

Essay
AD USUM NOSTRORUM
(or about how I see the Society of Jesus at the beginning of the third millennium)
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PREFACE

Argument of this treatise.

My intention is, with the grace of God our Lord, to put in writing in this paper: first, the manner of government that this Congregation of ours has. Secondly, the many and serious errors that are involved in it. Thirdly, the inconveniences that result from them. Fourth, the means that could be taken to repair them and to stop them.

I can well see the difficulty and risk I am putting myself in, and that not everyone will approve of this matter. [...] Besides the fact that in every Congregation custom has great force. Everyone wants to go the beaten path, without regard for other inconveniences; if there are swamps, they try to pass them as best they can; if there are slopes, they try to climb them, even with sweat and fatigue. It is of few to see if they could take a better way. However, I am confident that there are people who are eager to get it right, and who are beginning to think, and even to understand clearly, that all that glitters is not gold and seems so, and that in our government there are things and points that can be repaired and from which damages and inconveniences result, which I will try to put so clearly, that no person of calm and capable judgment will fail to confess the truth.

It will not be necessary to instruct anyone who reads these papers to refrain from judging the intentions, which is reserved to God alone, and to look at things in themselves in order to make the right judgment.

P. Juan de Mariana, S. I.

A Treatise on the Intimate Affairs of the Society of Jesus [1].

Dear fellow Jesuits:

For a long time I have been very dissatisfied with the situation of the Society of Jesus. I do not have a vocational crisis, nor am I thinking of leaving. Ever since I felt the vocation to be a Jesuit at the age of fifteen, it has been clear to me that the Lord wants me here, whatever the personal or institutional situation. However, for years I have seen that the Society is without direction, without a project and without the ability to rebuild itself and look to the coming decades with enthusiasm, purpose and desire to serve God and the brothers in the Church. This dissatisfaction, which at times is disillusionment, and at others indignation, shame, anger, impotence and desolation, at times has been referred to persons (How badly he does it or how little Jesuit he is, this provincial is a disaster!), at others to my province or other provinces; and at others to my own personal, religious and spiritual immaturity. Only in recent times, when I believe I have achieved greater maturity and stability and have established myself as a Jesuit, have I realized that the matter is more serious and that it goes beyond my own limitations, subjectivity or difficulties. Now I can recognize more clearly that the Society of Jesus has serious problems of identity and orientation, regardless of how I experience it personally. As an institution of the Church we have been experiencing a profound decline for the last fifty-odd years, and there are no signs or indications that this will change unless it is recognized as such and the means to do so are put in place.

2. In the past, my attitude was to get angry, to criticize, to isolate myself so as not to see and receive any more signs of decadence; to avoid reading official documents, since I already knew that they would not contribute much and would probably make me feel worse; to focus on my work, in which I am doing very well; not to participate in provincial meetings or other common activities of reflection. None of that has given me peace, and the feeling of dissatisfaction continues. The question I have been asking myself for the last three or four years has been: And you Julio, what are you going to do to help the Society get back on track? I have prayed a lot, I have talked about it with Jesuit and non-Jesuit friends, I have meditated on it. In the end, the one who helped me was a coach, who asked me what I could do if I took out those inner conversations I was having and put them down on paper. Then he added: "You'll see what you can do with them later, but you have to transform them into external conversations. So I decided to start this essay on how I see the Company and what its problems are. I have decided to do it by telling it to you, my fellow Jesuits, my religious family. I have also prayed a lot about it and discerned the tone it should have. It could be a denunciation, like Emile Zola's *J'accuse...*! or the ribbons of the prophets of Israel. It could be a catharsis, bringing out personal anger or frustration at being in an organization that is going badly; or write a satire full of sarcasm and irony, like Father José Francisco de Isla's *Fray Gerundio de Campazas*. Another option was to approach it as a sociologist, with a scientific, impartial, descriptive method. None of them gave me peace, nor convinced me.

3. I turned this over several months in prayer. From where and for what purpose was I going to write the essay? Until I was able to answer that I could not begin. What I realized was that I could only do it from my being part of this family, to which I have belonged in some way since I was seven years old, when I entered the Seminary School of the Jesuits of Montevideo and in which I hope to die when

the Lord determines it. I can only write it thinking that it can be useful to my companions and to the order, to make explicit things that I believe I am not the only one who sees and lives, but that somehow, they are not said in public or openly. I can only do it with love for the Company and commitment to its fate at this stage of its history.

4. My knowledge of the Society is limited. I studied for eleven years in a Jesuit school and entered the novitiate in 1986 at the age of 19. My first nine years of formation were in Uruguay, with two summers of international juniorate (ECSEJ) in Paraguay and Chile. The following six years were spent in Spain studying theology and doctorate. In Uruguay I have always worked in Montevideo: a school, four parishes and a university, all run by the Jesuits. In Madrid I had apostolate in three schools, one of the Jesuits and two of the nuns, besides collaborating in a parish that was not run by the Jesuits. I have traveled extensively and frequently in Latin America, the United States and Western Europe. I also got to know some of the Jesuits in Singapore, Israel, Poland and Lithuania. All of Africa, almost all of Asia, Oceania, Central Europe and Canada are outside my experience. Everything I do not know about the Society is much more than what I know and therefore I point it out as a great limitation and should be taken into account when reading this work, even when it is not made explicit.

5. My formation, apart from my priestly studies (Bachelor of Philosophy and Licentiate in Theology), has been in history (Licentiate at the University of the Republic, in Montevideo, and Doctorate at the Complutense University of Madrid). My thesis was on The educational action of the Society of Jesus in Uruguay in the 19th century, for which I studied a lot about Jesuit education in the 19th century, both in Europe and Latin America. The research allowed me to delve into the archives of the order in Spain, Rome and the Rio de la Plata. I read thousands of letters between Jesuits and learned about the daily life and government of the Society in those years (1850-1920) in Spain and the American Southern Cone. My apostolic work has been in schools, both in pastoral ministry (during juniorate, philosophy, teaching and theology, in centers in Montevideo and Madrid), as well as in the direction of high school and academics after ordination (Colegio Seminario de Montevideo). I was Director of the Education Department of the Catholic University of Uruguay, of which I have been Rector for the last five years. I have also worked in education for the Archbishopric of Montevideo since 2014, through the Sophia Foundation, of which I was its first Executive Director and current Executive Vice President. Between 2010 and 2014 I was pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Montevideo, having worked as a catechist in two other parishes in my novitiate years. I have always had a lot of ministerial work (baptisms, marriages, funerals, chaplaincy of nuns and school children, Sunday Masses). I was minister for six years in the community of the Seminary School and superior for three and a half years of the community in St. Ignatius Parish in Montevideo, until it was decided to transfer the novitiate of the province to that place and I was moved to another community.

6. To write this essay I decided to re-read many of the documents and books about the Society that I had read, especially in the novitiate and third probation: Constitutions and Complementary Norms, general congregations and letters of the generals. Also many other Jesuit writings and histories of the Society. Although many of the things I will share could be said about other religious congregations and the Church in general, I have made the decision not to go into these other realities, but knowing that they exist and affect us.

7. My personal balance of thirty-six years as a Jesuit is one of gratitude, consolation and deep happiness. I have met hundreds of Jesuits, I have many dear companions and friends, and I have admired many real Jesuits. I have known true saints, some of them canonizable, others perhaps not so much because of some characteristic, but with admirable and extraordinary virtues and dedication. My debt of gratitude to my fellow Jesuits is immense. I owe who I am, after my parents, to the Jesuits. I have had great formators from the novitiate to the third probation, who have transmitted to me the charism of the Society and have taught me how to live my priesthood. The latter has been a source of uninterrupted consolation in the almost twenty-three years I have been ordained. The Society has been very patient with my faults and sins, very generous in giving me formation and supporting me in all my needs. Of course there have been bad moments, disagreements, anger, injustices and distancing; but in the balance of my life and vocation, clearly there have been many more good moments, encounters, joys, acts of forgiveness and generosity, and rapprochements.

8. The reason for this essay has to do with the affection and gratitude I have for the Society, as well as the concern I feel for its present situation. I think of the younger companions, especially the newly ordained priests, who have their whole apostolic life ahead of them, and I feel the moral obligation and in conscience to say what I think, see and believe. Man is an animal with great resources for adaptation and survival. As he grows and gets to know the context, he adapts and learns to live in the most adequate way possible. Many even manage to live happily. But it is naive to think that all manage to survive and also to be happy. With the help of the Lord and many companions, I have managed to do so. However, in these decades of religious life I have seen many companions fall by the wayside of vocation and happiness. Some may not have had a true vocation, but I believe that most of them did. Today I continue to see young people who fall by the wayside and whom the Society is unable to support and care for. I write for those who are struggling to survive and be happy in their vocation, for those who have fallen by the wayside, and for those who in the coming years and decades will decide to pursue the wonderful life of being a Jesuit. I have written it for the many who could choose our vocation and do not because of the situation we are in.

Chapter I: The Emperor is Naked: Discourse and Reality

9. Hans Christian Andersen's tale, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, is well known. Although there are antecedents to this story in Count Lucanor, by the Infante Don Juan Manuel, and in other authors in Europe and Asia, the interesting thing about the Danish version is that it leaves aside the blindness of the emperor and the courtiers based on the fear of being considered illegitimate children or new Christians, to attribute it to the fear of being considered "unsuitable for the position held or unusually stupid". Thus, for Andersen, although everyone saw that the emperor was naked, starting with himself, the fear of ridicule or of being left out of the consideration of others prevented them from recognizing the reality, and everyone praised the magnificent new suit. It often seems to me that in the Society of Jesus, its members are in the same situation. We all, or many of us, know that the order has been in a tremendous decline for the last fifty-seven years. We all, or many of us, see that we have lost our way and that we lack hope, zeal, drive, decision, courage, but we continue to pretend that this is not so. We do not want to be seen as inadequate within the Society; we do not want to be considered pessimistic,

nostalgic or conservative, and so we deny reality. In private we are capable of seeing the problems, of complaining about a thousand things, of becoming bitter about what is happening, but when someone dares to add one thing and another and draw a conclusion that speaks of decadence, we stop and deny it. When are we going to hear a provincial, a general or a master of novices shout “the emperor is naked”, the Society is naked or, the Society of Jesus is living a deep process of internal decadence and its near future is very much compromised?

10. Some examples of the nakedness of the Society or its profound decadence. First example: In 1965 the Society reached its greatest expansion in membership: 36,038 fathers, brothers and scholastics. In 2022 it stands at 14,818 Jesuits. Every year about three hundred members are lost (last year 379), which is equivalent to the size of a fairly large province. When I joined the Society in 1986, the Assistant for South Latin America visited our novitiate. At that time there were about 25,000 Jesuits and he told us that according to the calculations that had been made at the General Curia, the Society would stabilize at 23,000 members. We already have eight thousand less than that estimate. We have lost 59% of our membership since 1965. The number of elderly Jesuits over the age of 65 is overwhelming in most Western countries. In 2021 only the Africa Assistancy grew by twelve members. All the others have decreased, including the Asian Assistancy. In some countries the Society will practically disappear in ten to fifteen years. If we were to make a statistical study comparing the percentages of novices, scholastics, brothers and Jesuits *ora pro Ecclesia et Societatis*, the picture would be much worse, since life expectancy has increased a lot in this half century and the number of retired Jesuits in infirmaries is much higher than it was in 1965. Therefore, the reduction of the apostolic forces of the Society is greater than the 59% that the unbundled numbers show.

11. I think it is obvious that the whole of society has changed in the last fifty years and that the Society, and the Church, are not isolated from the world. The causes of this decline are complex and varied. However, I have the deep conviction that a great part of the responsibility for the lack of vocations is ours and has to do with our situation of interior decadence, of loss of apostolic and religious north, of lack of full religious and priestly life. In our order there is a lack of clear, honest and well-founded self-criticism about why year after year fewer young men enter and why so many young scholastics or priests leave.

12. Second example. I know several confreres from different provinces who participated in the last General Congregation, the 36th. I have heard all of them say that it was a frustrating experience, that they did not know where to go or what to do; that elaborating the decree was a lot of work and it came out because something had to be done; that they waited for the Pope’s visit to have some orientation and that they did not receive it, because there was no formal speech, etc., etc. etc. In the end, a nine-page document came out, which is a jumble of commonplaces and platitudes, with nothing concrete to guide the Society in the coming years, and that, seven years after its promulgation, few Jesuits have read it again or it has meant anything to them in their religious and apostolic life. To elect the General (after twelve days) and to write the nine pages of Decree 1 and the eight pages of Decree 2, 215 Jesuits met in Rome for forty-two days. This congregation was preceded by three years of preparation, with meetings in all the provinces, by regions and by commissions. The results, in terms of efficiency and efficacy, could not have been more negative. However, was there any member of General Congregation 36 who wrote an article critical of what happened? Was there any other Jesuit who

publicly expressed that the truth is that more was expected from a General Congregation? Was there anyone who published something critical of the decrees that were produced and who showed some of their weaknesses? General Congregation 36 was naked, but no one has dared to say so.

13. I believe that the experience of the last General Congregation was not uncommon; this has been happening with General Congregations for a long time. I remember that my provincial at the time, upon returning from General Congregation 34 in 1995, who had also prepared for it with a lot of time and countless previous meetings, expressed privately that for him it had been a great disappointment, that he had not felt the wind of the Spirit and that it had been a congregation of compromises to get along with everyone. [2] Something similar seems to have happened with the mythical General Congregation 32, according to Father Urbano Valero in his last work *Paul VI and the Jesuits*, where he says that “it was not an easy GC. It took a long time to find and undertake the path of its work.” [3]

14. What I want to highlight is the inability to call a spade a spade, to recognize the failure of the work of a general congregation or how poorly organized it was. The problem is not that it was a rather useless, irrelevant or frustrating experience; the bigger problem is that we are not able to say so and review why it happened and what can be done so that this situation does not happen again.

15. Third example. Apostolic Preferences: General Congregation 36, in its Decree 2, point 14, charged the new Superior General “to review the process - begun by GC 34 and continued by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach - of evaluating how our present apostolic preferences are being carried out and to propose, if appropriate, new ones. Discernment should involve the widest possible participation of the whole Society, as well as those who are involved with us in our mission. According to the final document, the result was a work that took sixteen months of work, in which the communities and works of the Society throughout the world participated. The result was a ten-page document, which gave as fruit what we all expected, which was basically: spirituality, poor, youth and environment. All said in a rhetoric, a mixture of Jesuit language, progressive, politically correct and careful not to leave anything out or that could offend anyone. The document has turned out, in my opinion, to be inconsequential and empty for the real life of the Jesuits and their works.

16. To begin with, let us consider the word used to speak of the objectives or orientations for the next ten years of the life of the Order: preferences. Although Decree 2 of General Congregation 36 refers to them in relation to GC 34 and Fr. Kolvenbach, the reality is that what Kolvenbach promulgated in 2003 were Universal Apostolic Priorities and their formulation was concrete: 1. Migration and refugees. In this way, they could be concretized into actions and evaluated if these objectives or priorities had been achieved. The change of term, from priorities to preferences, was deliberate. The fulfillment of the 2003 priorities gives the impression that it was not significant and the situation of these five priorities, sixteen years later, had not changed, and in some cases, such as priorities 3 and 4, had clearly been impoverished. Why, then, is it “better” to use preferences instead of priorities? Because preferences are so generic and vague, so difficult to evaluate, that seven years from now we will be able to say that they have guided us, and whether or not this was true cannot be verified. In the case of the 2003 Priorities one could ask for numbers: how many Jesuits have been assigned to Roman houses in the last sixteen years, how many houses have been opened in Africa, how many Jesuits are assigned to migrants and refugees, what projects have been carried out in

refugee camps that have been beneficial to the lives of those who live there? But what figures could be asked to evaluate preferences?

17. I personally believe that the document of the Universal Apostolic Preferences has very debatable affirmations on many topics and that it assumes visions about the world, politics and the economy that many Jesuits do not share and that we have no moral or faith obligation to share. However, what seems more debatable to me is that it is believed to be the fruit of discernment and of an authentic participation of the Jesuit bases and of the collaborators of the works. I participated in some of the instances in my community and I know how others were carried out and I think that methodologically they are very questionable. Many people did not take the process seriously, among other reasons, because they knew that everything was already defined beforehand. It is not that they thought there was a Machiavellian mind in Rome. What they believe is that there is a culture of compromise, balance, and political correctness in secular society, in the Church today, and in the Society. It has become customary to write documents, even if there is not much conviction about their content, nor is it thought that they will be put into practice.

18. I know it is hard to say, but I firmly believe that the document of the Universal Apostolic Preferences lacks authentic apostolic zeal: it does not excite, it does not challenge and it will pass unnoticed in the history of the Society. The document is naked, because in spite of the religious and Jesuit rhetoric it uses, it is not a religious document, it is secularized in its approach to the world. We are told that it is the mission of the Society today, that it has been commissioned by the Pope, that it shows us the path that the Holy Spirit is showing the Society today, that it is the fruit of a common discernment. And we repeat it, but many Jesuits believe that it is not so. We do not dare to say it for fear of being left out, of being considered “unsuitable for the position we occupy or unusually foolish”.

