

# **DECREE OF GC XXXV ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS**

## **GENERAL CONGREGATION XXXV**

### **GOVERNMENT AT THE SERVICE OF THE UNIVERSAL MISSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The DECREES are the expression of a legislative intention or of directives with concrete implications, which for the most part ratify earlier Congregations.
2. It is good to distinguish between “extraordinary” and “ordinary” governance:
  - a) “Extraordinary” governance is represented in the GC, which, as expressed in the same Decree, 1) has the function of electing the General, 2) is the expression of the universal body, and 3) is the highest legislative organ of the Society.
  - b) “Ordinary” governance is that assumed by Fr General and his team of assistants, counselors and major superiors; it is understood to be the continuous, regulatory care of the Society.

#### **ANTECEDENTS**

- Previous General Congregations
- Complementary Norms
- Postulates to GC XXXV and to Fr General
- Others

#### **FORMULATION OF THE DECREE ON GOVERNANCE**

A five-member commission was created with representation from five continents, and on February 9<sup>th</sup> it presented a draft to the plenary of the Congregation. Various recommendations were made and later incorporated into the final document, which was approved by the members of the Congregation.

Although the structure of the decree distinguishes clearly General governance, Provincial governance and Local governance, there is no common schema in the treatment of each of these items.

#### **THE SCHEMA OF THE DECREE**

Introduction

I. General Governance

- General Congregation
- Central Government
- Conference of Major Superiors
- II. Provincial Governance
  - Nature of the Provinces
  - The Province and the Local Church
  - Planning and Decision-making in the Provinces
  - Apostolic Works of the Provinces
  - Formation for the Responsibility of Governance
- III. Local Governance
  - Local Superior
  - Superiors and Directors of Works

### **TO WHAT IS THIS DECREE RESPONDING?**

- Greater awareness of the transformations in today's world in a context of globalization, an awareness that should be translated into forms, modes and structures of governance.
- The need to renew our forms of governance with the aim of responding to present-day challenges, especially those of transnationality and multiculturalism.
- The urgency of clarifying and defining certain instances of governance.
- The opportunity that is presented to the Society of Jesus by the circumstances of the election of a new Fr General.

### **GENERAL GOVERNANCE**

- There is urgent need for an evaluation of the procedures used in the preparation for and the procedures of the General Congregations.
- It is asked that financial resources for the service of the mission be used effectively and equitably.
- It is recommended that a strategy of communications be developed.
- The way in which the Conferences of major superiors can contribute to the mission is defined.
- There is a description of the way in which the Presidents of the Conferences of major superiors, who are named by Fr General, can assume their responsibilities and assign persons in function of the mission.

### **PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE**

- Given the new challenges and opportunities for our mission, there is a need for reflection, formation and coordinated action that go beyond the borders of the Provinces and the Conferences.

- It is recommended that the provinces and their structures be rethought.
- Communal discernment is encouraged, but at the same time the authority of the concrete superior is reaffirmed: it is he who takes the final decision.
- It is urged that the responsibility of governance be fully assumed.
- It is requested that there be continual formation and training for better performance in governance.

## **LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

- It is recalled that knowledge of the members and, above all, love for each of them should be the distinctive trait of the superior.
- Emphasis is given to the role of local superiors as bearers of the apostolic responsibility of the community and of each of its members; mention is made of the difficulty superiors have nowadays in fulfilling their mission due to the current circumstances.
- The features and characteristics of Jesuit community life are recalled.
- It is recommended that formation sessions and meetings be held among superiors, without neglecting their primary responsibility, which is animating the local community.
- It is recommended that there be clarification of the relations between directors of works and local superiors, and the major superior role in this task is pointed out.

## **THE ASPECTS TO BE STRESSED 1**

The PRINCIPLES that should guide the GOVERNANCE of the Society and that appear throughout the Decree are the following:

- a) Universality
- b) Mobility
- c) Unity
- d) Diversity
- e) Subsidiarity
- f) Love which translates into service
- g) Solidarity

These Principles should translate into:

- Apostolic planning around a common vision
- Collaboration, coordination and articulation
- Internal and external communication

## **THE ASPECTS TO BE STRESSED 2**

- There is insistence on the need for apostolic planning at all levels – local, provincial, inter-provincial and supra-provincial – as part of communal discernment.
- Provincial governance is reinforced, and the direct dependence of Provincials on Fr General is ratified.
- Fr General is granted the liberty to review the governance.
- The Conferences of major superiors are ratified and consolidated, and they become part of the Society's GENERAL GOVERNANCE. They will have charge of those inter-provincial works to which priority is given and will be able to have funds for same, but they will not constitute a new level of governance between Fr General and the Provincials.
- The Conferences of major superiors, whose statutes should be approved by Fr General, should be oriented fundamentally to the mission; they are not mere organs for coordinating and articulating activities.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The Society's Governance should be at the service of the apostolic mission, as is expressed in the title of the Decree.
2. There will be important changes in the way the Society is governed, both in its "extraordinary" and in its "ordinary" governance.
3. The Society of Jesus in its legislation and structure of governance has taken significant steps toward greater relationship, linkage and integration at the inter-provincial and supra-provincial levels: UNIVERSAL MISSION.