

## The Superior General of the Society of Jesus

*"In all well-organized communities or congregations there must be, besides the persons who take care of their particular goals, one or several whose proper duty is to attend to the universal good...there must be someone with responsibility for the entire body of the Society, a person whose duty is the good government, preservation, and growth of the whole body of the Society. This person is the superior general."--Const. [719]*

(from the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus on the need of a Superior General)

### Father Adolfo Nicolás

#### *Father General*

*30th Superior General of the Society of Jesus (January 19, 2008 to present)*



*On January 19, 2008, Father Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, moderator of the East Asian Assistancy, was elected 30th Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Adolfo Nicolás Pachón, 71 years old, is the seventh General of the Society of Jesus of Spanish Nationality.*

#### **EARLY YEARS:**

Born on April 29, 1936, in Villamuriel de Cerrato (Palencia province), Spain, about 4 miles from the capital city Palencia. Baptized in the local parish.

He is the third of four brothers (Antonio, Félix, Adolfo and José). His father Adolfo originated from the province of Burgos and his mother Modesta hailed from the small town Villalaco in the Palencia province.

His father, a military professional, was transferred to Barcelona when Adolfo was 4 years old. There Adolfo attended the *Jaime Balmes Institute* for his 1st year of high school [a seven year program at that time in Spain]. He did his 2nd and 3rd year at the Christian Brothers school in Barcelona. In 1949 he transferred to what was then the Minor Seminary of Saint Joseph that the Tarraconense Province (S.J.) had in the town of Roquetas del Mar and he did his 4th year of high school there. A fruit of his stay in that region, apart of the good friends

he still stays in touch with, was a good command of the Catalan language (he actually won a Catalan language contest in his parish).

In 1950 his father was transferred to Madrid and Adolfo completed his remaining three years of secondary education at the Jesuit's Areneros high school, graduating in 1953 with the highest distinction the school granted, that of "*príncipe*".

## **YOUTH:**

On September 15, 1953 he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Aranjuez in what was then the Province of Toledo. His philosophy studies were done in Alcala de Henares, obtaining in Ph.L. in 1960. He then left for Japan for language studies.

In 1964-1968 he studied theology in Tokyo and was ordained priest there on March 17, 1967. From 1968 to 1971 he did his doctoral work at the Gregorian and wrote his doctoral dissertation, *Theology of Progress*.

In 1971 he became Professor of Systematic Theology at Sophia University in Tokyo. From 1978 to 1984 he was director of the *Pastoral Institute* in Manila, Philippines. This Institute was formed after the Vatican II to work on *aggiornamento* and has had wide influence in the theological renewal of all of Asia. Asian bishops and novice directors received their formation there.

From 1991 to 1993 he was Rector of the house of Jesuit students in Tokyo. In 1993 he was made Provincial of Japan and in that capacity he attended GC34 in 1995, where on the first ballot he was elected secretary of the Congregation.

After those years in governance, he moved to a poor parish of immigrants in Tokyo and lived there from 2000 to 2003. His work was difficult, but he was able to help thousands of Filipino and Asian immigrants, in the process gaining a first hand experience of their suffering. In this way his love for the poor and oppressed became his most important ministry.

In 2004 he was again called to exercise governance ministry and he was named Moderator of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania. This means he was responsible for the entire region of South Asia, from Myanmar (Burma) to East Timor, including the newly formed China Province. During these years he was a firm supporter of the Jesuit presence in Vietnam and other countries.

He was made a member of the *Coetus Prævius* (preparatory commission) of GC35 and on January 19, 2008 he was elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus.

He speaks six languages: Spanish, Catalan, Japanese, English, French and Italian.