19. One last example of our nakedness. As a Jesuit trained in the study of history, I cannot help but notice that a narrative has been constructed about the Society over the last half century, which is transmitted in many ways and sacralized, and which has much of a refoundational myth. Unfortunately there is very little historical writing about the last century and a half of the Society. The titanic efforts made at the end of the 19th century, with the impetus of Father General Louis Martin, bore marvelous historiographical fruit in Rome, at the Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu and the Gregorian University and in so many other provinces. Thanks to several generations of Jesuit historians we have a fairly extensive knowledge of the sources and history of the Society up to the 20th century. It is true that most of them were Jesuit historians and that the topics, approach and inclination were quite conditioned by that condition. However, there were great historians in the order and those works allowed that today there are many academic historians, Catholic and non-Catholic, who work on the history of the Society and who drank from the works of those Jesuits. The Institutum was closed during the generalate of Father Nicolás and the Jesuit archives have not been accessible since 1958, following the criteria of the Vatican Secret Archives. There are no histories of the generalates of Fr. Ledóchowski (1915-1942) or Fr. Janssens (1946--1964), and the studies on the period from 1965 onwards are still superficial and, in general, too partial. Even the work of Gianni La Bella, *The Jesuits. From Vatican II to Pope Francis*, published in 2019, can be qualified as a history *ad usum novitiorum*. The Italian historian knows his trade and although a layman, he shows no critical sense towards his

object of study, which is the order. He does no more than endorse in academic garb the official account of the Society over the last fifty years.

20. A cornerstone of this official story is the importance assigned to Father Pedro Arrupe in the configuration of what today is the Society. It is said that in the 1970s, some critics of the direction the order was taking said: “A Basque founded the Society, and another Basque is finishing it”. I believe that other Jesuits transformed that phrase and in some way say: “A Basque founded the Society, and another Basque refounded it. We live in the Society of Ignatius and Arrupe.

21. I declare it without complexes: I am not an Arrupist, nor do I believe that Father Arrupe was a great General of the Society. I cannot pronounce on his personal holiness because I did not know him, but I must admit that I liked his book *En Él solo la esperanza* very much since the novitiate and it has helped me to pray. From the references I received from those who knew him, I think he was a classic Jesuit: spiritual, austere, apostolic, well-intentioned. His letters and writings about the Society, published in *The Jesuit Identity in Our Times*, show a knowledge of our vocation and an extraordinary fidelity to the spirit of St. Ignatius. I read them early in my life in the order and reread them for this work, and they continue to confirm me in the proper vocation of the Society, in which he was formed and grew. At the same time, I see the fruits of his generalate and think that he did not know or could not maintain that fidelity throughout his government. I do not know him well enough to know if it was naïve optimism (quite common at the time), inability to understand that many did not live the changes with the same fidelity as he did, or other characteristics of his personality that prevented him from adequately guiding the Society in those fifteen years. I refer to the facts and to the fact that “by their fruits you will know them”. I believe that the apostolic, vocational and spiritual fruits of Arrupe’s period were not of authentic renewal for the Order, but rather of profound decadence.

Beyond the person and the government of Father Arrupe, there is the myth and the use that is made of them. Arrupe is often cited today as an argument of authority, as if he were the founder of the order, which he was not. The ex-combatants of ‘68, and their death throes, who still have a lot of weight in the order, appeal to Arrupe to uncritically vindicate the 70’s of the last century. The name of Arrupe is given to countless houses and works throughout the world, against the custom of the Society; they speak of the Society of Arrupe; and he is named as a synonym of renewal, as if for a young man of today a priest who ceased to govern the Society forty years ago were significant. Nostalgia for the period of Father Arrupe also shows our blindness in the face of the emperor’s nakedness. We idealize a period of profound crisis in the Society; we do not analyze it critically and therefore, we cannot react to dynamics that were born in that period and that continue to lead us to our demise.

23. Arrupe’s canonization is part of this dynamic of uncritical mythologizing of a period. Somehow, it is believed that if he is declared a saint, his work and period will be “canonized”. This is not so. In the first place, because several people have already been canonized who clearly did not have the same orientation as Arrupe and even came into conflict with him, such as Paul VI and John Paul II. Secondly, because if the Church declares someone a saint, it does not mean in any way that it “canonizes” his work or governmental actions. Pope John Paul II explained it masterfully in his homily at the beatification of John XXIII and Pius IX: “Holiness is lived in history, and no saint is exempt from the limitations and conditions proper to our humanity. In beatifying a son of hers, the

Church does not celebrate particular historical choices made by him; rather, she proposes him as a model to be imitated and venerated for his virtues, to the praise of the divine grace that shines forth in them.” [4]

Chapter II: “Why do you doubt?” [5]

24. The allocution of Paul VI to the 32nd General Congregation impressed me very much since I read it in the novitiate. Something of the context and the disagreements between the Pope and Father Arrupe was told to us by the novice master, although he defended Arrupe. I learned the details of what happened through the book of Father Urbano Valero, *Pablo VI y los jesuitas. Una relación intensa y complicada* (1963-1978), published by Mensajero in 2019. Although Valero’s critical position on the Pope and his defense of the Society’s actions is clear, it is a detailed and honest work that clearly shows the disagreements between Paul VI and Father Arrupe during practically the entire pontificate of the former.

I am convinced that Pope Paul VI saved the Society of Jesus in 1975 by intervening in the work of General Congregation 32 and preventing the modification of the Formula Instituti, the magna carta of the Order and the guarantor of its charism. Since then, the three successor popes of Paul VI who have coincided with General Congregations have maintained their decision not to modify the Formula of the Institute, which is the most hierarchical juridical document of the Society, and therefore, in the light of which all the others must be read.

26. Returning to the address of Paul VI, it is structured in three questions that the Pope asks the congregants: “Where do you come from, then?”, [6] in which he speaks about who we are as members of the Society of Jesus; “Why do you doubt?”, [7] in which he speaks about the identity crisis of the Society at the end of 1974; and finally “Where are you going, then?”, [8] when he encourages the order to continue in fidelity to the renewal called for by Vatican II and the Formula of the Institute. I find rereading the words of Paul VI much more vocationally inspiring than reading any of the decrees of General Congregations 32-36. In answering the first question, he summarizes the Ignatian charism and its essential elements, which is the reason for my vocation and my remaining in the Society: “a religious, apostolic, priestly order, united to the Roman Pontiff by a special bond of love and service, according to the way described in the Formula Instituti. [9] And he explains each of these elements: what it means to be a religious, apostle, priest, united especially to the Pope, according to the Society’s way of proceeding.

27. The 32nd General Congregation was not able to assume the Pope’s orientations. In the following weeks, there was a conflict between Paul VI and Arrupe over the prohibition to discuss and try to modify the Formula of the Institute. In this conflict, the members of the Congregation intervened, but without having all the information about the Pope’s refusal to deal with the matter. The Congregation complied with the decision of Paul VI, but did not understand their fears, their desires and their requests to redirect things in another direction. In the end, the decrees we all know came out, especially decrees 2 and 4, which received conditional approval from the Holy See on May 2, 1975. On that date, Cardinal Jean-Marie Villot, Secretary of State, sent a letter to Fr. Arrupe in which, after

pointing out that the Pope had studied the documents carefully, he said that “on examining the decrees, one notices that the well-known vicissitudes of the Congregation did not allow it to achieve the overall result that His Holiness expected from such an important event, and for which he had given paternal indications on various occasions and in various ways, especially in the programmatic discourse of December 3, 1974”. [10] He also added that along with “statements that merit every consideration”, the decrees contain “others that produce a certain perplexity and, in their formulation, can give rise to less correct interpretations”. [11] For this reason, the letter adds an appendix with clarifications to Decrees 2, 3, 4, 6, 12 and 14. The most important of these is the one that refers to Decrees 2 (Declaration “Jesuits Today”) and 4 (“Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice”). In this annex the Pope points out that “it is beyond doubt that the promotion of justice is linked to evangelization”, but he adds that the Society of Jesus “has been constituted for a primarily spiritual and supernatural purpose, to which every other concern must yield, and which must always be exercised in a manner befitting a religious, not a secular, and priestly Institute. Nor should it be forgotten that it is proper to the priest to inspire the Catholic laity, since it is they who have the principal role in the promotion of justice: the roles of each must not be confused”. [12] I believe that this clarification of Paul VI is fundamental for understanding one of the greatest problems we have had as Jesuits in the last fifty years: to understand what is specific to our vocation and mission, why and for what purpose we have become Jesuits.

28. Arturo Sosa, in a speech in Brazil summarized the search of the last congregations in the following way: “For many years we have sought to define our mission. For example, our mission of Faith and Justice (GC 32), our mission of dialogue with other religions and other cultures (GC 33) or our mission of reconciliation (GGCC 35 and 36). We have been searching for the “What”. In fact, since we have spent too much time searching for the “What” of our mission, we have very little to add. We now realize that how we do our mission and how we discern it is crucial. The last General Congregation has asked us to focus on the “How”.” [13] I respectfully wonder if that summary is really the “What” of the vocation of Jesuits, of most Jesuits. Clearly I do not feel reflected in that synthesis. For me, the way in which the Formula Instituti, the highest document of the order, expresses the “What” of the Society continues to be much more inspiring, and I continue to feel fully reflected in it: The Society of Jesus is, it points out, founded principally to employ itself for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the benefit of souls in Christian life and doctrine, especially by means of public preaching, lessons and any other ministry of the word of God, spiritual exercises, the Christian doctrine of children and rude people, and the spiritual consolation of the faithful, hearing their confessions and administering to them the other sacraments. And yet let him employ himself in the pacification of the unruly, the relief of prisoners in jails and of the sick in hospitals, and the exercise of other works of mercy, as shall seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good; doing all this gratuitously, without receiving any stipend for his work. [14]

29. I do not know why the expression “service of the faith” was used in General Congregation 32. I do not know if it was inspired by the Greek *diakonia*, but it seems to me a not very concrete and too intellectual way of expressing what I believe should have been associated with the *kerygma* or announcement of the good news of Christ. If they did not want to go back to using “defense and propagation of the faith”, because it sounded counter-reformist, they could have said “proclamation of

the faith”. It is not clear what it means to serve the faith. As for the “promotion of justice”, inspired by the document of the Synod of Bishops of 1971, dedicated to Justice in the World, I believe that, not following the indications of Paul VI in the letter of Cardinal Villot that I have quoted, the Society’s discourse has taken up a great deal of time and effort in this regard, has occupied a disproportionate space in the discourse of the Society over the last forty-seven years and does not correspond to the objective of our religious, apostolic and priestly vocation, nor to the real experience of the vast majority of the Jesuits I have known throughout my life, although few of us will find the courage to express it publicly.

30. Dialogue with other religions and other cultures, indicated as one of our missions by General Congregation 34, is another thing that I believe cannot be considered a “What” because we were not founded for dialogue. It can be considered a “How” because from the beginning of the Society of Jesus in the 16th century, whether it was with the Protestants of Germany or Poland, with the Chinese Mandarins or with the American Indians, dialogue was a fundamental part of the Jesuit way of evangelization. The immense work of knowledge of the languages and traditions of so many peoples throughout the world, bequeathed by hundreds of Jesuits, is an example of this. It would have been impossible for Father Ricci to reach the Chinese emperor without dialogue; or for the Jesuits of the missions, from Patagonia to Baja California, passing through Paraguay, Upper Peru and hundreds of other places, to have built that marvelous work of evangelization and civilization, if they had not known how to dialogue. But dialogue is not the end of the Society, but a means to fulfill our mission, which is to evangelize.

31. Finally, there is the call to Reconciliation, which since the last General Congregation has become a new Jesuit buzzword. The word or one of its derivatives appears twenty-three times in Decree 1, which seems logical if the title is “Companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice”. Now, I believe that any Catholic who hears the word reconciliation associated with priests is going to think of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reconciliation with God and the brethren, repentance for having done something wrong, or with the sin that causes the rupture. This also seems to be indicated by the quote that opens the document, from St. Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians: “And all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation”. If we speak of reconciliation with God and that he entrusted to us a ministry of reconciliation, we are speaking of the reconciliation that is born of the forgiveness of sins, of the conversion of heart and life, and of the baptism that makes us children of God. The document speaks of none of these things. The word sin never appears. The word “sinners” does appear twice, referring to ourselves Jesuits and as an act of humility, because we “recognize ourselves as small, weak and sinners” (7) or we are “overcome with joy in recognizing ourselves as sinners who, through the mercy of God, are called to be companions of Jesus and “God’s co-workers” (8). Two expressions that echo the beginning of Decree 2 of General Congregation 32, in which it was pointed out that to be a Jesuit today is “To recognize that one is a sinner and yet called to be a companion of Jesus, as was St. Ignatius”. The rest of the document never refers to the rupture that sin generates in the bonds with God, with the brethren and with creation. It seems that the only sinners are the Jesuits; the rest, it seems, have no need to be forgiven.

32. The problem in the Society is that this definition of who we are, expressed so clearly by Paul VI in 1974, does not seem to be what we really believe and transmit in recent decades. It is curious, but although we love to use quotations from the Autobiography of St. Ignatius and from the Spiritual Exercises, which we have transformed into the almost sole sources of our tradition and charism, the Society we are talking about has left by the wayside much of what it means to be a religious, apostolic and priestly order. In 1974 the danger was to become a secular institute, something that various groups of Jesuits from different parts of the world wanted to achieve and from which Paul VI freed us with his intervention. Today the risk is to become an NGO, or at least that is what frequent documents of the Order seem to indicate.

33. There is so much work for the Jesuits in their tasks that respect for them is obligatory. There are thousands of companions who dedicate their lives to carry out what the current orientations of the Society propose. It is not easy to say that one does not agree with much of this work, but if I am honest with myself and my vocation, I have to do it. I listen to the General, to the Conference of Provincials of Latin America, to so many directors of works or superiors, and I do not feel in tune with them. Very often it seems to me that I am listening to the discourse of a social-political NGO, with a complement in which they speak of spirituality and Ignatian discernment. If I analyze the speech I do not find the most radical part of the Gospel: the redemption brought to us by the Lord; a salvation that frees us from sin and offers us eternal life. I do not find in these words the priestly dimension of our vocation, which destines us to preaching, the administration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. I do not find the religious consecration dimension of our vocation. Are service to the poor, care for the environment or attention to young people not part of the Gospel message? They are, no doubt. What I do not believe is that it is specific to the Jesuit vocation. The Gospel is for the whole Church: laity, religious, priests and bishops. The way we should live the Gospel varies according to our particular vocation. There are tasks that are more proper to some than to others. Even among religious and consecrated persons, what is specific depends on the foundational charism.

34. The Jesuit vocation, as Paul VI tells us, is religious, apostolic and priestly; it is to promote and defend the Catholic faith, especially through preaching and the sacraments. All the ministries that the Society undertook since its foundation, until fifty years ago, had the purpose of evangelizing, converting, sustaining and nourishing the faith; be it schools, universities, professed houses, rural missions, workers' missions, indigenous missions, writers' houses, magazines, research, etc. This is not what I see today in the Society. This explicit evangelizing orientation is absent from many works and in others it is marginal and almost cosmetic. This discourse, which is becoming secularized year by year, is distancing me from the harmony with the order. If it were only me, it would not be a problem for the future of the Society. The problem is that I believe that this lack of harmony is more widespread than we want to admit. Maybe that disconnect in many things is not theoretical or conceptual, but it does exist with respect to the motivations that led many Jesuits to join the order. For me, this lack of harmony is the cause of the many departures of young and middle-aged Jesuits.

Chapter III: The trivialization of discernment

35. Most of us Jesuits think that the most important contribution of St. Ignatius and of the Society of Jesus to the Church has been his spirituality and specifically the Spiritual Exercises and the teaching of the discernment of spirits. I am not an expert in the history of Ignatian spirituality, but undoubtedly because of the mark left by the practice of the Exercises in each member of the order, made the full month in the novitiate and the third probation, and repeated for eight days over so many years, the influence of that charismatic experience in all the apostolates of the Society is the most valuable thing we have and that we can offer to the ecclesial community. This being so, I have the impression that in the Society of the past centuries, it was not so common for this spirituality to be made explicit in the correspondence, documents and written works of the members, at least in the way it has been done in recent decades.

36. Today it is difficult to find a letter of the provincial, general, message or document of the Society in which there are not several references to the book of the Exercises, to discernment, to passages from the life of St. Ignatius in his Autobiography, etc. Some, with levity, will hasten to point out that this is a sign of how the Society had weakened its Ignatianity in recent times before General Congregation 31, especially since the restoration of the order in 1814. Others, even more daring, will trace it back to the generalate of St. Francis Borgia (1565-1572), when they say that the Society became conventual and in some way changed the original orientation of St. Ignatius. The reality is quite different and it is enough to take a serious look at the history of the Society during the first decades to know that the fundamental traits, which later marked the order for 425 years (1640-1965), were present in the sixteen years of the generalate of St. Ignatius. John W. O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* is an outstanding work to get to know this.

I am not sure that discernment of spirits is the heart of Ignatian spirituality, since I am inclined, perhaps from personal experience, to think that what is central to this spiritual journey is the "inner knowledge of the Lord, who became man for my sake, so that I might love him more and follow him more. [15] In any case, the discernment of spirits is a fundamental means for this following and, although St. Ignatius did not invent it, since the Church had already been discerning for fifteen centuries, he had the grace and genius to "codify" it in rules that have been extraordinarily fruitful for the Church. Ignatian discernment is something very concrete and is an instrument to know the will of God and to distinguish it from the lurks of the devil. A first question that is striking in our time is to find people, among them Jesuits, who do not believe in the existence and action of the devil, or the evil spirit as St. Ignatius sometimes calls it, and yet they are convinced propagators of Ignatian discernment. They probably make a "modernized" reading of St. Ignatius, where the evil spirit is the traumas, the ways of thinking of the world, the prejudices, etc. I believe that they are seriously mistaken and that one should not speak of Ignatian discernment if one does not believe that both the Holy Spirit and the devil are the Good Spirit and the evil spirit of which St. Ignatius speaks.

