit as another image of the Church. It acknowledged the Spirit as the origin of the Church and the source of its unity, diversity, and continued life. Gaillardetz thus summarizes the varied role of the Spirit: “In the Spirit’s constitution of the Church we must admit an ongoing, dynamic presence of the Spirit, continuing to mold and shape the Church through the exercise of human freedom. The Church is seen not only as a stable institution but as a dynamic entity open to the future” (20). The recognition of the presence of the Spirit in all Christians relativizes a hierarchical model that images the Spirit as coming down on the Church only through the structures of the Church. Both offices and charisms are gifts of the Spirit, and all the faithful are empowered by their baptisms to share in the life and ministry of the Church. In speaking of authority in this context, Gaillardetz concludes that “an authority exercised *within* the Church is an authority that acknowledges the dignity, the rights and the responsibilities of every member of the Church. It is an authority that recognizes that God’s Spirit communicates to the Church not only through ecclesiastical office but through the lives of all believers” (26). This acknowledgement of the Spirit’s presence in all Christians leads to the concepts of ecclesial reception and the *sensus fidelium*.

Gaillardetz describes ecclesial reception as “the process by which some teaching, ritual, discipline, or law is assimilated into the life of the Church” (228). Ecclesial reception implies an active discernment by the community of the truth of what it received and the assimilation of that truth into the life of the community. In other words, “[r]eception meant not mere acceptance but transformation, both of the receiving community and that which was received” (229). Gaillardetz reflects that the notion of reception was widespread in the first thousand years of the Church when the dominant ecclesiology was a communion ecclesiology, but it was replaced by a juridical notion of obedience as the Church moved toward a more hierarchical model (229). In a communion model, however, reception is an integral part of the teaching process that respects the work of the Spirit in the whole Church and recognizes that truth is worked out in dialogue and tested in living.²⁰

The traditional concept of the *sensus fidelium* adds another dimension to the concept of ecclesial reception. *Sensus fidelium* refers to “the

²⁰ On the notion of ecclesial reception, see also Sullivan, *Magisterium*, esp. pp. 109–17.

inerrancy of the faith of the whole community of believers.”²¹ It implies a sense of the faith in each believer and in the whole community that makes it possible “to recognize divine revelation and to respond to it in faith” (233). Thus the faith and discernment of the people are an important part of the process of teaching and learning in the Church. There is a distinct role of leadership for the pastoral teaching authority, but it cannot ignore the response of the believing community, who also possess the Spirit and a sense of the faith.²²

In summary, Vatican II moved the Church away from a pyramidal conception of the Church that understood revelation as God’s word coming down from God to the rest of the Christian community only through the hierarchy. This model had led to a passive role for the laity and a clear distinction between the teaching and the learning Church. An ecclesiology of communion, founded on the triune God, conceives of the Church as a relational reality in which all relationships are mutual and reciprocal and in which the Spirit speaks to all Christians in a variety of ways. Such an understanding of Church and revelation calls for processes of communication and dialogue. It invites an open and honest conversation within the Church. In the end, it acknowledges that though there is a legitimate and necessary role for authoritative teaching to help articulate and safeguard the truth of the Gospel, the whole Church is called to be both a teaching Church and a learning Church. Genuine teaching authority must encourage a dialogue that reverences the Spirit at work in the whole Church. This view of Church underlies the document from General Congregation 34 on service in the Church. The next section will review that document in the context of the three congregations that led up to it.

From General Congregation 31 to General Congregation 34

In January 1995 two hundred and thirty Jesuits assembled in Rome for the Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, the fourth such congregation since Vatican II. The first of them, General Congregation 31, met in two sessions in 1965 and 1966. The document entitled “The Mission of the Society of Jesus Today” made clear reference to the promise of the first Jesuits to obey the Roman Pontiff with regard to

²¹ Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority*, 231.

²² On this idea of the *sensus fidelium*, see Sullivan, “The Infallibility of the People of God,” chap. 1 of *Magisterium*, esp. pp. 21–23. Referring to *Lumen gentium*, no. 12, Sullivan notes that the sense of faith of the people enables them to discern the word of God, to recognize and cling to the truth, to penetrate the word more deeply, and to apply the word to life.

mission.²³ The document “The Training of Scholastics Especially in Studies” exhorted Jesuits to see that in all matters “their knowledge is well-grounded, according to the norms which the Holy See has given us” (d. 9, no. 42). The document reminded professors that “they should let themselves be guided by the mind and will of the Church, [and] show proper respect for the teaching authority of the Church” (no. 43). At that time, fidelity and obedience to the magisterium did not seem to raise any questions.

By the Thirty-second General Congregation in 1974, however, the exciting and tumultuous years after Vatican II had created quite a different set of circumstances. The first decree of the congregation voiced concern: “Others, when they read publications in which Jesuits unsympathetically criticize one another, their own Father General, the magisterium of the Church, and even the Holy Father, ask whether Jesuits have lost their traditional loyalty, obedience, and devotion to the Society and the Church” (d. 1, no. 4). In its third decree, the congregation dealt explicitly with the question of fidelity. Entitled “Fidelity of the Society to the Magisterium and the Supreme Pontiff,” the decree, in four short paragraphs, acknowledges the obligation of reverence and fidelity toward the magisterium of the Church and, in a special way, to the Supreme Pontiff. It recalls the tradition in the Society of serving the Church by explaining, propagating, and defending the faith, and goes on to express regret for particular failings on the part of some members of the Society who were less than faithful to this tradition. Finally, the congregation recommends that superiors encourage freedom, but also take care “to prevent and correct the failings which weaken fidelity to the magisterium and service to the faith and the Church” (d. 3, no. 46). The context is reverence and fidelity, but also clearly a desire to be of service to the Church.

In 1983 the Jesuits again convened in a general congregation to elect a new superior general. The Thirty-third General Congregation issued only one major or substantive decree, “Companions of Jesus Sent into Today’s World.” In the opening section of this decree, the Society committed itself again to serving the Church and encouraged all “to foster a truly Ignatian readiness for active collaboration with the Supreme Pontiff and all who share pastoral office with him.”²⁴

²³ The decrees of GC 31, in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), d. 1, nos. 5 and 7.

