

# jesuits

in East Asia and Oceania

June 2008

In the footsteps of Ignatius



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steps  
to the  
future

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# Assistancy snapshots



## Prophecy in a photo

Can *Jesuits in East Asia and Oceania* foretell the future? The front and back cover of our last edition carried pictures of the Vietnamese anniversary. Fr Kolvenbach was the central figure on the front cover, and Fr Nicolás was central on the back cover, with Fr Danny Huang next to him. The once and future Fathers General and Assistant!



## China apostolate comes to Rome

Fr Benoit Vermander, Director of the Taipei Ricci Institute (and a gifted artist), has been appointed a consultant for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Louis Gendron, Provincial of the China Province, has published through Kuangchi Cultural Group a handsome revised history by Jesuit Thomas Ryan. He prepared it for distribution to the Delegates of the General Congregation.



## From royalty to MAGIS08

The dancing troupe from Ta Hen, sponsored by Kike Figaredo, the Apostolic Prefect of Battambang, recently danced for the Queen of Spain. They then came to Australia to encourage the programs of MAGIS08 and to promote the Cambodian Mission.



## A place to hear Fr General

The auditorium of the East Asian Pastoral Institute has been named after Fr Nicolás. He was appointed Director of the Institute in 1978. Fr Nico keeps illustrious company. The Library is named after Fr Francis Clark who as Provincial of the Philippines, facilitated the establishment of the Institute on the Ateneo property, and was later librarian for 17 years.



## New Novitiate in East Timor

The new East Timor novitiate welcomed three novices on its opening day on April 22. Luis Pereira, Gemito do Carmo Amaral de Jesus and Januario Armando Smith will live at Lahane Residence until the new building is completed at Hara. Fr Joaquim Sarmiento is the novice master.



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In East Asia and Oceania

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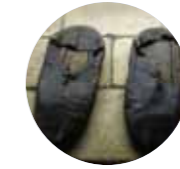
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*We should choose that part of the vineyard which has greater needs because of the lack of workers in it or because of the misery and weakness of our fellow human beings there.*

Constitutions

# After the Congregation

The election of Fr Adolfo Nicolás as General of the Society was a source of joy to all at the Congregation, and throughout the Society.

Of course, we from East Asia and Oceania were particularly delighted because Nico has worked with us and encouraged us for so long.

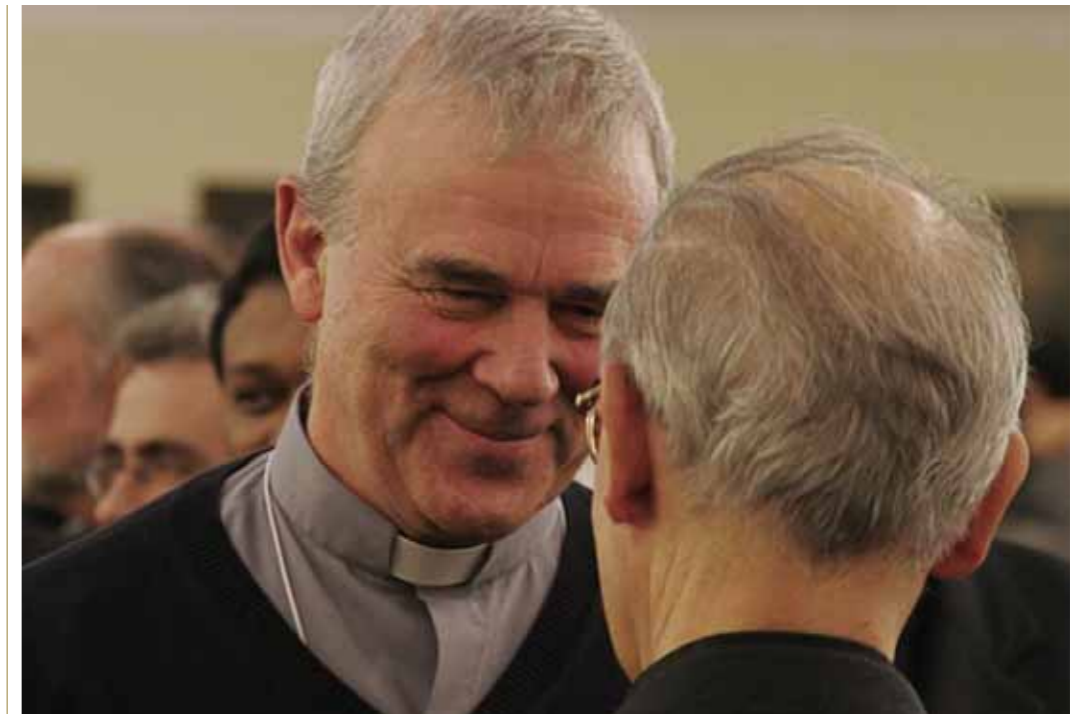
But his election meant that we needed to replace him as President of our Conference. Fr Nicolás appointed me to that position, and that is why I am writing to you now.

