



Father Paul Brian Campbell, SJ, is the vice president for Mission, Identity, and Online Community Building at Loyola Press in Chicago. A native of Belfast, Northern Ireland, he graduated from St. Malachy's College and in 1974 joined the Jesuits in Dublin.

During his Jesuit formation, Fr. Campbell earned a BA in English literature and history from University College Dublin (1979); a BA in philosophy from the Centre d'Etudes and Recherches Philosophiques in Paris (1981); and a BA, an MA, and a Licentiate in theology from Sophia University in Tokyo (1989). While at Sophia he met and took courses with Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, who on January 19, 2008, was elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus. While studying in Japan, Fr. Campbell also taught English at Eiko Gakuen High School in Kamakura and served as associate pastor at a parish in Yamaguchi.

Following his ordination in 1988, Fr. Campbell earned an MS and PhD in communications from Syracuse University. From 1995 to 2004, he taught mass communications and served as director of the communications major at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, during which time he became a member of the New York Province. In the two years prior to joining Loyola Press, Fr. Campbell was the vice president of Loyola Productions in Culver City, California.



interview by Jeremy Langford

Q How did you first come to know Fr. Adolfo Nicolás?

A As a young Jesuit I asked permission to go to Japan because I wanted to serve in an international mission of the Society of Jesus and meet Jesuits of many lands. One of the people I was fortunate to meet was Fr. Adolfo Nicolás. Though he is a Spaniard, he spent most of his career in Asia—he completed his theology studies and was ordained in Tokyo, Japan, in 1967. After earning a master's degree in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, he taught systematic theology at Sophia University. When I arrived at Sophia University in 1983 he was in the Philippines serving as director of the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila. He returned to Japan to teach at Sophia and eventually became Provincial of Japan, so I knew him as a teacher and a community member.

Q What was your first impression of him?

A The first thing I recognized about Nico, which is a nickname many people know him by, is what a joyful person he is. He always carries himself lightly. He likes to laugh. I have a vivid memory of him bursting into gales of laughter while in line for the community meal and just talking with people. He was never somber. I don't want to make him seem like a superman, but he really is an extraordinarily calm, joyful, passionate person—one of those people you want to be around because they bring so much joy into the room with them.

Q What kind of teacher is he?

A He is a fabulous teacher. I took a class on Sacraments from him with 19 others. Our class was divided evenly

A former student and fellow Jesuit of Fr. Adolfo Nicolás offers insights into the newly elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus.



between men and women, seminarians and laypeople, lifelong Christians and converts to Catholicism. One of the first things he said from the beginning has always stuck with me—“God is always generous with grace, so why do we feel we have to be stingy with grace? Those of you who are about to be ordained should never think you have the right to dole out grace in small doses.” Another thing that I remember is that when we got to the sacrament of reconciliation, Fr. Nicolás asked us to raise our hands if we’d had a bad experience of reconciliation. All of us raised our hands, and it was at that moment that I vowed, insofar as I could help it, never to allow someone to have a bad experience of reconciliation. His compassion and concern really made an impact on me and my priesthood.

Q What has Fr. Nicolás taught you about being a Jesuit?

A St. Ignatius urges us to find God in all things and Nico is one of those people who does just that. He finds God in the poor, in the most vulnerable. As Japan was growing in confidence and wealth when I was there, he always had his eye on the marginalized. That was very telling for me. He also really listens to people and responds directly to their concerns. There are not too many people in this world who treat you like that.

Q Were you surprised when Fr. Nicolás was chosen as Superior General of the Society?

A When he was named Provincial of Japan, I was not surprised because he was clearly a man of prayer, of the Exercises, with great vision and integrity. I’d like to say I wasn’t surprised when he was named Superior General, but I was—because of his age. At the age of 71, I thought he wouldn’t be chosen. He probably thought he wouldn’t be chosen on those grounds. But, I was thrilled for the Society when I learned that he’d been named because of his

passion, optimism, joy, talents, and sense of justice. He is a Jesuit’s Jesuit. Jesuits know he’s the real deal.

Q Given that Fr. Nicolás is only the 30th Superior General in nearly 470 years, why is he the right Jesuit for the job at this time in history?

A It strikes me that he has been chosen at a really interesting moment in the Church. As the Church is increasingly globalized and diverse, he represents the intersection of cultures, peoples, and times. He is European but has lived much of his life in the East. He has studied all over the world and knows at least six languages. But more importantly, he knows people—from East and West, rich and poor. Many people are tempted to compare him with Ignatius Loyola or Pedro Arrupe, but he is his own man. He knows how to communicate and reach people. Despite being a bit older, he has remarkable drive and energy. I don’t know where he is going to lead the Society, but I think his concern for communication and dialogue of all kinds will help bring people together. His concern for the poor and marginalized will also manifest itself in the Society in new and exciting ways.

Q What excites you as a Jesuit, especially in light of General Congregation 35?

A The Jesuits are responding to the needs of the Church and the world right here, right now. One of the things that gives me great hope is the impact the Spiritual Exercises continue to make around the world. Ignatian spirituality does not belong to the Jesuits, it belongs to the world. And we Jesuits and our lay partners need to continue to share them. I believe that Fr. General Nicolás understands this. What’s really important today is helping people find God in all things and in all things to find God. ■