

jesuits

in East Asia and Oceania

December 2007

New Vietnamese Province celebrates



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Snapshots from the region



Delegates meet

In preparation for General Congregation 35, delegates from the Assistency met in Vietnam. This new initiative enabled them to reflect together on the key issues for the Congregation, and also to come to know each other better before the Congregation begins.



MAGiS08 in the Assistency

The MAGiS08 programme is moving to the stage of experiments. These are opportunities for young adults to reflect on faith in a different environment accompanied by Jesuits. Experiments will be held in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and India.



Birth of the Vietnamese Province

The growth of the Jesuit enterprise in our Asian region was highlighted by the 50th anniversary of the refoundation of the Society in Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnam became an independent Province. Fr Kolvenbach attended the celebrations in Ho Chi Minh City.



In the steps of Ignatius

As part of their Assistency Tertianship, the Jesuits participating undertook a pilgrimage to Ignatian sites in Spain and Italy. The pilgrimage helped them to imagine in fresh ways the life of Ignatius and the great themes of the Spiritual Exercises that are so tied up with his life.



Teaching in Dili

The Colégio de São José in Dili is still seeking land to build a new school. In the meantime, three scholastics are already teaching there: Agus Tanudjaj and Eugene Koh from Malaysia and Bert Boholst from the Philippines. They join an already international community.



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Six hopes for the Congregation

Can we be Realistic?



By speaking of being realistic I am confessing my age. Old. But I can still remember GC34. Fond, humorous and challenging memories. But the hero of the day was Patience, by a long shot.

Just imagine. A gathering of 220 Jesuits decides to tackle 46 topics, work on them for three months, produce 26 Documents and solemnly handle and approve 416 Complementary Norms. Next year we will be close to 230 members.

I hope that we will be realistic about what a GC can do well, what it cannot, and what it should leave to the new Father-General and his team.

Can we be transparent?



Transparency has become more difficult in our small world. Yet our GCs have always started by acknowledging honestly where we are going wrong, what is missing in our lives, what has been distorted or wounded of our spirit.

I hope that the Commission on the State of the Society presents to us a clear, honest and courageous picture of where we are and what does not fit with God and God's call to follow Jesus.

This is the necessary beginning.

Can we be Accompanied?



The best of a General Congregation is the 'event of the heart'. People pray, think, discern, change, exchange, are freed from positions, are led to encounters, live for a few weeks in the middle point between the Kingdom of God and the joys and sorrows of our world; between the Cross of Jesus Christ and the Cross of humanity, hearts filled with the shared hope of the Resurrection.

I hope that this happens to the whole Society of Jesus.

I hope that those who do not go to Rome will monitor and follow events closely, with the same willingness to change and be led by the Spirit of our Lord. The GC will succeed if it continues in the life of the Society and all its members and communities.

I know that this is a very big hope.

Can we be Creative?



I have an elusive feeling that something important in our religious life needs attention and is not getting it. We have certainly changed, responded to new calls, new challenges. We are basically happy with that. We feel called to the core of our vocation, where only God, and Christ and his Mission count.

But others—significant among laypeople and the

hierarchy—are not happy with the changes. They miss something important in us. We must ask: Is it enough to be happy with our life and with improving our service and ministry?

I hope that in GC35 we begin to reflect openly on our religious life. The Society will then be re-created for our times. Not only the services we offer, but the quality of the personal and community witness to the Church and the world we give will be touched.

I believe that this process is so deep that it will carry into GC36.

Can we be Practical?



A General Congregation takes place within a well-tried framework that reflects the practical wisdom of centuries. But these limitations and rules make its going slow, heavy and very impractical.

We live, and our younger Jesuits will inherit, a world of very rapid change. New technologies and forms of communication make a great difference. We shall use some but will not feel free to use others.

I hope that the coming GC prepares for future Congregations by giving the new General and his Council the freedom to discern and to choose the best ways to prepare and to run them.

Can we be Short?



We would not like GC35 to become another exercise in patience.

A Congregation today does not need to be so long. Neither does it have to do the work of the whole Society through its ordinary Government. Nor is it a panacea for all the problems we face. A Congregation is a place for discernment and decisions. It can help the whole Society to grow in the Spirit and the apostolate.

So my final hope is that we will be so clear about the purposes of the Congregation, and so focused in our work, that we can serve the Society and the Church within a reasonably short time.

Pathway to a Province



Jesuits have come to and left Vietnam because of expulsions. Vietnam twice benefited when Jesuits were prevented from going to other lands. A fierce persecution in Japan led to the arrival of the first Jesuits in 1615. Jesuits preparing in Macao for the Japanese mission were instead sent to the kingdoms of Indochina. They came first to the southern kingdom of Vietnam, and later to the northern kingdom.