²⁴ *Documents of the 33rd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984), no. 8.

Both the Thirty-second and Thirty-third General Congregations made reference to the Rules for Thinking with the Church, affirming the spirit of the rules and the need to apply them today, but recognizing the changed historical context in which we live.²⁵

Finally, we must not overlook an important talk delivered by Fr. General Kolvenbach in Rome in September 1987, at the end of the Sixty-seventh Procurators' Congregation, including a delegate elected from each Jesuit province of the world. Dealing as it did with the topic of fidelity in the Church and the relation of the Society to the Holy See, the talk served as an important source and inspiration to those drafting the document of GC 34 on service in the Church. Fr. Kolvenbach reaffirmed the Society's original tradition of fidelity to the Vicar of Christ and the hierarchical Church. He recognized, however, the new situation in the world and in the Church when he stated that "[b]ecause they [the Rules for Thinking with the Church] are, in their form and in certain examples, in a sense obsolete, it is no use expecting these rules to provide an immediate solution to the ecclesial problems of our day," though "in their substance these rules have lost nothing of their actuality."²⁶ The last part of Fr. Kolvenbach's talk is an expansion of the exhortation of GC 33 that "the entire Society seek to incorporate itself more and more vigorously and creatively in the life of the Church" (d. 1, no. 8). For Fr. Kolvenbach, these words from GC 33 give the real meaning and significance of the expression "to think with [or in] the Church."²⁷

Now we can consider the most recent general congregation of the Society of Jesus. The major thrust of General Congregation 34 was a reflection on the mission of the Society today. The congregation reaffirmed the integral connection between the service of faith and the promotion of justice, but it also added as essential to the mission of the Society the elements of inculturation and interreligious dialogue. Moreover, it dealt with issues internal to the life and structure of the Society, as well as with the

²⁵ GC 32, d. 11, no. 33, and GC 33, no. 8.

²⁶ Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Final Address to the Sixty-seventh Congregation of Procurators" (in French), *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu* 19 (1987): 1081-83 (no. 8).

²⁷ Kolvenbach, "Final Address," no. 10. We might well reflect at greater length on the difference between thinking *with* the Church and thinking *in* the Church. Thinking *in* the Church implies participation in a process rather than conformity to a conclusion already determined.

ministries of the Society. The document we are concerned with is “On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church.”²⁸

The issue of service and fidelity in the Church was not a major concern in the work that preceded the congregation. The preparatory commission that organized all the material submitted by province congregations made no reference to this topic and did not recommend that it be addressed at the meeting. As a delegate to GC 34, I was present when the topic emerged at a general session early in the congregation while the agenda for the three-month meeting was being drawn up. When the topic arose, there were many who were skeptical that the congregation could say anything of substance on such a complex and delicate subject. In fact, not a few of the delegates counseled that no further treatment of the subject be undertaken, recommending instead that the congregation should content itself with a simple affirmation of GCs 32 and 33. On the other hand, a substantial majority, convinced that the relationship with the Vatican and the Pope was passing through a more serene phase at that time than had been the case twelve years previously, urged that the time was right to draft a more nuanced and substantive statement, or at least to attempt such a document. A commission was formed, which set about the task of writing a first draft. After it had submitted three or four drafts to the whole congregation and received from them extended comments and amendments, the delegates voted overwhelmingly for the decree on service in the Church.

“On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church” is not an easy document to summarize because, like statements of this type, it is dialectical, attempting to balance values that are often in tension. It affirms one value, while balancing it against a seemingly contradictory value. Such a document can provide quotations for both sides in a debate. In the end, the tension described is between fidelity to the Church and the need for critical reflection and dialogue in the search for the truth.

In the first place, the context of the document is not obedience but service.²⁹ The concern of the Society is to serve the Church and to witness to and foster the reign of God. Questions of tradition and progress, assent and dissent, obedience and representation are always addressed in the broader context of service and in the context of fostering a proper attitude toward such service. It is interesting that the approach takes us back to the

²⁸ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

²⁹ Philip Endean remarks that the conclusion of Raymond Schwager’s study of Ignatius’s ecclesiology was that “Ignatius’s *lived* ecclesiology centered on service to the Church rather than obedience to it (“Ignatius and Church Authority,” 79).

original title of Ignatius's "Rules for Thinking with the Church": "Toward acquiring the genuine attitude which we ought to maintain in the Church militant. . . ." In the same way, the document of GC 34 does not lay down strict guidelines or rules of procedure; instead, it encourages a disposition of mind and heart, an attitude of reverence and fidelity and service.

The four-paragraph introduction of the document speaks exclusively of service, the "long and permanent tradition of service proper to the Society" (d. 11, no. 1). It speaks of service performed in the ministries of the Society, service in scholarly research and writing and teaching, and the service of justice.

The second section of the document sets the new context of Church and world for that service, a world "gripped by strong sociopolitical and technological changes, often of a revolutionary character" (no. 4) and a struggle for justice; a Church "engaged in its own dialectic of *traditio* and *progressio*" (no. 5) that leads to tensions in all aspects of the Church's life. The document makes its own the ecclesiology of Vatican II, a vision of the Church as a pilgrim people of God, a community of local churches, a collegial Church, a Church that recognizes the role of the laity and the coresponsibility of all God's people for the life of the Church.

The third section addresses the challenges of the times, beginning with a renewed commitment to "fidelity to the teaching of the Church as it discerns and confronts the signs of the times" (no. 9). This statement sets the tone for the rest of the document—a creative tension between fidelity to the teaching of the Church and alertness to the signs of the times. This is a tension that is not only inevitable but healthy and life-giving for the Church. We can perhaps raise our comfort level by choosing one side of the creative tension, but in the process we will lose the dynamism and dialectic that is the source of the Church's growth in faith and life.³⁰ At the risk of focusing on the more controversial aspects of a very balanced and nuanced document, I would like to highlight some of the more thought-provoking and distinctive ideas that attempt to reexamine the charism of fidelity.

