

Jesuit Superior General Visits USF



Recently elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus Adolfo Nicolás, S.J. visited the University of San Francisco Feb. 4, celebrating Mass, meeting with students, and offering his views on martyrdom and Jesuit higher education.

Fr. Nicolás began his visit with a Mass at St. Ignatius Church, commemorating the feast day of the Jesuit martyrs of the missions. Fr. Nicolás discussed in his homily how Christians could live better in the present by modeling their lives on the lives of past martyrs. At the root of martyrdom is the Christian tradition of bearing witness, Fr. Nicolás said.

Martyrdom itself is not something to be sought, he said, but the lives of martyrs can provide inspiration. Modeling one's life and actions on the sacrifices of martyrs, according to Fr. Nicolás, requires three things: vision, to take a more encompassing view; commitment, to pursue faith even to the end; and love, of the most needy among us as well as for the pursuit of justice.

"Christianity is not about fanaticism; it is not about being unreasonable or being masochistic or wanting to suffer," Fr. Nicolás said. "Christianity is about life and love and (giving), and only then does it make sense."

Immediately following Mass, Fr. Nicolás greeted attendees in a receiving line and then joined several USF students for lunch at Loyola House. In the afternoon, Fr. Nicolás held a press conference in which he said Jesuit higher education offers a place where students can think, learn, and grow, whether that's in class, in a chapel or in the community at large.

"We need to give what St. Ignatius gave," Fr. Nicolás said. "Ignatius gave heart to the whole process of learning and serving."

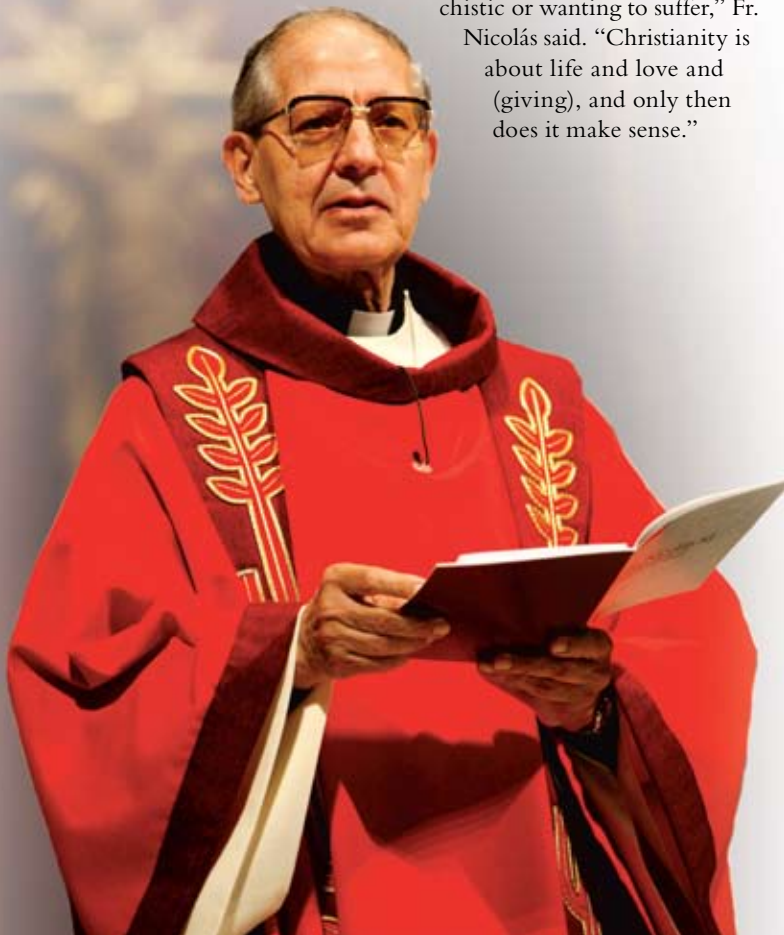
Fr. Nicolás said he was excited by what he had seen during his visit to USF, complimenting the university on working to make a USF education more accessible to students whose families earn less than \$30,000 per year as well as to first-generation college students. "That in itself changes a school," he said.

Currently, 19 percent of USF students' families earn \$30,000 or less annually.

Fr. Nicolás' visit from Rome coincided with the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Society's California Province. The last visit by a superior general to USF came in 1989 when Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. visited briefly. Prior to that, the most recent visit by a superior general to USF was that of Pedro Arrupe, S.J., in 1966.

Fr. Nicolás was elected superior general, the Society of Jesus' highest post, on Jan. 19, 2008 by the General Congregation in Rome, which was summoned as result of the resignation of Fr. Kolvenbach. The General Congregation consists of elected Jesuit leaders from each province who are tasked with selecting a new superior general when the presiding superior dies or resigns, as well as outlining in writing the direction they would like to see the Society take in the near future.

Fr. Nicolás is the 30th superior general in the history of the Society of Jesus, founded in 1540 by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Fr. Nicolás was born in Spain in 1936 and was ordained in Tokyo in 1967. He has extensive experience in Asia. [USF](#)



A Day on The Hilltop: Top: Archbishop Emeritus of San Francisco John R. Quinn (left) shares a laugh with Superior General Adolfo Nicolás, S.J. Center: (l to r) Fr. Nicolás chats with John McGarry, S.J., provincial of the Society's California Province, and Sr. Mary Peter Traviss. Bottom: Students Alex Edwards (left) and Michelle Doral were among four USF students who shared a private lunch with Fr. Nicolás.