

Words of Fr. Valentín Menéndez to Father Kolvenbach on January 14, 2008

Now that General Congregation 35 has accepted your resignation, it is fitting that this same Congregation gathered here today express, in the whole Society's name, its profound gratitude to you for your crucial service, as missioned by the Lord, to the Church and to the Society.

First of all, we wish to tell you how edified we are with your manner of submitting your resignation, namely, in that freedom of spirit that frames the Gospel and the Exercises. The example you give us today, of course, is very different from what commonly is found in a world characterized by the clinging to, and fighting for, positions of power and prestige. Our charism and legislation are not good merely because they propose beautiful ideals, but precisely because there are people who know how to embody and live them.

We are most especially grateful to you for the way in which you governed the Society following the difficult 1981 Pontifical intervention. Since then, you have known how to navigate the Society with serenity, recognizing how to balance fidelity to the Church with fidelity to our way of proceeding as expressed in our Constitutions and the most recent General Congregations. The words we heard in Cardinal Rodé's homily, which represent the thinking of the Church, clearly express the Holy See's esteem for you and your leadership during these past years.

We also appreciate the charism of union that you and your governance have represented for us, especially in light of the Society's ever greater plurality and cultural diversity. While living that freedom of spirit typical of our manner of proceeding and in the midst of cultural diversity, of varied ways of feeling and thinking, and through different historical contexts, you have maintained the union of the Society's corporate body. You have kept that union by being respectful of others, by means of your wise and balanced counsel, and by your inspiring presence in every province.

The trust that you have shown through your governance, not only to your curial staff but also to all of the provincials, has created a fraternal and collaborative setting. This broad setting has indeed affected the entire body of the Society and expresses very well one of our ideals, namely, to be, all of us together, companions of Jesus.

May our Creator and Lord reward you for your faithful service during nearly a quarter of a century. Additionally, we ask that the Lord continue to bless you in whatever new ministry He grants you for His greater glory.

In GC 35's name and that of the whole Society, and with all of our heart, we say: thank you very much, Fr. Kolvenbach! We are proud of you and of your service during these difficult, but exciting years, the Lord has seen fit to give us.