Section 3 contains a reference to the words of Fr. Kolvenbach concerning "new situations being presented to the Society, demanding, in full fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church, valid responses to so many

³⁰ In his speech to the procurators in 1987, Fr. Kolvenbach remarks that "it is in vain that we attempt to fix divisive frontiers between faith and reason, between obedience and liberty, between love and a critical spirit, between personal responsibility and ecclesial obedience" ("Final Address," no. 8).

healthy questions from the People of God.”³¹ This fidelity, however, must “adhere to the accepted norms of assent and to Catholic teaching on the hierarchy of truths and the development of Church doctrine” (no. 11). The important point, then, is that all truths are not of the same importance in Catholic faith and that all truths are open to a deeper understanding and a more precise articulation.

After affirming the important service of scholars and theologians toward maintaining the respectability of the Christian tradition in the contemporary world of intellectual and cultural discourse, the document recalls a statement of Fr. Kolvenbach that “through their very apostolic responsibility, Jesuits are inevitably dragged into conflictual, even explosive ecclesiastical situations” (d. 11, no. 11). The congregation’s document continues:

Our response to such situations can give rise to tensions with some Church authorities. Despite—indeed, because of—our sincere desire to live in fidelity to the Magisterium and the hierarchy, there may be times when we feel justified, even obliged, to speak out in a way that may not always win us general approval and could even lead to sanctions painful to the Society and constituting an impediment to our work. (no. 13)

To do so does not put the Jesuit in a stance of disobedience or revolt. Ignatian obedience, in accord with the tradition of Catholic theology, has always recognized that our first fidelity must be to God, to the truth, and to a well-formed conscience. Obedience, then, cannot exclude our prayerful discernment of the course of action to be followed, one that may in some circumstances differ from the one suggested by our religious and Church superiors. Such discernment, and its respectful representation to superiors, is an authentic element of our Ignatian tradition. (no. 14)

The recognition that fidelity and speaking out are mutually compatible promotes a mature understanding of obedience as actively dialogic and not simply passively compliant.

In the next paragraph, however, the document reminds us that “Ignatian obedience is one of concrete fidelity to the real, visible, hierarchical Church, not to some abstract ideal.” The Church “is the community of believers to which we belong.” And so “once the discernment is accomplished and the representations made, the Jesuit attitude will ultimately be one modeled on the ‘Rules in Order to Have the Proper Attitude of Mind in the Church Militant’ of St. Ignatius” (no. 15).³²

³¹ D. 11, no. 11. The words of Fr. Kolvenbach are quoted from his speech at the procurator’s congregation, no. 7.

³² Kolvenbach, “Final Address,” no. 4.

In the next paragraph GC 34's document clarifies this reference to Ignatius's rules by adding, "[W]e are well aware that the context in which Ignatius wrote these rules is very different from that of today. But Ignatian service in the Church is not a history lesson, It is a profound mystical bond that transcends the particularities of its historical origins in the sixteenth-century Church" (no. 16).

This section ends with this affirmation: "Therefore, if there is a time for speaking out, there may also be a time for silence. . . . If there is a time for representation, there is also a time for the abnegation of our intellect and will which becomes for us a new way of seeing through the clouds of suffering and uncertainty to a higher truth and wisdom, that of the Cross" (no. 17). The good of the individual, but even more the good of the community and the service of truth, will determine when speaking out is appropriate and when silence is indicated.

Before drawing some general conclusions, we should mention a few key ideas from the remaining sections of the document. In the section "The Jesuit Response: A Contemporary Perspective," we read that our love of Christ and our love of the Church "can also oblige us to engage in constructive criticism based on a prayerful discernment," but that this "cannot justify a lack of solidarity with the Church" (no. 20). The goal is always to understand the mind of the hierarchical Church and to articulate the faith of the people. This is to be done in the spirit of the Ignatian rules. Thus, criticism is always to be expressed in a spirit of respect and affection for those in authority, acknowledging the grace of their guidance as a corrective to our own limitations (no. 22). Finally, the document suggests that "between the extremes of premature, ill-considered public criticism and servile silence there exists the alternative of moderate and respectful expression of our views" (no. 24).

As I said earlier, the document is dialectical and at pains to balance contrasting values on a sensitive subject. The document has moved beyond a simplistic affirmation of obedience and fidelity to a much more realistic statement of the complex coresponsibility of all Christians, both hierarchy and laity, to search for the truth and to be of service. This decree presents a much more nuanced and creative understanding of fidelity in and to the Church. Such an understanding is possible because it is rooted in a Vatican II ecclesiology that understands the Church as a communion, a community of believers with different gifts, but also as a dialogic community in which the Spirit is at work in all its members. All then are obliged in fidelity to speak the truth as they see it and to continue the conversation, always with deep reverence and respect for the teaching office of the college of bishops with the pope at its head, but also with a shared openness and

willingness to listen, not closing off discussion because the search for the truth is too unsettling.

This document from the congregation is also written in the context of a renewed theology of papal ministry and of the magisterium, a theology that is rooted in modern scriptural scholarship, historico-critical studies, and the decrees of Vatican II, as well as the lived experience of Christians belonging to both the Eastern and the Western churches. This theology attempts to articulate the nature and traditional limits of the exercise of authority in the Church. In the light of this, the document understands the role of the theologian not solely as the defense and explanation of the official teaching of the Church, but also as a learned attempt to deepen the Church's understanding of the truth entrusted to it and to articulate that truth in ways faithful to the tradition, yet responsive to the insights and thought forms of the contemporary culture. We cannot in this context overestimate the positive impact that historical consciousness and pluralism exert upon our understanding of Church, authority, and the search for the truth.

Is this document faithful to or in continuity with Ignatius's Rules for Thinking with the Church? First, we must admit that, as Fr. Kolvenbach and the congregation have said, the context in which Ignatius wrote the rules is very different from what obtains today, but, at the same time, that the passion for service and the desire to be faithful are at the heart of both documents. To say otherwise, I think, is to read the documents with a kind of fundamentalism that distorts the spirit and intent that are central to the Ignatian vision.

