

Report from UWE Apostolic Planning Preparatory Committee on Collaboration

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Process:

The entire committee met three times to discuss possibilities for collaboration within the province before dividing into subgroups based on emerging themes. One group discussed and wrote a summary on collaboration for formation and the other group discussed and wrote a summary on regional collaboration. Both groups found resonance around the idea of collaboration for Ignatian vocations (lay and Jesuit) and the need for formation and regional participation to support them.

Collaboration for Formation of Ignatian Vocations

Because of the impact and need of both Jesuit and lay vocations inspired by the Ignatian tradition, the Jesuits West Province could call for and sponsor an ongoing collaboration of Jesuits and lay colleagues in multiple venues across the province (and beyond the Province where advantageous) to promote and form persons in Ignatian vocations. Lay persons and Jesuits working together with this purpose would deepen their knowledge of one another and would experience support of their respective vocations. This could be an excellent way of advancing collaboration more widely in the Province and could elicit vocations to the Society of Jesus and vocations as lay partners. Collaboration with this focus could take place in regions, within ministerial sectors, within a single larger ministry, between ministries, or in dialogue with dioceses. The formation of Ignatian vocations could involve spiritual, educational, immersive, and mentoring dimensions, or be carried out while working on common projects. Jesuits and lay colleagues, in whichever of these contexts they might operate, would together discern their own concerted strategy for how to organize and develop this formation process. Sharing the experience and results of their collaboration would be helpful for the Province as the need for collaborative lay/Jesuit partnership increases in all the Province undertakes.

People and Resources:

There would need to be persons appointed by the Provincial to oversee and foster this endeavor across the province. It would be best if a Jesuit and a lay person were appointed as co-leaders. The key attributes of the co-leaders and all of the participants would be 1) a deep experiential knowledge of Ignatian Spirituality, 2) experience in collaboration, 3) knowledge of and respect for these two kinds of Ignatian vocation. Some resources would be needed to train

those engaged in the collaboration in how to do formation. Some resources would be needed for materials and for occasional gatherings of participants.

Would need the time of presenters and participants. Would need the buy-in of Directors of Work or others who would be positioned to nominate program participants.

We discussed a few ways the province might resource this important work. One idea is having a designated person(s) working for the province to foster collaboration. Another model would involve regional councils charged to do this work in conversation with province leadership.

Ideally the partnership (Jesuit/lay person) would be gender inclusive.

Collaboration:

See "Possibilities" above about the aspects of this collaboration.

Challenges, Obstacles and Pitfalls:

A challenge (and perhaps an opportunity) might be how this endeavor would coordinate with the way we promote Jesuit vocations as a Province. Another possible objection might be the perception that this is a blurring of two different vocations, rather than a strengthening and clarification of each vocation in its distinctiveness and in its shared inspiration. This objection can be met by fuller explanation and understanding.

It will also be challenging to identify participants in this initiative. This is not strictly a leadership development initiative but is a mutual formation process and therefore should be open to a broad range of people in the community of our province. The instinct of those nominating people to this program may be to select lay leaders, rather than simply lay people with a hunger to embody the Ignatian charism.

We identified the desire for opportunities to experience formation in common among Jesuits and lay people to cultivate friendship and mutual support in our ministries.

One challenge could be the scarcity of time, which takes on a particular form among some lay people with the demands of family and work.

Apostolic Models:

The proposed possibility is based on a model of apostolic partnership. It is a partnership of persons of two different vocations who share a common inspiration and apostolic purpose. The Province will increasingly be called to move to a model principally of partnership rather than primarily of sponsorship, while respecting the difference in vocation and life-choice of the partners. Moving to a model more of partnership than of sponsorship will call for adjustments in how Province leadership carries out its responsibilities. This endeavor forms persons, both Jesuits and lay, for this apostolic partnership.

We discussed the importance of recognizing the vocation and call of lay leaders who have embraced a thorough Ignatian formation and desire to participate in the apostolic mission of the Province. Could this involve some kind of lay commissioning?