38. Discernment of spirits is central to our spirituality and apostolate, but not everything is Ignatian discernment, and the reality is that in the Society in recent decades there has been an excessive, confused and at times banal use of the word discernment. It seems that everything is discernment, including what normal people call decision, deliberation, discussion, exchange, study, consideration, etc. To give some examples of this excessive use, let us look at recent documents of the Society: Decree 1 of GC 36 in its nine pages uses the word discernment 19 times. Decree 2 of the same

congregation, which is a document of more or less practical matters, uses it 29 times in seven pages. The Letter on Apostolic Preferences uses it 22 times in ten pages. The word discernment has become a crutch and that is not good. This proliferation has to do with the development of the current, more theoretical than real, of communitarian discernment or discernment in common.

39. Community discernment: I do not know if there is any reference to community discernment in an official document of the Society before Father Arrupe's letter on this topic in 1971. I believe that in the previous 431 years of the life of the order, it had not been present. There was, however, a document entitled *Deliberatio Primorum Patrum*, first published in *Monumenta Historica* in 1934, which we all know now. It recounts the process that the ten founders of the Society followed between March and June 1539, to decide to found the Society, to choose the form of government that the new order would have, and other minor issues. At that time they were all on an equal hierarchical footing, they were all priests, they had offered themselves to Pope Paul III and hoped that the Pontiff would send them on mission. They then decided to see if they would form a new reality or disperse. It was in this context that the deliberation took place, the first two points of which (founding the Society and having a superior of all) were resolved unanimously, and the others by majority vote. The emergence of the so-called community spiritual discernment, which officially came about with the letter of Arrupe on this subject, dated December 25, 1971, I believe that it was an absolute novelty for the Society, since it took place in a context very different from the one in which the first fathers lived in 1539.

40. I do not know the genesis of this letter, but from its text I believe and risk the hypothesis that it was due to a concession to the "spirit of the times", wanting to reconcile authority and obedience, with participation and community. This is what Arrupe himself points out in the letter: "In the present times, certain human values stand out more markedly: a greater emphasis on the rights of the person and his freedom, a desire for the integral development of the personality, the need to participate and take co-responsibility in the preparation of decisions and their execution and, above all, the sense of community, which, leading to a greater interpersonal relationship, engenders the *unio cordium*, the basis of a community life deeply lived in order to reflect and act together". [16] At the same time, the General did not want to betray the sense of Jesuit obedience, and for this reason he pointed out that "such a way of proceeding will contribute to elevating and spiritualizing the sense of community that is so profound today everywhere, and at the same time will prevent a capitularist democratism, in which decisions are made by deliberative vote and with the force of a mandate. It will also prevent the spirit of true Ignatian obedience from being weakened, since it is clear that this is a discernment that must be made in union with the Superior and that the decision belongs to the Superior." [17]

Several years later, on November 5, 1986, Father Kolvenbach published a letter *On Apostolic Discernment in Common*, a response to the ex-officio letters of that year in which he had asked about this topic. Kolvenbach gives a quick summary of the responses received, which, as is frequent in this type of official ecclesial document, tends to point out how positive everyone finds the spirit of apostolic discernment in common (I don't know why the previous expression was changed), noting that "the danger of confusing discernment in common with a democratic process, which would not fit in with the Ignatian conception of obedience, does not seem to be frequent today". [18] In the following paragraph, he adds something that is significant of the reality that was being lived: "For this

reason, although cases of apostolic discernment in common in the strict sense are not very frequent, there are, nevertheless, quite a few in the life of the Society today, especially in more united and homogeneous communities, such as certain apostolic teams or in numerically smaller groups”. [19] Next, Fr. Kolvenbach devotes considerable space to the “negative aspects”, and in the eight paragraphs he devotes to them, he frankly points out what they were: difficulties in understanding what discernment in common is and its many names and interpretations (11); the “Jesuit character of the practice of apostolic discernment in common” is questioned, and they point out that it is not in the tradition of the Society and the spirit of St. Ignatius (12); its meaning is not understood, nor its *modus procedendi* (13); the difficulties of Jesuits and communities in living the basic conditions for discernment: indifference, interior freedom, availability, search for *magis* (14); “many attitudes, deeply characteristic of Jesuits and their communities, are in open contradiction with discernment in common”: individualism, reserve, modesty, difficulty in assuming or overcoming real disagreements, tendency to intolerance, activism, rationalism, etc. (15); organization of the apostolic works, which have differentiated structures of government and participation from decision-making bodies (16); difficulties in incorporating non-Jesuits and especially lay people (17); “Some see in the practice of discernment in common a danger of weakening the government of the Society, which is often too indecisive” (18). [20] To respond to these negative aspects, Father Kolvenbach devotes two chapters to “Theoretical indications on apostolic discernment in common” and “How to grow in the practice of apostolic discernment in common,” concluding that “This letter is certainly not the first word on discernment in common in the Society, and it will not be the last. [The positive and negative aspects of current practice show that the Society is in a process of research and growth that already offers many valid expressions of discernment in common that need to be confirmed, deepened and spread”. [21] My interpretation of what was happening in 1986 is that fifteen years after Father Arrupe’s letter, the practice of community discernment or discernment in common was not very frequent and that in the Society as a whole, in fact, it was not accepted. That is the year I entered the Society of Jesus.

42. Father Arturo Sosa dedicated another letter to apostolic communal discernment on September 27, 2017. It focuses on the importance of the link between communal discernment and apostolic planning: “Discernment in common is the precondition for apostolic planning at all levels of the organizational structure of the Society of Jesus. Discernment in common and apostolic planning thus become the binomial that guarantees that decisions are made in the light of God’s experience and that these are put into practice in a way that realizes God’s will with evangelical efficiency.” [22] The letter is, as it points out at the beginning, “a pressing call” to use discernment in all areas of apostolic decision-making in organizations linked to the Society of Jesus: “Discernment in common is used to good advantage in Province Consultations, in the Governing Councils of institutions of Jesuit identity and in all instances of apostolic government”. [23] For this reason, the letter insists on how to do it, so that the Spirit may be the one to guide these decisions. More than in previous letters, the letter stresses that “companions in mission” should also participate. [24] The letter goes on to point out the spirit and forms that should guide this apostolic community discernment, drawing on various elements of Ignatian spirituality: choice of subject matter, knowing who is participating and for what purpose, interior freedom or indifference, union of souls, knowledge of how to discern, putting prayer in common, spiritual conversation, systematic practice of the examination, establishing how the final

decision will be made. It is intended that our works be governed by criteria different from those of secular organizations, with a certain negative view of managerial methods: it is pointed out that “apostolic planning born of discernment in common thus becomes an instrument for our apostolic effectiveness, avoiding turning it into a tribute to the fashion of corporate development techniques”, [25] or that “Sharing in a spiritual conversation is different from a managerial discussion in which one seeks to make the most reasonable decision according to administrative logic. It is also different from a parliamentary exercise in which the game between majorities, minorities, alliances, etc. is played. It is also different from a parliamentary exercise in which the game between majorities, minorities, alliances, etc., depending on individual or group interests, and making use of oratory skills and other parliamentary “techniques”. [26] Although it is insisted that through discernment the will of God is found and “heaven and earth” are united, [27] persons who are not Christians or religious are not excluded from this discernment, so that in a note it is pointed out: “There are not few cases in which persons who do not share our Christian faith participate in works of the Society or we find ourselves together in the service of people in need. Finding a respectful and real way to make them participants in common discernment is a challenge to our creativity and freedom as sons and daughters of God”. [28] It also adds that it is important to choose a worthwhile subject, so as not to trivialize discernment: “Good discernment depends on a precise knowledge of the subject on which one wishes to make a choice and of the expected outcome of such a demanding and complex path. In this way, one avoids the trivialization of calling “discernment” any way of justifying small or large decisions.” [29]

43. It might seem that after recalling these three letters of the generals, from 1971 to 2017, to which one could add what General Congregations 32 to 36 say, that it is obvious that “discernment in common is inherent to the way of proceeding of the Society of Jesus.” [30] However, I believe that this is not so, because *contra facta, non valent argumenta*. My experience of thirty-six years as a Jesuit shows me that this is not so. Serious community discernment is a rarity and it is unrealistic to pretend otherwise. I am going to express this with some situations that I have experienced, and although they may not seem representative of everything that happens in the Society, they serve to support my conviction.

44. I have lived in ten communities during my life in the Society; only once was a community discernment proposed. It was in 1990 and I was in philosophy. A father of the community was given a microwave oven, which was a novelty in Uruguay. It was decided that we had to discern as a community whether to accept the gift or not. We took it seriously and dedicated some weekly community meetings to it, in addition to praying about it during the week. Finally it was unanimously decided that the microwave oven should not be accepted because it was a luxury for a Jesuit community and the gift was returned. A few months later a new minister came to the house, a young priest who was returning from studying. The first thing he did was to go to a store and buy a microwave oven for the community kitchen. No one questioned him for that, because he had the authority to do so and because we were delighted to have such an oven to use.

45. At the provincial level I have only participated in one apostolic community discernment. About fifteen years ago our provincial and his consultancy decided that we had to leave one of the four parishes in Montevideo because we did not have the personnel to take care of it. All the members of the province were asked to pray and discern which parish to leave and to give their opinion to the

provincial. It was decided to leave the Holy Family parish, but the decision was delayed and there was a union of provinces and a change of provincial. Then it was decided to continue with the four parishes. After three years a new provincial was appointed, who decided to leave the parish of Fatima and close that community and not Holy Family. After five years, the provincial changed again and quickly decided to reopen the community and take over the parish of Fatima, to which two years later, at the request of the Archbishop, another neighboring parish was added. All this is supposed to have been discerned in the various stages, seeking to follow God's will. My conclusion is that either God changes his mind a lot (five times in thirteen years), or we discern very badly.

46. I have worked in six works of the Society and for nineteen years I have been in management (school, parish, university, communities), as a consultant, superior, director of works or member of the steering group. I have never participated in or promoted apostolic community discernment, nor have I ever been invited to do so. I truly believe that for many Jesuits community discernment is not central to their life and way of proceeding in the order. I will exemplify this with two situations that touched me.

47. Shortly after the letter about Father Sosa's common discernment came out, in September 2017, our provincial called a meeting of superiors which he was to attend in that capacity. In one part of that two-day meeting, we were posed to read the letter and comment on it. We were all seated in a circle, about twenty people, and I was one of the first to speak. I expressed then what I am stating in these paragraphs. Basically, that I did not believe that discernment in common was inherent to the way of proceeding of the Society of Jesus, since it had not been used for 431 years, and that in my thirty-one years in the Society (at that time) I had not seen it used in a serious way either. Finally, I told the anecdote of the microwave oven. My intervention was not objected to by anyone present and it was decided to move on to the next topic of the meeting. Did they agree with me? None of those present said so, but it is still striking that no one came out to defend a letter of Father General published a month earlier.

48. A year and a half later, in May 2019, we had the biannual assembly of AUSJAL at ITESO University in Guadalajara. We had to discuss and approve the Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2025. We had been sent a draft prepared by the Presidency and Executive Secretariat. The introduction spoke about the Mission and Values of AUSJAL, and among them appeared the following: "Discernment, as a foundation and instrument of Ignatian spirituality that gives meaning and guides decision-making and planning the best use of available resources to achieve the purposes of university work in the network". Since corrections or additions to the draft had to be raised, I, without remembering the letter of Fr. General of 2017, pointed out that I considered that discernment was not good to appear as one of the values of AUSJAL, since decision-making and planning in a university were not made in common discernment, since many of the members of the governing bodies were not Catholic or if they were, they did not have a deep prayer or sacramental experience. This proposal motivated an exchange among the participants, who were about thirty in number and almost all Jesuits. In that case there were those who defended the permanence of that paragraph, although some of the strongest were not rectors and therefore did not have the right to vote. Finally, the vote was taken and the proposal to remove it won, and so it remained in the approved Strategic Plan. No one appealed to the letter of the General, which was very recent, nor to the letters of Arrupe or

Kolvenbach. Nor was it an acrimonious discussion. The result was that most of the Jesuit rectors present had no problem in eliminating this reference, basically because they agreed with the proposal.

Beyond personal anecdotes, I believe that the reality is that discernment in common is a rarity in the Society because it is not possible to carry it out. In the first place, it is not possible among Jesuits because it is not compatible with obedience understood in the manner of St. Ignatius. It is probable that in 1971, to be listened to and to participate in the discussions, even if someone else made the decisions, was something loved and accepted. It is likely that one generation, the ex-combatants of '68, continues to value the fact of participation per se, even if they do not resolve. However, I believe that there are many Jesuits, among whom I count myself, who do not want, nor do we value participation for the sake of participation, or participation in long, ambiguous processes, so conditioned by a culture that avoids confrontation, that they are not very credible. I have seen a lot of manipulation of superiors, while talking about consultation, participation and discernment; and I have seen how they manipulate superiors, provincials and assistants to the General to achieve what they could achieve with their own authority. They use instruments of participation to make them seem consensual or that they respond to a common discernment, but they are not. There is a generation of Jesuits who have lived with guilt and fear of being considered authoritarian for using their authority, and yet some have been authoritarian in manipulating communities and provinces.

50. Secondly, discernment in common with lay people or persons outside the Society is even more difficult or impossible in transcendent matters. We speak of companions in mission, but the reality is that in most of our works there is an enormous asymmetry between the laity, employees of the works, and the Jesuits who are their titulars. If it is difficult for a Jesuit to express himself freely to his superior in matters in which he knows he has another opinion, it is much more difficult for a lay person who depends on a salary or whose position in the organization is conditioned by his conformity to the Jesuit in charge. My experience over the years is that the vast majority of people when consulted think of pleasing the boss and agreeing with him. It is not hypocrisy, it is common sense. In organizations people know who decides and who has to decide. I am not saying that it is not possible to make consultations and give participation to the members of an institution, but what cannot be done is to start a process of discernment in which they are told that they are looking for God's will, but that the boss will have the last word. People may pretend to believe it, but most know that it is something that has to be done to conform to the boss. Even in works where there is not a relationship of labor and salary dependence, such as parishes, the relationship of the parishioners with the pastor is asymmetrical. On the other hand, in order to discern spiritually one must have faith, something less and less common in collaborators in our works; this faith must be formed, something even rarer, and be accompanied by a practice of prayer and sacramental life.

51. What happens in reality is what Father Sosa says should not happen: "false discernments in common that only seek to clothe in Ignatianly correct language decisions previously made with the criteria of the group itself". [31] The Society of Jesus, in its Constitutions and in its tradition, has a great experience of participation in decision-making, from the consultations of the communities, provinces and the General, to ex-officio letters, reports of various kinds, visitations of provincials and assistants, accounts of conscience, etc. Some of these traditional elements should be recovered and strengthened, because I believe they are not working as they should, as is the case of community

consultations or the link between superiors and directors of works; but it is not by insisting on discernment in common, which is not part of the Society's way of proceeding, nor has it managed in fifty years to be accepted and adequately used. It is not a question of lack of obedience or docility on the part of the Jesuits, but because it is inadequate for the government of communities and works, and because the minimum conditions are not in place to be able to use it. I insist that I am convinced that the discernment of spirits and the wisdom of St. Ignatius to practice it, are an essential element of Ignatian and Jesuit spirituality, and for any member of the order or person who knows and practices it, it is a fabulous tool to seek and find the will of God in his life, but it is not an instrument of government of persons, nor of communities, nor of apostolic works. To use the word discernment as a buzzword, as the English would say, a buzzword that is repeated over and over again, trivializes and misrepresents it. We use it, and our environment uses it, to anoint with authority or respectability any decision that is made, and that does not help to live the true discernment of spirits.

Chapter IV: Obedience and government

If he who has such an independent and absolute government as our General chooses a path as the most correct, it will be very difficult to make him leave it, even if he has really erred; the reason is that each one favors his own opinion and considers it the most correct. In addition to this, many others join him, most of them, some because they are of the same opinion, others because they please him, many because they do not have the courage to contradict and oppose what their superior is inclined to, either to live in peace, or not to point out and displease the one who has so much power and command over them. I leave the pretensions of those who have them to remain in their offices and those who desire them to attain them. Against so large and so closed a squadron as this, who will dare? Who will go forward? If he were a Saint Paul, he would always be considered extravagant, restless and a disturber of the peace.

P. Juan de Mariana, S. I.

Treatise on the intimate affairs of the Society of Jesus. [32]

In his famous letter on obedience, St. Ignatius points out that this was to be the characteristic virtue of the Society of Jesus. It is the vow to which he dedicates more pages in the Constitutions and in his epistolary. The anti-Jesuit myth, born in the sixteenth century, and which reached its culmination in the nineteenth century, fires the most serious of its accusations at the Jesuit style of obedience, which it transforms into an inhuman and anti-evangelical caricature. The fact is that, whether viewed positively or negatively, obedience is a focal point of the order, and really shapes its being and doing, both in the past and in the present, even if there are variations. Obedience has to do not only with the fact of obeying what one is commanded, but also with our institutional culture, the way we appreciate authority and superiors, as well as the halo that surrounds the exercise of authority and what it subjectively arouses in each member of the Society.

