



2012/18

**TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY**

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council started its work for the aggiornamento of the Church. Its first Constitution, published, on Dec. 4, 1963, was *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, dedicated to the reform of the liturgy. As Pope Paul VI commented: “The liturgy was the first subject to be examined and the first too, in a sense, in intrinsic worth and in importance for the life of the Church.” Its fifth chapter speaks about the liturgical year and the veneration of the Saints, whose feasts “proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in His servants, and display to the faithful fitting examples for their imitation”. In order to harmonize the cult of the Saints with the celebration of the principal mysteries of our salvation, a reform of the liturgical calendar was needed, both in the universal Church (1969) and in the particular Churches and religious families. On April 27, 1971, Fr. Arrupe announced to the whole Society the promulgation of our own new calendar, which meant that the celebration of our Saints and Blessed could, as he said, “be inserted in the liturgical year in a more organic way and at the same time obtain its scope more efficaciously, so that in this matter, too, the proper charisma and spirituality of our Order is more fully promoted and lived”.

In the decades following the reform of the calendar, the Society of Jesus has been graced with no fewer than thirteen new feasts for beatified companions, while eight Jesuits or groups of Jesuits have been canonized, among whom we find such universally venerated men as Saint Albert Hurtado (2005). For the liturgical calendar this has meant an increase from 24 to 38 feasts. Now the time seems to have come to look again at the best way to celebrate our Saints and Blessed, and hence I have asked our Liturgical Commission to prepare a new edition of our calendar, as well as a new edition of our proper Missal. Barring unexpected events, the latter will be ready next year. Our liturgical calendar, on the other hand, which has been approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship on October 22, 2012, will take effect on the first Sunday of Advent 2013, December 1. Allow me to explain with a few words the guiding principles for the new calendar.

The first principle has been to conform our own liturgical calendar more closely to that of the universal Church. For that reason, our titular feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, for example, has been transposed from January 1 to January 3, even though the latter date has the disadvantage of not being a civic holiday. A second principle has been to let the calendar better reflect both the Society’s worldwide salvation history and the lived reality of the veneration of our Saints and Blessed. To give two examples: the common celebration of our martyrs in the missions (Feb. 4) has been abolished in favour of separate or geographically grouped celebrations (Japanese martyrs, Indian martyrs); a new feast has been introduced to celebrate those who died during the persecution of the Church, which for the moment includes the martyrs of the French revolution and of the Spanish civil war. The third principle has been to accentuate the theme of collaboration: we already celebrated the diocesan priest



Mark of Križevci together with the two Jesuits martyred in Kosice. Now the feast of Blessed Diego Luis de San Vitores has been joined to that of his faithful companion and fellow-martyr, the catechist Saint Pedro Calungsod; the celebration of our four Chinese martyrs has been united with that of the large group of laypeople who gave their lives with them: Mary Zhu Wu, the woman who protected Fr. Mangin with her own body when their enemies tried to shoot him, will from now on be mentioned in the same Eucharist. Fourthly and finally, it has been thought good to reintroduce two celebrations that had been removed from our liturgical calendar in 1971: the celebration of the universally venerated, Our Lady of the Way, on May 24, and the commemoration of our dead on November 6. Truly new, on the other hand, is the feast of the historical Patron Saint of the Society of Jesus, Saint Joseph, whom we will celebrate on March 19 in unity with the universal Church, but with particular filial affection.

It will be noted that several celebrations of Saints and Blessed now have a different liturgical grade, i.e. they are now optional instead of obligatory memorials or vice versa. Here, too, the principle of a more accurate reflection of their church-historical importance and their actual cult has been used. The new liturgical calendar is a universal calendar valid for the whole Society of Jesus, yet each Province is free to adapt it to its own needs and circumstances. The Office of our Postulator General is at your service to present requests for changes to the Congregation for Divine Worship. Concessions that have already been granted and that do not contradict the new calendar remain in vigor, e.g. the celebration of the Province's Patron Saint on the same day, but with a higher liturgical grade.

Our Saints and Blessed embody in a very special way “the proper charisma and spirituality of our Order”, as Fr. Arrupe said. I join him wholeheartedly in expressing the hope that the revision of our liturgical calendar will help us promote and live more fully our charisma and our spirituality, so that this least Society may “go forward in strength, advancing God's glory throughout the world, and working with greater zeal at the task” God has assigned to it, as we pray annually in the Preface of all Saints of the Society.

Fraternally yours in the Lord,

**Adolfo Nicolás, S.I.**  
Superior General

Rome, 3 December 2012

*(Original: English)*