



## JOINING HANDS TOWARD GOD'S MISSION

Dear Friends,  
Advent Greetings to you.

The year 2016 has seen us successfully complete General Congregation 36 (GC36), which is the highest governing body of the universal Society of Jesus. One of the recurring themes of the deliberations was the importance of interculturality, discernment and consolation in the life and mission of the Society of Jesus today. Our first companions led their lives by example and in solidarity with the poor, sounding the Word of God in places where it had not yet been proclaimed advocating for faith and justice. As a Province, and following the outcome of GC36, we now get into the process of deeper reflection on how we can continuously incorporate our mission for consolation, discernment and faith that does justice in our daily lives. We are to reforecast how we can realign our goals with those of the universal Society of Jesus in order to courageously continue rowing into the deep. To this end, we are soon starting the process of updating our Apostolic Plan, 2016-2021, in view of incorporating the outcomes of GC36 and the Mission to which we are all called.

Our main focus, 'service to the underprivileged' remains unchanged. This is consistent in all our apostolates, which aim at supporting those at the margins of society. In all education initiatives in our Province, our preferential option is towards the poor, with a special focus on South Sudan which continues facing many challenges. We thank all of you for responding so generously to the emergency appeal launched toward supporting beneficiaries of our work in South Sudan, following the recent turmoil, and featured in the previous edition of this newsletter. The funds raised are being utilized toward the provision of educational materials, psychosocial support and a feeding program primarily for the students of Loyola Secondary School, Wau South Sudan.

In the coming year, we would like to also focus on local collaboration and partnerships across the province. An old Sudanese proverb, "one hand cannot clap" explains the concept of collective efforts as a means to achieve the best results. Our aim therefore is to strengthen local partnerships, alongside the international partners, and work closely with like-minded individuals and organizations to ensure the realization of God's mission. In this way, we will be more involved in the communities within which we work and will be better placed to support and strengthen their efforts to rebuild their lives and bring instrumental change.

In the spirit of bringing change, let us pray that the Lord gives us the desire and strength to work together to serve the underprivileged and reaching out to the poor and the vulnerable of the society. Every individual's contribution matters. On behalf of the Jesuits of Eastern Africa, I thank you for your invaluable support, prayers and contribution in the Society's mission in Eastern Africa. I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and abundant blessings in the New Year 2017.

Fr. Joseph Oduor Afulo, SJ  
Provincial



Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus at the Thanksgiving Mass.

## From Caracas to Rome: The Story of Arturo Sosa

An interview with the new Superior General of the Society of Jesus Rome, October 16, 2016, conducted by the GC36 Communications Team

### My Childhood

I was born on November 12, 1948, during the very scant period of democracy that Venezuela had in the first half of the 20th century. On the 24th of that month there was a coup d'état against the first democratically elected president of the country. My grandparents had lived in great poverty, but my father belonged to the generation that built the country.

One of the settings that influenced my childhood development was the Colegio San Ignacio in Caracas; my father had studied at that same school. At the age of five, I started kindergarten there and continued with my studies for thirteen years until I finished high school. For me it was kind of a second home (my mother claimed it was my first home since I was never in the house.) To be sincere, I don't remember much of the chemistry or the mathematics, but I do remember very well that we formed groups within the school like the Sodality of Mary and the student center. This explains the birth of my vocation: I experienced there the great meaning that life has when you give yourself to others.

In those days, the Society's schools had many Jesuits, especially young scholastics and brothers. I got to know the Jesuits at the college, and I never had any doubts about my vocation to the Society. I never even thought of it in terms of priesthood but just wanted to be a Jesuit. My interest in the Society arose in this context, but it was always nourished by my sense that we had to take a hard look at the situation of the country. I thought that I could do something to help the country, and the best place for me to do that was to become a Jesuit.

After my formation and various apostolic assignments, I was appointed provincial of Venezuela Province in 1996, a time when it was clear that there were going to be strong social changes and that the province's identity needed to be strengthened. At a very personal level, I had

the intuition that the apostolic mission does not belong to us; [it is God's mission]. The insight did not come from something I read; it was something I experienced as I encountered people who worked on the mission with greater dedication than one did oneself—and they living in much more difficult situations. Even though we Jesuits are freed of many things in order to carry out the mission, there are many collaborators who carry it out with us and at the same time raising a family in very trying circumstances—and they don't for that reason lessen their dedication to the mission. This movement made us aware of the need to create conditions for promoting a sense of shared identity.

