

# General Congregation 34, Decree 13

## Cooperation with the Laity in Mission

1. A reading of the signs of the times since the Second Vatican Council shows unmistakably that the Church of the next millennium will be called the “Church of the Laity. During the past thirty years increasing numbers of lay people have responded to the call to ministry flowing from the grace received in baptism.<sup>1</sup> The actualization of their vocation in so many and such varied situations has become the predominant way by which the People of God minister to the world in promotion of the Kingdom. This growth of lay ministry will surely continue to expand during the next millennium. The Society of Jesus acknowledges as a grace of our day and a hope for the future that laity “take an active, conscientious, and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great moment of history.”<sup>2</sup> We seek to respond to this grace by offering ourselves in service to the full realization of this mission of the laity, and we commit ourselves to that end by cooperating with them in their mission.<sup>3</sup>

2. We discover a similar grace if we read the signs of the times in the apostolic work of the Society of Jesus over the past thirty years. Spurred by the council, General Congregation 31 urged us to “foster the cooperation of the laity in our own apostolic works.”<sup>4</sup> Since that time a growing cooperation with the laity has expanded our mission and transformed the ways in which we carry it out in partnership with others. It has enriched what we do and how we understand our role in that mission. Jesuit works in some areas of the world depend primarily upon lay persons for the carrying out of the mission of the Society. We foresee the expansion of lay apostolic leadership in Jesuit works in years to come and pledge ourselves to assist this development.

3. We also cooperate with many others: priests, men and women religious, with their distinct charisms, as well as people of all faiths and believes who seek to build a world of truth, justice, freedom, peace and love. We are grateful for this cooperation and are enriched by it.

4. Jesuits are both “men *for* other”<sup>5</sup> and “men *with* others.”<sup>6</sup> This basic characteristic of or way of proceeding calls for an attitude and readiness to cooperate, to listen and to learn from others, to share our spiritual and apostolic inheritance. To be “men with others” is a central aspect of our charism and deepens our identity.

5. Because of the experiences of the recent past, many Jesuit provinces as well as many lay persons have urged this general congregation to take new steps forward in cooperation. In response to these requests we offer recommendations concerning (a) the Society’s service to the laity in their ministry, (b) formation of both laity and Jesuits for this

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, N. 31.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> GC 31, D 33, n. 34; Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Address to the Congregation of Provincials 1 “*De Statu Societatis*,” n. 19, AR 20 (1990): pp. 601-7.

<sup>4</sup> GC 31, D 33, N 6.

<sup>5</sup> Pedro Arrupe, “Men for Others,” Address to the Tenth International Congress of Former Jesuit Students of Europe, 1973. English text printed by the Jesuit Secondary Education Association, U.S.A.

<sup>6</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “To Friends and Colleagues of the Society of Jesus,” AR 20 (1990): p. 602

cooperation, (c) Jesuit cooperation with laity in works of the Society, other works, and associations, and (d) opportunities for the future.

a. Service to the Laity in Their Ministry

6. The expansion and variety of lay apostolic service in our day has remarkable dimensions. Many lay persons recognize their activity as Christian ministry and seek to be trained for and commissioned to this service. Others engage in apostolic service in a more informal and implicit manner. Still others participate in lay associations for varied apostolic purposes. In all these ways many lay men and women give witness to the Gospel. Where they live, worship, and work, laity are taking on greater responsibility for the ministry of the Church. Called to be holy and concerned for faith, justice, and the poor, they evangelize the structure of society.

7. The Society of Jesus places itself at the service of this mission of the laity by offering what we are and have received: our spiritual and apostolic inheritance, our educational resources, and our friendship. We offer Ignatian spirituality as a specific gift to animate the ministry of the laity. This apostolic spirituality responds to the unique spirituality of the individual and adapts itself to present needs; it helps persons to discern their call and “in all things to love and serve the Divine Majesty.”<sup>7</sup> We offer to laity the practical wisdom we have learned from more than four centuries of apostolic experiences. Through our schools, universities, and other educational programs we make pastoral and theological training available. Perhaps most important, we join with them in companionship: serving together, learning from and responding to each other’s concerns and initiatives, dialoguing with one other on apostolic objectives.

b. Formation of Laity and Jesuits

8. Putting ourselves at the service of the apostolate of the laity challenges us. We need to respond to their desire for formation so that they are able to minister as fully as possible according to their call and gifts. This formation should draw on the abundant resources and experiences of the Society. We should not hesitate to offer, when requested, the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and our spiritual direction. We can encourage them toward the apostolic priority of the service of faith and the promotion of justice with a preferential love of the poor. By responding in this way we offer who we are. As persons whose lives are centered on loving and serving God in all things, we should help others recognize and discern the apostolic possibilities of their lives and work. Laity who collaborate in Jesuit apostolates can expect from us a specific formation in Ignatian values, help in discernment of apostolic priorities and objectives, and practical strategies for their realization.