Conclusion

Finally, what does this document say to our Church today? It speaks of the context in which we live—a Church in transition, a Church struggling to be faithful to a tradition by examining, rethinking, proclaiming, and living that tradition with the inspiration of God's Spirit. The document acknowledges the inevitable conflicts that have arisen from the new vision of Vatican II, but it reminds us that "most major ecumenical councils have set in motion a very lengthy process of reform and renewal which did not reach a lived consensus for centuries" (d. 11, no. 7). To paraphrase Jaroslav Pelikan, tradition is too often the dead faith of living

people rather than the living faith of dead people.³³ This document and the whole history of the Church call us to a creative fidelity to the Church in its life and teaching. Creative fidelity simply means living in the Church as thinking, reflective people who search for the truth in honesty and humility. There are different gifts and roles in the Church: there are popes, bishops, theologians, and faithful Christians. The truth arises and is affirmed in a conversation, a lived dialogue among all the members of the Christian community. There must be a place for conservative voices that affirm the tradition that has been handed down. There must also be a place for reasoned and prophetic voices that challenge the tradition to respond to new questions and insights.

Tragically, a growing chasm of intolerance between right and left, conservative and liberal, divides the Church today. There is a deadening lack of genuine dialogue because each side has formed stereotypes of the other, has ceased to listen to the other, and has moved to simplistic judgments of the other. One side can at times be tempted to indulge in an arrogance, a lack of appreciation for the richness of the tradition, a fascination with the new, and disregard for authority. The other side can at times be tempted to manifest a rigidity, a fear of change, an intolerance for ambiguity, a confusion of mindless conformity with orthodoxy. All of these temptations on both sides only divide the Church further and stifle the shared faith and dialogue that enlivens the Church and brings the whole truth to light.

The GC 34 document states some basic principles that are very much a part of the Church's tradition—a hierarchy of truths, development of doctrine, fidelity to truth and conscience, a need for constructive criticism and respectful expression of one's views. All of these elements are not only compatible with but are in fact essential to true fidelity and service in the Church. For those who think criticism and questioning and speaking out are at odds with loyalty and fidelity, this is a disturbing document. For those who see the truth as the result of a dynamic and self-correcting process of learning hammered out in a context of open dialogue, this document is a challenge to engage in the kind of reasoned reflection that has been the source of the Church's growth in understanding and living the gospel tradition. Robert Taft, a Jesuit theologian at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome and a delegate to GC 34, has written an insightful essay on the document we have been considering. He concluded with these words: "We debated, we struggled, we argued, we revised—and we came up with a

³³ Pelikan's exact words are "Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living" (*The Vindication of Tradition* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984], 65).

document those of us engaged in intellectual apostolates considered an absolute necessity, but one that tried to be scrupulously respectful of the Church, of its hierarchy, of our tradition, but above all of the truth, for which we are ultimately responsible to no one but ourselves and God.”³⁴

The document’s concluding section is entitled “In the End—Fidelity to Our Jesuit Charism to Serve.” This essay has reflected on the notion of fidelity in the Church as Ignatius expressed it in the sixteenth century in his “Rules for Thinking with the Church” and as the Thirty-fourth General Congregation expressed it in the twentieth century in its decree “On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church.” Both expressions call us to a profound attitude of fidelity in the context of service. The desire to be faithful servants has been the passion and driving force of the Society of Jesus since its foundation. That same desire continues to shape the life and ministry of the Society today.

³⁴ Robert Taft, S.J., “Respectful of the Church, Responsible to the Truth,” *The National Jesuit News*, October 1995, p. 9.



SOURCES

Thinking with the Church Today

(From the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola)

These Rules possibly date from Ignatius's stay in Paris (1528-35) and were in the manuscript of the Spiritual Exercises during their revision in Rome (1539-41). They come at the very end of the Exercises and are intended for someone who for a month has been engaged in those Exercises and was now about to return to ordinary life in the perilous and stormy situation of the Church at the time. They do not constitute a theoretical treatise in ecclesiology, but rather a set of practical counsels. The usual English title, "Rules for Thinking with the Church," is not adequate to express their context or what Ignatius actually had in mind. For handy reference George E. Ganss suggests the title "Rules for Thinking, Judging, and Feeling with the Church." See his brief but careful notes to these Rules on pages 197-200 of his edition of the Exercises.

[RULES FOR THINKING, JUDGING,
AND FEELING WITH THE
CHURCH]

352 ¹TO HAVE THE GENUINE
ATTITUDE
WHICH WE OUGHT TO MAIN-
TAIN
IN THE CHURCH MILITANT,
WE SHOULD OBSERVE THE FOL-
LOWING RULES.

353 ¹*The First Rule.* With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our holy Mother the hierarchical Church.

354 ¹*The Second.* We should praise confession to a priest, reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament once a year, and much more once a month, and still more every week, always with the required and proper conditions.

355 ¹*The Third.* We should praise frequent attendance at Mass; also, chants, psalmody, and long prayers inside and outside the church; ²and further, the

schedules setting the times for the whole Divine Office, for prayers of every kind, and for all the canonical hours.

356 ¹*The Fourth.* We should strongly praise religious institutes, virginity and continence, and marriage too, but not as highly as any of the former.

357 ¹*The Fifth.* We should praise the vows of religion, obedience, poverty, chastity, and vows to perform other works of supererogation which conduce to perfection. ²We should remember, too, that just as a vow is made in regard to matters which lead towards evangelical perfection, so vows ought not to be made with respect to matters that withdraw one from it, such as to enter business, to get married, and the like.

358 ¹*The Sixth.* We should praise relics of saints, by venerating the relics and praying to the saints. We should extol visits to stational churches, pilgrimages, indulgences for jubilees and crusades, and the lighting of candles in churches.

359 ¹*The Seventh.* We should praise precepts of fast and abstinence, for example,

in Lent, on ember days, vigils, Fridays and Saturdays; also penances, not only interior but also exterior.

360 ¹*The Eighth*. We ought to praise church buildings and their decorations; also statues and paintings, and their veneration according to what they represent.

361 ¹*The Ninth*. Lastly, we should praise all the precepts of the Church, while keeping our mind ready to look for reasons for defending them and not for attacking them in any way.