### Experience in the Society's Central Government

My involvement in the central government began at GC 35 when Fr. Nicolás named some non-resident assistants (others called us the "flying" or "fluttering" assistants). After I was elected, he told me that he wanted me to help in the government of the Society but not from Rome. They named Fr. Mark Rotsaert, SJ and I as non-resident assistants, and that was a very interesting experience since we took part in the general council but did not live in Rome. Basically, we attended sessions three times a year, during the busy times, and we brought with us a voice and a vision that went beyond everyday concerns.

Several years later, I was assigned to be responsible for the international houses in Rome and now, Fr. General. During the last two years, I have encountered Pope Francis four or five times, always on topics related with the international houses of the Society in Rome, and the relationship has always been very genial and lively, graced by the sympathetic kindness characteristic of this Pope. I believe that the message of Pope Francis in these last few years has worked to energize the Society in the work we are doing, both here and in many other places.

# Missio Dei

For the first time as a Jesuit, I attended a General Congregation. In the Society of Jesus, a General Congregation is the highest governing body. It doesn't happen frequently. This unique piece of history has occurred only thirty-six times in close to five hundred years. It was a privilege to attend GC 36 as the elected delegate from Eastern Africa Province.

My experience of the Congregation covers a wide spectrum. Being at the Congregation was an opportunity to witness the inter-cultural identity and cultural diversity of the Society of Jesus. Delegates coming from all over the world represented the apostolic vitality of the Jesuits. The Congregation was an experience of prayer. All the work that we did was shaped and influenced by prayer, reflection and conversation. The Congregation was a profound experience of discernment at the highest level of the Society. Although, I have been a Jesuit for more than thirty years, the Congregation was a unique moment of learning about the traditions, ways of proceeding and history of the Society. I came back from the Congregation with an enriched knowledge of the Society of Jesus and a profound appreciation for the mission of the Jesuits in the church and in the world.

As usual, a Congregation produces decrees that will shape the apostolic direction and mission of the Society in the coming years. Also, it examines and proposes criteria for the renewal of Jesuit religious life. The decrees of GC 36 will cover the areas of Jesuit life and mission,



Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ

and the renewal of governance and leadership of the Society. I was impressed by the commitment of the members of GC 36 to reflect on and define the life, mission and leadership of the Society in the 21st century. The context of our mission is changing rapidly and we need to adapt to this changing context.

For what concerns Africa, the Society is still growing. Vocations are promising and formation remains a crucial area of focus. We can't go it alone: the mission entrusted to us is the mission of God or *missio Dei*. Jesuits are called to participate in and contribute to the fulfilment of this mission. As Father Arturo Sosa, SJ, reminded us during the Congregation, we share this mission with thousands of collaborators, colleagues and partners. The outcomes of the Congregation call us to greater commitment to the value and practice of collaboration. Besides, as Jesuits, we come from a variety of backgrounds and regions of the world. Our cultures and outlooks differ. For us to become more effective in our apostolic mission, we must embrace the process of inter-culturality. This process enables us to learn from one another and network more effectively across the world. Finally, whatever we do as Jesuits, we strive to do it with excellence and competence. In this sense intellectual depth remains an essential dimension of Jesuit mission. GC 36 emphasized the importance of these themes which are particularly important for the mission of the Society of Jesus, especially in Africa.

By Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ  
Principal, Hekima University College

## About the Jesuits

The Society of Jesus was founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1540 and is today the largest religious order of men in the Catholic Church. We serve in 127 nations on six continents and are organized in administrative regions called Provinces.

The Eastern Africa Province consists of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan. Though the province was established in 1986, the earliest missions date back to the times of St. Ignatius in 1557 in Ethiopia.

Our works in Eastern Africa include:

- **Education** - through our educational institutions we form well rounded and competent persons committed to a faith that does justice. Our students are aware of the social ills that are present in Africa and they generously give of themselves to put an end to these ills. We train 'men and women for others.'
- **Retreats** - for more than 470 years, Jesuit spirituality has led countless women and men to a greater intimacy with Jesus Christ and to a dedication to serve those most in need. We maintain retreat houses in Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia. In addition, we run mobile retreats in all countries of our province.

- **Parish ministry** - we run 4 vibrant parishes and 3 outstations all having a variety of pastoral, formation and service programmes. All our parishes give emphasis to 'community' and have dynamic Small Christian Communities
- **Social Justice and Communication** - we aim to transform unjust structures and offer hope to the marginalized in society. We reach out especially to refugees, those affected or infected with HIV/AIDS, poverty and violence. Our justice and communication ministries include: Jesuit Hakamani center, African Jesuits Aids Network (AJAN), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Radio Kwizera.