9. Cooperation with laity in mission requires the formation and renewal of all Jesuits. Initial formation must develop our capacity for collaboration with both laity and fellow Jesuits by means of education and experiences of ministerial cooperation with others. Ongoing formation in apostolic situations – if we listen to others, learn from their spirituality, and face together the difficulties of genuine cooperation – will deepen this

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<sup>7</sup> *SpEx* [233].

capacity. Both in our initial and ongoing formation, lay people can help us understand and response their distinct vocation as well as appreciate our own.

c. Jesuit Cooperation with Laity

10. Recent experience enables us to see three dimensions of our cooperation with others in mission: (i) lay collaboration in Jesuit apostolic works, (ii) the cooperation of Jesuits in the works of others, and (iii) our support of and contribution to lay apostolic associations related to the Society and its mission.

*i. Collaboration in Works of the Society*

11. We collaborate with the laity in works of the Society. A work of the Society substantially contributes to realizing the mission of the Society, manifests Ignatian values, and bears the name “Jesuit” with the Society’s approval. The Society takes “ultimate responsibility” for this work.<sup>8</sup> Examples are Jesuit educational institutions, parishes, social centers, retreat houses, and the Jesuit Refugee Service.

12. Each such work must be guided by a clear mission statement which outlines the purposes of the work and forms the basis for collaboration in it. This mission statement should be presented and clearly explained to those with whom we cooperate. Programs are to be provided and supported (even financially) to enable lay people to acquire a greater knowledge of the Ignatian tradition and spirituality and to grow in each one’s personal vocation.

13. All those engaged in the work should exercise co-responsibility and be engaged in discernment and participative decision making where it is appropriate. Lay persons must have access to and be trained for position of responsibility according to their qualifications and commitment. A lay person can be the director of a Jesuit work.<sup>9</sup> When this is the case, Jesuits receive from the provincial their mission to work in the institution, and they carry out this mission under the direction of the lay director.<sup>10</sup> In institutions where Jesuits are a small minority, special attention should be given both to the leadership role of lay colleagues and to appropriate means for the Society to assure the Jesuit identity of the work.

*ii. Cooperation in Non-Jesuit Works*

14. Our mission today also calls us to cooperate more closely with institutions, organizations, and activities which are not sponsored by the Society.<sup>11</sup> Among these are social development and welfare centers, educational and research intuitions, seminaries

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<sup>8</sup> GC 31, D 33, n 6. Civil laws, which vary from country to country, affect the way in which the Society exercises its responsibility and must be respected.

<sup>9</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Final Address to the Congregation Provincials 1, AR 20 (1990): pp. 508.

<sup>10</sup> This direction is the authority over the institution and its mission rather than the religious authority which is the subject matter of our vows.

<sup>11</sup> GC 31, D 33, n. 3.

and religious institutes, international organizations, labor unions, ecclesial base communities and grass-roots movements. This cooperation is a way of witnessing to the Gospel and to Ignatian spirituality. It allows us to enter into dailies where the Church wishes to be present. Our cooperation there can express solidarity with others while learning from them in a way which enriches the Society and the Church.

15. Cooperation in these works should be in accord with the Society's criteria for the choice of ministries, especially service of the faith and promotion of justice. The Jesuit should be missioned with clear apostolic objectives and remain in continuous discernment with his superior and apostolic community.

### *iii. Cooperation with Associations*

16. Many lay persons desire to be united with us through participation in apostolic association of Ignatian inspiration.<sup>12</sup> The Society views positively this growth of lay association. They give witness to the Ignatian charism in the world, enable us to undertake with them works of greater dimensions, and help their members to live the faith more fully. Jesuits are encouraged to study these various associations, to know them through personal contact, and to develop a genuine interest in them.

17. Among the privileged means both for the Christian formation of lay people in Ignatian spirituality and for partnership in a common mission, the Society actively promotes several different associations.<sup>13</sup>

- Christian Life Communities address people who, being formed in the Spiritual Exercises, hear a call to follow Jesus Christ more closely and to make a life commitment to work with others through apostolic witness and service. The community dimension supports this apostolic commitment. We pledge ourselves to share Ignatian spirituality with them and to accompany them in their mission.

- Jesuit Volunteer programs offer service marked especially by concern for the poor and work for justice, community living, simple lifestyle, and Ignatian spirituality. Provinces are encouraged to support these volunteer associations, to develop better national and international networks among them, and to recognize them as a work of the Society where desired and appropriate.

- Jesuit Past-student Associations enable those who once attended our schools to better carry out their responsibility to "make fruitful in their lives and in the world the formation they have received."<sup>14</sup> Qualified Jesuits should be assigned to help them in ongoing spiritual, ethical, and social formation, as well as in identifying apostolic needs.

- The Apostleship of Prayer seeks to form Christians shaped by the Eucharist, devoted to the Heart of Christ through the daily offering and prayer for the intentions of the Church, and committed to apostolic service. The Society supports and promotes this

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Hans-Kovlenbach, "To Friends and Colleagues of the Society of Jesus," *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> This list does not in any way mean to exclude other communities or movements with which the Society has very privileged and fruitful links in various countries.