*[translated from the web page of the Province of Castille]*

1st **St. Ignatius Loyola**  
April 19, 1541 to July 31, 1556  
Feastday: July 31



2nd **Diego Laynez**  
July 2, 1558 to Jan 19, 1565  
  
1st General Congregation



3rd **St. Francis Borgia**  
July 2, 1565 to October 1, 1572  
Feastday: October 10  
  
2nd General Congregation



4th **Everard Mercurian**  
April 23, 1573 to August 1, 1580  
  
3rd General Congregation



5th **Claudio Aquaviva**  
Feb 19, 1581 to Jan 31, 1615  
  
4th General Congregation  
5th General Congregation - 1593 to 1594  
6th General Congregation - 1608



6th **Muzio Vitelleschi**  
Nov 15, 1615 to Feb 9, 1645  
  
7th General Congregation



7th **Vincenzo Carafa**  
Jan 7, 1646 to June 8, 1649

8th General Congregation



8th **Francesco Piccolomini**  
Dec 21, 1649 to June 17, 1651

9th General Congregation



9th **Luigi Gottifredi**  
January 21, 1652 to March 12, 1652

10th General Congregation



10th **Goswin Nickel**  
March 17, 1652 to July 31, 1664

10th General Congregation



11th **Giovanni Paolo Oliva**  
July 31, 1664 to November 6, 1681

11th General Congregation



12th **Charles de Noyelle**  
July 5, 1682 to Dec 12, 1686

12th General Congregation



13th **Tirso Gonzalez**  
July 6, 1687 to October 27, 1705

13th General Congregation  
14th General Congregation - 1696



14th **Michelangelo Tamburini**  
January 31, 1706 to February 28, 1730

15th General Congregation



15th **Frantisek Retz**  
March 7, 1730 to November 19, 1750

16th General Congregation



16th **Ignazio Visconti**  
July 4, 1751 to May 4, 1755

17th General Congregation



17th **Luigi Centurione**  
November 30, 1755 to October 2, 1757

18th General Congregation



18th **Lorenzo Ricci**  
May 21, 1758 to November 24, 1775

19th General Congregation



[On July 21, 1773, the Pope issued a Brief of Suppression...](#)

19th **Tadeusz Brzozowski**  
August 7, 1814 to February 5, 1820



20th **Luigi Fortis**  
October 18, 1820 to January 27, 1829

20th General Congregation



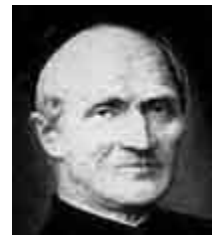
21st **Jan Roothaan**  
July 9, 1829 to May 8, 1853

21st General Congregation



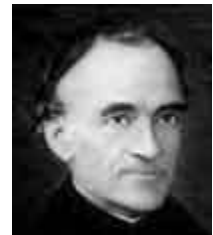
22nd **Pieter Jean Beckx**  
August 2, 1853 to March 4, 1887

22nd General Congregation



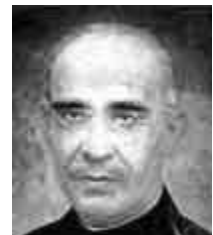
23rd **Anton Maria Anderledy**  
March 5, 1887 to January 18, 1892

23rd General Congregation



24th **Luis Martin**  
October 2, 1892 to April 18, 1906

24th General Congregation



25th **Franz Xavier Wernz**  
September 8, 1906 to August 19, 1914

25th General Congregation



26th **Wlodimir Ledochowski**  
February 11, 1915 to December 13, 1942

26th General Congregation  
27th General Congregation - 1923  
28th General Congregation - 1938



[On December 13, 1942, Fr Superior died while Europe was in the thick of World War II...](#)

27th **Jean-Baptiste Janssens**  
September 15, 1946 to October 5, 1964

29th General Congregation  
30th General Congregation - 1957



28th **Pedro Arrupe**  
May 22, 1965 to September 3, 1983

31st General Congregation - 1965 & 1966  
32nd General Congregation - 1974

[In 1981, Fr. Arrupe suffered a stroke which paralyzed him and later rendered him mute...](#)

33rd General Congregation - 1983



29th **Peter Hans Kolvenbach**  
September 3, 1983 to January 19, 2008

33rd General Congregation  
34th General Congregation - 1995

[Feb. 2, 2006 - Fr. Kolvenbach called for the 35th General Congregation to elect his successor...](#)

[35th General Congregation](#) - 2008





30th **Adolfo Nicolás**  
January 19, 2008 to present  
- [About Fr. Nicolas](#)

[35th General Congregation](#)



**Society of Jesus:** [Superiors General of the Society of Jesus](#) | [Presidents of the U.S. Jesuit Conference](#) | [Provincial Superiors of the California Province](#) | [Jesuit Pastors & Associate Pastors of Blessed Sacrament Church](#).

