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 **The Jesuit Curia in Rome**

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**Jesuits to Hold Worldwide Meeting, Elect New Leader in Rome this October**

***Only the 36th General Congregation in the 476-year history of the Society of Jesus***

**Rome: September 27, 2016** — The Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the largest order of priests and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church, will hold the first plenary session of General Congregation 36 in Rome on October 3. The supreme governing body of the Jesuit order, a General Congregation has only happened 35 times since the Society was founded in 1540 by St. Ignatius of Loyola.

At the Jesuit Curia in Rome, the worldwide headquarters of the Society just steps from the Vatican, 215 Jesuits from around the globe will gather to elect a new Superior General, as Superior General Father Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, 80, has announced his intention to resign.

Fr. Nicolás, the 30th Superior General in the history of the Society, has served as leader since 2008, when he was elected at the Jesuits’ 35th General Congregation. Born in Spain, Fr. Nicolás joined the Jesuits in 1953. Before his election as Superior General, he served in Japan and the Philippines, including as provincial (superior) of the Jesuits in Japan and as head of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania, where he was responsible for the common works of the region from China to the South Pacific and Australia.

Fr. Nicolás said he believes this Congregation will be different from the previous one because “times have changed and there is a new awareness in the Society that we need daring, imagination and courage in facing our mission as part of the bigger mission of God vis-à-vis our world.”

The men who will gather in Rome to elect his successor represent the global Society of Jesus and come from 62 countries.

The logo for General Congregation 36 includes the words, “rowing into the deep,” a phrase inspired by the exhortation of Pope Francis to the Jesuits in 2014, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus. His Holiness encouraged the Society of Jesus to know how to discern in the midst of difficult times, to be submissive and obedient to the will of God, and to “row together in the service of the Church.”

While the first 19 General Congregations in the Society of Jesus were held at the house in Rome where St. Ignatius lived and died, next door to the Church of the Gesù, recent Congregations have been held at the Jesuits’ headquarters at 4 Borgo Santo Spirito in Rome. The proceedings will take place in the complex’s *Aula*, or hall, newly renovated as part of an extensive project that included wiring and plumbing upgrades, new LED lighting, and fire-retardant measures throughout the headquarters, which dates back to the 1920s.

The Congregation will gather for an Opening Mass on Sunday, October 2 at 17:30 to be celebrated by Fr. Bruno Cadoré, Master of the Dominican Order. The first order of business will be electing the new Superior General. Delegates vote in as many rounds as necessary until someone receives a simple majority.

Once a new Superior General is elected and Pope Francis is informed, the successor to St. Ignatius will be announced. Pope Francis is familiar with the process, as he attended two prior General Congregations — GC 32 (1974-75) and GC 33 (1983). Following the election, a Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at the Church of the Gesù.

After a new Superior General is elected, delegates turn their attention to discussing issues of importance in the Society, including mission, structure and Jesuit life and work. For instance, the 32nd General Congregation in 1974 established “the service of faith and the promotion of justice” as the overriding characteristic of all Jesuit works.

There is no set end date for the Congregation, but when the delegates conclude their work, a closing Mass will be celebrated at the Church of Sant’Ignazio in Rome.

The Society of Jesus is always seeking to find ways to make available the Church’s experience of spirituality, universality, and theological reflection to serve others in the challenging times in which we live.

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**About the Society of Jesus**

Founded in 1540 by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is the largest order of priests and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church. Jesuit priests and brothers are involved in educational, pastoral and spiritual ministries around the world, practicing a faith that promotes justice. In 1548, the first Jesuit school was founded in Sicily, and today that tradition of forming competent, compassionate and committed leaders in the service of the Church and society continues at Jesuit colleges and pre-secondary and secondary schools. Jesuits minister in parishes and at retreat houses and serve as chaplains at prisons, hospitals, nursing homes and in the military. For more information on the Society of Jesus, visit [www.sjweb.info](http://www.sjweb.info).

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