53. Unlike other religious orders born during the Middle Ages, with a capitular system of government and rotation in the highest authority, the Society of Jesus, which saw the light of day at a time when national states were being consolidated and the power of kings was being strengthened, had

from the beginning the structure of an absolute monarchy: general superior for life, with full authority for government and the ability to appoint subordinate positions, strongly centralized. This does not mean that the Society was a dictatorship or an elective tyranny, any more than were the absolute monarchies of the Ancien Régime. The Constitutions and canonical legislation, the General Congregations and the usages of the order, were and are a clear and definite limit to the exercise of the authority of the generals and other major superiors. However, unlike the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines or Cistercians, the Society does not have a rotation of general prelates every few years, nor chapters that must meet periodically, nor voting to elect provincials or other offices. The organs of participation in government, whether in Rome, in the provinces or in the communities, are always consultative and not resolute. Even the vote in congregations of procurators, by *cogenda aut non cogenda*, is customarily conditioned by the wishes of Father General, who lets it be known that he considers it good or not to convoke a general congregation, and who asks for a vote *non cogenda* when he wants more time for the preparation of the congregation, as happened in 1970 and on some other occasion in recent decades. I do not know the earlier history.

54. The reality is that the Superior General of the Society has enjoyed among the Jesuits a treatment of veneration and respect analogous to that of the Pope, and in my youth, even greater, since I knew many companions who were very critical of John Paul II and completely submissive to the General of the day, whether it was Father Arrupe or Father Kolvenbach. Kolvenbach. I never heard from Rome a reprimand for criticizing the Pope, and that was quite common. Kolvenbach's lack of government and jokingly said a verse about the General, in which he characterized him by the type of beard he wore, asking him to make decisions. It was something quite innocent, which caused laughter in the rest of the community. The fact is that it provoked a call of attention to the superior, who did not live in our house, to reprimand us for expressing ourselves with little respect to the General. It must be said in defense of the superior, that he did not say anything to us, because he was embarrassed to call our attention for a trifle, and he told me about it when we were no longer in that community.

55. I believe that this reverential respect has changed with the last two generalates, because the external forms have become more horizontal in the Church as a whole, in society and even in the business and political world, at least in the West. Even so, the respect for obedience in the Society is still very much alive and ingrained in most of us. When John Paul II intervened in the order in 1981, appointing Father Paolo Dezza as his personal delegate, the Society gave an extraordinary lesson of obedience to the Holy Father and to the authorities appointed by him, which surprised everyone. There was no rebellion, no protests, no condemnatory articles. The Jesuits closed ranks and obeyed, even though it pained many, probably the majority, who considered the act unjust or disproportionate.

56. I am convinced that the vow of obedience enjoys good health in the Society and is lived with conviction. That does not mean that it does not present its problems and shadows as well. Obedience has to do not only with how subjects obey, but also with how superiors command: with the exercise of authority and the culture of obedience, and I will expand on these aspects.

57. When I wrote my doctoral thesis, which dealt with the educational activity of the Society of Jesus in the American Southern Cone in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, I worked mainly with correspondence between Provincials of the Aragon Province,

Assistants General, Superiors of America, rectors of colleges and other Jesuits. There were more than three thousand letters, to which must be added memorials of visitations, minutes of consultations, elenchi visitationes and annual letters. This enormous body of documents, over several decades, in times of foundations, expulsions and internal and external conflicts, allowed me to know quite well the forms of government and the exercise of obedience in the restored Society, which is the one that shaped the order that arrived in 1965. I must admit that for several years it seemed to me the ideal of Jesuit government, and what I saw and did not like about the current style of government, I compared and contrasted with that ideal. My thinking was that the problems we have today were due to not having maintained the Society's way of proceeding prior to GC 31. After twenty years in government and management positions in communities and works of the Society, I believe that the current problem is, paradoxically, that on the one hand, in some things we continue to have customs of government that are no longer for this era; and on the other hand, we have abandoned elements of our tradition that are very valuable and should be recovered. When we speak of government, we must keep in mind that today this extends to works that belong to the Society, but in which almost all the personnel is lay. As a lay friend told me, "very much one of us", an Ignatian who has worked for decades with the order: the government of the Society is designed for celibate, consecrated and Catholic men, not for the diversity of persons, sexes, states, ideologies and lifestyles of our days. So it happens that, frequently, the discourse goes one way and reality goes the other, and as in the case of the emperor's new clothes, we admire how wonderful the system is, without being able to admit that the emperor is naked. We do that, Jesuits and lay people alike, if we want to keep our place or not be considered unusually foolish.

58. Some aspects we need to review: The Society has a strongly centralized, hierarchical structure of government where all authority resides, except when the General Congregation is gathered, in the Superior General and those to whom he delegates it. We are not a democratic and participatory order. The problem is that today this is frowned upon and since GC 31 there have been attempts to square the circle: to be democratic and participatory, without modifying the traditional government of the Society. The reality is that all attempts have been a failure. We have become what St. Ignatius did not want: we have lots of community meetings, province assemblies, working groups, consultations, indicative ballots to elect provincials whose results are not published, assistants who talk to hundreds of Jesuits when the candidates for provincial have already been decided, directed apostolic discernments, general congregations that are prepared for years to give poor results, and so on. Although it is hard to say, and perhaps it is not so in other places, I have the direct experience of seeing very crude manipulative and demagogic practices, which seek to give a veneer of participation and listening of the bases to questions that arrive resolved to the instances of consultation. This happens with issues ad intra of the Society, such as appointments of provincials, and in resolutions in the works in which the laity participate, such as approval of documents, appointments of university rectors or pastoral projects.

59. Unfortunately, at the same time that we want to give the impression of greater participation in the decisions, we have neglected aspects of the traditional government of the Society, which were a limit to the possible arbitrariness of the superiors. In the thirty-six years I have been a Jesuit, I have never been in a community where the consultation of the house has worked, and I have been a consultant according to the catalogs for many years. The obligation that the superiors had to pass

certain topics through the consultation and have the opinion of the consultors no longer works in many places; neither do the reports that the consultors had to send each semester to the provincial on the progress of the house and work. When I did my thesis I came across innumerable letters from provincials to local superiors, informing them of the complaints that the consultors made about their performance. In addition, I was able to read many minutes of house consultations. Sometimes I have heard as an excuse that today there are community meetings, which function as consultations. The reality is that they are not the same, since they are not formal instances and can be easily manipulated, besides not being recorded in the minutes.

60. What do I think are the problems we have in the order for the exercise of authority? I will point out some of them:

61. 1) The persistence of a culture born in French 1968 continues to permeate an aspect of our culture and of the Society: the suspicion of all authority, whatever it may be. This often leads people in governmental roles to panic about being considered authoritarian and not knowing how to command. Besides affecting the progress of community life and works due to lack of decisions, it produces in others a manipulative use of authority that generates many problems. Often one encounters superiors or construction managers who want to be obeyed without giving orders.

62. 2) The appointment to be superior of colleagues who are weak in the face of authority is favored, and this often leads to obsolescence. Too many yesmen in government positions. Although the system of election of superiors in the Society is vertical and centralized, the current superiors, provincials and provincial consultations participate in the selection process. This adds an element of quasi-“co-optation” of superiors. In some provinces there is talk of a merry-go-round of superiors, in others, like mine when we had not yet joined Argentina, there was talk of the “rosca”, the group of three or four Jesuits who dominated the province for many years. Who sends the list of three candidates to Rome for appointments? The provincial and his consultation. Who chose the consultation? The provincial. Whom do the provincial and his consultation choose for this slate? Someone from their own group, ideological line, friendship or affinity. Are they the best candidates? Often no. What happens with the votes of the province as a whole in the case of the election of the provincial? They are not mandatory, so sometimes they are done and sometimes they are not. The results are not published, and therefore give rise to manipulation. What about the visits of the Assistants General before the appointments? I say this from lived and repeated experience. Some will sow the name of the one who seems to be already elected, so that colleagues become familiar with it and then put it on the ballot. Another one carefully avoids asking for the “chosen one”, if he is not popular in the province, so that later the consultation proposes him and he comes out. In other cases, when the list of three candidates arrives in Rome and the candidate of the assistant is not there, the list is returned so that the provincial and his consultation can redo it and the candidate from Rome appears. This usually happens when there is no harmony between the General Curia and the provincial who finishes. Finally, I have seen that when one does not want to displease anyone, the candidates that some group does not want are vetoed in the consultation of the province or in Rome, and one ends up electing someone whose merit is not to have detractors, but who perhaps does not have the conditions for the task.

63. 3) There are many typologies of organizational leaders. One of them speaks of three categories: 1. those who lead the growth and development of organizations; 2. those who lead stability; and 3. those who lead decline. In the Society of Jesus, sadly, we have been managing decline for a long time and superiors with the third profile are chosen to carry it forward. This type of superiors are distinguished for not being demanding; for not taking initiatives and only reacting to what happens, without anticipating situations. They do not dream or project. They are not distinguished by their apostolic zeal. Their expectations with respect to their subjects and works are very low. They are passive in the face of history, waiting for it to do its work. It is amazing how much time is wasted in the order making plans, documents and projects, and how little efficient and effective they are in reversing the situation of decadence we live in. The Society today does not favor the initiative, creativity, innovation and daring of its members, and therefore, there are not many candidates with these characteristics to be superiors or directors of works. When one studies the Jesuits of the 19th century, who suffered all kinds of expulsions, persecutions, defamatory campaigns, etc., and sees the extraordinary evangelizing work of the Jesuits in the 19th century, we see the extraordinary work of the Society. and sees the extraordinary evangelizing work they carried out in a very few years, one is amazed at the capacity they had for apostolic action. That drive today has been almost completely lost in the West, and the general government does not seek to reverse it by appointing other types of leaders.

64. 4) The current paradigm of authority, not made explicit, is that of the King in Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, the one who taught him that only reasonable orders should be given when the conditions are right. When the Little Prince asks him to make the sun set, the king tells him that he will command him to do so when it is time for nightfall. Superiors often end up deciding when there is nothing else to do, which is often too late. There is a lack of leadership and courage to rule. To give an example. Since the mid 80's in Uruguay there was a need for the province to unite with another province because it had very few members and being a province meant having to have a provincial, curia, novitiate, student house, etc. The provincial of the time made this clear to General Kolvenbach. When was it resolved? Twenty-five years later, in 2010, when the situation was already unsustainable and there were not even forty Jesuits in Uruguay. Even with the delay of a quarter of a century to resolve the matter, there were those who praised the decision of General Nicolás as an act of courage and wisdom. Today there are several provinces in Latin America that are in the same situation, but the decisions are not taken, because there is still some resistance and nobody wants to be seen as authoritarian.

65. 5) In the past, the links between the different levels of government, superior of the community, provincial, assistant and general, were quite formal and mutual knowledge was scarce. Today, with the possibilities of meeting frequently and the "reunionitis" that has taken hold of the order, the links are much more horizontal and closer. This has undoubtedly positive aspects, but it has negative repercussions on others. The "chumminess" that frequently occurs among superiors does not make it easier for subjects to appeal to higher authorities with confidence.

66. 6) The selection of superiors, which, as I have pointed out, has something of a "co-optation" character, repeatedly commits important errors, which communities and provinces then suffer. In the selection of superiors, particular care must be taken with the spiritual maturity and intellectual

capacity of the candidates. I have heard many times, when a superior or director of a work is questioned because of his lack of suitability, that he is a good person. My answer is always: “That is assumed, but what other qualities does he have”. It is really striking that Jesuits who lack the personal and intellectual qualities necessary for the task are appointed to lead a province, a community or a work, and it is believed that goodness and personal righteousness are enough for this. I know that in the last twenty-five years five provincials of Latin America have left the Society, three of them with great scandal. I do not know if there have been more cases in Latin America or other parts of the world. To them can be added masters of novices, rectors of schools or universities, superiors and formators of students, etc. Also those who have been “burned out” in these positions because they were not prepared for them. As a person who has been in management for twenty years, I am aware that mistakes can be made in the selection of people, no matter how well you want to do it, and even the most qualified headhunters and leaders make them. However, we must keep in mind that we spend many years in the Company and that we keep a record of reports, performances and opinions about us. I believe that the system for selecting superiors should be seriously reviewed, because the traditional model does not seem to be the best suited to the situation. And, above all, we should be much quicker to rectify a mistake and not wait for the six-year term of office to change an inadequate superior or site manager. There are some who show their inability a few months after starting and it is not fair to the subjects, nor is it good for the mission of the Society to sustain someone in a task for which he is not qualified.

67. 7) We have too many communities and works and an insufficient number of Jesuits capable of leading them. The excuse of many provincials and sometimes of the assistants is that someone has been appointed or kept in a certain position because there is no one else who can replace him. This may happen in the short term, but if there are no Jesuits qualified to govern provinces, communities and works, the number of them should be reduced. We have 59% fewer Jesuits than fifty-seven years ago, but I would venture to say that there is clearly nowhere near the same reduction in communities and works. We have been trying to justify this by appealing to the laity as partners in Christ’s mission and a thousand other formulations that change every few years. This is not true. In the first place, because the works where there are no Jesuits or where there are only a few, are not works that maintain the imprint of the Society. Having some “values” and Ignatian rhetoric does not make them truly Jesuit. One or two Jesuits in works that integrate thousands of people do not manage to maintain our identity at a deep and consistent level. In addition, many times the Jesuits in charge have neither the personality nor the formation to lead these institutions. We are burning out many Jesuits by imposing on them tasks for which they have no subject. Several times I have had discussions with a fellow Jesuit on the matter. We criticize companions for not doing their work well and I am convinced now (I did not see it that way before), that the fault is not theirs, but that of the Society, which puts them in positions and tasks for which they are not prepared or do not have the conditions.

68. 8) We do not prepare superiors and directors of works adequately. When I was a junior, I remember a formator telling us that he was convinced that any Jesuit, with the basic formation of the Society (novitiate, juniorate, philosophy and theology) was prepared for any task entrusted to him. Already at that time this opinion seemed to me to be nonsense, although some of my fellow juniors defended it. In reality we find that many times people govern with that conviction and we see school

rectors who know nothing about education, university rectors without a doctorate and who do not know the university world, parish priests who have never worked in a parish, etc., etc. etc., etc. I believe that in the past this was relatively possible for the following reasons: the organizations were quite stable and structured; there was less competition; most of those who worked in them were Jesuits and had a vow of obedience; the long Jesuit formation itself gave a knowledge of the institutions. In a way, it was the model that family or traditional companies also had. One could enter as a cadet and become a general manager, learning everything within the organization. That world no longer exists. Today organizations, all of them, including religious congregations and their works, are much more complex and changing than in the past. They require much more elaborate personal, academic and professional preparation. It cannot happen that a Jesuit reaches a position of leadership, either ad intra or ad extra with only a philosophical-theological formation intellectually, and the novitiate and the third probation personally. Today, an MBA (Master in Business Administration) should be a basic requirement for anyone who occupies high positions of management and authority, especially because these university programs are currently much more of a leadership training than a business preparation. It is true that there are people who have personality and talent for management without having prepared themselves, but even those, among whom I include myself, would have done much better if they had had previous training and not only that which comes with experience. Of course, it is legitimate to wonder and question whether it is appropriate for religious priests to have to do an MBA. It is true, perhaps we should dedicate ourselves to what is more specific to our vocation, which is the proclamation of the Gospel and service to the Church. But if we want to carry out educational, social and apostolic works that involve an important group of people, goods and economic means, we must have formation. What is not acceptable is that without formation we pretend to carry out tasks for which we are not prepared. We can dedicate ourselves to be chaplains, pastors, workers, missionaries, preachers and teachers, but then let us leave the works in the hands of others who are qualified for it. This includes not continuing to sit on boards of trustees, boards of directors and councils, because that also requires specific training and experience.

69. 9) Linked to the above, since it also refers to the preparation of superiors and formators, is the issue of their moral formation. A superior or a formator has to make transcendent decisions about other people, involving their life and vocation. This requires, in addition to intellectual and spiritual formation, a solid ethical structure and foundation, which should not be taken for granted. Moral emotivism, which is so strong in our culture and civilization, has also penetrated the Church and the Society. A reasonable Catholic morality, enlightened by faith and consistent, is necessary to exercise religious government. Unfortunately, I have encountered in my life as a Jesuit some superiors and formators who had a weak, emotional, falsely merciful moral foundation. For that reason, they could not make the necessary decisions to carry out their task, causing great damage to the Society, to the persons and to the works.

70. 10) The hierarchical organization of the Church is sacramental in character, for the bishops, although appointed by the pope, have authority per se, by apostolic succession and by having received sacramental ordination as bishops. A bishop is not a delegate of the Pope. The case of the Society is very different. Provincials are appointed by the General and are his delegates for the government of a part of the Society. However, at times it would seem that they act as if they were bishops, even though

their term of office lasts six years. In the Society there should be much greater continuity over time, regardless of who the provincial of the day is. Perhaps in some places this is the case, but in others it is not. The provincial changes and it seems that the priorities, the style of formation and the criteria change. I think this has to do with a weakening of the leadership of the General Curia of the Society. The Jesuit phrase “that from Rome comes what goes to Rome”, to a large extent I believe is true. At least that is my experience. In the government of the Order there is an abuse of that quote from the Constitutions that speaks of doing things according to “times, places and persons”, and it is confused with the whims and even caprices of the Provincial of the day. Today the means of communication and the facility to travel would allow to have a much more unified organization at world and regional level. I suppose that the creation of the conferences of provincials had this objective, but for me their fruits, after twenty-five years of experience, show that they are more bureaucratic and document-creating instances than authentic dynamizers of the apostolate and collaboration among the provinces. The Society should learn a lot from the multitude of international organizations that exist today, business, inter-governmental, social, etc. From some to learn how not to do things, because they function very badly and are very inefficient; from others to learn how to achieve better results. This implies a General Curia with much more leadership and initiative. At the same time, if the regional conferences are to continue to exist, their presidents should have real authority over the provincials. Otherwise, it is better not to have them. In the case of the CPAL, which is the one I know and am familiar with, my impression is that its work for more than twenty years has been frankly poor and inefficient. We dedicate a handful of Jesuits in the fullness of their apostolic time to generate documents that few companions read; to participate in meetings that few want to attend, and to suggest things, without much capacity to carry them out. The only significant thing they managed to achieve was the creation of the three regional theologates, of which they had to close one, and in at least two of them, the problems of management and formation have been enormous and have left much to be desired.