The Society around the world has been given new hope and energy by the election of Fr Adolfo Nicolás. He is at home in many cultures. As a theologian he has explored how to proclaim the Gospel to people who think, feel and communicate in such different ways. As General he brings precious gifts for our Jesuit mission to a globalised world.

The Congregation reflected on the global scale of the challenges facing the Society. It saw in the six Jesuit conferences an important vehicle for tackling issues that are global in scale.

The conferences help provincials to share responsibility for the mission of the Society beyond the boundaries of their own provinces.

Conferences are about mission. They help provinces to be united, to communicate,



to share a common vision, and to cooperate for the universal good.

During the Congregation the provincials of our conference met to discuss the challenges that face our region and our provinces. One of our largest challenges is to form Jesuits for mission. In many local places, including Myanmar, East Timor, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia, we have few resources to form young Jesuits. We need a massive, concerted effort by the whole Conference to make sure that all our Jesuits receive a good formation.

The Provincials also saw as central the need of all our provinces and missions to plan for the future. When we plan, we need to begin with vision that is shared by all the Jesuits. Then we must design how we shall implement our vision. Finally we must recruit and place people who will be able to implement the vision. The Conference has an important role in supporting good planning and cooperation.

Of course planning and organisation, although important, are not enough. In his final homily at the Congregation, Fr Nicolás spoke of the need to be

companions of Jesus. I leave you with his words:

*'We all know that it is not through guidelines or directives written for others that the Church and the Society will change. They will change if we know how to become new persons. The question is not what we wish to do in community, but what kind of community men we need to become in order to "remain" obedient men, men who know how to discern, men who are always companions, always.'*

Mark Raper SJ

# Shaping the new Father General

Since his election as Father General, Fr Adolfo Nicolás has reminded us how deeply we are shaped by those whom we encounter in our lives. In an interview he explained how this was true of his own life.



Fr Nico was born shortly before the start of the Spanish Civil War, a time of conflict. His family had often to move house. He says,

*'I was used to being with new people and making new contacts right from my childhood. That was a great help in my missionary life.'*

He came early to appreciate simplicity and openness of spirit. He saw this especially in his parents:

*'When people consulted them about their problems they had the gift of opening paths, not just giving answers. They knew the theoretical, 'orthodox' answers, but they had a feel for the individual.'*

With such a background, he soon himself found himself at home in Japan where he was sent as a young Jesuit.

*'In Asia I have seen other Europeans experience problems of identity. That wasn't the case with me, no doubt because I don't care about the fact that I am Spanish, French or Japanese. I am what I am. If you like me, we can be friends; if you don't like me, you can look for someone else. My identity comes from my communication with people and from entering into situations.'*

His entry into inter-religious dialogue was also shaped by his day-to-day contact with people of different backgrounds.

*'In my case daily contacts have been much more important and have influenced me much more than formal contacts. I haven't been very active in academic meetings with different Buddhist groups, for example. But I have always lived with non-Christians. I have worked*



*and cooperated with them. I see in this a challenge, one to which we Jesuits surely have not sufficiently responded.'*

In Japan and the Philippines he learned when we come to know people from different cultures we begin to appreciate that difference is a gift. He illustrates this by a story of

how Japanese Catholics came to appreciate the very different religious sensibility of Filipino immigrants.