The most notable missionary was Alexandre de Rhodes who devised a romanised script, complete with marks to distinguish the six different tones. This is the basis for the modern Vietnamese script. Although he was subsequently expelled from Vietnam, Jesuits remained in Vietnam until the Society was suppressed in 1773. In all, 53 Jesuits worked there.

After the restoration of the Jesuits, many Provinces sent missionaries to China. But when the Communists seized

power in China, Jesuits were expelled. A few years later the Society was asked to help the church of South Vietnam. The country had been divided a few years earlier. As a result many Jesuits who had prepared themselves for the Chinese mission came to Vietnam. The founder of the Mission was Fr Ferdinand Lacretelle. He bought a house in Saigon, later to become the Alexandre de Rhodes centre, and also began the Pontifical College of Pius X in Dalat. In 1960 he opened a novitiate, also in Saigon.

When Saigon fell to the Communist army in 1975, 80 Jesuits worked in Vietnam. Of these, 57 were foreign born. Anticipating that foreign missionaries would soon be expelled, Fr Arrupe immediately sent Fr Nguyen Cong Doan to Vietnam as mission Superior.

This third expulsion shaped subsequent Jesuit history in Vietnam. The Jesuits continued their work, hoping that the Alexandre de Rhodes centre would be a place for dialogue. But in 1980 the Society went underground. Fr Doan, with six other Jesuits, was jailed and later sent to a re-education camp. He remained the public face of Jesuit leadership. But a succession of Superiors was secretly drawn up to ensure that even if Superiors

were jailed, Jesuit life would still continue.

For ten years there was no space for ordinary Jesuit community life. Jesuits worked in the army, in schools, in factories and labour camps. Novices lived at home, and visited their novice master in secret. Not surprisingly, few of the Jesuits who joined the Society between 1975 and 1990 overcame this disruption to continue to live as Jesuits.





By 1990 Jesuits had more freedom but still needed to live cautiously.

The priority of the mission was now to ensure that Jesuits were well formed for their ministry. Studies in philosophy and theology began in Vietnam. Young Jesuits also went abroad to study. Because they now had more pastoral opportunities, the Jesuits of the region also met twice each year to plan.



As part of the planning they named pastoral priorities. These were to form Jesuits, to preach God's word, especially in remote communities, to form people in faith, and to engage younger Vietnamese intellectually.

Relationships with the Government of Vietnam have become less difficult. In 2004 the Government publicly recognised the existence of the philosophy and theology programs. In 2006 the Government returned the Alexandre de Rhodes centre to the Society. Jesuit growth in Vietnam is evident in the 89 Jesuits who began their formation between 1993 and 2006.

From expulsion has come growth.

CELEBRATING AN EVENTFUL 50 YEARS

On July 14 the Vietnamese Jesuits celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Jesuit return to Vietnam and the birth of the Province of Vietnam. Two thousand people came to an outdoors mass in the front of the Hien Linh Church.

His Eminence, Jean Baptiste Man, Cardinal Archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City, concelebrated the Mass with Father-General Peter Hans Kolvenbach and about eight archbishops and bishops. During the mass, Fr Nguyen Cong Doan who had been the first superior of the Vietnamese region after 1975, and is now Assistant of the region, read the decree instituting the new Province of Vietnam.

In the Decree, Fr Kolvenbach said: ***'I am very pleased to formally establish the Vietnamese Province of the Society of Jesus on the 50th anniversary of the second presence of the Society of Jesus in Vietnam. This new Province is established under the special protection of St Francis Xavier, the greatest Jesuit missionary in Asia.'***

Fr Kolvenbach encouraged the Jesuits of the new Province, thanking especially their parents: ***'We honour you for your love and generosity in giving us your beloved sons to the Society of Jesus. Without your generous offering and collaboration, the Society of Jesus would not be present today since the last foreign Jesuit had left the country thirty years ago. 134 of your children and members of your families make up the present Vietnamese Province of the Society of Jesus.'***

The new Province is rooted in native Vietnamese soil.

Asia in General Congregations

General Congregations deal with matters that concern the whole Society. But our Asian region can be detected in past Congregations. Sometimes we see it in the decrees, but more often in the delegates who have taken part.

Usually General Congregations meet to elect a new Father-General.

Until recently news and people travelled slowly. So the Congregation was held six months after Fr General's death. Even so it was impossible for distant Jesuit regions to send delegates. But sometimes procurators responsible for conducting mission business were in Europe during Congregations. The procurator for the Indies was present at the first General Congregation that elected Diego Laynez.



