



Digital News Service SJ

Vol. XVI, No. 20 , 5 December 2012

From the Curia

Commission for the Revision of Studies. In order to meet the challenge of preparing Jesuits to best face today's mission, Father General last February set up a commission to revise the studies of philosophy and theology. The commission is composed by one Jesuit from every Assistancy. Until now it consulted educators, teachers and students of the different Conferences in order to have a clear picture of the current state of our studies. The members have shared their working papers and they will meet at the General Curia from the 8th to the 15th of December. The revision of our intellectual formation will take the best from our educational tradition incorporating to it the innovations needed to achieve the goal of preparing Jesuits ready for mission. The aim of the Rome meetings will be to elaborate a document setting out guidelines for the programs of study of the various Conferences. The committee is expected to complete its work in February 2013.

Conversation on Jesuit Higher Education in the U.S. On December 10 and 11, twelve representatives of Jesuit higher education in the U.S. will meet at the Curia for a two-day conversation on progress in strengthening the identity and mission of our institutions during the past several years. The Association for Jesuit Colleges and Universities has developed two documents, *Characteristics of Jesuit and Catholic Universities* and *The Jesuit, Catholic Mission of U.S. Colleges and Universities*. The two documents will form the basis for this conversation. The group is composed of six presidents, lay and Jesuit, two provincials, two board Chairs, and two chief academic officers. It will provide us with an opportunity to explore progress in strengthening the Catholic and Jesuit character of the schools, along with challenges and opportunities. This conversation is intended to further our work in strengthening Lay-Jesuit collaboration and advancing our faith and justice agenda in this region of the Society.

From the Provinces

The Near East Province's stance concerning the troubles in the Arab world

In a letter addressed to the members of his Province on July 22, 2011, entitled : "Challenges and Promises of our Mission," the Provincial of the Near East, Father Victor Assouad, described the situation and the vision of the Province facing the present changes in the Arab world. Now, in a letter dated November 24, 2012, Father Assouad recalls the instructions given to the Jesuits.

He first recalls again a text from his 2011 letter: "As Jesuits, we do not seek to foretell the future or to take sides politically. On the other hand, we need to reaffirm our evangelical values and our principles and to discern how they can enlighten our present situation. In this context, I would like to underline some important points:

- The uprisings seen in most of our Arab countries, notwithstanding the manipulations or appropriations possible, nay, in fact, real, have been inspired everywhere by people, especially youth, who yearn for true freedom, pluralism and democracy. Their action rises against repression, corruption, exorbitant privileges, flagrant social inequalities, unemployment and poverty brought about or authorized by the dictatorial regimes that have become hereditary and that have been usurping power for the last, thirty, forty and even fifty years.
- The modern means of social communications, used in these countries to set off and to nourish the popular uprisings, constitute an unprecedented fact that permits us to believe that it cannot be suppressed or put out. Henceforth, if we want to, a way for permanent denunciation is open, notwithstanding the efforts to repress it or

to blot it out.

- As Christians, the principles guiding our action cannot be directed or guided by fear or the rejection of the other, whoever that other is, even when that fear and that rejection are justified or realistic. On the contrary, it is in spirit of openness, of acceptance and of respect for the other that we must place ourselves and act.

Introspection, rejection and the refusal of the other constitute a position we can in no way assume evangelically.

- Still, Christians have the right and the duty to demand guarantees for their presence and their action within the Muslim world. They must, as full-fledged citizens, demand the guarantee to live and to practice their faith, to have places of worship, as well as the recognition of the liberty of conscience.

- In order to obtain that, Christians have the duty to commit themselves fully with their fellow citizens to demand the respect of the dignity of every human person, the affirmation of fundamental liberties, the refusal of privileges and the condemnation of corruption, as well as a constitution that recognizes for all citizens the same rights and duties, within the frame-work of national unity and pluralism."

He then concludes:

"Today, notwithstanding that violence persists - indeed, it keeps growing - and notwithstanding the numerous disenchantments concerning attacks on freedom, democracy and human dignity, we want to reiterate our commitment of solidarity with the victims and the persons who suffer, so as to contribute in relieving their sufferings and offer them the possibility to get back on their feet. We reaffirm our desire for dialogue, reconciliation and unity, wherever that is possible. We reject the reactions resulting from fear and the temptations of isolationism, as well as all forms of recourse to violence and to arms, even if they sometimes seem justified or even legitimate.

We desire to unite our energies with those of the local Churches to coordinate the efforts and ensure a better support of the worried and disaster-stricken Christian populations, with the intention of being open to all citizens and parties of good will.

We believe that, whatever the trials and the tragedies we are going through, there is always a way to life and to peace qui can be opened even if just a little."