<sup>14</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Address to the Third World Congress of Former Jesuit Students, Versailles 1986, AR 19 (1986): pp. 621-29.

pastoral service entrusted to it by the Holy Father, as well as the Eucharistic Youth Movement.

#### d. Opportunities for the Future

18. The present moment is a moment of grace. As lay people continue to grow in their service to the world, the Society of Jesus will find opportunities for cooperation with them reaching far beyond our present experience. We will be stretched in our creativity and energy to serve them in their ministry. We will be called upon to take a supportive role as they become more responsible for our own apostolates. We will be challenged to live our more fully our identity as “men for and with others.” As we look to this future, we suggest some possibilities for our response to this opportunity and grace.

##### *i. Empowering the “Church of the Laity”*

19. Lay men and women will assume more and more responsibility for the ministries of the Church in parishes, diocesan structure, schools, theological institutions, missions, and works of justice and charity. We can expect a flourishing of specialized ministries, ecclesial movements, and lay apostolic associations of more varied purpose and inspiration. With our charism and experience we will make a specific and needed contribution to these apostolic endeavors. For this we must increasingly shift the focus of our attention from the exercise of our own direct ministry to the strengthening of laity in their mission. To do so will require of us an ability to draw out their gifts and to animate and inspire them. Our willingness to accept this challenge will depend on the strength of our Jesuit companionship and on a renewal of our response to the call of Christ to serve his mission.

##### *ii. Lay Leadership in Works of the Society*

20. The emerging “Church of the Laity” will also have an impact on our own Jesuit apostolic works. This transformation can enrich these works and expand their Ignatian character if we know how to cooperate with the grace of the emergence of the laity. When we speak of “our apostolates,” we will mean something different by “our.” It will signify a genuine Ignatian partnership of laity and Jesuits, each of us acting according to our proper vocation. Lay persons will rightly take on a greater role of responsibility and leadership within these works. Jesuits will be called on to support them in their initiative by Ignatian formation, the witness of our priestly and religious lives, and the promotion of Jesuit apostolic values. If our service will be more humble, it will also be more challenging and creative, more in accord with the graces we have received. This actualization of the lay vocation can show more clearly the grace of our vocation

##### *iii. Developing an Ignatian Apostolic Network*

21. A challenge for future cooperation with the laity in mission can be found in the number of individuals, co-workers, former Jesuits, associations, and communities both lay and religious who find a common spirituality and apostolic motivation in the experience of

the Spiritual Exercises. The existence of so many Ignatian-inspired persons testifies to the continuing vitality of the Exercises and their power for apostolic animation. The grace of the new era of the Church and the movement to solidarity impel us to work more decisively to strengthen the bonds among all these persons and groups. Thus we can develop what might be called “an Ignatian apostolic network.”

22. Such a network will foster better communication and provide personal and spiritual support among these persons and groups. It will maximize the mission of Ignatian-inspired persons in their evangelization of the world. In this way the Society of Jesus can make a specific contribution to the new evangelization. The shaping of their Ignatian apostolic network will require wide consultation, careful discernment, and careful, gradually developed planning. The general congregation asks Father General, with the assistance of qualified Jesuits and others, to study this possibility.

*iv. Some Joined to the Society by Closer Personal Bond*

23. The possibility of joining lay persons more closely to the Society was given official recognition in GC 31. It urged Father General “to study the ways by which such bonds and a more stable and intimate collaboration” could be achieved.<sup>15</sup> Some experience of closer bonding has occurred since then. GC 34 views this as one among several ways of future lay cooperation. It recommends ten years of experimentation of “juridical bonding” of individual lay persons to the Society of Jesus and offers directions for experimentation, asking the next general congregation to evaluate these experiments.

24. The purpose of these experiments with closer bonding is apostolic – to extend the missioning process of the Society to lay persons, who accompany and are accompanied by Jesuits in apostolic discernment and activity. The juridical bond will be some form of contractual agreement of the Society with individual lay persons; they may or may not form an association among themselves for companionship, mutual support, and apostolic strength, but they are not admitted into the body of the Society. The distinctiveness of their lay vocation is preserved; they do not become quasi religious.

25. Elements to be considered in experimental programs include
- a. procedures for selection of associates
  - b. adequate and appropriate formation
  - c. terms of agreement regarding rights, responsibilities, duration, and evaluation
  - d. mutual discernment with the provincial or his delegate about mission
  - e. norms for the possible communal life of associates
  - f. norms for informal relationships with Jesuit communities
  - g. preparation and assignment of Jesuits to accompany associates
  - h. financial and other practical arrangements

## A Call to Renewal

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<sup>15</sup> GC 31, D 34.

26. Cooperation with the laity is both a constitutive element of our way of proceeding and a grace calling for individual, communal, and institutional renewal. It invites us to service of the ministry of lay people, partnership with them in mission, and openness to creative ways of future cooperation. The Spirit is calling us as “men for and with others” to share with lay men and women what we believe, who we are, and what we have, in creative companionship, for “the help of souls and great glory of God.”