Chapter V: Poverty Confusion and ideology

71. The vow of poverty, in religious life in general and in the Society, has been considered an essential element. In the founding generation of the Order it was a topic that was treated, discussed and much prayed about. It is significant that the little that is preserved of the Spiritual Diary of St. Ignatius has as its main theme the discernment on the regime of poverty in the Society. In the 16th century, the lack of poverty and the corruption linked to it was one of the main causes of the crisis in the Church, the birth of the Protestant Reformation and the decline of many religious orders. For this reason, the mission of the order was expressed as *praedicare in paupertate*. Religious poverty was considered fundamental to our apostolate and to this we owe the insistence of St. Ignatius on the gratuitousness of our ministries, the refusal of stipends, rents and *per diems* for the professed members of the Society. Even the colleges of the order were free before the suppression of 1773, except for the boarding schools. Still in the 19th century, when schools were opened in America, it was discussed whether or not to charge tuition, although the lack of income and productive properties made it necessary to receive payment for the educational service in order to subsist.

72. Were the Jesuits austere and poor before GC 31? To answer yes or no can in no way be adequate. There are many years, many people and many different situations. Clichés abound and are part of the anti-Jesuit myth: immense properties and assets, power, links to power, colleges for the nobility and the bourgeoisie, many vocations among the sons of the wealthy classes, large libraries, laboratories and buildings. I remember a character in Angela's Ashes, by Franck McCourt, who gave large alms to ensure masses and eternal salvation after his death, but did not give them to the Jesuits in Limerick, because he knew that in that case the money would end up in a good bottle of wine. It would be interesting for some historian to study how poverty was lived in the Society in different places and times. What I do believe is that until not so long ago the poverty of the order was lived as an evangelical and ascetic virtue, which implied having everything in common, not charging for apostolic work and being austere in the tenor of life. Those of us who lived for many years with confreres who entered before 1965 got tired of hearing stories and anecdotes about the hard, austere and even needy life in the novitiates and scholasticates. The cold that gave them chilblains, the barracks food, the little clothing they were given, the fasting and abstinence during Lent, the austerity in traveling and the need to "beg" for scholarships or aid to study. The situation was probably not the same in all provinces. The Europeans suffered for years the hardships and miseries of the World Wars and the Spanish Civil War; those who went to mission lands had no institutions to protect them. In addition, the abundance of vocations generated poverty, since there were tens and hundreds of novices and schoolboys to feed, clothe and educate for ten, twelve or fourteen years, until they began to have ministries and receive alms or retribution.

73. However, one thing is the reality and another the image. The large buildings, colleges, universities, novitiates, scholasticates and churches, gave an image of a regal life and wealth. Since at least the 17th century, there were accusations against the poverty of the Jesuits, but the order had resisted the criticisms and until the beginning of the 1960s it continued to build large houses of formation. I believe that it was from GC 31 onwards that the criticisms of the enemies of the order entered the Society. Poverty began to mix with the spirit of the times, which united the commitment to the poor, the desire for personal fulfillment, the questioning of traditional asceticism, liberal progressivism and leftism, which at times are enemies of each other, but at other times curiously unite. This movement led to the abandonment of the scholasticates in the West, which were transformed into retreat houses and infirmaries or sold. Small communities appeared. [33] It was questioned whether the communities shared their economy with the apostolic works, based on the premise that the community lived "at the expense" of the rich work, when in reality it was, and still is in some places, the opposite. The austere work, without salaries or schedules, of hundreds of Jesuits kept countless works afloat. This situation led to what appears in decree 12, numeral 7 of GC 32, collected in number 178 & 1, of the Complementary Norms:

In this world of ours, in which so many are dying of hunger, no one can lightly appropriate the title of poor. It is perhaps regrettable that language does not have a more adequate word to designate this characteristic of religious life, since the term "poverty" designates realities that are not univocal. Religious poverty will have to make a serious effort to reduce consumerism to a minimum, instead of allowing itself to be carried away by it. It is absolutely impossible to love poverty and experience its ineffable consolations without feeling some of its real effects. **The tenor of life in our**

communities should not exceed that of a family of modest condition, whose members of working age must necessarily work diligently to support it. What concrete demands derive from this principle, it is up to individuals and communities to discern in sincere deliberation with their superiors. Let the chapters on food, drink, clothing, housing and, above all, travel, recreation, automobiles, villa, vacations, etc., be examined seriously. Let them also inquire into the idleness of some, an idleness, at times, that a rich man could hardly enjoy.

74. The text, which is still a decree, is curious in that it makes explicit the difficulty of using an equivocal term such as “poverty. In saying it, it seems that they want to point out that religious poverty is not real poverty or that which sociologists study. However, they then confuse it again and we have been there ever since. To say that “the tenor of life in our communities should not exceed that of a family of modest condition” makes one think that the religious poverty of the Society should be like the situation of a poor or modest family, socio-economically speaking. Perhaps this was the intention of the congregants and of those who voted at GC 34, 1994, to incorporate it into the law of the Society in the Complementary Norms. The reality is that more than 90% of the communities and Jesuits I have known in my thirty-six years in the Order live above the level of a modest or poor family. I have known many communities located in poor neighborhoods, but in practically all of them the standard of living was significantly higher than the rest of the neighboring population, because even if the housing was similar, the other elements of life were higher: automobiles, health care, domestic service, vacations, cultural life, studies, etc. The few experiences that I have known, which corresponded to the socio-economic level of a poor neighborhood, have not had continuity after a few years. The reality is that most of the Jesuits in the countries I have visited live as middle class or upper middle class. In some cases, a minority, like the upper class. While in the late 60’s and early 70’s, a lot of buildings were left, the reality is that I have been in many communities built or refurbished since then, which are far from being considered modest.

75. Religious poverty is a virtue, not a socio-economic condition. To have all goods in common, not to choose ministries according to income, to be available and willing to be one day in a prominent position, with a good salary, and the next day in a humble position, in a poor place, is religious poverty. To give our life without expecting retribution is religious poverty. Austerity in dress and lifestyle is religious poverty. Poverty is a permanent challenge for a religious today, more difficult than in the past, because we have much more means, because there are not many novices and scholastics to support, because our salaries are often high, and because the environment in which we move often leads us to consumerism and comfortable living. To work ascetically the virtue of poverty is what can help us, but not progressive and seventies speeches. To maintain the phrase that our tenor of life should be that of a modest family is shocking to ourselves and to those who hear us say it and see how we live. The text of Decree 12 said, “in this world of ours, in which so many are dying of hunger, no one can lightly appropriate the title of poor”, and I would also add, that of “modest family”. The incongruence between discourse and reality is very great and it is not a consequence of being incoherent and sinful. Our religious poverty, which is not that of the Little Brothers of Jesus or of the Franciscans, even if we live it faithfully, does not correspond to the tenor of life of a modest family, unless we juggle rhetorically, interpreting what “modest” means so that it fits our real tenor. Of course, in the Society there are faults against poverty at the personal, community and provincial levels.

I am the first to commit them. However, we are not going to grow in true poverty as long as what we have written is unrealistic and the vast majority do not want it. I believe that our tenor of life is noticeably better than it was before 1974, when GC 32 was held, and that is very bad for us as a religious order. I believe that it is not with speeches about the poor that we are going to change. Appealing to the religious virtue of poverty and taking concrete steps to help live it on a personal and community level is the way.

76. There are other aspects of our poverty regime that I believe are not working well. Although the poverty statutes have been updated, they still have much to do with a model of religious life from another era, in which people lived more on alms and income than on salaries and investments. This is probably not the situation in all provinces and some have a more professionalized administration, but I know from direct experience that in many communities and some provinces, the economic management of goods is very inefficient and unprofessional, even though we have accountants, budgets and balance sheets. We have to be clear that we are not a small company, we are not even a medium-sized company. In most countries we manage institutions with hundreds of employees and the vast majority of Jesuits dedicated to the governance of these institutions and communities do not have the minimum elements of business training to understand accounting and make decisions. It is true that there are specialized personnel, although not always, especially in the communities, but those who have the last word in the management of these institutions and communities have to understand the basics of economic administration and the human and professional formation to be able to make decisions that are neither easy nor pleasant. A person, a Jesuit, incapable of firing an employee in a professional and ethical manner, cannot be in charge of an organization, and I have met many in that situation. A Jesuit who manages the works for personal benefit cannot be in charge of an institution, and we all know of repeated experiences of companions who hire unqualified or excessive people to help them, damaging the apostolic mission of the institution. On too many occasions, provincial and Rome controls do not work, either because they are easily circumvented, or because, in order to avoid conflict or to make a confrere look bad, they are concealed, covered up or denied. The suspicion towards business and its rules, nurtured by indiscreet charity and in some cases, by a lurking anti-capitalist ideology, does not help to assume that if we have goods, works, educational companies and employees, we must manage them ethically and professionally. Perhaps in some countries, with good state controls and laws that adequately regulate labor relations and administrative management, this does not happen, but in other countries it does. I am not talking about corruption, but about incompetence and lack of quality controls.

77. Another aspect that worries me, and I insist, I do not know if it occurs in all the provinces, is the opacity of the economic information in front of all the members of the order. I have been in the Uruguayan province for thirty-six years, and since 2010 it has been an Argentine-Uruguayan province. Considering only the Society in Uruguay, I have to admit that I have never known for certain or approximately, what assets the province has, what investments and income, and what is the accounting situation of this part of the Society. Is it logical and desirable that the Jesuits, other than those in charge of the government at a given time, should be unaware of the assets and accounting situation of the province? Obviously one learns things from comments of companions, from lay people who know, from some incomplete report in a province meeting, but that is not what seems necessary for the body

of the province to assume its responsibility in the general running of the province. In the culture of the Society it is not well seen to ask these things, much less demand it, but transparency and shared knowledge generate commitment and responsibility. Living religious poverty has to do with taking responsibility for one's own support and that of one's companions, as well as charity to the needy and to works. Concealment and opacity, as St. Ignatius teaches us in the Rules of Discernment of Spirits, is not of the Good Spirit, and does not help those who have to administer and govern. Sometimes it seems that by concealing or reporting defects one is discreet and avoids negative consequences, but in reality it is something that harms the bonds between superiors and subjects, generates distrust and provokes behaviors that lead to lying, dissimulation or irresponsibility. Transparency and reliable information on the part of superiors, I am sure, results in greater transparency, sincerity and responsibility of the members of the order.

78. Although it may seem minor, almost an anecdote, I believe it is not, because of the mentality and lack of professionalism it reflects. In at least three Latin American provinces, in 2022, Jesuits will not be allowed to have credit cards, even if they are over forty years old and have completed their formation. This is not normal in Europe and North America, but it is in our countries. I do not know the official arguments, but it is quite ridiculous that adult priests, dedicated to the apostolate of the 21st century, do not have an instrument that is required to take an Uber, buy a book on Amazon, pay for a medical consultation that is booked online, or withdraw money from an ATM. The argument that it is a "symbol" to not have a credit card, in the case of Jesuits, is puerile. On the other hand, if well organized, it is an excellent means of poverty control. The worst part of the situation is that it is not even an even measure for all Jesuits in the provinces where it is applied, since there are Jesuits who do have credit cards with the excuse that it is corporate or because they take them out without permission from the superiors and no one dares to call their attention to it, even if it is known. These types of situations, which are flagrant comparative offenses, occur in many aspects of the Society's life of poverty and generate feelings of resentment, jealousy and injustice, which the superiors should address and heal with more justice.

Chapter VI: Chastity and cura personalis

79. The Constitutions of the Society say succinctly that "what concerns the vow of chastity does not require an explanation, and it is clear how perfectly it should be kept, trying to imitate in it angelic purity with cleanliness of body and mind". [34]

Blessed sixteenth century in which a whole vow could be taken as a treaty! Human beings were surely the same as us and lived the same passions and temptations, committed the same sins, and could offer to God their lives in chastity and celibacy as they do now. What they did not have to do was to deal with all that we know from Freud and many others, nor with the crumbling moral edifice of our time, the gender ideology, hedonism as a social value above self-giving and sacrifice, etc. etc., etc.

80. I cannot say much about the living of chastity in the Society today. I have never been a formator of Jesuits, I have been a superior of formed Jesuits for a very short time and therefore I have not received an account of conscience; I have not been a province consultor, who sometimes have to deal

with these issues; I have not been involved in spiritual direction or in giving retreats to Jesuits, not even in hearing their confessions. For all these reasons, and in all honesty, I have very little idea of how my companions live their celibacy and chastity. You may ask me what happens to my friends. My experience is that chastity, and by direct link, sexuality, continue to be a taboo in the Order, as they were in the 16th century. In my years in the Society I have rarely discussed this topic with formators, spiritual directors and superiors; much less with companions. They have always been delicate talks, very brief and, I would say, uncomfortable for both parties. In the novitiate, in the Arrupe month or in the third probation, it was a topic that was approached, but with talks, with material, rationally, but avoiding openness or personal sharing. I don't think I ever received a repressive or blaming discourse, but it was not something that people seemed to want to talk about. Maybe that is different in later generations. Someone has told me that in his group of close Jesuit friends they talk about how they live celibacy and chastity. That has not been my experience and I don't think it has been the experience of my generation either. Nor is it a topic that superiors talk about or that there are documents every few years. I think the last one was decree 8 of GC 34, twenty-seven years ago.

81. While writing this essay, a former Jesuit of my province, who was my age, but who entered the Order some years after me, published a memoir in which he recounted in great detail how, during the twelve years he was a Jesuit, he led a double life, not keeping chastity. I admit that although there are few of us in the province and in a way he was my contemporary, although we only lived together for a few months in 1995, I never knew anything about his double life. Even so, I find it hard to think that formators and superiors in Montevideo and Rome, where he lived for several years, knew nothing, even though he was ordained a priest. Such things should not happen if we had a more orderly and articulated community life, but they seem to happen. On the other hand, I have heard several stories from a few years ago, of situations in some of the theologates of Latin America, which speak of lack of chastity or serious affective disorders on the part of theologians, which were known and tolerated by formators and superiors. I do not know if when I was a theologian these things happened and I did not know about it, or it is a situation that has spread later.

82. Chastity is a theme that we should work on more, spiritually, ascetically and psychologically. I remain convinced that celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom is a call of the Lord and that it is possible, but it must be sustained for many years. It has to do with sexuality, but also with a well-founded religious vocation, with communities that form for solitude and coexistence, with a genuine spiritual and sacramental life, with affective-sexual maturity that should not be taken for granted and obvious. I do not know if the general government and each provincial in his region know how his subjects live celibacy. I have never been asked about it by a provincial in the account of conscience. Sometimes I have said something, many times I have not. I don't know how they do, then, to know the situation. I insist, I do not know much about the subject, but I think it is still a taboo and that is not good.

83. *Cura personalis*: Closely linked to the theme of chastity and celibacy is the personal experience and maturity of each Jesuit. I remember that shortly before my ordination, living in the theologate in Madrid, I made some unfortunate comment about the greater "freedom" I could enjoy in receiving orders. My superior at the time, who is one of the Jesuits who has influenced me the most, and who often had a rather sullen manner, asked me harshly: "Do you know what the only thing that changes

when you are ordained a priest? And he added: “Nobody will correct you anymore, and that’s not good”. I admit that at the time I didn’t really understand what that answer meant. More than twenty years later, I think that from my own experience and that of many colleagues, I was able to understand. During the long formation, from novitiate to ordination and perhaps the third probation, somehow we have formators and superiors, they ask for reports about us, we receive feedback about our characteristics, virtues and sins, qualities and defects. After that it becomes rarer and rarer and very often disappears. Some might think that this is logical, since we are supposed to mature and as adult priests we no longer need this kind of contrast and support. However, this is not the case.

84. In a world much more complex and changing than in previous centuries, with much less structured and smaller communities, without clear rules of action and spiritual life, the *cura personalis* cannot be reduced to an annual account of conscience with the provincial and a superior who pampers us a little. My impression is that once one has been ordained and, in some cases, once he has passed the third probation, he is taken for done or done badly and little more is expected in terms of personal improvement. It is true that many things could have been worked on in formation and that the frequent change of formators, in spite of the long years of preparation, does not help to follow consistent processes, but the reality is that even having done things well in formation, we continue to grow and mature over several decades and each one of us needs to be helped in that process. On the other hand, there is something artificial about formation; we are students and often almost teenagers well into our thirties, if not our forties in these times of late vocations. Real life for us begins late and often we do not have the psychological and affective maturity to live it adequately. On the other hand, we live in times of postmodern culture, hedonism and liquid and fragile personalities. It is not a matter of longing for other times, but of realistically assuming the present situation and putting the means to help the Jesuits of this 21st century to mature and be solid.