Distinctive and Unique Role of Jesuits:

The unique role and function of Jesuits in ministries is currently and increasingly will be one of catalyzing ministries in their Jesuit and Ignatian reality and witnessing to that reality. This role and function depends less on the number of Jesuits assigned to a ministry and more on their ability to elicit and support lay Ignatian leadership and to collaborate with lay leaders in their Ignatian vocations. In the past, Jesuits invited lay persons into sponsored ministries. It is now more often the case that lay leaders of Jesuit ministries are wanting and inviting Jesuits to serve with and support the ministry with the unique gifts Jesuits bring.

In a way, this initiative prioritizes the time of Jesuits to be focused on grounding and spiritually deepening the work of lay people active in our ministries.

Conversation at June Gathering:

It would be helpful at the Province gathering in June to focus on how all four of the potential "Apostolic Directions" proposed as foundations for Province Apostolic Planning are interrelated with and require one another. Grounding in Ignatian Spirituality is essential for collaboration, which together foster community and belonging, and all of these support accompanying youth and the marginalized. It would be good to discuss at the gathering how engaging in these apostolic directions does not mean working more but working differently.

Some questions for June: How broad should participation in this initiative be? How can it transcend and unite regions? What will best transmit a sense of cohort and community to those engaged in this process of mutual formation?

Is there an interest/hunger for this across the Province? An imaginative presentation/composition of place on this initiative (rather than a delineation). Fully envision the possibility of the what.

In five years, how will the Jesuits and lay people relate to each other in the work? What would collaboration look like?

Establishing Regional Centers for Ignatian Vocation

Possibility: The Jesuits West Province should prioritize the formation of Ignatian vocations (both lay and Jesuit) by establishing regional centers for Ignatian formation. These centers will focus on developing both Jesuit and lay vocations, fostering partnerships between Jesuits and lay colleagues across multiple venues within each region, and extending beyond the Province when advantageous with a focus on the spiritual, educational, immersive, and mentoring dimensions of Ignatian vocation formation while working on common projects.

People and Resources:

1. Identify or create regional centers for formation for Ignatian vocations (to the Society of Jesus and as lay partners).
2. Appoint a Jesuit and a layperson as co-leaders for each regional center.
3. Collaborate with Directors of Work and other stakeholders to nominate program participants, ensuring a broad range of community members are included.
4. Provide resources for training, materials, and occasional gatherings of participants.
5. Funding mechanisms need to be determined

Collaboration:

1. Institutions in the region would collaborate on human and fiscal resources and program development.
2. There would be synergy between formation that happens within each institution, formation that happens regionally, and formation that happens at the province level.
3. Engage in partnerships with local dioceses, particularly when the regional center is a parish, in order to expand the reach and impact of the collaboration.
4. Rooted in an Ignatian formation, cross-apostolic collaboration would be responsive to pressing issues in regional contexts.

Challenges, Obstacles, and Pitfalls:

1. Address concerns about the potential blurring of distinct vocations or narrowing of the Jesuit vocation towards only formation of vocations.
2. Ensure the financial solvency and long-term viability of regional centers for Ignatian formation.
3. Balance the need for regional missioning with the importance of maintaining the role of institutional leaders in forming Jesuits in formation.
4. Overcome the challenge of time scarcity for lay people with family and work commitments.
5. Shifting current institutional thinking toward more of a regional approach.
6. Developing a sense of ownership of a center within all institutions in a region, and the Province.

Apostolic Models:

1. Active participation in this new regional center should be an important dimension of the province's sponsorship relationship with each institution.

Distinctive and Unique Role of Jesuits:

1. Prioritize missioning Jesuits to regional centers, while also considering missioning Jesuits to a region rather than a specific institution, allowing them to be more apostolically available and responsive to the needs of the region.
2. Focus on the role of Jesuits as catalysts for Ignatian ministries and witnesses to the Jesuit and Ignatian reality, regardless of their numbers in a given ministry.

3. Jesuits foster the development of lay Ignatian leadership and collaborate with lay leaders in their respective vocations.

At the June gathering, participants should discuss the following questions:

1. What would institutions need to let go of and what sort of investment would it require of institutions in order to make this happen?
2. How can the Province best support and resource the formation of Ignatian vocations through the establishment of regional centers for Ignatian formation?
3. What is the unique role that Jesuits have played and will continue to play in the formation of both Jesuits and laypeople?