362 ¹*The Tenth*. We ought to be more inclined to approve and praise the decrees, recommendations, and conduct of our superiors [than to speak against them]. ²For although in some cases their acts are not or were not praiseworthy, to speak against them either by preaching in public or by conversing among the ordinary people would cause more murmuring and scandal than profit. ³And through this the people would become angry at their officials, whether civil or spiritual. ⁴However, just as it does harm to speak evil about officials among the ordinary people while they are absent, so it can be profitable to speak of their bad conduct to persons who can bring about a remedy.

363 ¹*The Eleventh*. We ought to praise both positive theology and Scholastic theology. For just as it is more characteristic of the positive doctors, such as St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and the rest to stir up our affections toward loving and serving God our Lord in all things, ²so it is more characteristic of the Scholastic teachers, such as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Master of the Sentences, and so on ³to define and explain for our times the matters necessary for salvation, and also to refute and expose all the errors and fallacies. ⁴For

the Scholastic teachers, being more modern, can avail themselves of an authentic understanding of Sacred Scripture and the holy positive doctors. ⁵Further still, being enlightened and clarified by divine influence, they make profitable use of the councils, canons, and decrees of our Holy Mother Church.

364 ¹*The Twelfth*. We ought to be on our guard against comparing those of us who are still living with the blessed of the past. For no small error is made when one says, ²for example, "He knows more than St. Augustine," or, "He is another St. Francis, or even more," or, "He is another St. Paul in goodness, holiness, and the like."

365 ¹*The Thirteenth*. To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What seems to me to be white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it. ²For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, his Spouse, there is the one same Spirit who governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls. ³For it is by the same Spirit and Lord of ours who gave the ten commandments that our Holy Mother Church is guided and governed.

366 ¹*The Fourteenth*. It is granted that there is much truth in the statement that no one can be saved without being predestined and without having faith and grace. ²Nevertheless, great caution is necessary in our manner of speaking and teaching about all these matters.

367 ¹*The Fifteenth*. We ought not to fall into a habit of speaking much about predestination. But if somehow the topic is brought up on occasions, it should be treated in such a way that the ordinary people do not fall into an error, as sometimes happens when they say, ²"Whether I am to be saved or damned

is already determined, and this cannot now be changed by my doing good or evil.”³Through this they grow listless and neglect the works which lead to good and to the spiritual advancement of their souls.

368 ¹*The Sixteenth*. In the same way we should take care that we do not, by speaking and insisting strongly about faith without any distinction or explanation, give the people an occasion to grow listless and lazy in their works—either before or after their faith is informed by charity.

369 ¹*The Seventeenth*. Similarly, we ought not to speak so lengthily and emphatically about grace that we generate a poison harmful to freedom of the will.²Hence one may speak about faith and grace as much as possible, with God’s help, for the greater praise of the Divine Majesty; ³but not in such ways or manners, especially in times as dangerous as

our own, that works and free will are impaired or thought worthless.

370 ¹*The Eighteenth*. It is granted that we should value above everything else the great service which is given to God because of pure love. Nevertheless, we should also strongly praise fear of the Divine Majesty. ²For not only is filial fear something pious and very holy, but so also is servile fear. Even if it brings a person nothing better or more useful, it greatly aids him or her to rise from mortal sin; ³and once such a one has risen, one easily attains to filial fear, which is wholly acceptable and pleasing to God our Lord, since it is inseparably united with love of him.

(George E. Ganss, S.J., trans. with commentary, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary* [St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992]; reprinted with permission of the publisher)

Guidelines for Thinking with the Church Today

(From *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises, a Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading*, by David L. Fleming, S.J. Here follows Fr. Fleming’s contemporary reading of the “Rules,” as found on pp. 281-91 of *Draw Me into Your Friendship*.)

St. Ignatius of Loyola was convinced that the man or woman who makes the thirty-day Exercises would be taking on a more active and concerned role in the life of the Church. In the midst of the confusion and turmoil of the sixteenth-century Church of his day, he knew the difficulty of maintaining a mature balance, a clear-headed judgment, and a loving reverence for both tradition and change. The guidelines which he proposed were meant to be internalized by the retreatant, just as the guidelines with regard to eating or the guidelines for the discernment of spirits. In this way, a person could come more easily to responsible judgment and action in everyday life. Even though Ignatius’s statements were made in the light of events in the Church of his day, the attitudes and approaches which he includes in his reflections have a lasting value for our own growth as church members. The following statements are meant to be helpful in developing a true and loving sensitivity to the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting as a Catholic in our present-day Church.

353 1. When legitimate authority speaks within the Church, we should listen

with receptive ears and be more prompt to respond favorably than to criticize in a condemnatory way.

2. We should praise and reverence the sacramental life in the Church, especially encouraging a more personal involvement and a more frequent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and of the sacrament of reconciliation.

355 3. We should praise and reverence the prayer life in the Church, especially as it has been developed in the Eucharistic celebration and in the public morning and evening praise service of the liturgy of the Hours.

356 4. We should praise and esteem all vocations as God-given within the church—married life, the dedicated single life, the life of priests, and the religious life.

357 5. We should praise the vowed religious life of chastity, poverty, and obedience as a special sign of a call to witness to God's reign whose value system stands in contrast to the value system of our world.

358 6. We should have a loving reverence for all the men and women who have gone before us and make up the communion of saints, especially those whom the Church has identified as helpers for us in our own struggling lives here and now. Our prayers for their support and our various devotions are our living out of the mystery that we all form the one communion of saints and that there is a continuing concern of all the members for one another.

359 7. We should respect the Christian call to penance and should respond freely to the abstinence and fasting of the prescribed days in the Church year. We should also continue our personal search

for the ways of giving expression to the carrying of our cross daily in our following of Jesus Christ.

360 8. We should show respect for our places of worship and for the statues, paintings, and decorations which are an attempt to beautify them and help us in praising God.

361 9. The laws and precepts within the church are meant to be of help for the institutional life of the Body of Christ. As a result, we should maintain a proper respect for such laws and respond with all our heart to them for the good order of the whole Body.