Notes:

1) On July 21, 1773, Pope Clement XIV issued a Brief of Suppression, *Dominus Ac Redemptor*, against the Society of Jesus. (A detailed account about this Brief is available at the [Catholic Encyclopedia website](#).)

Czarina Katerina (Catherine the Great) of the Russian Empire refused to promulgate the Brief of Suppression and allowed the Jesuits to continue their work in her empire. The King of Prussia also declined to promulgate the Brief in his country. During that time, the Jesuits held general congregations to elect Vicar Generals to lead the Society in Russia.

- Stanislaus Czerniewicz, Vicar General of Russia, Oct 17, 1782 - July 7, 1785
- Gabriel Lenkiewicz, Vicar General of Russia, Sept 27, 1785 - Nov 10, 1798
- Franciszek Kareu, Vicar General of Russia, Feb 1, 1799 - March 7, 1801

On March 7, 1801, Pope Pius VII issued the Brief, *Catholicae Fidei*, giving approval to the existence of the Society of Jesus in Russia and allowing the Society there to elect a Superior General for Russia.

- Franciszek Kareu, Superior General of Russia, March 7, 1801 - July 30, 1802
- Gabriel Gruber, Superior General of Russia, Oct 10, 1802 - March 26, 1805
- Tadeusz Brzozowski, Superior General of Russia, Sept 2, 1805 - Aug 7, 1814

On August 7, 1814, Pope Pius VII restored the order of the Society of Jesus through a Papal Bull, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*. From Superior General of Russia, Tadeusz Brzozowski, was tasked by his companions to become the 19th Superior General of the Society of Jesus.

[Continue the chronology](#)

2) On December 13, 1942, Fr Superior Ledochowski died while Europe was in the thick of World War II. The Vicar General, Norbert de Boyne, was unable to call a General Congregation until the war ended in Aug 1945. Fr. de Boyne, in effect, was in charge of the governance of the Society for three years. He was finally able to convene the 29th General Congregation from Sept 6 to Oct 23, 1946.

### [Continue with the new Superior General](#)

3) In 1981, Fr. Arrupe had a stroke which paralyzed him and later rendered him mute. The Superior General was a lifetime position and there was no law in the Constitution of the Society to cover this event. Pope John Paul II intervened and appointed Fr. Paolo Dezza as Papal Delegate/Vicar General and Fr. Giuseppe Pittau as the Delegate's Coadjutor. Both were tasked to prepare for the next General Congregation of the Society to discuss the resignation of Fr. Arrupe and the election of a new Superior General. Fr. Dezza summoned the 33rd General Congregation on September 1, 1983.

### [Continue with the new Superior General](#)

4) February 2, 2006, Fr. Kolvenbach called for a General Congregation (the 35th in Jesuit history) to elect his successor and to discuss matters regarding the Society of Jesus to begin on January 7, 2008, the year he turns 80. Each of the 91 Jesuit provinces in the world had held their own provincial congregations by March 1st, 2007, to prepare for the Rome gathering.

- About the [35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus](#)
- January 14, 2008 - The General Congregation accepted the resignation of Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach as Superior General.
- January 19, 2008 - The General Congregation elected [Fr. Adolfo Nicolás as the Society's 30th Superior General](#).

### [Continue with the new Superior General](#)

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This chronology was compiled with the generous assistance of Dan Peterson, S.J., Archivist, California Province in 09/20/05.