

## **CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION - PART II**

### **WINTER-SPRING 2023**

#### Supporting Materials

Letter from Sean Carroll, S.J., February 10, 2023

Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus (1550), *Chapter One Excerpt*

Apostolic Directions and Questions, February 9, 2023

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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

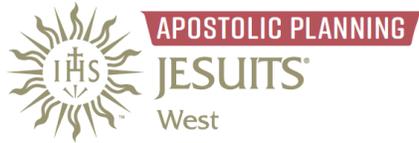
**SOCIETY OF JESUS**  
**Formula of the Institute (1550)**  
(Chapter 1: Excerpt re *Purposes*)

*Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, His spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience, keep what follows in mind.*

*He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments.*

*Moreover, he should show himself ready to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.*

*Furthermore, all these works should be carried out altogether free of charge and without accepting any remuneration for the labor expended in all the aforementioned activities.*



## **APOSTOLIC DIRECTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

### **February 9, 2023**

The members of the Apostolic Planning Steering Committee read, listened to, and reflected on the reports from the *Conversation and Consultation groups* that gathered in Jesuit communities and apostolic works during the fall of 2022. On January 11, 2023, the members of the committee met and, for a full day, shared their reflections on these reports in spiritual conversation. On January 12, the committee processed these reflections and discerned four themes that characterize both the experience of the Spirit alive and laboring in the ministries and works of the province, and the future to which the Spirit is calling them.

The Committee also discerned two fundamental questions underlying each of these directions.

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### **Apostolic Directions**

#### **1. Grounding our Experience of God through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatian Spirituality and Ignatian Discernment**

- The **Spiritual Exercises** are experienced as the essential, fundamental and privileged formative tool both for those who minister, and for those who are ministered to. The very identity and mission of the ministry are inextricably tied to and dependent on spiritual formation through the Exercises
- **Ignatian Spirituality** animates the work itself as well as the day-to-day management, choices and conduct of the work. This expresses itself as a continual search for God in all things, and in an attitude and posture of discipleship.
- Intentional processes for **Ignatian Discernment** are employed to direct the mission, preferences and choices of the work at every level, including governance, leadership, and implementation.

## **2. Promoting and Supporting Mutual Collaboration**

Collaboration, in its many forms, is experienced as the essential means not only for Jesuit ministries, but for Church ministries in general. This is not understood to be an practice born out of necessity or scarcity, but as a rich, vibrant and graced response to the baptismal call of both Jesuits and lay persons to service and holiness.

This experience and call include collaboration:

- between ministries & the Province
- among Jesuits and apostolic colleagues in ministries
- within and across apostolic sectors
- within and across regions
- with the local Church
- with and within the local community

## **3. Fostering Community and Belonging**

The works of the province minister in a context of brokenness, division and alienation, characterized by social and political polarization, economic disparity, social exclusion and distrust of and estrangement from the Church and other institutions. The ministry of healing and reconciliation is experienced as central to these works, thereby creating communities of belonging, inclusion, mutual ownership, purpose, joy and hope where each individual is cared for and valued.

The focus of the ministry of community and belonging is both internal, as it fosters the growth of community among its members, and external, as it confronts injustice, promotes human dignity, and works for peace and reconciliation beyond its walls, while inviting and welcoming others share in the life of the community.

## **4. Exercising an Apostolic Preference for Youth and the Marginalized**

More than just a response to the Universal Apostolic Preferences, a large number of those engaged in these conversations noted the special urgency, importance and opportunities for ministries that empower us to continue and to find new ways to be intentional and creative about ministry to youth and the marginalized.

Central to this are:

- a posture of listening to the experience of youth and marginalized people
- accompanying them through their joys and struggles
- creating spaces to empower their voices

## **Two Fundamental Questions Underlying Each of the Directions**

### **1. What is (are) the appropriate apostolic model(s) for implementing the mission of the Province in this day and context?**

Up until about 50 years ago, the predominant model of furthering the mission of the Society of Jesus in the United States was through institutions and works that it owned and operated (or had substantial control over), and assigning Jesuits to fill most of the ministerial positions.

Then over the last 50 years or so, a new model emerged, one of sponsorship of institutions or other works, varying from sector to sector. The Society's sponsorship was exercised in large part through: assignment of men, sharing of financial and other temporal resources, and embedding its *charism* in the work in collaboration with lay colleagues.

With the Society's decreased ability to assign men and share financial and other temporal resources, in what ways is the existing model still a viable and effective means for implementing the mission? Are there other models to consider and develop?

### ***2. Is there a particular/distinctive mission & role for Jesuits in the vision of Province ministry for the future; what is it?***

With decreasing manpower and a larger number of ministerial commitments, there is understandable anxiety about Jesuit assignments being reduced to an exercise in filling slots with a concurrent desire to renew our understanding of and appreciation for the particular *charism* Jesuits bring to our apostolic works. As the province considers these four apostolic directions: in what ways can Jesuits be uniquely and effectively prepared and assigned for the furtherance of a mission grounded in these four apostolic directions; what opportunities might there be for nurturing future vocations to the Society?