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Editorial

The Papal Message

In the 476 years since its founding, the Society of Jesus has convened only 35 general congregations. The 36th General Congregation was convened in Rome on October 2, 2016. A general congregation is always summoned on the death or resignation of the head of the Society — the Superior General — to choose his successor, or when the General decides action is needed on serious matters that he cannot or does not want to decide alone.

One of the historical moments of the General Congregation took place on October 24, 2016, when the Pope walked into the General Congregation and addressed the gathering. The Pope entered naturally like a Jesuit father among others. But his white cassock marked a visible difference. But that added to the perception that there is a deep bond between the Jesuits and the Church.

A historic event: this was the encounter of General Congregation of the Jesuits with Pope Francis. The first to be aware of this event was precisely Father General Arturo Sosa who asked the Jesuits to prepare themselves spiritually for this encounter. It has never happened that there was a Jesuit Pontiff at a General Congregation of the Jesuits. His discourse then assumes for the Society a truly strong, special value. But, even before his discourse, the very presence of the Pope itself was extremely

important. The audience in the Hall of the Congregation itself which lasted for hours of free and spontaneous encounter in an open and relaxed atmosphere was symbolic of a new Church.

Much more than the historical significance of a Jesuit Pope addressing the Jesuit General Congregation, the challenge that the Pope's address poses, not only to the Jesuits but to the whole Church is truly significant. So we decided to dedicate

this issue of AJRS to reflect on his message and to understand it better. So we have requested some Jesuit scholars from all over the world to reflect on the themes the Pope has dealt with in his address. Thus this issue of AJRS is dedicated to

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understanding the vision and expectation of Pope for the Jesuits in particular and the whole Church in general.

We wish the readers a fruitful and blessed New Year, 2017.

The Editor