When General Congregation 7 (1615) elected Mutius Vitelleschi, the Procurator of Goa was present. Nicolas Trigault, the Procurator of the Chinese mission, was also admitted to the Congregation. Nicolas had travelled to China through India in 1607, and returned to Europe in 1612. In 1618 he left

for China again, where he travelled as a missionary through the country. He was a powerful advocate for the missionary strategy of Matteo Ricci.

He begged the Congregation to request the Emperor of China to allow the Jesuits to preach the Gospel in China. Wisely the Congregation left the matter to the judgment of the local Jesuits. But it praised the zeal of the missionaries and promised them the prayerful support of the whole Society.

Alexandre de Rhodes attended the ninth and tenth General Congregations (1649 and 1652) as Procurator for the Province of Japan. He had travelled to Hanoi in 1620 and worked there for ten years before being expelled.



After he left Vietnam he went to Macao, from where he returned to Rome in 1649. He was thus able to attend two General Congregations. He later worked in Persia.



After the Society was restored travel became less arduous.

Delegates from overseas Provinces, especially from the United States, joined the Congregations. Missionary continents, including Asia, were represented by the Assistants and delegates of the Provinces that sent missionaries there. General Congregation 25 (1906) responded favourably when Pope Pius X commended an intellectual mission to Japan. General Congregation 30 (1957) renewed the support.



By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Society had grown rapidly, and missions were flourishing. Vice Provinces and large Missions were permitted to send delegates to General Congregation 28 (1938). From the Asian region came representatives of the Batavia Mission, the Japanese, Philippines, Chinese, Wuhu and Shanghai Missions. The Visitor to the Chinese Missions also took part. The Australian Vice Province was also represented for the first time.

The growth of Jesuit ministry in Asia after the Second World War is reflected in the number of Provinces and Missions that sent delegates to General Congregations. The growing number of delegates who were locally born also tells of growth.



At General Congregation 30 (1947), delegates came from the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, and the Chinese Missions.

This Congregation instituted the new Assistancy of India/East Asia, which was divided in 1962. Over the following eight years the Assistancy incorporated more and more missions until it took its present shape. By the time of General Congregation 34 (1995), delegates came from the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Hong Kong.

Growth of Jesuit ministry in Asia is also shown in the origins of delegates.

Only two of the seven delegates to General Congregation 28 from the future East Asian Assistancy were born in the region. At GC31—in which Fr Arrupe, the first General with an intimate knowledge of our region, was elected—four out of thirteen were locally born. By GC32, held in 1975, the proportion had changed dramatically. Eleven out of twelve delegates were born in the region. This pattern held also for GC33 (1983) and GC34 (1995).

Assistancy delegates

Bambang Triatmoko, Benedictus **Indonesia**

Chae, Joon-ho, Mathias **Korea**

De Luca, Renzo **Japan**

Huang, Daniel **Philippines**

King, Geoffrey **Australia**

Lee Hua, John **China**

Magadia, Jose Cecilio **Philippines**

McIntosh, Robert **Korea**

Nebres, Bienvenido **Philippines**

Nguyen Cong Doan, Joseph **Assistant**

Nicolas, Adolfo **President of Assistancy**

Priyono Marwan, Agustinus **Indonesia**

Raper, Mark **Australia**

Riyo Mursanto, Robertus **Indonesia**

Sumita, Shogo **Japan**

Tan Cheong Kee, Lawrence **Malaysia-Singapore**

Vu Quang Trung, Thomas **Vietnam**



THE FACE OF ASIA IN CONGREGATIONAL DECREES

General Congregation 7

God will stir up the kingdom (of China), watered once of old with his blood and make of it a fertile harvest soon ready to be brought into his barn. Nor will he allow these burning hopes and desires of Ours to be wasted by vain effort. They should be convinced that their sweat is the seed of Chinese Christians. *Decree 86*

General Congregation 25

The Most Holy Father (Pius X) strongly commended to the Society its ancient mission in Japan, and specially the establishment of an institute of higher studies in the region that it had cultivated. Wherefore the General Congregation by unanimous vote professed itself fully prepared to undertake both the works as offered, both out of regard for the special obedience involving missions that is due to the supreme pontiff by reason of our Constitutions and also in memory of Saint Francis Xavier, apostle of Japan, and the many martyrs of the Society who poured out their blood in the region for the name of Christ. *Decree 6*

General Congregation 30

The Congregation determined that the Vice-Province of Japan must continue to receive help in the future. *Decree 25*

The Congregation created a new Assistancy of India and East Asia, and gave to Our Father authority to divide that same assistancy and to establish others in Latin America and Africa.