Visit [www.easternafrijesuits.org](http://www.easternafrijesuits.org) for more information on our work



# In the Chapel of the Room of St. Ignatius

The experience of being a participant and an elector as a Jesuit Brother at GC36 was outstanding for me. I met many Jesuits from different parts of the world; men from diverse backgrounds, experiences and talents; this was truly an experience of the universality of the Society of Jesus in action. GC36 began on the 1st of October 2016 with the arrival of the expected 211 delegates (205 professed Fathers and 6 formed brothers) from all over the world.

There were three outstanding experiences for me: First, witnessing all delegates put their interests aside and focus solely on the mission of the Society. This was clear during the election of the new General, and then during the subsequent deliberations on various issues affecting the Society. As a result all I had imagined would happen during GC36 such as Jesuits from different parts of the world advocating only for their interests or interests of their assistances or provinces melted away. Instead, I saw Jesuits focus on issues that affect the universal society.

A special experience for me was in the chapel of the room of St Ignatius. Before the thanksgiving mass in the bigger church of Gesu on October 15 2016, there was an exclusive ceremony celebrated by Father General-elect and three other Jesuits; two representatives of the electors and one Deacon. The four paused for a silent prayer in front of the tomb and at the altar of St. Ignatius. The deacon then read before Father General-elect a passage from Mathew 23: 8-13. This was then followed by a brief pause and then the oldest elector in Religion, Father Bienvenido Nebres from the Philippines addressed the General-elect reminding him of the qualities which the General must possess before handing Father General-elect the *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*.

Thereafter, the youngest in Religion, myself, from the AOR Province, also addressed Father General Elect saying: "Receive the



Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General, with Fr Bienvenido Nebres, SJ, of the Philippines, in the chapel of the rooms of St. Ignatius

Formula of Our Institute and the book of the Constitutions of which today you have become the custodian: be attentive to the universal welfare of the Society so that with grace of God and of your good governance, this apostolic body entrusted to your care may persist and grow in charity and in the service of Christ and of the church his spouse. May you be helped by the intercession of St. Ignatius and of all the Society in heaven." After that I handed Fr. General the Formula of the Institute.

Thereafter, the General was left alone in silence to pray in front of the altar of St Ignatius. A few minutes later, he vested for the thanksgiving celebration and joined the rest of the Congregation in the main church. The whole experience for me was very special because we were invoking the spirit of St. Ignatius to guide the leadership of the Society he started.

By Br. James Edema, SJ, Assistant Headmaster, St. Peter Claver High School, Dodoma, Tanzania.



Br. James Edema, SJ (right) hands over the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus to Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General

## From Caracas to Rome: The Story of Arturo Sosa

### Looking to the Future

I am convinced that there is no Society if it is not "of Jesus." And this has two aspects: there will be no Society if we are not intimately united with the Lord; on the other hand, if the Society is truly of Jesus, we trust that he will help us take care of it. A consequence of this intuition is the certainty that the mission is "his." The mission we share is that of Jesus, and we share it with all the others who have received this call. Therefore, there are two themes that seem to me fundamental: collaboration and interculturality.

The emphasis on collaboration is not a consequence of our not being able to do the work ourselves. It is that we do not wish to work by ourselves. The Society of Jesus makes no sense without the collaboration of others. In this regard we are called to a tremendous conversion, because in many places we are still nostalgic about the days when we could do everything, and we regret that now we have no choice but to share the mission. I profoundly believe that it is just the opposite: our life is in being able to collaborate with others.

The other theme is *interculturality* or *multiculturalism*, which is part of the Gospel itself. The Gospel is a call to conversion of all cultures in order to uphold them and lead them to God. The true face of God is multicultural, multicolored, and multifaceted. God is not a homogeneous God; quite the contrary. Creation is everywhere revealing to us diversity; it shows us how different things complement one another. If the Society succeeds in reflecting on this diversity, it will become an expression of that fascinating face of God.

I believe that the Society of Jesus has achieved this cultural variety since the Council [The Second Vatican Council]. We have become rooted in all parts of the world, and from there have arisen vocations as authentic as any. You can find Jesuits, true Jesuits, in every region, in every color, in every activity. I think that is a sign of the Church for the world. What unites us all in our diversity is our connection with Jesus and the Gospel, and that is the source of the creativity of the Society and of the people with whom we share the mission.