362 10. We should be more ready to give our support and approval to our leaders, both in their personal conduct and in their directives, than to find fault with them. Only greater dissatisfaction and disunity among us is caused by public criticism and defamation of character. Rather the proper step in remedying a wrong, harmful, unjust, or scandalous situation would be to refer and make representation to the persons who can do something about the problem.

363 11. We should praise and respect the work of the theologians in our Church, especially those who have given us the legacy of positive and Scholastic doctrine. Some men, such as St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory, have given us their theological reflections in a way that we are moved to a greater love and service of God. Today, too, some theologians write in this more pastoral or devotional way. Others, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, and Peter Lombard (the "Master of the Sentences"), define and explain doctrine in order to clarify Christian mysteries through analogies and to expose error and fallacious thinking. Some theologians today continue this process, and



their writings are often more difficult and less appealing than the first group mentioned. But both kinds of theologians are important for the reflective life of the Church. The modern theologians have this advantage: moved and enlightened by the grace of God, they have not only the legacy of the people before them and the rich development of Scripture studies, but also very importantly the whole tradition of the official Church's teaching as summed up in Church councils, decrees, and constitutions up to the present time.

364 12. We sometimes act as if we have discovered Christianity and true holiness for the first time in our own day. And so we have the tendency to exaggerate the contribution of a particular person in our contemporary Church or the holiness of life exemplified in certain practices. We should avoid making comparisons which attempt to exalt some of our own present-day leaders and practices at the expense of past peoples and traditions.

365 13. We believe that Christ our lord has shared his Spirit with the Church in a lasting way. The Spirit, then, is present in all the members of the Church, and the same Spirit continues to influence and guide in a special way the leadership in the Church for the good of all the members. Although there may be matters of faith or morals which we as individuals at times cannot see or grasp, we should explore whether the Church may have given some official direction about it in order to aid us in our Christian living. When we take up the area of infallibility of dogmas defined by the Church, our attitude should be that we surrender our own private judgment. In general, we should be more open to acknowledge the limitations of our own

individual opinion than to scorn the light of the Spirit's action within the tradition and communal vision of a church which is described as truly catholic.

366 14. It will always remain difficult to describe adequately the saving will of God. That God wants all people to be saved is revealed. That anyone of us has the freedom to reject God in a decisive way is also our belief. We should be careful in our thinking and speaking about this matter not to begin to deny either of these two essential statements of our Christian faith.

367 15. Because we must work out our salvation through our whole lifetime by the grace of God, we must avoid the two following extremes. Being pessimistic to the point of despair, we could act as if we have no ability to act freely or to change and so we deny the God-given gift of our personal freedom as well as the power of God's grace, with which we need to cooperate. Or being presumptuous, we could act as if we ourselves can change and grow and become holy solely through our own efforts, with God and grace being incidental to our salvation.

368 16. From what has been said above, there is always the danger of so stressing the importance of faith in God and God's grace for our salvation that we ignore the necessity of our own daily effort in living lives of active love for our neighbor and for our world.

369 17. Similarly, we can so stress the power of grace that we can be remiss in taking the human means to remedy physical, psychological, and spiritual evils. We must not try to escape from the responsibility to use our freedom and to choose from all the various means for our growth and development which God has given us in our contemporary world.

370 18. Today we have a great emphasis on the motivation of love being central to our Christian lives. Yet we can so overstress a language of love that we ignore the value of Christian fear—the fear of the lord which acknowledges God as God and the filial fear of offending a Father who loves us. And so in the practical living of our Christian lives, we must acknowledge and make

use of the various motivating factors which stimulate us towards growth and development in Christ.

(David L. Fleming, S.J., trans. with commentary, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* [St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996]; reprinted with permission of the publisher)

General Congregation 34

DECREE ELEVEN

On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church

Introduction

298 1. When General Congregation 33 spoke of our “Life in the Church,”¹ it committed the Society once again to “serving the Church in her teaching, life, and worship.”² In his final address to the congregation of procurators,³ Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach reiterated this commitment. GC 34 reaffirms this long and permanent tradition of service proper to the Society, one to which we dedicate ourselves not only as religious but also, and especially, in virtue of the fourth vow of obedience to the pope in regard to missions.

299 2. This service is exercised in myriad humble, sometimes hidden, ways by Jesuit priests and brothers missioned to the labors of parish and mission station,

pulpit and confessional, workshop and printing press, classroom and laboratory.

300 3. Equally humble and hidden is the service exercised by Jesuit theologians, by consultors of the dicasteries of the Holy See, by consultants and resource persons for episcopal conferences and individual diocesan bishops. Along with the more public service of scholarly research, teaching, speaking, and writing, these are intellectual tasks that require freedom, openness, and courage in the objective service of truth.

301 4. Our Jesuit service can also be the dangerous commitment of witness and struggle against the forces of injustice and persecution, both social and religious, a witness that has been once again sealed by the blood of martyrs. In recent decades, as throughout our history, the heroism of our many brothers who have suffered and died for their fidelity to the Church bears clear and irrefutable witness that the Society’s foundational commitment is truly “to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under

¹ GC 33, D 1, nn. 6–8.

² *Ibid*, n. 6.

³ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Final Address to the Congregation of Procurators 67, 8 September 1987, nn. 8f., AR 19 (1987): pp. 1081–84.

the Roman Pontiff."⁴

Church and World: The New Context

302 5. Jesuits today exercise this service in a world gripped by strong sociopolitical and technological changes, often of a revolutionary character, fueled by the struggle for justice, modernization, and development. This dialectic of change produces multiple problems from which the Society cannot be immune.

303 6. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has been engaged in its own dialectic of *traditio et progressio*. New strains and conflicts have arisen as it seeks to respond to the call for an evangelization that is ever old yet ever new. These tensions affect several aspects of the Church's life: liturgy, doctrine, ethics, discipline, pastoral ministry, and the inculturation of each of these.

304 7. Vatican II was a prophetic event, producing a momentous renewal within Catholicism not witnessed since the Council of Trent. This dynamic ecclesial creativity reveals a People of God on pilgrimage, striving, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to live a recovered ecclesiology of collegial (or "synodal" for the Eastern churches) coresponsibility. Those disoriented by the inevitable conflicts that result from such an invigorating new vision should recall that most major ecumenical councils have set in motion a very lengthy process of reform and renewal which did not reach a lived consensus for centuries.