It was already foreseen that the Assistancy of India and East Asia, just established, would before very long have to be divided, both because of the swift development of political affairs and those of the Society in Asia, and because of the different characteristics of India and East Asia, as well as the variety of practical matters that had to be dealt with. *Decree 56*

General Congregation 34

Jesuits in Asia and Oceania are engaged in the struggles of the poor and indigenous peoples for justice. Especially in Asian countries where Christians are a small minority, they dialogue with other cultural and religious traditions in an effort to put the Gospel in touch with Asian life and to bring the richness of Asian culture to the living of the Gospel. *Servants of Christ's Mission 18*

In bondage abroad



When Jesuits from social ministries in Asia have met, they have described religious conflict and globalisation as two of the three greatest shared concerns. The third was the plight of migrant workers.

In poor nations, the human story of forced migration usually begins when an agent visits a poor area. He promises people profitable work overseas, offers to arrange their fares and visas, and to look after their accommodation when they arrive.

Sometimes promises are kept. But more often

when workers arrive, their passports are held. They are forced to pay for their travel expenses by working without wages. They are poorly housed, have no access to medical care, and are fined unjustly. They are without papers or redress.

Nguyen Van Cao, formerly director of JRS in Australia, met many

immigrant workers in the course of his work. He describes their conditions.

‘Many employers hold back migrant workers’ wages for three months after arrival or at the end to cover their expenses. They might also hold back wages for a month or two as punishment for missing work or for speaking out. When workers die, it is also common for the employer

Above and near right: Nguyen Van Cao in Malacca
Far right: Ando Isamu in Nairobi





A feature of our region is the presence of migrant workers.

It is estimated that some 80 million people leave their own nations to find at least temporary work. Some 20 million of these are found in Asia, and it has been estimated that two million Asians leave their country each year to work abroad.

They usually move from poorer nations to wealthier nations. So, workers from Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines are found in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and other nations. Some come with visas, others irregularly. Both men and women come, the latter often employed for house work or in the sex industry.

There are economic benefits for both nations. Migrant workers provide cheap labour for development. They also send back foreign currency to their own nations, and help development there. Of 93 billion dollars world wide, some 23 million returned to Asian countries.

They are also vulnerable. Because migrant workers contribute so greatly to their economies, the governments both of the sending and receiving nations are unwilling to regulate conditions tightly.

Ando Isamu describes the situation in Japan.

‘The most basic human rights of the people are grossly violated and legislation to curb the influx of foreign workers is in real conflict with the needs in Japan for young workers to raise production and to come to the help of an increasing grey population.

The numbers of Catholics that had remained steady (around 420, 000) for many years have now jumped to near one million due to the workers coming from Brazil, the Philippines and Peru. Every Sunday, I help out in a diocesan parish, where we have about 90 Catholics in the morning Japanese mass and, usually over 300 Catholics (most workers are from the Philippines) in the early afternoon English mass. This continues for more than eight years already. There are few Jesuit working directly and exclusively with migrant workers. But many meet them in their work in prisons, in parishes and in their pastoral outreach.’

to refuse to send their wages to their families.’

Cao also says that many workers find a much more difficult situation than the agents led them to believe. He continues:

‘Some newly arrived workers are lucky. They inherit equipment and utilities from the returnees. But some live

a long way from their work. They have to walk eight or ten kilometres to do the shopping on Sunday. This means taking a day off. Some live in places like dormitories of 120 or 600 people; others live in shipping containers or in any shelter they can make.

It is often hard for Catholic workers to attend Church, because they live so far away.

Because their employers hold their passports, too, they are afraid to travel.’

If Jesuits are to help migrant workers, we must first to try to understand the problem, and then to build up a list of people involved in meeting it, studying its reality and effects, and working across Provinces to heal it.



TRAFFICKED

The early Jesuits established a house in Rome for prostitutes. Ignatius defended it against slurs, because prostitutes were so vulnerable and exploited.

Ignatius’ heart would have gone out to Kit. She was born in Burma. At seven, she was sold into Thailand, where she spent her childhood as a household slave. At puberty she was sold into prostitution in Bangkok. She was never allowed to leave her workplace.

After some years she was trafficked to Malaysia. She had to work in a brothel for board and lodging. Then she was sent on a false passport to work in Australian brothels across the main cities. When her agents thought her no longer useful, they anonymously told the police that she was working illegally. That saved them the cost of the return fare. Immigration officers detained her, and found she had no record of citizenship. She stayed in detention for more than two years.

At first she first wanted only to end her life. But as she met asylum seekers and workers who respected her, she recognised her own intelligence and self-worth. She was permitted to stay in Australia, was welcomed into the home of one of the teachers in the detention centre, and began tertiary studies that would prepare here for a career.

