

December 14, 2023

Dear Directors of Works and Province Staff:

I wish you many blessings in this beautiful season of Advent as we wait for the birth of the one who called us to a life of service as collaborators and friends in the Lord.

I am writing today with an update on our apostolic planning process. After our wonderful meeting at Loyola Marymount University in June, there was a great deal of energy around the four apostolic directions that had surfaced as part of the two rounds of spiritual conversations that had taken place in communities and works prior to our gathering.

As a reminder, those directions are:

- To ground our experience of God through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian discernment;
- To promote and support mutual collaboration;
- To foster community and belonging; and
- To exercise an apostolic preference for youth and the marginalized.

During our time at LMU, I found deep confirmation and even a hunger for these directions from the 220 Jesuits and collaborators in attendance. I also experienced tremendous convergence around communal discernment, which is not surprising when a group of mission-driven women and men come together to prayerfully ask God for guidance. From the beginning, our apostolic planning process has been grounded in the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), directions that Pope Francis entrusted to the Society as its mission in 2019. I was also consoled to see the strong thread of continuity between our directions and the UAPs.

You may recall that our process began with a few simple questions: Where and in what ways do I see the Spirit present and moving in my ministry? Where is the Spirit inviting us to go? When I left LMU in June, I felt that the Spirit had truly answered those questions in the directions that had emerged.

Over the summer, I consulted with senior advisors and members of my Cabinet and then began my discernment. The fruit of my prayer, which was informed by so many people and so many conversations, is the following apostolic vision:

To be a community of Jesuits and apostolic partners that fully embraces discernment in common as we seek to respond to God's call.

In October, I sent Fr. General Arturo Sosa, SJ, the proposed apostolic vision as well as the four proposed apostolic directions. I told Fr. General that I hoped this vision would orient the Jesuits West Province for the next five years, adding that to make this vision a reality requires

an openness to ongoing individual and communal conversion. I believe that the more we live out this call, the more we will draw closer to Jesus, poor and humble, and the more we will be empowered to follow the apostolic directions with courage and hope.

On November 28, I was grateful to receive a letter from Fr. General confirming our proposed vision and four apostolic directions.

Next Steps: Implementation Plan

The work of apostolic planning now towards the development of an implementation plan. I am pleased to announce that Fr. Tom Smolich, SJ, has accepted my invitation to serve as chair of the Apostolic Planning Implementation Committee. Tom, who recently finished eight years as international director of Jesuit Refugee Service, is on sabbatical until this summer when he assumes his new mission as rector of the Jesuit community at Santa Clara University's Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. I am grateful to Tom for taking on this critical role and to Fr. Ed Fassett, SJ, for all the work he did getting us to this point.

I am also grateful to the four members of the Implementation Committee, who have likewise accepted my invitation and will be working with Tom.

- Dominic Chai, SJ – Dominic is a second-year theology student at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.
- Erin Luby – Erin is the principal of Seattle Prep and has served in that role for the last seven years.
- San Mai, SJ – San, who was ordained in 2020, is the associate pastor of St. Ignatius Parish in Portland.
- Tracey Primrose – Tracey, who serves as the provincial assistant for communications for the province, also served on the Apostolic Planning Steering Committee.

Each part of our apostolic planning process has relied on discernment, which will continue to be our way of proceeding as we move into the implementation phase. Communal discernment is the key to making our vision and directions a reality with the hope and expectation that, over time, the plan becomes a more integral part of our apostolic and communal lives.

I am grateful to everyone who played a role in what has truly been a synodal process. I believe that a vision of ***Jesuits and apostolic partners fully embracing discernment in common as we seek to respond to God's call*** is exactly where God is calling us to be. It is a vision that brings us closer to Jesus and closer to one another. It is a sustainable vision that allows us to respond to the challenges of our times by putting Christ front and center.

In mid-January, there will be additional updates on apostolic planning, and I will write to you again. Until then, please know of my gratitude and my prayers that Christ's light, which has illuminated our path every step of the way, shines brightly in your hearts and homes this Christmas.

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Sean Carroll, S.J.
Provincial