305 8. The ecclesiological renewal of Vatican II has helped us rediscover the Universal Church as a *koinōnia* of local churches under the entire college of

bishops, of which the bishop of Rome is the head. This, in turn, has renewed our consciousness of the distinctive and inalienable ecclesial role of the laity in the life of the Church. Can we be surprised that this deepened sense of the coresponsibility of all God's people for the whole life of the Church has led to more voices speaking, and that they are not all saying the same thing? This is a source of vitality—as well as of creative tensions.

Challenges of the Times

306 9. Attentive to this summons to work with the People of God in the spirit of Vatican II and GCs 32 and 33, and invited by the Pope to help in the implementation of the same council, the Society renews its fidelity to the teaching of the Church as it discerns and confronts the signs of the times. For among those signs are contemporary developments that can pose intellectual, cultural, and pastoral challenges to that fidelity.

307 10. Hunger, religious and racial persecution, disordered economic and cultural development, the lack of political freedom and social justice; widespread socioeconomic discrimination, exploitation, and sexual abuse, especially of women and children; callous disregard for the precious gift of life; pastoral challenges of secularity; social anonymity and the alienation of modern urbanization; the dissolution of the family: all these confront, often massively, the Church—and therefore ourselves—and demand our response.

308 11. Even positive developments are not without their ambiguities: remarkable advances in the life sciences and the accompanying new problems of bioethics, the need to nuance cherished theological theories in the light of contempo-

⁴ *Formula* [3].

rary hermeneutics and historiography, the new culture created by the explosion of mass media, internal problems of liturgical discipline and sacramental life provoked by modernization and inculturation. These are among the “new situations being presented to the Society, demanding, in full fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church, valid responses to so many healthy questions from the People of God” to which Father General alludes in his final address to the congregation of procurators.⁵ This fidelity will adhere to the accepted norms of assent and to Catholic teaching on the hierarchy of truths and the development of Church doctrine, as contained in the official documents of the Magisterium and in the common teaching of proven Catholic theologians.⁶

309 12. A Jesuit, especially the scholar or theologian engaged in research and the molding of informed public opinion, will see these challenges as occasions for service. His mission must ensure that the Christian tradition maintains its respectability as a coherent and valid worldview in dialogue with the realm of secular scholarship and science. Only through the exacting labor of the scholarly enterprise, carried out with faith and in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual trust, can the Church remain an active force for good in the contemporary world of intellectual and cultural discourse. GC 34 expresses its deep ap-

⁵ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *op. cit.*, n. 7, *AR* 19 (1987): p. 1081.

⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 11; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 24 June 1973, nn. 4f., CIC 750-54; CCEO 598-600; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 85ff.

preciation to, solidarity with, and support for the Jesuits engaged in this crucial service to the Church today.

310 13. Such service requires courage and integrity; it can also involve pain. As Father General said, aware of “strong tensions within the Church from which the Society may not stand aloof, and through their very apostolic responsibility, Jesuits are inevitably dragged into conflictual, even explosive ecclesiastical situations.”⁷ Our response to such situations can give rise to tensions with some Church authorities. Despite—indeed, because of—our sincere desire to live in fidelity to the Magisterium and the hierarchy, there may be times when we feel justified, even obliged, to speak out in a way that may not always win us general approval and could even lead to sanctions painful to the Society and constituting an impediment to our work.

311 14. To do so does not put the Jesuit in a stance of disobedience or revolt. Ignatian obedience, in accord with the tradition of Catholic theology, has always recognized that our first fidelity must be to God, to the truth, and to a well-formed conscience. Obedience, then, cannot exclude our prayerful discernment of the course of action to be followed, one that may in some circumstances differ from the one suggested by our religious and Church superiors. Such discernment, and its respectful representation to superiors, is an authentic element of our Ignatian tradition confirmed in GC 31⁸ and clarified in GC 32.⁹

⁷ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *op. cit.*, n. 4, *AR* 19 (1987): p. 1079.

⁸ GC 31, D 17, n. 10.

⁹ GC 32, D 11, n. 55.

312 15. At the same time, Ignatian obedience is one of concrete fidelity to the real, visible, hierarchical Church, not to some abstract ideal. This Church is not something distinct from us: it is the community of believers to which we belong and whose virtues and defects, triumphs and tragedies, we share. Once the discernment is accomplished and the representations made, the Jesuit attitude will ultimately be one modeled on the "Rules in Order to Have the Proper Attitude of Mind in the Church Militant" of St. Ignatius.¹⁰

313 16. In saying this we are well aware that the context in which Ignatius wrote these rules is very different from that of today. But Ignatian service in the Church is not a history lesson. It is a profound mystical bond that transcends the particularities of its historical origins in the sixteenth-century Church. Rooted in faith that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church, it drives us to seek the *magis*, serenely confident that "to them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8:28).

314 17. Therefore, if there is a time for speaking out, there may also be a time for silence, chosen by discernment or even imposed by obedience. If there is a time for representation, there is also a time for the abnegation of our intellect and will, which becomes for us a new way of seeing through the clouds of suffering and uncertainty to a higher truth and wisdom, that of the Cross.

The Jesuit Response: A Contemporary Perspective

315 18. A contemporary Ignatian response to these problems is given in the

address of Father General to the congregation of procurators to which we have already referred.¹¹ It is not meant to provide an updated version of the "Rules in Order to Have the Proper Attitude of Mind in the Church Militant";¹² still less does it pretend to give an exhaustive treatment of the theme or of its history and interpretation.¹³ We find instead a profound reflection on the foundational inspiration that motivated the Society to integrate itself more fully into a living experience of the mystery of the Church, in the spirit of the fourth vow in regard to missions that so distinctively unites us with the Holy Father.

316 19. This congregation makes its own the teaching of Father General's address and recommends it to the whole Society for attentive study in an atmosphere of prayer, examen, and individual and communal reflection and discernment. In accord with GC 33, Father General affirms that the Society must "seek to incorporate itself more and more vigorously and creatively into the life of the Church,"¹⁴ and "learn in the Church, with the Church, and for the Church how to live our faith as adults in the conditions, cultures, and languages of this end of the century."¹⁵

317 20. If our love of Christ, inseparable from our love for his spouse the Church, impels us to seek the will of God in each situation, it can also oblige

¹¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *op. cit.* nn. 8f., *AR* (1987): pp. 1081-84.