Kit was lucky someone took an interest in her.

Asia mobilises for MAGiS08



MAGiS08, the Jesuit programme for World Youth Day, will bring together young people from many different cultures.



Jenni Winters, who led a group of young adults at a MAGiS08 experiment in Cambodia, says learning was mutual.

'The Khmer young adults had never heard of the word magis before and initially there was confusion around the meaning of the word. One Khmer young man said to me "Oh I understand now—magis, to discover more for God in my Life. I understand! I thought magis was a place in Sydney."'

Jenni continues, *'I was struck by the deep understanding young adults already had of the concept.'* Jenni's experience in Cambodia and in the Assistency has taught her how much young adults from Asia will contribute. *'They have so*

much life to offer MAGiS08! Specifically they bring a richness of culture and community to the experiment that is at times new for Australian young people.'

Stephanie North, a young woman who was part of the programme in Cambodia, spoke of her own experience: *'On meeting a Khmer person, you are almost instantaneously made aware of your own value as a human being. There is recognition that we in fact belong to one another. Regardless of the little they personally have, Cambodians give it all to serve the least amongst them. There is an unspoken acknowledgment that the community is only as strong as its weakest member.'*

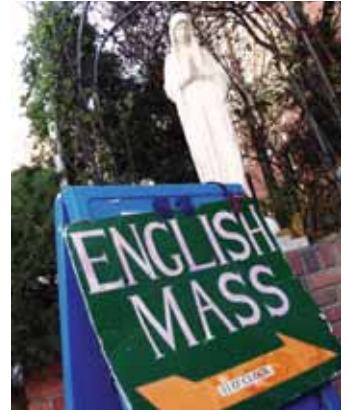
Young Australian Jesuits will accompany young adults

in the experiments to be held Asia over the next months. Jenni explains: *'There will be three experiments in Asia during December 2007 and January 2008. Like the trial experiment in Cambodia, we hope these experiments will help prepare the teams for July 2008. Then we plan to have up to twelve experiments running across Asia in the Philippines, India, Cambodia and Indonesia.'*

She also hopes that over the next months, Jesuits in the Assistency will increasingly be involved in MAGiS08: *'MAGiS08 experiments offer young Jesuits in Asia the wonderful opportunity of accompanying young adults in their faith journey. We need Jesuits in Asia to be involved in many areas of the project if we are to realise the magis for MAGiS08! We need them to lead experiments, participate as animators, act as spiritual companions, to promote and accompany young adults when they come to Sydney in 2008.'*



Climbing the Tower of Babel



Jesuits have typically learned foreign languages. Think of Matteo Ricci and of Alexandre de Rhodes. But teaching languages is an equally important Jesuit task. Scholastics in France, Germany and England, for example, offer language courses to Jesuits over summer.

The need to learn languages is driven by the dollar as well as the cross. Robert Jermain Thomas, the first Protestant missionary martyr in Korea, for example, distributed Bibles and preached to Koreans in their own language. But he also acted as interpreter for a British trade expedition.

In our Assistency the main challenge is often to learn English. It is often the language of commerce and technology. It is also the most

generally shared language among Jesuits.

In Vietnam novices have regular English classes and speak English for day each week. In Manila the scholastics at Arrupe House take an introductory English course, and continue to study later. Those who study in Australia spend some months in English learning centres before beginning their studies.

East Timorese scholastic, Plinio Martins, who studied both in Manila and in Australia says, 'I found English hard. The English courses in Manila were very helpful; the course in Australia was more demanding'.

Korea has an English school for the novices to which Australian scholastics come to teach. This year Greg

Jacobs and Kent Rosenthal came to the Suwon novitiate to teach English.

In Korea many English schools use the *hagwon*—an English immersion village—where students learn in an English-speaking environment. During their six week stay Kent and Greg followed this model. It particularly helps in conversation, the most difficult challenge when learning another language.

One of the texts used was *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco. The novel is set in a mysterious monastery library. It features translators, secret codes, hidden knowledge and power.

The novices saw parallels between the themes of the novel and the place that English plays today in Korea.

Left and above top: English in Korea
Above: French in Versailles

There is national debate about whether English should be made Korea's second language. As South Korea looks east and west to expand into western markets and looks northwards to North Korea, language is an important symbol of power and trade.

But it would be wrong to think that scholastics born in Asia are only students of Western languages. Quang Vinh left Vietnam as a small child after the fall of Saigon. He later joined the French Province. This summer with other French scholastics he was a teacher of French to overseas Jesuits at Versailles, including some from our region.