*'In the Buddhist or Confucian tradition, when you enter a sacred space you immediately adopt a formal attitude, try to be pure and all that. You must be serious. In fact the Japanese Church has a very serious face.*



*The first quality of Father General is that he should be closely united with God our Lord and intimate with him in prayer and in all his actions.*

Constitutions



## FR NICOLÁS' FIRST SERMON

God is the servant's only strength. We do not have any other source of strength: not the external strength found in politics, in business, in the media, in studies, in titles, nor the internal fortitude found in research. Only God. Exactly like the poor.

Yesterday after the election, after the first shock, came the moment of fraternal aid. All of you have greeted me very affectionately, offering your support and help. One of you whispered to me:

*'Don't forget the poor!'*

Perhaps this is the most important greeting of all, just as Paul turns to the wealthier churches of his time requesting aid for the poor of Jerusalem. Don't forget the poor: These are our 'nations'. These are the nations for whom salvation is still a dream, a wish. Perhaps it may be in their midst, but they don't realise it.

*But then they see the Filipinos come to church. Filipinos enter the place of worship as if it were an extension of their home. They speak among themselves and are happy before the Lord. They sing and dance; the little children dance and run about everywhere. That's a shock for the Japanese. But then they*

*think about it, and realise that these people whose life is difficult find in the church a moment of joy, of hope.'*

St Ignatius has always attracted Fr Nico because he was so deep and so willing to throw himself into new ventures. The little rituals that followed his election as General moved him:

*'When I became General I was taken into St Ignatius's room and reminded of the Third Degree of Humility and other similar things. It is tremendous to feel so centred on the essentials of who Jesuits are.'*

He enters new service as Jesuit General expecting to learn more, particularly from the people and situations

that he encounters. That has been his constant experience so far.

*'I feel myself very limited for this work, ignorant about so many things. So I feel that my first job will be to learn and to learn again.'*

*'Without encounters you can become very theoretical. You can spend a great deal of time and energy theoretically, and it's often in these situations that fights amongst us begin. But reality doesn't lie there. It lies in the fight of people to live and survive, to live in love and to deepen it, to educate their children, to deepen their relationships. That is something I want to keep in mind in all my responsibilities.'*

# Landmarks of the Congregation

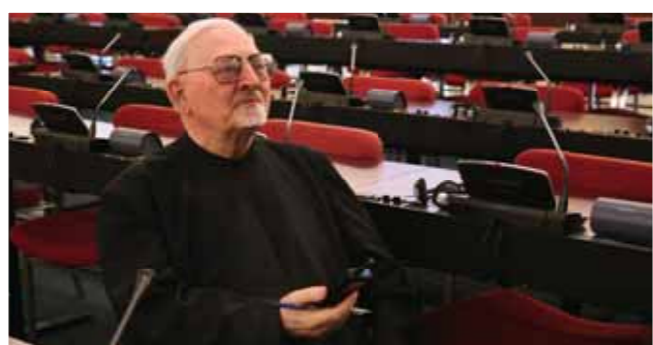


## THE CONGREGATION GATHERS

To the Eternal King of all things  
we entrust this least Society,  
created not by human hands,  
but by the powerful hand of Christ our Lord in whom we  
place our hope.  
May Christ conserve and prosper  
what he has begun for his greater service and praise.

Prayer for the lighting of the lamp at the altar of St Ignatius

## FR KOLVENBACH OFFERS HIS RESIGNATION



In the name of General Congregation 35 and that of the whole Society, and with all of our heart, we say: thank you very much, Fr Kolvenbach! We are proud of you and of your service during these difficult, but exciting years the Lord has seen fit to give us.

Speech of Fr Menéndez

## FR NICOLÁS IS ELECTED GENERAL

The day after the election of Fr Adolfo Nicolás as Superior General of the Society of Jesus, many of us here in Rome find ourselves deeply grateful for the guidance of the Spirit. We believe in faith that it was the Spirit who led us to choose Fr Nico—as we fondly call him in our part of the world—as the 29th successor to St Ignatius.

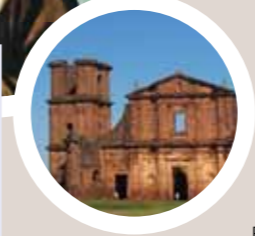
Letter of Fr Danny Huang



## THE POPE RECEIVES THE DELEGATES

For this we offer you our good wishes. And now, Holy Father, we are ready and willing to listen and attend to what you have to say to us.