¹² *Ibid.*, n. 8; the updating was mandated by GC 33, D 1, n. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, n. 9.

¹⁴ GC 33, D 1, n. 4.

¹⁵ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *op. cit.* n. 17, *AR* 19 (1987): p. 1089.

¹⁰ *SpEx* [352-70].

us to engage in constructive criticism based on a prayerful discernment. But it cannot justify a lack of solidarity with the Church, from which we are never in any way distinct or apart. In the elaboration and expression of our theological views and in our choice of pastoral options, we must always actively seek to understand the mind of the hierarchical Church, having as our goal the end of the Society to help souls. At the same time, we must try to articulate the *sensus fidelium* and help the Magisterium discern in it the movements of the Spirit in accord with the teaching of Vatican II.¹⁶ Formed by the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and desirous of being faithful to this Ignatian vision, we pray God to instill in us the spirit that animates these Ignatian rules.

318 21. Even when it is not possible to refrain from all critical observations in the objective evaluation of certain situations in the life of the Church, or even of the comportment of persons holding responsible positions in its service, we will always seek to do so in this spirit. As men of integrity, we must of course be true to our consciences. But we will speak (or keep silent) in prudence and humility, and with a sense of genuine respect and affection for the pastors of the Church, both local and universal.¹⁷ We will strive for the honesty to gratefully acknowledge the grace of their guidance as a needed corrective to whatever may be tainted by narrowness or the limitations of what is personal and subjective. We will be aware that as members of the Society we are bound to them in a special way, and that our prime concern

is to cooperate with them in building up and, where necessary, healing both the universal and local churches.

319 22. We will be conscious, too, that the Church cannot be explained in purely sociopolitical terms, but is animated by a transcendent Spirit that guides and authenticates the Christian community through the collegial action of the Pope and bishops,¹⁸ and is affirmed by the *sensus fidelium*.¹⁹

The Jesuit Response: Concrete Modalities

320 23. We will recognize that, particularly in sensitive doctrinal and moral questions, it is often difficult for magisterial statements to explicate exhaustively all aspects of an issue. Rather than indulging in selective and superficial criticism, we will look for the central message and, through discerning theological reflection, attempt to understand it in depth and explain it positively, respectfully, and clearly.

321 24. We will keep difficulties in perspective and not isolate them from their context. We will not underestimate the possibility of giving scandal, nor forget that between the extremes of premature, ill-considered public criticism and servile silence there exists the alternative of moderate and respectful expression of our views.²⁰ We will avoid particular interests and bear in mind the greater good of the whole Church. When possible, we will seek recourse through offi-

¹⁸ Cf. *SpEx* [365].

¹⁹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 12, 35.

²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Allocution to General Congregation 34, 5 January 1995, n. 6; cf. Appendix I.

¹⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 12, 35.

¹⁷ Cf. *SpEx* [353].

cial channels;²¹ we will remain in active dialogue and discernment with our own superiors in the Society, and conduct consultation and dialogue with other competent Church authorities in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. To this end, wherever possible we will show ourselves ready to foster informal personal contacts of cordial friendliness with the local bishops in areas where we exercise our mission, and seek to contain and defuse possible sources of conflict before they develop.

322 25. If the Church appears to be attacked or defamed in the media, we cannot limit ourselves to a dismissive condemnation of such abuses. We must enter the world of communication and defend the truth, while at the same time honestly acknowledging conflicts and polarities within the Church. Though we will do so without sharpening tensions or weakening authority, we cannot avoid issues which, as news, the media will present in any event.

323 26. We must cooperate with the media so that the Church's true face can appear and the Gospel be inculturated in this new mass culture as well. We will strive to see that issues conducive to good receive effective media attention. Though we remain always loyal to the truth, our Ignatian sense of *sentire cum Ecclesia* will lead us to present what is praiseworthy in the Church, revealing the bonds of affection that make us love the Church and cleave to it as a source of life, solace, and healing, as an internal authority for genuine religious experience, as a nurturing matrix of our deepest values.²²

²¹ Cf. *SpEx* [362].

²² Cf. *SpEx* [353–63].

Conclusion: Fidelity to Our Jesuit Charism to Serve

324 27. If in today's world the Society is to be engaged "in the most difficult and extreme fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the front line of social conflict," as the Holy Father said in his address at the beginning of this congregation,²³ repeating the words of Pope Paul VI at the opening of GC 32,²⁴ we are there as "men whom Christ himself sends into the world to spread his holy doctrine among people of every state and condition."²⁵

325 28. In that same spirit, on this eve of the third millennium we pledge ourselves once again to generous service of all our brothers and sisters. This service will be Christian only if anchored by fidelity to him who makes all things new. It will be Jesuit only if it is in union with the successor of Peter. For this union has always given us the assurance—indeed, it is the visible sign—"of our communion with Christ, the first and supreme head of the Society which by its very name is his: the Society of Jesus."²⁶

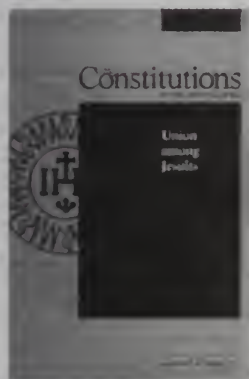
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²³ John Paul II, Allocution to General Congregation 34, 5 January 1995, n. 8; cf. Appendix I.

²⁴ Paul VI, Allocution to General Congregation 32, 3 December 1974, n. 2; cf. Documents of General Congregation 32, Appendix.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; cf. *SpEx* [145].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

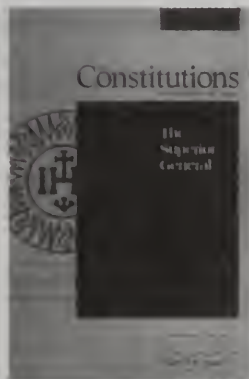


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