85. It is curious that the Society of Jesus has a tradition of more than four hundred and fifty years of *cura personalis*, in these times when companies talk about talent management, care for human capital, human resources, etc. etc. We are not taking advantage of these tools with trained Jesuits. Often the culture of “etiquette” is present in our order. We label ourselves as “difficult”, “weird”, “rigid”, “soft”, “immature”, “emotionally blocked”, “superficial”, “superficial”, “frivolous”, “hard”, “irresponsible”, “neurotic”, “narcissistic” and a long etcetera, which does not allow us to grow or to be cared for as we should. If we add to this the ideological labels and the rationalist and pseudo-intellectual tendency of many Jesuits, it is very difficult to take advantage of the great human, spiritual and ascetic capital that the Society still has. I am sure that even though there are far fewer of us than there were fifty years ago, if we took better care of one another, especially the trained Jesuits, our life and apostolate would have a greater impact on the Church and the world today.

86. It is true that in the Society for many decades now, the various currents of clinical psychology and other forms of deepening personal knowledge, such as the Enneagram, the Progoff diary, coaching, family constellations, etc., have been present. When they are well used, in a professional and mature manner, they can be excellent means for the development and improvement of each one of us. I have personally experienced their benefits and am grateful for them. However, I have also known many experiences in the order in which these tools have been misused, in an unprofessional manner and as a substitute for issues that should be handled by formators and superiors. Psychologizing

religious life, as has happened a lot, is not a good way to go, nor is psychologizing family life. The cura personalis cannot be substituted by therapies, no matter how good they may be, just as paternity, maternity or conjugal care in a family cannot be substituted. It is necessary to avoid the easy resource of sending someone to therapy, instead of making the effort to know, listen, accompany, challenge and offer an adequate communitarian and affective structure to a companion, so that he can carry out his life and religious vocation.

87. Today, more than in past centuries, we have tools to help us become more mature, balanced and psychologically and affectively healthy. I believe that we use them in an unprofessional and unsystematic way. The formators and community superiors, as well as the major superiors, should receive a better formation in human management and cura personalis than the one they have today, and it is not about formation for spiritual direction or accompaniment, since it is not the same thing to be a spiritual director than a superior or formator. Nor is it a question of their being therapeutic guides. This formation cannot be achieved with a one-week course, like the one received by the provincials in Rome or the superiors of some assistancies. A consistent and solid formation is needed, and that requires time and well-trained people to provide and accompany it. It will be difficult for us to survive in the coming decades if we do not seriously face the cura personalis of our Jesuit companions, in order to achieve affectively mature and chaste persons.

88. Above all aspects of cura personalis is the care of the religious and priestly vocation of the members of the Order. One can achieve adequate personal and affective maturity and yet fail in his vocation if he does not have a life of intense and well-founded familiarity with the Lord. Secularism has penetrated deep into the life of the Society and of many Jesuits. We suffer its onslaught in a thousand ways and there are many who end up leaving religious life for lack of a constant life of prayer and encounter with the Lord. This should be an intense concern of the superiors of adult Jesuits. To know how the spiritual life of their companions is and to foster it.

89. The same superior of theologians that I quoted in this chapter, another day, in which I was surely saying something frivolous that I do not remember, told me something like this: “As Father Jesús María Granero said, since the Society abandoned abnegation as the basis of its religious life, things have gone badly in the order”. I remember the place (the kitchen of the theologate) and the idea perfectly well, although not the exact words. It has been haunting my life ever since. This is coupled with the fact that my novice master repeated to us countless times that St. Ignatius preferred a mortified Jesuit to a prayerful Jesuit. The paragraphs of the Constitutions that he hammered on us the most for two years were numbers 101, 102 and 103 of the Examen of the Constitutions, especially 103:

In order to reach such a degree of perfection, so precious in the spiritual life, their greatest and most intense office should be to seek in our Lord **their greatest abnegation and continual mortification in all possible things**; and ours should be to help them in it, as much as our Lord may administer his grace to us, for his greater praise and glory.

90. Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe that today self-denial and mortification, fundamental for living our celibate consecration, poor and in obedience, are not expressions that we hear or read

frequently in the documents of the Society. They are not words and attitudes that enjoy popularity in our surrounding culture and I am sure that for this reason they should be much more explicit and worked on for the care of the members of the Society. I am not saying that Jesuits do not live them, I have known many self-sacrificing Jesuits, but I do not know if it is a strong aspect of our communities and provinces today.

Chapter VII: Religious Life

Parallel to the unexpected upheaval of 1968, and unrelated to it, the reasonable transformation of the Church in the wake of the Council had taken place. But the increased freedom that followed had disastrous consequences for Jesuit scholasticates. On that occasion I also experienced very badly the evolution or transformation of our way of life. The rebellion of the scholasticates seemed absurd to me. Naturally, my horizon was limited to France, from where the shock wave started. But in general, I was convinced that the Society had the strongest nerves and an inner strength capable of overcoming the crisis without giving in on anything essential. The result was not what I expected. Thank God the spirit has been saved, but the body of the spirit, the letter, has suffered in a lasting way. It is an ordeal that has been inflicted on the Jesuits of my generation, of the preceding generation and of the next. Perhaps it is a lack of flexibility, a lack of adaptation, but they no longer recognize themselves in the lax lifestyle that has been established, they no longer recognize the order that once welcomed them.

Xavier Tilliette [35]

91. I have to admit that it is difficult for me to write what follows, because I realize that it would be very difficult for me if things were different from the way they are now. I am referring to the style of community life, more in conformity with what corresponds to religious life and less centered on the design of life itself. Let me explain. The Society had from its foundation a clear apostolic and ministerial sense, different from that of the monks and friars founded before. For this reason St. Ignatius did not want the choir, that is, the obligation to meet five times a day in church to pray and sing one of the canonical hours. Nor did he want common penances. Notwithstanding these differences, once the order was approved in 1540 and the number of companions increased rapidly, the houses began to be organized as communities of religious, with common times, reading during meals, communal recreation and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The life of the Jesuit residences until after Vatican II and GC 31 was very regimented and uniform. I came to know many of these customs during my first years as a Jesuit, since in the larger and more traditional communities, the bell continued to be used, prayer before lunch, recreation after meals, etc., were maintained. Also in my novitiate, although there were six or seven novices and four formators, life was regulated. However, as the Society diminished, as those who had been formed in that structure passed away and the communities became smaller and smaller, the common life, the proper customs and the self-denial implied in that kind of life, not centered on one's own "love, love and interest", however good and generous it may be, religious life has been diluted. Often our houses are more like apostolic bachelors' colivings than authentic communities. It is not rare that in our houses on "free" days there is almost no one, because most of its members have organized plans with friends or relatives. This happens even on important religious feast days, such as Christmas, Easter or St. Ignatius. Individualism is rampant in

our communities and if there are community plans “and I am free, count on me, but if I have a better plan, don’t wait for me”. I believe that this is not the case everywhere, but it is becoming more and more frequent. The culture in my country is very individualistic, in other places they are still a bit more gregarious.

92. To give an example. I had a superior - and he was for twelve years in the same community, in two different periods - who was never in the community on weekends, vacations or vacations. The same thing happened with a provincial we had. And this was tolerated without question by the community and by the major superiors. This is what Father Xavier Tilliette was talking about in 2003, referring to France, although I believe that today it is much more widespread:

The General Congregations have taken note of the changes that have taken place in behavior, of the desire for independence of their members, of the permissiveness that comes from civil society and that has spread among us. These have cornered the treasure of the rules, the priority of priorities is no longer the religious community life, which has been torn to pieces, but the concern for justice and the predilection for the poor. A fine ideal that risks remaining mere words and becoming unrealizable for the majority. It is to be hoped that a new sap will spring from the stimulating discourse of the delegates, sustained by Father Arrupe, that a new impulse will bring the Society out of the current relative torpor. So far, stagnation has prevailed. [36]

93. I say that it is difficult for me to write about this, because I recognize myself as a very individualistic person. I have a great facility for making plans with friends and I have many of them. It would be very difficult for me to assume a more communitarian and austere lifestyle. It is also true that this requires larger communities, with more play among its members. The smaller communities, more popular in recent decades, are wonderful when their members are very well assembled and friendly, but where there is one who is difficult of character or has a major personality problem, community life can be terribly hard, a living hell. A more intense community life requires, in addition, an order that does not depend on the superior and minister of the moment, because people need a more objective, known and clear framework. I have seen how a community can go from being harmonious for living to being toxic, and the opposite.

What is certain is that if we do not succeed in rebuilding religious life, the Society will disappear. Religious consecration is not for heroes or survivors who manage to live and be faithful in spite of disorder, unpredictability and emotional distress. It is for normal people who need a predictable, healthy and supportive living environment. Today the Society cannot assure that to its members, and that is not good.

95. In the 1960s, an interpretation of the religious life of the Society as it was until GC 31 began to circulate, which labeled it as non-Ignatian and attributed its creation to the generalate of St. Francis Borgia. When I entered the Order in 1986, this interpretation was still being repeated, and in a recent text I have once again found this interpretation well summarized:

The Jesuits, “restored” and almost “conventualized”, needed to be renewed and updated. Gianni La Bella, with the title “An Order in fermentation”, exposes some of the non-Ignatian practices and customs that had been infiltrating and enthroning themselves in the life and apostolates of the

“restored”, conservative, traditionalist and almost “conventualized” Society of Jesus, prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). I entered the Society of Jesus in 1957, from a Faculty of Social Sciences, in the midst of a national struggle to get out of a political dictatorship, and I found, among other things, with: a. Materials not updated as formative readings: The Practices of Villagarcia (Jesuit novitiate from 1577 to 1767), the Exercise of Perfection and Christian Virtues (3 volumes) of 1609 by Father Alonso Rodriguez, S. J., and the Spiritual Meditations of the Society of Jesus (3 volumes) of 1609 by Father Alonso Rodriguez, S. J., and the Spiritual Meditations of the Society of Jesus (3 volumes) of 1609 by Fr. Luis de la Puente, S. J., were my formative readings during my two years of novitiate. b. A dining room (“refectory”) where I was able to read the Exercises of Perfection and Christian Virtues (3 volumes) of 1609 by Fr:

i. We had all our meals in silence and with reading.

ii. The four “classes” (priests, coadjutor brothers, juniors and novices), duly differentiated by the “separation of classes”, which did not allow us to greet each other or converse, had clearly identified areas.

iii. Where, on our knees, we publicly acknowledged our “faults”: “Today I broke a glass” ...

iv. We did rare public “penances”: kissing feet....

v. We could not read newspapers or secular magazines, watch television, go to the movies or the theater....

vi. Let us refer to each other as Brother You, without mentioning our first names.

vii. Personalized friendships were considered “particular friendships” and were forbidden.

viii. The “terna”: Always at least three by three.

ix. We had the “rule of tact” that forbade us to touch each other fraternally, nor to “put each other out”, in the official way, when we played Cuban ball during recreation.

x. The Conference Room (“Pláticas”) referred to as the “Crucified Workshop”.

xi. Exclusion of any female presence in our formative (female teachers or classmates) or operative (civil servants and employees) world.

xii. A summary of the Constitutions that we had to learn by heart and recite to the neighbor across the street. There it was emphasized that “let us all feel and say the same thing”.

xiii. Rules of modesty that taught us to walk with religious moderation and to order other bodily expressions.

xiv. When I went to study philosophy in New York, I found that Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was

locked in the library's "Infiernillo".

Someone will rightly ask how such strange practices and environments, which sought to become part of the Jesuit DNA, could be removed from Jesuit formation, life and work. It was not at all easy. [37]

96. To believe that the rules were not Ignatian and that the Society had become conventualized is to ignore the history of the Order, something that was understandable in the 1960s because there were no studies on the subject, but that today we know is not so. Father Arrupe, in his conference on "Our Way of Proceeding", on January 18, 1979, dedicates numbers 18 and 19, two pages, to "The Rules", and points out that they date back to the time of St. Ignatius. [38] John W. O'Malley, in his popular *The First Jesuits*, devotes chapter 9 to "Prescriptions for the Future", where he deals with the composition and characteristics of the Constitutions and Rules. There he points out that in addition to the Constitutions,

Ignatius and some others had other particular points in view that they judged necessary to give the Society a coherent form and habits. After his first visit, Nadal left extracts from the Constitutions, but also "some rules based on them, so that it would be possible to accommodate the Constitutions to the use of these colleges". This was the basis for the most important set of "rules," the so-called Rules of the Summary, a collection of excerpts from the Constitutions intended to serve as a vademecum or "summary" of their ideals and goals. Another fundamental collection, which would become known as the Common Rules, was begun even earlier. It began around 1549 with the guidelines, which Ignatius drew up for the "domestic discipline" of the professed house in Rome. Already by 1550 these had been adopted by some other houses elsewhere and soon became an integral part of the lot which the promulgators of the Constitutions explained and left for their observance. These Common Rules were much more specific in their norms than the Rules of the Summary and served to some extent as traffic rules for the more numerous communities, while enabling Jesuits to adapt easily and to feel at home when they moved from one community to another, from one country to another. [39]

97. Regarding the Rules of Modesty, O'Malley points out that "In 1555, Ignatius had written a small collection entitled Rules of Modesty or rather Rules of Conduct which, being the author who he was, were held in high esteem". [40] What is curious in this matter is that, in addition, according to the Complementary Norms approved in GC 34, in its numeral 12 & 1 it is declared that "It is presumed that the General Congregation gives the character of laws to all the determinations it makes, unless it is otherwise established by the nature of the matter or by positive declaration. Such are:" and they put in number 3: "The Rules approved by authority of the General Congregation, namely: the Rules of modesty written by St. Ignatius". This means that the rejected Rules of Modesty are still in force in the Society of Jesus.

98. St. Ignatius of Loyola had a particular fondness for the Rules, which is evident in the same book of the Spiritual Exercises, in which appear, in addition to the "Rules for feeling and understanding in some way the various motions that are caused in the soul: The good ones to receive, and the bad ones to throw", of the first [313] and second week [328], the Rules "In the ministry of distributing alms"

[337], “To feel and understand scruples and the suasions of our enemy” [344], “For the true sense that in the Church militant we must have” [352], and “To order oneself in eating for the future” [210]. Six lists of Rules in a small book. It was precisely this excellent idea of St. Ignatius to “codify” his spiritual experience in Rules that made Ignatian spirituality so fruitful in the life of the Church. He transformed it into a clear, accessible method of prayer for everyone. Other great saints and mystics of the Church, such as his contemporaries St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, who were better writers than St. Ignatius, with a more elaborate spiritual doctrine, which led them to be declared Doctors of the Church, did not achieve the same impact as Loyola, because they did not create such a practical method of prayer and Rules of discernment.

99. If we consider the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Society, which was the most widespread and successful educational method in the West for two hundred years, and whose influence reaches our times, we will see that it is a set of 30 sets of Rules that establish what is to be done in an educational center. This document, which was officially approved during the generalate of Father Acquaviva, began to be drawn up in the time of Saint Ignatius. The Rules correspond to what are known today in organizations as action protocols or procedures. They are necessary for the proper functioning and growth of a neighborhood association, a company, a hospital or a religious congregation.

The Rules were the skeleton that supported the edifice of the Society for four hundred and twenty-five years. If one reads the decrees of the Society of the first thirty general congregations, which as far as I know are only published in English as a modern language, one will see that apart from the election of the generals and other major officers, and some serious problems, a large part of the decrees was devoted to the Rules and how they were lived in the Society, the changes needed, etc. [41]

101. In addition to the Rules of the Summary, the Common Rules and the Rules of Modesty, the Rules of Offices were common in the Society, for, as O’Malley points out, “many others, which were essentially descriptions of offices, flowed from the pens of the early Jesuits, especially Nadal. At Padua in 1555, for example, he left rules for the scholastics, for the master of novices, for the novices, for the rector, for the purchaser, for the bursar, and for several others. As he told Ignatius on this occasion, with some modesty, “I have not hesitated to provide you with more rules.” [42]

102. What happened to the Rules in GC 31? The Congregation dedicated decree 19 to “Community Life and Religious Discipline. It defines them as follows: “The life of the Society, its activity, and more specifically the life of community, as a “con-spiratio” of all the members, born of charity, must be defined and ordered by Rules, according to the mind of the Founder and according to the wishes of the Church. Rules which are not only a defense of charity and a sign of the union of the members, but which constitute at the same time an effective aid to human weakness, a stimulus to individual responsibility and a coordination of the activities of all for the common good” (n. 9). He then goes on to affirm how fundamental the Rules are for religious life, “because the Rules point out the way of a concrete, constant and personal love and the common manner of our service to Christ and for Christ” (10). The observance of the Rules “is also a way of human perfection, because such observance is neither a vain formality nor an ‘alienation’; on the contrary, by demanding at times the renunciation and abnegation of valuable things, by which we associate ourselves with Christ, it leads to a solid personal maturity” (11). He asks superiors to set an example in observing them and points out that

“their principal duty is to form their subjects, especially the younger ones, to a progressive education in responsibility and freedom, so that they may come to observe the Rules not out of a spirit of fear, but out of an intimate personal persuasion rooted in faith and charity”. He invites the subjects to “foster love for the Rules by assiduous reading and meditation of the Constitutions” (12). He then points out that one should not “worship discipline in itself and for itself” and that superiors and subjects should be “attentive to scrutinize the signs of the times in the light of God, and be ready to propose a timely accommodation and adaptation of the Rules, which would eliminate those that are out of use and unprofitable, confirm those that are fully in force and perhaps introduce new ones that are more useful for the intended purpose” (13). Finally, “Father General is entrusted with the revision, as soon as possible, of the Rules in conformity with the principles of the Church, so that some common norms for the whole Society may be determined, necessarily few, universal, brief, expressed (as far as possible) in a positive and organic form, theologically well founded, which “signify” and bring about the union of the members of the Society, leaving it to the Provincials, under the approval of Father General, to determine concrete forms for each Province” (14). It is then established that “the Rules of the Summary and Common Rules remain under the competence of Father General” (15), and therefore, they are no longer subject to the legislation of the General Congregations, as had been the case until then. The following decree, number 20, dealt with “Reading in the dining room”, one of the universal rules of Jesuit communities. The General Congregation decided not to pronounce itself and to refer the matter to Father General (1), but already taking it for granted that the reading would be removed, it added in number 2: “In order that, by the cessation of the monthly reading of the Summary of the Constitutions in the dining room, knowledge of the Constitutions may not diminish, the General Congregation recommends to Fr. General that he should effectively preserve and foster this knowledge, either by restoring the monthly reading of the Summary, or by determining that the principal paragraphs of the Constitutions themselves be read in order in the refectory, or in some other more conducive manner”.