Fr Nicolás



In its history the Society of Jesus has lived extraordinary experiences of proclamation and encounter between the Gospel and the cultures of the world—suffice it to think of Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto de Nobili in India, or the Reductions in Latin America—of which you are justly proud. Today I feel I have the duty to exhort you to follow in the footsteps of your predecessors with the same courage and intelligence, but also with as profound a motivation of faith and passion to serve the Lord and his Church.

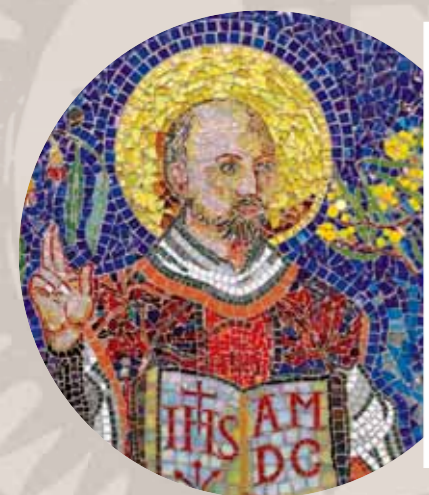
Pope Benedict XVI



## REACH OUT TO THE WORLD

The end of the Gospel states that there will be visible signs. These signs will be in those who believe, not in the missionary who may already have been forgotten. What, then, are the signs? Justice, peace, compassion, solidarity, reconciliation and human dignity. When these have become universal, when everyone has access to these most human elements of our lives, these will be the signs.

Fr Nicolás' homily at closing Mass



# Experiments for mission

The heart of the MAGiS08 program is the Experiments. Experiments, of course, are not new. Ignatius insisted on them in the training of Jesuits. They offer the new experience and the opportunity to reflect on it that allow us to ask where God is leading us in our lives.



Photographs are of MAGiS08 Experiments in India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

MAGiS08 brings into the Ignatian family people from every nation. So it is appropriate that the early Experiments to form leaders are also international. At the beginning of the year, Experiments were held in Indonesia, Malaysia and India. Young adults from many nations took part in them. They will guide Ignatian Pilgrims in the Experiments before World Youth Day. Religious, including Jesuits, accompanied them.

At Elakurichy in Tamil Nadu, for example, Jesuits from Hazaribag, Cambodia and Australia accompanied young adults. Each day the participants divided into groups and went out to the villages. They shared the culture and the daily life of the villagers. At the end of the day they reflected together on what they had seen and felt. At the end of the Experiment they had further opportunity to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their experience.

The same pattern was seen in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Malaysia, the group of young adults met with the Singapore Magis group. They spent the majority of their time in Malacca, where they were accompanied by Malaysian Scholastics. They visited villages and came to know their host families. They spent the evenings reflecting on what they had experienced. In Indonesia, those involved in the Experiment were accompanied by Jesuits



*They should pass through experiences and experiments of life for a period. There they can find who they really are.*  
Constitutions

and Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

The power of the Experiments is best described by the participants. James reflected on the meaning of what he saw:

*‘Muslim hymns ring out over the valley in tandem with the mystical sounds of Hindu puppet shows and Catholic church bells. But they do not compete with one another, there is harmony. I found this level of interfaith dialogue—which in other parts of the island is so pointedly absent—most remarkable.*

*Catholic families have adopted and supported Muslim orphans in the development of their faith.’*

Pip reflects on how she personally grew through the experiment:

*‘New life in Jesus will mean something different to all of us. My involvement in MAGiS has been a way for me to find what it might mean for me. What is the kind of life I would like to have, and how would I like to live it? Do I want to live alone*

*or in community? Going to Indonesia was a very significant experience for me, and one that, without conscious effort, has trickled down into my daily life and altered the way in which I live and see the world.’*

The MAGiS08 pilgrims will join Experiments before World Youth Day. They will run from 6 July to 11 July. They will be in several countries and also in different parts of Australia.

