

COMPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

HOMILY

Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J.

**Mass of Thanksgiving
Church of the Gesù, Rome
15 October 2016**

Readings : Sir 39 : 6-10 (gr) ; Rm 15 : 2-7 ; 16, 17-18. 25-27 ; Mk 13: 33-37

Dearest Brothers,

A few days ago, in this very Church of the Gesù, where lie the remains of St. Ignatius and Pedro Arrupe, Fr. Bruno Cadoré invited us to possess the audacity of the improbable as the distinctive mark of persons of faith, who seek to bear witness to such faith in the complex reality of human life. He invited us to leave fear behind and to row into the deep, as a way of being at the same time creative and faithful during the General Congregation.

Certainly, the audacity that we need in order to be servants of the mission of Christ Jesus can only flow from faith. For this reason, our gaze is directed first of all to God, since *we have but one Father in heaven*, as the passage from the Gospel which we have just heard reminds us. And as the *Formula of the Institute* reminds us in paragraph no.1: "... let (the Jesuit) take care, as long as he lives, first of all to keep before his eyes God and then the nature of this Institute". Indeed, it is with our whole heart that we wish to be in harmony with the Merciful Father, God who alone is Love, our Principle and Foundation. The heart of each of us and the heart of the body of the Society as well.

If our faith is like that of Mary, mother of Jesus and Mother of the Society of Jesus, our audacity can go even further and seek not just the improbable, but the impossible, because *nothing is impossible for God*, as the Archangel Gabriel proclaims in the scene of the Annunciation (Luke 1:37). It is the same faith of St. Theresa of Avila or St. Theresa of Jesus, whose memorial we celebrate today. She too, without fear, entrusted herself to the Lord in order to undertake the improbable and the impossible.

Therefore, let us ask the Lord for this faith, so that we, as the Society of Jesus, can also make our own the words of Mary in her response to the extraordinary call she received: "*Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.*" Like Ignatius and the First Companions, like so many Jesuit brothers who have fought and who fight *under the banner of the cross*, in service solely of the Lord and of his Church, we too desire to contribute to that which today seems impossible: a humanity reconciled in justice, that lives in peace, in a common home well-cared-for, where there is a place for all, because we recognize each other as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same and only Father.

For this reason, we reaffirm even today the conviction of Ignatius as he wrote the Constitutions: "*The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it*

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can be preserved and increased, but through the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord. Therefore in him alone must be placed our hope.”

With our hope placed in God and in God alone, the General Congregation will proceed with its deliberations and it will contribute to its duty *to preserve and grow this entire body* (Const. 719).

The preservation and growth of the body of the Society is tightly bound to the depth of the spiritual life of each of its members and of the communities in which we share life and mission with our companions. At the same time, it takes extraordinary intellectual depth to think creatively about the ways in which our service to the mission of Christ Jesus can be more effective, in the creative tension of the Ignatian *magis*. To think about how to understand in depth the moment of human history which we live, and to contribute to the search for alternatives for overcoming poverty, inequality, and oppression. To think so that we never cease to pose pertinent theological questions, and so deepen our understanding of the faith that we ask the Lord to increase in ourselves.

We are not alone. As companions of Jesus we too want to follow the way of the incarnation, to identify ourselves with the human beings who suffer the consequences of injustice. The Society of Jesus can grow only in collaboration with others, only if it becomes *the least Society that collaborates*. Let us be careful about linguistic pitfalls. We want to increase collaboration, not just to seek others to collaborate with us, with our works, because we do not want to lose the prestige of position of one who has the last word. We want to collaborate generously with others, inside and outside the Church, in the awareness, which comes from the experience of God, of being called to the mission of Christ Jesus, which does not belong to us exclusively, but which we share with so many men and women consecrated to the service of others.

In the journey of collaboration, with the grace of God, we will find new companions to increase our numbers as well, always much too small no matter how great: collaborators who, along with the others, are invited to be part of this body. There is no doubt about the need to increase our prayer and our work for vocations to the Society, and to continue the complex work of providing formation that would make of them true Jesuits, members of this multicultural body that is called to testify to the richness of interculturalism as the face of humanity, created in the image and likeness of God.

Today, let us therefore make our own the words of the apostle Paul: *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Rm. 15:5-6)

(Original: Italian)