In the footsteps of Ignatius
From royalty to MAGIS08

The dancing troupe from Ta Hien, 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 Nicolas. 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.

China apostolate comes to Rome

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

New Novitiate in East Timor

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

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 Nicolas was central on the back cover, with Fr Danny Huang next to him. The once and future Fathers General and Assistant!

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 NCO has worked with us and encourages us for so long.

But his election meant that we needed to replace him as President of our Conference. Fr Nicos 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 Nicos. 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 someone 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 Provinces also saw as central the needs 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. These conferences have an important role in supporting good planning and cooperation.

U: course planning and organisation, although important, are not enough. In his final homily at the Congregation, Fr Nicos 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 Nicolás 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.

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 Nicolás because he was so deep and so willing to throw himself into new ventures. ‘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 Father 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.’

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.’

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

Constitutions

FR NICOLÁS’ first sermon

The Constitutions
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 deeply gratitude who led us to choose Fr Nicolás—thus fondly call him—at the end of the year of Jesus, as the 29th successor to St Ignatius.

Letter of Fr Danny Huang

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

THE PAPA 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 XV

PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMP AT THE ALTAR OF ST IGNATIUS

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

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

A LETTER OF FR DONALD KOLVENBACH

In the name of General Congregation 35 and that of the whole Society, and with all of our heart, as you 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 Menendez

FR KOLVENBACH OFFERS HIS RESIGNATION

Landsmarks of the Congregation
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.

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 Wono Youths Day. Religious, including Jesuits, accompanied them.

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

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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 Hn which suffered badly during war and the Khmer Rouge rule.

Kike believes strongly that dance can address the deeper wounds of the spirit that afflicts Cambodia. Through their long sufferings with Christian education and our daily work for justice and reconciliation.

The Cambodians suffered the loss of their cultural identity. He says, 'Music and dance groups, like the one from Ta Hn, 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 M AGiS08. Kike says, 'With 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 as they travel through the dance. As Sophia 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 our country and share our lives and culture with them.'

Familiar faces in new places

After Fr Adolfo Nicolás was elected as 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 CEOA Team, what is left of it...

We used to tease Fr Nicolás 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 Assistant 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 describe 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 Assistance.

Mark Raper has been the Australian Provincial for five years. Most of his work since hisordination 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)