They conclude with the Ignatian Gathering from 12-14 July. This allows all the MAGiS pilgrims to

meet, reflect, celebrate in preparation for the World Youth Days which begin on 15 July and conclude on 20 July.

After World Youth Day some MAGiS pilgrims will take part in a pilgrimage into rural Australia.



# Dancing from the heart



The dancers come from a dancing school founded by Kike Figaredo. After he was made Bishop of Battambang in 2000 he set up the school in the village of Ta Hen which suffered badly during war and the Khmer Rouge rule.

Kike believes strongly that dance can address the deeper wounds of the spirit that afflict Cambodia. Through their long sufferings

Cambodians suffered the loss of their cultural identity. He says, 'Music and dance groups, like the one from Ta Hen, are helping reassert this national identity by recovering timeless love stories, blessings, myths and stories that speak of the life of the people in the countryside and the rice fields. This is the reason why we have made dance a priority as part of our service to the poor along

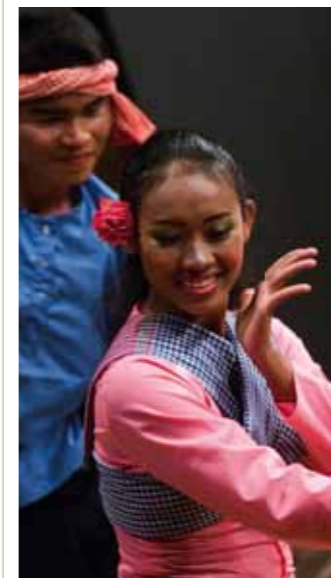
with Christian education and our daily work for justice and reconciliation.'

Through dance, members of the troupe express their faith. One of them, Sophea, says, 'My faith represents all I believe in. When I have problems I know I can come to God for strength and help.'

Faith is the link, too, between the young dancers and the young people who

are involved in MAGiS08. Kike says, 'What we have brought to Australia is not a dance group of young people, but a group of young Catholic people who share their lives and faith through their dance. This is what we hope this trip will accomplish: an opportunity of encounter between our young people and young Australians, to share our daily lives, experiences and dreams as well as to discover each other's way of living our faith.'

The dancers share their faith and dreams less through words than through the dance. As Sophea says, 'Dance is a universal language and I'm good at this language. I hope people will appreciate how much it means to us to be able to visit their country and share our lives and culture with them.'



**The gift of MAGiS08 is to allow young people to share and deepen their faith. This is usually through words. But sometimes gestures speak even more powerfully than words. The Cambodian Dance Troupe that visited Australia drew all who saw them into their own journey of faith.**



# Familiar faces in new places

After Fr Adolfo Nicolás was elected General his assistant and Treasurer, Tom Steinbugler, said jokingly: 'How does it feel when the 'worst' happens?' If you want to know, come and talk to the JCEAO Team, what is left of it...

We used to tease Fr Nico about his staying in Rome; perhaps it was our way of coping with the danger. It was also our way of saying how much we appreciated all that his presence contributed to our work and our lives.'

No doubt the Philippines and Australia will share the same feelings of loss and affection for Fr Danny Huang, the new Assistant for East Asia and Oceania, and for Fr Mark Raper, the new President of the Assistancy Provincials Conference.

Before being made Provincial of the Philippines, Danny Huang was parish priest, taught theology and was Rector of the San Jose Seminary. Those who came into contact with his ministry described his challenges as Provincial as 'the consolidation of its various apostolates, the optimisation of its manpower resources, the renewal of its social apostolate, the more effective coordination of its schools, the better care of its aged and infirm, and a greater openness to the call for more apostolic engagement in Southeast Asia'. He will carry these challenges into broader responsibilities for the Assistancy.



Mark Raper has been the Australian Provincial for five years. Most of his work since Ordination has been involved with Asia. First, he tried to build an awareness among Jesuits and Australian Catholics of the importance of engaging with Asia and its needs. Then he was appointed Director of Jesuit Refugee Service Asia/Pacific, and later international director. In the course of this work he became familiar with our region and with many of the Jesuits working there. Now he will be responsible for implementing the directions of the recent General Congregation.



We wish Mark and Danny well in their new responsibilities.

*I have set before you an open door* (Revelation 3.8)

