
“A faith doing justice must necessarily lead to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue,” contends the following decree issued by the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. Because of this relationship, the congregation’s Jesuit delegates declare their reaffirmation of “the Society’s commitment to ecumenism in the most vigorous and explicit terms.” Since this decree does not endorse a new path of ecumenism, it does not propose new legislation but rather indicates how Jesuits can more effectively implement existing guidelines.

1. The signs of the times give stark proof of the fact that a faith doing justice must necessarily lead to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. In many parts of the world, it is precisely religious divisions that are a force contributing to injustice, violence, and even warfare. In situations of conflict, often fueled by historic confessional hostilities, ecumenism calls us to pardon and to love as essential components of a Gospel-inspired struggle for justice and reconciliation. As peoples move towards ever closer political, economic, social, and cultural unity, and as nations once divided by centuries of hatred and conflict form new supranational economic and political structures, the historic divisions of Christianity represent a flagrant counter witness to the Gospel message “ut omnes unum sint” (John 17:21).

2. Therefore General Congregation 34 reaffirms the Society’s commitment to ecumenism in the most vigorous and explicit terms; it is an apostolate not only in need of revitalization in its present moment of crisis but one for which the Society is suited by its global outreach and numerous institutions dedicated to formation in the Christian spirit.

3. Ecumenism is not only a specific work for which some Jesuits must be trained and missioned; it is a new way of being a Christian. It tries to be more than just honest and truthful and fair; it attempts to work disinterestedly in service of the truth. It seeks to see things from the other’s point of view and to take seriously the other’s critique of one’s own communion and its historic errors and failings. Like Ignatius’s preamble to the Spiritual Exercises, it seeks to put the best interpretation on what the other says and does. In a word, ecumenism seeks what unites rather than what divides; seeks understanding rather than confrontation; seeks to know, understand, and love others as they wish to be known and understood, with full respect for their distinctiveness, through the dialogue of truth, justice, and love.

4. In choosing the path of ecumenism, the Society is responding not only to its discernment of the signs of the times but to the repeated calls of the Church and preceding general congregations. It is also responding, with even greater urgency today, to the exigencies of the ministry of faith and justice. The need, therefore, is not for new legislation, but for a more effective implementation of existing legislation.
5. Consequently, the general congregation

   a. recommends greater attention to initial and ongoing ecumenical formation in the Society, in accordance with the norms of GC 31, Decree 26, nn. 4–8, and The 1993 Directory on Ecumenism, Section II, nn. 55–91, especially 795

   b. draws attention to the recent norms of the Congregation for Catholic Education for courses in ecumenism and Eastern Christian studies

   c. recommends an attentive fostering of ecumenical sensitivity in all our ministries

   d. reaffirms the concrete proposals of GC 31, Decree 26, nn. 9–14 concerning the practice of ecumenism.