

C.P. 9048
00100 - Roma

Rome, May 21, 1975.

Dear Father,

Reorganizing his Council, according to the wishes of the XXXII General Congregation, Father General has asked me to represent there in a special way the concern for our service to faith in the context of contemporary culture and values, taking into account the difficulties as well as the opportunities arising from them.

You are already aware, I am sure, of the all-pervasiveness of this goal of the service of faith in the Congregation's discussions and decisions, and of the consciousness it had of the new cultural environment in which faith has to grow today. No doubt there is here one of the main thrusts of this recent Congregation; alongside with a few others, particularly our obligatory commitment to the promotion of justice.

In a sense the service of faith is a broader concern than what emerged from the XXXI General Congregation where we were invited to an apostolate with regard to atheism and to the unbelievers. But the latter is clearly included and the XXXII Congregation did not omit to spell it out.

Since we have a long way to go as a body in order to really cope with the challenges of a renewed service of faith on the frontier of changing contemporary culture, Father General will be striving to help every Jesuit to become more aware of the new needs, and to inspire all of us toward a fuller dedication to the forms of service such needs require from us.

For my own part I immediately realize that I can serve Father General in this regard only if I am in close touch with so many as possible of those Jesuits who have more experience of contemporary problems affecting faith as well as of initiatives in order to meet the challenges arising from them. There is of course information flowing to Father General from the Provinces through the ordinary channels of communicating and reporting, and the Regional Assistants here have an unvaluable knowledge of many initiatives. It still seems that direct contacts, even by correspondence, with the General Adviser specially entrusted with this concern can be a non-indifferent supplementary source of information and suggestion for Father General.

With this in mind I am writing to you as well as to all the Jesuits who are either consultors of the Roman Secretariate for non-believers or official correspondents of their Provinces in the matter of the "mandatum circa atheismum" (members of the Commission existing in their Province). I also include those who acted a few years ago in that capacity of Province coordinators "de atheismo" even if their function has ceased, at least according to the Province Catalogues.

I am sure you can help me and help Father General if we start again some kind of informal correspondence.

Feel free to send me any information you think may be useful to us here on your activities, experiences, projects, questions relevant to the field of service of faith in contemporary culture, and particularly the problems of unbelief and to the contacts with unbelievers. I shall be very grateful to you for any such information and documentation. Maybe I shall be able to help you too, for instance by circulating to all (by some kind of newsletter) the information of a non confidential nature received from you.

At this moment I would dare to direct to you three specific questions:

First: after reading - probably very soon - the documents of the XXXII General Congregation, principally "Our mission today: the service of faith and the promotion of justice", what would you stress as the necessary preconditions to enable the Jesuits at large, their communities and their institutions to be really at the service of faith among men who live intensely the values emerging from the new cultures and have a special sensitivity to them? The question is boundless.... But you will certainly have some first hints to make, beginning a dialogue which should not stop there.

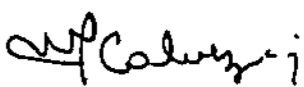
Second: did you have a chance to read the seven reports which were written, from seven different areas of the world, in preparation for the XXXII General Congregation, under the general title "The Society of Jesus and the apostolic needs arising from modern unbelief (1965-1973)" (Castelli - Italy; Mitchell - USA; Divarkar - India; Co-reth - German Assistancy; Valero - Spain; Mendes de Almeida - Brazil; Yanase - Japan; Costes - France)? If so, how do you react to their observations and conclusions?

If you have not seen them, you may still ask your Provincial for a copy. The reference is: CPCG Relationes Informativae, Number 4, letters A to H; each letter corresponding to one of the seven reports. Six of them exist in English, French and Spanish; the last one only in French. We also still have here few spare copies: if you cannot get one from your Provincial's files or from the baggage of a Delegate to the XXXII General Congregation and if you ask me for it, I shall do my best to provide you with it. This documentation has been an important background for the reflections of the General Congregation.

Third: can you give the names of a few other men of your Province, perhaps younger than yourself, who seem to show a special awareness of and sensitivity to the requirements of our service to faith in the midst of today's cultural values, so that I can also get in touch with them in order to better help Father General. Such men may be active in a variety of fields: intellectual. aposto-

late, arts, science, education, working with ordinary people deeply affected by modern values and by the "culture of unbelief", even pastoral work, for instance retreat houses open to contacts with unbelievers or "uncertain believers" laboring under all kinds of difficulties concerning faith.

In advance I am deeply thankful to you for your cooperation.


Jean-Yves Calvez, S.J.
Assistant General

A Postscript on a practical side of things. If you are an English-speaker, please excuse my poor English. If you are not an English-speaker, please excuse my using only this language: it seems to be one which serves now better than latin the purpose of "lingua franca" communication among us. I might use French another time if you think it is better or as well. As for yourself, feel free to answer me in any one of the languages more currently used in the Society; it won't present any problem.

In the Upper Canadian Province this letter was sent to Fr. B. Lonergan.