CONGO R.D.: A Jesuit Working for Social Change

Jesuit priest Ferdinand Muhigirwa working in the social sector, was from 2005 until 2012 the director of the *Centre of Studies for Social Action* (CEPAS), directed by the Jesuits in Kinshasa. Although his country is bursting with natural resources, their exploitation does not benefit most of the population. This is why this Congolese Jesuit, since 2008, has worked for a change in the management of these resources that would benefit all Congolese citizens. In recognition of his work, Mr Sylvain Ntumba, director general of African Institute for Economic and Social Development (INADES) defined the career path of Ferdinand Muhigirwa as a sign of "commitment to social change." The type of change advocated by Fr Muhigirwa does not only apply to the natural resource sector, but also to the management of organizations and institutions. The Jesuit is convinced that social change based on justice cannot come about unless the capacities of development actors are strengthened. It is for this reason that "the Father established the Sector for Development Support," explained Christian Mavinga, manager of the Sector for Development Support in CEPAS. Thanks to this sector, CEPAS not only offers NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and state institutions the possibility of participating in capacity building training, but also to engage in coaching.

GOA: Feast of St. Francis Xavier

3rd December is a State holiday in Goa (India) being the feast of St Francis Xavier, Patron of Missions and, for the Goans, *Goencho Saib* (Lord of Goa), greatly revered by Christians and others. On this day all roads lead to the ancient town of Old Goa where his Holy Remains are enshrined in the beautiful baroque Basilica of Bom Jesus built by the Jesuits in 1605. It is estimated that around 100,000 pilgrims came to the shrine on the feast day. As customary, this year the feast was celebrated with great pomp and fervour with around 7000 devotees participating in each of the twelve Masses celebrated that day, beginning from 4.00 am. As the Basilica cannot accommodate such a crowd a *shamiana* (tent) was erected in front of the basilica with 9000 chairs. Many had to remain standing. . In the evening there was a special "Jesuit Mass" presided over by the Provincial Fr Rosario Rocha and concelebrated by about 50 priests mostly Jesuits, with relatives, friends and benefactors participating. A special feature of this celebration is the "walking group pilgrimage", with people coming from as long as 200 kms and joining the main group at designated places. They reach Old Goa on the eve of the feast after a journey of 3-4 days. On arrival at noon they have a special Mass, later in the evening a candle light procession and late into the night a *bhajan* (hymn singing) session. This year's 32nd edition had 500 faithful joining the pilgrimage at various places along the route.

[Watch Video](#)

HAITI: Micro-credit for Displaced Women

Along with peasants and children, women are considered the main victims of exclusion in Haiti. Thanks to their creative efforts, they support over 43% of mono-parental families, of which they are the head. The earthquake that devastated the

island in January 2010 affected Haitian women in particular. Hundreds of thousands of them, including street vendors, domestic workers and others, suddenly found themselves without means of subsistence. From one day to another, they had to take refuge in the camps, along with their children, and face a major challenge: to invent their own livelihood to support their families. Sensitive to the difficult situation of these women, in October 2011 *Jesuits Refugee Service* (JRS) launched a project aimed at "improving the lives and dignity of 2040 displaced women in Port au Prince, through strategies of self-sustainability of economic and cultural improvement with productive approach." One year after the implementation of the project in four camps of Port au Prince, 108 women head of families have been trained in micro-management of trade and organized into a group of solidarity economy before receiving each of them a small sum from JRS. The experience was very rewarding for these women. The project is just a small example of the path of hope these displaced women are going through after the earthquake.

ROME: Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy

The Chinese rites controversy in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is often considered a purely European affair: the Catholic Church questioned whether Chinese rites such as ancestor worship could be practiced by Chinese converts. But to what extent did Chinese scholars take part in the debates concerning these rites? An exceptional series of Chinese and European sources preserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI), dating from the year 1701 to 1704, provide new evidence for the Chinese voices in this controversy. These sources include a collection of some 60 Chinese letters (with about 430 different signatories) that were sent to Rome to make their voices heard. These letters provide a unique insight not only into the argumentation but also into the sociological composition of the local Christian communities and their networks at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A new book published by ARSI investigates how knowledge about Chinese rites was produced, distributed, and exchanged at that time. It fully exploits the richness of these documents with regard to three topics: how books travelled, community networks and intercultural themes. The book includes a reproduction of all the Chinese primary sources. See: www.sjweb.info/arsi/

USA: Award to an Indian Activist

Recently the Mayor of City of Harvey in Illinois, Eric Kellogg, presented the *Outstanding Achievement Award* to Fr. Cedric Prakash, director of *Prashant*, a Jesuit center for human rights, justice and peace, based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Kellogg hailed Fr. Prakash for his stellar service to humanity and his struggle to bring justice to the poor and victims of sectarian violence, especially in Gujarat. The mayor also recalled the 2002 riots in Gujarat that killed more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims and how Fr. Prakash braved threats to his life to help the victims. The Jesuit priest's work proved the existence of compassion, selflessness and "an inspiring conviction in the brotherhood of humanity." Accepting the award, Fr. Prakash said the honor "is a reminder that none of us should be quiet until the cause of justice has been met."

New in SJWEB

There is a new *Slide Show* of Fr. General's visit to Latin America (October 28th-November 8th). Please follow the url: <http://sjweb.info/ss/index.cfm> or on the slide show icon on our homepage.

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