103. It would be very interesting to know the behind-the-scenes of these decrees in GC 31, but it will be many years before the archives are opened. What is clear is that in spite of the pious declarations on the importance of the Rules, the intention was to eliminate what had structured the life of the order since its birth. The following year the Summary of the Constitutions and the Common Rules were abrogated, as well as the rules of office. A Selection of Texts of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus (1968) was published, which in 1976 was replaced by Jesuit Religious Life, and in 1990 by Our Jesuit Life. As historian Manuel Revuelta points out, “In order to update the Jesuit identity contained in the Exercises and Constitutions, the compendium of the old Rules was replaced by new ones that expressed in a modern style the essential features of Ignatian spirituality. Some received the false impression that the Rules had been suppressed and that new styles of life and action were being introduced. What the new formularies did not achieve was the familiarity the Jesuits had had with the old Rules, which they learned by heart in the novitiate and heard read each month in the refectories.” [43]

104. Since 1990 nothing has been published again that attempts to summarize the Constitutions and Complementary Norms. Today we have a 425-page volume, which few Jesuits have read and know with any familiarity. Recently a Jesuit, who published a book on the leadership of St. Ignatius based

on texts from the Constitutions, asked me how long it had been since I had read them, and added, “Because Jesuits don’t read the Constitutions”. Nowadays we are only obliged to read them in the Novitiate and in the Third Probation, and I know that in some cases, they are not even read well. In the end, our experience of the charism is nourished almost exclusively by the Spiritual Exercises, which is very good, but it is not enough. The Exercises were not made for Jesuits, but for any Christian, so they cannot give us elements of our charism, which are in the Constitutions, letters of St. Ignatius and other documents of the foundational period.

Although I had a novice master, who was largely a former combatant of ‘68 and very arrupist, he had, and still has, a deep sense of the Jesuit vocation, and he had had great spiritual masters who had engraved it in his heart. For this reason, I can only be grateful that in my two years of novitiate and beyond some elements in which we clearly did not agree, such as the liturgy, he transmitted to me the charism of St. Ignatius in depth. He made us study a lot the life of St. Ignatius, the Constitutions and the Exercises. He also made us read many books on the history of the Society. He had the habit that we were always reading a biography of St. Ignatius, and when you finished it, he would give you another one. During those two years I was able to read the biographies of Cándido de Dalmases, Jean-Claude Dhotel, Pedro de Ribadeneyra, James Brodrick, José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras and Ricardo García Villoslada. In this way you became familiar with the birth of the Society in a remarkable way. We studied the Constitutions by dividing them into two years: five parts in the first year and five parts in the second. We used the commentaries of Antonio María Aldama to study them in depth and we had to do monographic works on each topic. Later I met with companions who had a very different experience and a more diffuse knowledge of the origins of the Society and its Constitutions.

106. The loss of the reading of the Summary of the Constitutions and the Common Rules, I believe, is something that continues to affect us unfavorably more than fifty years later. I am not saying that they should not have been renewed and revised, but religious life also requires external structure, known and assimilated rules, that continue to sustain us. A religious order without rules is a disintegrated order and many of our companions experience this. What decree 19 of GC 31 said about the religious and human importance of the Rules, although I think it was said without believing it, is true. Without Rules there is no consecrated religious life. Father Arrupe’s conference on “Our Way of Proceeding”, given towards the end of his generalate, is very interesting. It is a very well done and profound writing, where the fundamental characteristics of “our Jesuit way of proceeding” are pointed out. In the conference, Arrupe recalls the main means used by St. Ignatius and the first generation, especially Nadal, to transmit this “way of proceeding” to the new Jesuits: Constitutions, instructions, Rules, correspondence, talks. Arrupe speaks of two levels in the way of being and doing of the Jesuits, one more profound and permanent, and the other more phenomenological, external and changing. For him the “our way of proceeding” has to do with the first level, although it should be made explicit in the second, even if it is changing. What this conference lacks is to have said, in the first place, why the Rules were completely abrogated and not replaced by others more adapted to the times of that time (we cannot say that they are current), as GC 31 had requested. Secondly, it does not explain how Jesuits can assimilate and live the “our way of proceeding”, common to the whole Society, without common Rules that structure that religious and ascetical experience that makes it possible to be configured to Christ, to have the *sensus societatis*, and to achieve the elements that make visible “our

way of proceeding”. I have the impression, and this is my interpretation, that Father Arrupe wanted to achieve a Jesuit like the traditional one, but improved and adapted to the times, but without realizing that this cannot be achieved without a clear community, religious and ascetic structure, that is to say, with Rules.

107. The other set of lower-ranking but important Rules, which also disappeared with GC 31, are the rules of the offices: Superior, Rector, Minister, Bursar, etc. These rules were what in modern management is called “job description”. The Society had it since its foundation and lost it when it became a common practice in the world of organizations and companies. It is incredible, but in no current document of the Society does it say what a superior is, what a minister is, what a bursar is. There is advice for superiors, but there is no specific description of what is expected of them. The clearest case is that of the ministers of the communities, a key character for the common life of the members of the order. When I returned from my studies in Spain, I was appointed minister of a community of twenty-two fathers and brothers. I looked for a document that expressed what the minister was supposed to do. I did not find it. What happened was that being a house of older Jesuits, they asked me to do things that I could not do, because I was not a full time minister, but I was also the director of a high school with five hundred students. The fact is that neither the community nor the minister were clear about what a minister was, and each one, according to his own history, saw it differently. For years I have seen that we have been managing with the inertia of other times and with arbitrariness and subjectivity. There are ministers who make themselves masters of the communities. I lived in one where we talked about the “So-and-so Law”, the minister’s last name. He did what he wanted and the superior washed his hands of it. His whim was the rule and the majority of the community, like good obedient Jesuits, put up with it stoically. I have lived in others where the minister had only the title, without exercising anything. In others he was the housewife, just as enslaved as so many mothers of macho culture, acting as chauffeur, cleaner, buyer, recreationist and host of the community. All that the Complementary Norms say is that the Superior “in addition to a Bursar, should have a Minister to help him in the observance of community order, take care of everything necessary for the house and supervise the material services” (404 & 1). When there were Rules of Offices, one could know what was expected of him, and others could have a criterion for evaluating performance. Today we have no description and everything is left to the best knowledge of the appointee. This lack of Rules of Office is the source of many problems in the communities and clearly affects the daily life of the Jesuits.

Chapter VIII: Liturgy

108. My liturgical experience in the Society has been very hard. In the fourteen years of formation, until ordination to the priesthood, with the exception of the two years of teaching, when I participated in the parish or college Mass, I never lived in a community where the Eucharist was celebrated in a way that was minimally in accord with the General Ordinance of the Roman Missal of Paul VI. Masses were always seated during the entire celebration, the priests did not dress, or at most wore a stole, without respecting the liturgical colors of the day. Communion was given by passing the chalice and paten from hand to hand, the Gospel was read by anyone. In some houses the Eucharistic Prayer

was done in one paragraph per person, without distinguishing between priests and non-priests. This was the case from the novitiate, through the juniorate, philosophy and theology, in Montevideo and Madrid, as well as during the summer juniorates (ECSEJ) in Paraguay and Chile. Some scholastics questioned this situation, but the questioning was not accepted. In the novitiate and juniorate I myself was the main objector. The arguments of the formators were inconsistent, because they appealed to the fact that the superiors (provincials, assistants general) celebrated this way. When one objected that Canon Law and the papal documents said otherwise, we were sent to a course on Sacrosanctum Concilium with a Jesuit “liturgist”, who belonged to the creative school of the 60’s, or they asked a secular priest liturgist and friend, who spoke kind words, but when he received my questions from the Law and the Magisterium, he slipped off on a tangent so as not to commit himself to any part of it. In the end, authority prevailed and we had to comply. So I did. I decided not to raise the issue again and to resist all the formation until I reached ordination, with the clear decision never to celebrate in that way. In my twenty-three years as a priest I have never celebrated seated, nor unclothed, which has meant celebrating very few times with my fellow Jesuits. I have attended Masses, but I have not concelebrated. Although in general I foresee it and avoid situations as much as possible, I have had to clarify many times in environments close to the Society: religious, laity, CLC, etc., that I do not celebrate in any other way. that I do not celebrate in any other way than in the Latin rite of Paul VI.

109. It is very sad to note that the vast majority of Jesuits I know, with the exception of the North Americans, have a very poor liturgical formation. They do not know the spirit of the liturgy, as Romano Guardini and Joseph Ratzinger called it, and they do not respect the Roman liturgy because they have been explicitly formed to despise the ritual, the norms, the aesthetics and the deep meaning it expresses. I can affirm that in Spain and Latin America the situation is particularly serious. Perhaps it is a little better than twenty years ago, but in no way can we speak of liturgy of quality and depth. For most of us, to prepare a Mass is to prepare the homily, and if it fits, the explanatory scripts that nobody listens to, or the extra gestures that are more meant to entertain than to worship God: presentation of offerings, prayers of forgiveness, prayers of the faithful, etc. This neglect of the Church’s liturgy is not something of nostalgic progressives of the 1970s. It is part of a Jesuit culture seen at the Gesù, the General Curia and in the other European capitals. The only place where I have found a liturgical culture that is cared for and lived, even if I do not share all its characteristics, has been in the United States, Poland and Singapore.

110. In the case of Latin America, an alternative ritual has taken shape, born as a transgressor in the 60’s and 70’s, but which has become as ritualistic as any other. What some progressive “created” fifty years ago as a gesture of creativity, today is still being repeated by recently ordained priests, who have seen their formators do it and who meekly and without any spirit of transgression, continue to repeat it. Examples? For example: presenting the bread and wine with a single prayer; not doing the lavabo; having everyone say the Per Ipsum or the prayer of peace; saying Amen at the end of the Our Father; having the parish announcements before the Postcommunion prayer; saying “The Lord is with you” instead of “be”; saying “of the man and the woman” in the prayers of presentation of the offertory; not standing for the Offertory prayer; not putting on the chasuble, etc.

111. I am not saying that Jesuits have no Eucharistic devotion. I am impressed by the fidelity of many of them to the daily celebration of the Mass, even if it is in any place and in any way. I admire

that they live it with devotion. I cannot. I prefer to go without Mass if there are no decent conditions to celebrate it. I do not question and I admire those who in terrible situations have managed to celebrate the Eucharist, as Cardinal Van Thuan tells about his imprisonment in Vietnam. But outside of these situations of force majeure, I believe that everything necessary for a dignified celebration of the Mass should be provided. Father Arrupe himself told how he carried the stone Sacra to celebrate Mass on Mount Fuji before the Council. In the Society we have trivialized the liturgy, and the superiors, including those in Rome, and for many decades, have been accomplices and responsible. It is enough to visit many of our house chapels to see that they do not comply with the minimum liturgical norms. If the altars are tables, if there are no ornaments, if there are no liturgical books, it is clear that it is not possible to celebrate as God and the Church command.

112. We are a priestly order and are therefore at the service of the liturgy. The sacraments are our central and primary task. If we are not able to do so in a profound, decorous, dignified and aesthetic manner, we are seriously failing.

113. I have had formators who did not know what the liturgical colors were, nor the distinction between fair, memorial, feast and solemnity. The sacristies of our churches, which were among the richest and most well-stocked in the past, are often in deplorable condition, with ornaments of inferior quality and old. The sacred vessels, cloths, books, etc., are tattered, stained, and in poor condition. The sacred vessels, cloths, books, etc., are ragged, stained, beaten, neglected, if not dirty. On more than one occasion I have had to make it clear that I would refuse to eat or drink a glass of water from objects in that condition, and they were being placed to contain the Body and Blood of our Lord.

114. We live all this knowing that it is not right. When we receive a bishop we are embarrassed, or we go out to look for ornaments and objects to make the pantomime that we are celebrating according to the rubrics. When the ordination of my generation arrived in Spain, most of them, after ten, twelve or fourteen years of formation in religious houses and daily Mass, had no idea of what to do in a Mass, neither of the theory nor of the practice. We were not offered any specific training, as is traditionally done in seminaries and was done before in the Society. Almost none of us knew how to move in a presbytery or how to use our arms and hands properly. I don't know if I was the only one, but I'm sure there were not many, who studied the entire General Order of the Roman Missal before being ordained.

115. This lack of formation and familiarity with the liturgy, and even more of liturgical spirit, is noticeable when one sees the majority of Jesuits celebrating, with the exception of North Americans and Poles. There are few who know how to move, know the gestures, accompany the prayers with the appropriate looks (yes, the looks have to do with the ritual), and know all the richness of the Roman Missal. Liturgy is something that we should master from the novitiate, being acolytes, then deacons and finally priests. Who would like to make a survey on basic liturgical knowledge among Jesuits?

116. What can we say about the Liturgy of the Hours? Thank God, in my novitiate we prayed Lauds and Compline to begin and end the day. Then, eleven years without seeing them again. The diaconate came along and you made a promise to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily and you were given the four thick volumes. From then on, the struggle to fulfill a duty of conscience, for which no

one formed you in thirteen years. What percentage of Jesuits fulfill the promise they made at their diaconate ordination?

117. The matter has a stirring point. We Jesuits know that St. Ignatius did not want us to be obliged to pray the hours in choir all together. It was a fierce struggle, because Paul IV forced the Society to pray in choir. After the Pope's death, this obligation was removed, although shortly afterwards the so-called Litanies were established, all together, before lunch. Since the end of the 60's, they began to insist on how good it is for communities to come together to pray, and to this day they continue to do so. Now, the Liturgy of the Hours is the official prayer of the Church, built almost entirely with the Word of God, another of the post-conciliar insistences. What better than to take advantage of those moments of community prayer to pray one of the canonical hours? Well, no, there is always someone who reminds us that we are not monks, nor friars, that St. Ignatius forbade it, etc. Considering the apostolic motive of our founder and what praying the choir implied in the 16th century is out of the question. Thus we fall into these "creative" prayers, which must be prepared in advance and which lead to the eventual abandonment of these communal instances. It can be counter-argued that some people do not like the Liturgy of the Hours, or do not feel it. This is probably true, but it is largely because we were not formed to like the Breviary, we did not incorporate it into our lives during the long years of formation and then it is more difficult to get a taste for it. The fidelity of St. Ignatius and the early Fathers to the Breviary is not emphasized either. It is impressive to read the Memorial of St. Peter Faber, and to see how he consigns the recitation of the Hours, sometimes with days of delay because he had not been able to do it when it was due because of much work.

118. Perhaps I am very much mistaken, but I believe that the Society will not recover if it does not first rediscover the centrality of the liturgy and obedience to the Church in something as central as the profound experience of the sacraments and the daily prayer of the Church.

Epilogue: Quo vadis Societate Iesu?

I try to guard against nostalgia, which is sterile. But I do not have a clear vision of the Society in the future, on the threshold of the third millennium. The eternal youth of the Church is not granted to religious orders, and the Society has already known death and resurrection. At present, is it going to follow the path that, at least in France, leads it to become a secular institute, to justify the considerable absurdities of poverty and common life. Bad habits are so difficult to eradicate... A change of status would disguise the excess of diversity. Or, drinking from the authentic sources, will it recover its former vigor, which implies painful sacrifices, an austere lifestyle, a homogeneity in manners, discipline, silence, enclosure...? Our houses would become religious houses again, something they are not now. [...] Having reached the age when the final notes of Ecclesiastes take on a completely personal resonance, when the shadows are bending over the road, I have the right to confess a disappointment that I share with many. I have changed infinitely less than my living environment and it is a suffering to feel outdated, anti-modern and, unfortunately, complicit, because the influence of the surrounding environment is too strong. No one should be incriminated, even if a decisive word from superiors has been lacking at certain times.

119. There are many topics on the life and apostolate of the Society that could be added to this already long essay. At one point I thought of dealing with the formation of our members, as well as ministries, especially the intellectual apostolate, which is disappearing by leaps and bounds, despite the repeated requests of the popes and the good intentions of the General Congregations. [45] There was also the question of parishes, schools and social works. However, I have chosen not to add more chapters because it would be interminable. Others will be able to reflect on these topics.

120. Talking with several friends, Jesuits and non-Jesuits, about this writing I was doing, some of them asked me what I was going to propose as a solution. Others told me that I had to finish it in a positive, hopeful way, otherwise it would be a downer. I'm not sure I can do that. I am a rather critical person, because that is how the Jesuits educated me, both in the eleven years of school and in the formation, in which we were insistently told about the masters of suspicion (Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche and Freud), as keys to not being naïve in the face of reality. At the same time, I am an optimistic, "go-ahead" guy, with a pragmatic capacity to do and transform things and institutions. I am one of those who believe that history can be changed and that it is not a fatality. However, Woody Allen says that a pessimist is a well-informed optimist, and that is what I am now with respect to the Company.