Another important theme is that of *intellectual depth*, because it is not a question of copying models but of creating them. Creating means understanding. Creation is an arduous intellectual process. We need to understand what is happening in today's world and in today's Church in order to understand faith. Such understanding will give us the keys for focusing the mission on the areas where we have found great consensus, and it will help us find the most effective ways to make it reality. My impression is that the Society is very much alive and that there are many processes underway. Our passion is founded on the certainty that we accompany the people with the guarantee that God is with us.

Interview edited by Ms. Diana Karua, Communications Coordinator, Jesuits Eastern Africa

# Making Hope a Reality

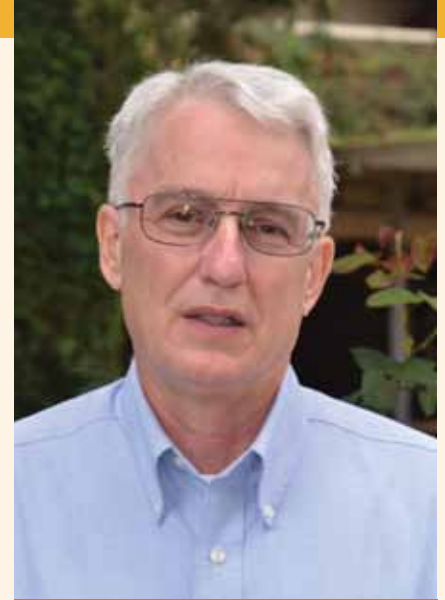
When Christmas day arrives, I will have been in Kakuma Refugee Camp, which is located in northwestern Turkana County, Kenya, for three months. My bishop granted me a six month sabbatical to volunteer with the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in Eastern Africa. The official purpose is to learn what life is truly like for refugees. Yet, I am looking for something else as well: I am hoping to see my ministry as a priest and pastor in a new and fresh way. Proclaiming the Gospel is not just giving testimony to the life and teaching of Jesus. Neither is it simply guiding others to live by faith. It is also about using this precious tool to help all of us see the presence of Christ in our world today. This is why Pope Francis, wants his clergy to be out among the people, "smelling like the sheep." Christ's presence is to be seen among the poor, the broken-hearted, and suffering people of our world. I did not come to Kakuma because he was not present in my parishioners, but rather, that I might see him more clearly. I have not been disappointed.

My first impression of the camp at Kakuma is one of the temporary houses and shops with tin roofs. There are people everywhere - always on the move. The roads through camp are rough and dusty. When a vehicle passes, one must hold their breath in order not to swallow too much dust. It made me think of Jesus instructing his disciples to shake the dust from your sandals when you leave a town that does not accept Christ's messenger. It also reminded me of the night he washed the dust from the feet of his disciples and told them they must do the same.

In the camp there are also many children. Every time I walk, children will follow and greet me. They like to shake your hand or bump your fist. I recall how the disciples tried to discourage the children from coming up to Jesus, that is, until Jesus stopped them. The children are

important too. What amazes me is their ability to smile and laugh in this harsh environment. They help me see hope in the desperate surroundings.

One day as I came to the JRS center, I saw a beggar sitting by the gate. I was reminded of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man who ignored him. This story now confronted me. I do not have the means to help all who have need here in Kakuma. Should I just walk by pretending not to see? Father Arrupe, founder of JRS, stressed that our role is to accompany, serve, and advocate for all refugees. The challenge is to see hope in a hopeless environment. Could acknowledgment, a simple greeting or smile, make any difference? What do I think? When we pray to God, how important is it that we know God acknowledges our prayer? I was being challenged to re-think my choice of action. Hope comes when



Fr. Jeff Grant.

we acknowledge others and choose to accompany them on their journey. We do not bring hope; it is already there. When we walk with others, we can help make it more visible.

That is the message I will reflect on this Christmas as I celebrate the Word made flesh. I will recall the birth of Jesus, who was also a refugee, fleeing to Egypt with his parents for protection. I will reflect on how he accompanied others, giving the gift of himself and making hope a reality. I will recall what I have seen in the refugee camp and how important it is to have someone willing to walk with us on the journey. For that is what Christ chooses to do. He accompanies us so that our hearts may be filled with hope and our world filled with peace.

Fr. Jeff Grant, Pastor, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Springfield, IL USA

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