
February 10, 2023

Dear Brothers and Companions in Mission:

I hope you are doing well as the season of Lent draws near.

At the Jesuits West Province Congregation last summer, I shared with you the State of the Province address, where I reflected on the lights and challenges I had observed in my first year as provincial. At the same time, I officially kicked off our province's apostolic planning process, later appointing eleven people to serve on a Steering Committee for this significant province-wide endeavor.

With the help of our province delegate for apostolic planning, Ed Fassett, SJ, and consultant Charlie Kelley, we began in earnest, asking members of our works and the Jesuit communities to engage in a first round of prayer and spiritual conversations during the fall. We asked you to reflect on three questions: Where are we as a province? Where are we being invited to go by the Spirit? What are the obstacles we anticipate when we consider where we are being invited to go?

In total, more than 1,100 people — faculty, staff, students, parishioners, board members, Jesuits and many others — engaged in spiritual conversations. While I find that number consoling, what is more moving than the substantial number of people who participated is what they had to say.

Reflections on the Apostolic Planning Input Thus Far

From January 11-12, 2023, the Steering Committee met in Portland to review the reports from the community and apostolic conversations. After looking over the results and engaging in careful conversation and reflection, the committee identified four themes in the reports:

- **Grounding our Experience in God in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatian Spirituality and Ignatian Discernment**
- **Promoting and Supporting Mutual Collaboration Within and Among Works**
- **Fostering the Growth of Community and the Experience of Belonging**
- **Exercising an Apostolic Preference for Youth and the Marginalized**

The committee also discerned two critical questions that were raised by many people:

- **What is (are) the appropriate apostolic model(s) for implementing the mission in this day and context?**
- **Is there a particular/distinctive mission and role for Jesuits in the vision? What is it?**

Next Steps

In the coming weeks, we will be asking our communities and works to participate in a second round of conversations to reflect on the input provided in the first round. We want to see if these themes resonate with all of you as we continue down this apostolic planning path together. Also, in light of these identified areas, we will invite you to reflect on some questions which I hope will inspire imagination and creativity in us.

Directors of Works and Superiors will be receiving consultation guides on the second round of conversations in the next few days. Simultaneously, we are forming preparatory committees which, over the next couple of months, will look more closely at the four thematic areas identified, as well as the two underlying questions.

The results of our second round of conversations will conclude with a gathering at Loyola Marymount University, from June 8-9, 2023. We plan to include two lay representatives from each of the province works, and all province Jesuits will be invited to attend. You will be hearing more about that gathering, which will serve as a final consultation, in the coming weeks. After the Steering Committee and I engage in a period of discernment and reflection, I will send a draft of the plan to Fr. General and, hopefully, receive his approval by September 2023. A process to develop an implementation plan will follow to clarify how we will begin to live out the apostolic plan concretely in our province.

I am very grateful to you all for your participation thus far, and I ask for your prayers as we move into the second round of conversations. Because we heard so strongly from all of you about the need for us to share God's love with marginalized communities, I ask too for prayers for so many of our sisters and brothers who are suffering. For so many, including the migrants at our southern border, the tens of thousands in Turkey and Syria who have died or been displaced, the members of the AAPI community in California who were among the most recent victims of gun violence, we ask for God's healing.

I am confident that the Spirit will continue to lead us as we move into the future and as we respond to the Spirit's invitation to fulfill our mission in response to the signs and needs of our time.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sean Carroll, SJ', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean Carroll, SJ
Provincial