121. It is very difficult for me to think of a change of direction and a reactivation of our charisma. Perhaps it is because we have not yet hit bottom and we will have to wait until we shrink even more to see what happens. It is true that in the history of the Church, many orders and congregations have reformed and have lived times of great flourishing after a very pronounced decline. Benedictines, Carmelites, Franciscans and Dominicans have experienced this. The Society of Jesus itself was suppressed and persecuted, survived as a small group in the Russian Empire and then was restored and flourished impressively. However, I believe that we have two conditions that make this recovery difficult at this historical moment. First, the crisis of the 18th century was of external origin, not the consequence of internal processes of deterioration and relaxation. The current situation is not one of external persecution, but of internal crisis and decadence. The same thing happened to the orders mentioned above. In the second place, we are a much more centralized and verticalist order than the others, that is why it becomes more difficult to achieve a reform like the one carried out by Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross in Carmel, or those that gave rise to the Capuchins and Alcantarines among the Franciscans, or the Clunianence, Cistercian and Trappist reforms of the Benedictines. In the Society, reform seems to come only from the central government and that makes it very complicated.

122. Even so, I am going to express some ideas that I believe could be useful for the Society to recover its tradition and emerge from the process of decadence it has been going through for the past fifty-seven years.

123. 1) The first thing to do is to go back to the Formula of the Institute and what it points out to us:

As long as he lives, let him set before his eyes first of all God, and then the way of being of this institute of his, which is the way to go to Him, and to reach with all his strength the end that God

proposes to him, although each one according to the grace with which the Holy Spirit will help him and according to the proper degree of his vocation. [46]

124. Putting God first means that the only way out of the present situation is with more spiritual life. I cannot speak properly about the general spiritual situation of the Jesuits. I am not involved in spiritual direction, I have not been a formator, I have not been a major superior and therefore I have not received an account of conscience. I don't know if the general government has any idea about that. I think it would be important that with rigorous methodologies and with specialized people, an investigation be made about what the members of the order really believe and live in 2022, as well as their spiritual and vocational situation. At the end of the 1960s, the famous Survey of the Society was made, of which I saw many materials when I first entered the order, but whose results, I believe, were never published and which, according to the testimony of Fathers Valero and Revuelta, seems not to have borne the fruits that were expected. [47] How important it would be to know this situation! I have the impression, from the years I have been in the order and the many Jesuits I know, that most of them live their religious and priestly consecration seriously and in faith. But I also have the feeling that most of them lack apostolic zeal, spiritual solidity and radicality. Despite the progressive rhetoric, the service of faith and the promotion of justice, of the poor, of integral ecology and the desire for social impact, the order, at least in the West, and that includes Latin America, is gentrified and lacks pathos. This has to do with the lack of abnegation and mortification.

125. To conduct a survey, we currently have the powerful tool of the Internet. Instead of conducting lengthy processes, with serious risks of conscious or unconscious manipulation, such as those used for the Universal Apostolic Preferences, we could organize an Internet survey, which could be answered anonymously by every Jesuit in the world and which would provide complete, detailed and rapid information on how Jesuits in every region live their vocation. The only ones who might have problems answering it would be very old Jesuits who are not active, because even octogenarians who are active use the Internet. I believe that in designing such an investigation, the expert support of sociologists and other non-Jesuit social scientists could be sought, led by a pluralistic committee of Jesuits, who are not all of the same line, that is, who are willing to know the truth and do not seek to ratify the official account. [48]

126. 2) As part of the survey or as a separate project, the General Government should ask a group of Jesuits and other religious and priests, perhaps a bishop, to make an objective study-report on the situation of the Society, working on quantitative and qualitative aspects; a report that would give an account of the situation of the Order in the various aspects: spiritual life; community life and discipline; level of formation and problems it presents; selection of apostolates and their vitality; organization of government; life of poverty and administration of goods. It is true that in the *De Statu Societatis* reports made by the Generals in the last decades, many of the problems of the Society appear, but they are never quantified and end up being relativized with the positive aspects. What is needed is a report prepared by people who are not linked to the government, nor are they responsible for the units or organizations being studied. [49]

127. 3) The General, who by General Congregation 31 was put in charge of the management of the Rules (Decree 19, n°14), should recover this fundamental instrument for religious life, which was the

skeleton that maintained the Society for 437 years. I am not speaking of restoring the Rules that were in force until 1967, but of creating a commission of prepared and wise Jesuits to review the tradition of the Rules, the Summary of the Constitutions and the other documents that made up the *Thesaurus Spiritualis Societatis Iesu*, recover what is still valid, revise all subsequent legislation and propose new lists of Rules, including those of the offices of the Society, especially those of the Provincial, Superior, Director of Works, Minister, Sotoministro, Bursar, Provincial and community Consultors, etc. I believe that having sufficient, simple and well known Rules would be of great help to recover religious life in the Order and to be clear about what corresponds to a Jesuit and what does not. These Rules, in addition, should help to grow in the spiritual life, and to recover self-denial as the solid foundation on which religious life is built.

128. 4) I believe that the Society should, at different levels, make a revision of its being and doing, without being bound by the experience and the General Congregations of the last fifty years. I am not saying that we should ignore what we have lived and learned since 1965, but I am saying that we should not assume the ruptures and changes of the 60s, 70s and following years as if they were intrinsic parts of our charism. It is curious that the “iconoclasts” of the post-conciliar period have become the defenders of the status quo of the Society today. The Jesuits of the new generations have the right to re-read the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* of Vatican II, on “The Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life,” without being conditioned by the way in which the Jesuits of that time read it. We cannot ignore what has been lived since GC 31, any more than we can ignore the Society restored in 1814 and which flourished until 1965. It is a matter, as the Council pointed out, of “a constant return to the sources of the whole Christian life and to the original inspiration of the institutes and an adaptation of these to the changed conditions of the times” (n. 2). This means a return to the Ignatian and Jesuit roots of our vocation, which involves more than the Exercises, the Autobiography and the Constitutions. The Society had a formation process and was nourished by more texts than these, from the correspondence of St. Ignatius, through the writings of Nadal and the first and second generation of Jesuits, to works of Jesuit asceticism and mysticism such as the *Exercise of Perfection* and *Christian Virtues*, by Father Alonso Rodriguez, a jewel of the spirituality of the Society, which marked the spiritual and ascetic formation of all Jesuits until 1965, and of many other religious congregations. Although I heard about this work, especially in jokes, since the novitiate, I only read it in 2010. It is an extraordinary work, which should be republished in current Spanish, to make it more accessible, but it is fabulous and fundamental to recover the depth of Jesuit life. At the same time, the “changed conditions of the times” of which the Council speaks are not the same in 2022 as they were in 1970, nor are those of the Society. Therefore, it is necessary to make an adequate renewal without being tied to the recent past.

129. 5) Finally, we should recall the famous response of Pope Clement XIII, who resisted the attacks of the Bourbon ambassadors until his death, when he was asked to change the Society of Jesus: *Sint ut sunt aut non sint* (Let them be as they are or not at all). The consequence of this “holy obstinacy”, both of Clement XIII and of General Lorenzo Ricci, was that with Clement XIV the suppression of the Society of Jesus was achieved in 1773. Perhaps, if they had adapted more to the times, the Society would have survived. The reality is that it survived in the Russian Empire and forty years later was universally restored by Pius VII in 1814, and managed to return to being an

extraordinary evangelizing force for another one hundred and fifty years. We do not know what would have happened if the position of the Pope and the General had been more conciliatory. Are we today what we should be? I think to a large extent we are not. That is why we are becoming less and less and may even disappear. I believe deeply in the honesty and depth of the vocation of the vast majority of my current Jesuit companions. They are spending their lives in the service of God and their brothers. However, this is bearing less and less fruit, because there are conditions in the order that do not help to make their work fruitful. May the Lord grant us light to be able to see our errors, deviations and sins. May the Lord give us again the vitality and courage to encourage us to correct them before it is too late. The Church needs us to be active, prepared, solid; the people, all of them, long for a more religious, apostolic and priestly service of the Jesuits, which will help them to know the Lord more intimately, to love and follow him more; our young companions deserve a Society full of apostolic zeal and evangelical depth, in which they can grow, live and serve in community.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Society of Jesus, on whose feast I conclude this essay, place us with her Son and make us faithful to him, through the charism she gave to St. Ignatius of Loyola.



Julio Fernández Techera, S. I. / April 22, 2022

Notes

1 In 1605, the famous Father Juan de Mariana finished in Toledo a writing that he called *De reformatione Societatis* or Discourse on the Illnesses of the Society, in which he pointed out some of the problems that the government of the order had in his time. It was published a year after his death, in 1625, in Spanish, Latin, French and Italian, in the city of Bordeaux. It was a work that coincided with a period of strong questioning within the Society about the forms of government, especially during the generalate of Father Acquaviva. Catto, Michela. *La Compagnia divisa. Il dissenso nell'ordine gesuitico tra '500 e '600*. Brescia, 2009, pp. 157-173. The quotation is taken from a Spanish edition called *Tratado de las cosas íntimas de la Compañía de Jesús*, Madrid, 1931, p. 51.

2 Even so, GC 34 produced 26 decrees and was the last to deal in depth with internal issues of Jesuit life, as well as establishing priorities.

3 Valero, Urbano. *Paul VI and the Jesuits*, p. 176 and note 3.

4 John Paul II. "Homily at the beatification of Pius IX, John XXIII, Thomas Reggio, William Joseph Chaminade and Columba Marmion". September 3, 2000.

5 Paul VI. "Allocution of the Holy Father to the participants in the XXXII General Congregation". General Congregation XXXII of the Society of Jesus, Madrid, Razón y Fe, 1975, p. 248.

6 Idem, p. 242.

7 Idem, p. 248.

8 Idem, p. 251.

9 Idem, p. 244.

10 “Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to Father General”. Congregación General XXXII de la Compañía de Jesús, Madrid, Razón y Fe, 1975, p. 271.

11 Idem, p. 272.

12 Idem, p. 274.

13 Fr. Arturo Sosa: “Common discernment and apostolic planning” (excerpts from an address in Brazil on October 27, 2017). Rambla, Josep M. and Lozano, Josep M. (eds.) Apostolic communal discernment. Fundamental texts of the Society of Jesus, p. 23.

14 Formula of the Institute. Loyola, St. Ignatius, Collected Works, Madrid, 1963, p. 435-6.

15 U.S.A. [104].

16 Arrupe, Pedro, La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos, p. 247.

17 Idem, pp. 248 and 249.

18 Kolvenbach, Peter-Hans, Selected Writings of Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach 1983-1990, p. 54.

19 Idem.

20 Idem, pp. 55-57.

21 Idem, p. 69.

22 Rambla, Josep M. and Lozano, Josep M. (eds.) Discernimiento comunitario apostólico. Fundamental texts of the Society of Jesus, p. 14. This work contains most of the documents of the Society of Jesus on the subject.

23 Idem, p. 14.

24 Idem, p. 16.

25 Idem, p. 17.

26 Idem, p. 21.

27 Idem, p. 20.

28 Idem, note 3, p. 16.

29 Idem, p. 18.

30 Idem, p. 16.

31 Idem, p. 17.

32 P. 59.

33 To give an example, the theologates of Leon, Castilla, Toledo and Loyola were transferred to Madrid and Bilbao, forming innumerable small communities (apartments), of which in 1970 there were 35 in Madrid and 12 in Bilbao. Egido, Teófanos (Coord). 2004. Los Jesuitas en España y en el Mundo Hispánico, p. 410.

34 Constitutions [547]

35 Gómez-Oliver, Valentí and Benítez Josep M. 31 Jesuits Confess, 203, p. 507.

36 Idem.

37 Espadas, S.J., Román. 2021. The Jesuits. From Pedro Arrupe to Arturo Sosa “Seeing all things new in Christ” who “makes all things new” A new today with much Ignatian yesterday, pp. 5 and 6.

38 Arrupe, Pedro. La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos, p. 58-60.

39 O'Malley, John W. 1995. *The Early Jesuits*, p. 410-11.

40 Idem, p. 411.

41 Padberg SJ, John W.; O'Keefe SJ, Martin D.; McCarthy SJ, John L. 1994. *For Matters of Greater Moment. The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations. A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees*.

42 Ibid.

43 Egido, Teófanés (Coord). 2004. *Los Jesuitas en España y en el Mundo Hispánico*, p. 415. The "false impression" is nothing more than a typical and very fine ironic comment of Father Revuelta, who was a lucid man, but not given to direct criticism.

44 Gómez-Oliver, V and Benítez J.M. *31 Jesuits Confess*, Barcelona, 2003, pp. 509.

45 In this regard, I fully subscribe to the following text of Xavier Teillette: "I have spent my life as a Jesuit in the traditional positions of school principal and professor, magazine editor and writer, university professor. I have taken on these rather austere tasks, convinced that Jesuit humanism is paramount and that intellectuals are the eyes of the Society. It seems that today this is no longer the case and that preference is given to directly apostolic ministries. Rather, I believe that necessity is a virtue; recruitment does not allow us to maintain a high level of studies and the superiors do not have subjects capable of filling vacancies as they arise. From this point of view, the future of the Society is rather bleak. Houses are closed and the elderly are crowded into residences staffed by medical personnel. Undoubtedly, there is no other solution. But we would like this inevitable failure not to be accompanied by the euphoric discourse that has become a ritual, reminiscent of the declarations of defeat during the war". Idem, p. 507.

46 Formula of the Institute. Loyola, St. Ignatius, *Collected Works*, BAC, Madrid, 1963, p. 436.

47 "Sociological survey on the situation and resources of the Society to respond to the needs and demands of the world and of the Church, launched by Fr. Arrupe at the end of 1965, which occupied a group of Jesuit sociologists from our communities for three years, generating an important set of documents on the subject, which later had only a relative use. Valero, Urbano. *Paul VI and the Jesuits*, p. 102, note 9. Revuelta summarizes the survey in Spain: "The surveys aroused more skepticism than enthusiasm. Only 48% of those surveyed responded". Regarding the Society as a whole, he adds: "The great worldwide assembly of the survey concluded with a final meeting in Rome in early 1970. Although the results were mixed, Father Arrupe, always optimistic, assured that the first objective had been achieved: "to stimulate an organic reflection on the revision of ministries and to awaken and strengthen the awareness of responsibility for the good of apostolic works and religious life. The final note on the results of the survey noted the reality of a de-Christianized Europe, in which the Society was in a situation of crisis, with a decrease in vocations, disillusionment with traditional works and great uncertainty in the choices to be made. The self-analysis made by the Spanish Jesuits fit perfectly into the European profile, although it was pointed out that in Spain, and in Belgium, "some insist that the first thing to investigate is not so much what should be done, but what should be". Egido, Teófanés (Coord). 2004. *Los Jesuitas en España y en el Mundo Hispánico*, p. 406.

48 It is interesting to know that at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, when the crisis known as that of the memorialists occurred, in which the government of Father Acquaviva was strongly questioned, there were two instances of revision of the situation of the Society. The first was during GC 5, in 1693-4, when a commission "ad detrimenta cognoscenda" was formed. The second was created by Acquaviva himself in 1605, as the unrest and questions about his government continued. In this case, all the Jesuits, as well as the provincial congregations, were asked to write and expose their questions and solutions: "Nel 1605 Acquaviva decise de procedere a un'approfondita indagine volta a coinvolgere tutti i gesuiti, anche quelli delle sedi più periferiche, al fine di conoscere tutto ciò che a loro avviso poteva e doveva essere modificato, quali erano i maggiori problemi che affliggevano il corpo gesuitico e i possibili rimedi a questo stato di cose. A study *De detrimentis Societatis* is available to all the provinces. Each provincial congregation should meet and send a report on the deficits found, on the measures already taken and their results and, finally, on the means to be used in the future to ensure greater funding. Each of them could finally send a memorial on these issues to Rome. "L'ensemble du dossier représente le jugement que porte sur elle-même une génération", scrive Michel de Certeau. In fact, it is a mass of documentation, which from the peripheries goes to the heart of the gestural body, in which it is possible to trace, with a great variety if not of themes certainly of tones, the multiple sfumature of the gestural model

embraced by each component”. Catto, Michela. *La Compagnia divisa. Il dissenso nell’ordine gesuitico tra ‘500 e ‘600*. Brescia, 2009, p. 146.

49 An interesting model of the study that could be done is the one conducted by Peter McDonough and Eugene C. Bianchi on the Jesuits in the United States, published in 2003: *Passionate Uncertainty. Inside the American Jesuits*. It is the work of two sociologists, one of them a former Jesuit, who study the evolution of the Society in the United States since the Second Vatican Council, through surveys and interviews. The book has a clear anti-John Paul II bias and with a position taken on the value of this process. Methodologically it is questionable because a very high percentage of the Jesuits consulted did not respond to the surveys and therefore it cannot be said that its conclusions are representative of the order as a whole. Even so, it is very interesting to know the opinion of an important group of Jesuits and ex-Jesuits in a given place and time. If such a study could be carried out, less “arrowed” and more complete, it would be very useful.

For internal use in the Society This text was partially reformatted by Claude Pavur, S.J. on April 27, 2022. The notes have been changed to straight endnote text for better results from online translators.