The First homily of the General of the Jesuits, Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J.

October 15, 2016

Dearest Brothers,

A few days ago, in this same Church of the Gesù, where the remains of St Ignatius and Father Arrupe rest, Fr. Bruno Cadorè invited us to have **the audacity of the improbable** as the proper attitude of people of faith who seek to witness it in the complex current events of Humanity. He invited us to **leave fear behind and to row towards the open sea** as the attitude for being both creative and faithful during the General Congregation.

Certainly, the **audacity** we need to be servants of the mission of Jesus Christ flows only from **faith**. Consequently, our gaze is in the first place directed to God, because only one is your Father in heaven, as the passage of the Gospel we just heard reminds us. And, as the Formula Instituti at n. 1 reminds us “(the Jesuit) as long as he lives, first of all, to keep before his eyes God and then the nature of this Institute”. Or rather, it is our whole heart that we want to have in tune with the Merciful Father.

If our faith is like that of Mary, the mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Society of Jesus, our audacity can go even further and seek not only the improbable, but the impossible, because nothing is impossible with God as the angel Gabriel proclaims in the scene of the Annunciation (Lk 1:37). It is the same faith as St Theresa of Avila or St Teresa of Jesus, whose remembrance we celebrate today. Even she, fearlessly, trusted the Lord to **undertake the improbable and the impossible**.

We ask, then, of the Lord for this faith, so that we also can make ours, as the Society of Jesus, the word of Mary in answering the extraordinary call she received: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: may it be done to me according to your word. As Ignatius and the first Companions, like so many of our brothers served and serve under the standard of the cross only at the service of the Lord and of his Church, we also want to contribute to what seems impossible today: a **Humanity reconciled in justice, that lives in peace in a common home well cared for, where there is a place for all of us because we recognize our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same and one only Father**.

Therefore, we reiterate today St Ignatius’ conviction in writing the Constitutions: The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it can be preserved and increased, but through the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord, **in Him alone must be placed our hope**.

**With hope placed in God and only in Him**, the General Congregation will continue its deliberations and will contribute to the responsibility to maintain well and develop the whole of this body (Cons. 719).
Maintaining and developing the body of the Society is closely bound to the **depth of the spiritual life** of each one of its members and of the community in which we share the life and mission with our companions. At the same time it takes an extraordinary intellectual depth to think creatively the ways through which our service to the mission of Jesus Christ can be more effective, in the creative tension of the Ignatian *magis*. Thinking to understand in depth the moment of human history that we live and to contribute to the search for alternatives to overcome poverty, inequality and oppression. **To not cease thinking to propose the pertinent questions to theology and to deepen the understanding of the faith** that we ask the Lord to increase in us.

**We are not alone.** As companions of Jesus, we too wish to follow the path of the incarnation, to become like the human beings who suffer the consequences of injustice. The Society of Jesus will be able to develop only in collaboration with others, only if it becomes the least collaborator Society. Beware of the language traps. **We want to increase collaboration, not only seek others who collaborate with us,** with our works as if we do not want to lose the prestige of the position of the one who has the last word. We want to collaborate generously with others, within and outside of the Church, in the awareness, that comes from the experience of God, of being called to the mission of Jesus Christ, that does not belong to us exclusively, but that 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 even find new companions to also increase the number, always least to great that is, of collaborators with others invited to be part of this body. There is no doubt regarding the need to increase our prayer and our work for vocations to the Society and to continue the complex commitment to offer formation that makes them true Jesuits, members of this **multicultural body called to witness the wealth of interculturality as the face of humanity, created and in the image and likeness of God.**

We take today for us the words of the apostle Paul: *the God of perseverance and of comfort grant you to have towards one another the same feelings as Jesus Christ, so that with one mind and one voice we give glory to God, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**In the Church of the Gesù in Rome October 15, 2016**

*(translation by Reyanna Rice. The original text is in Italian)*