

ASSISTANCY STRATEGIC DISCERNMENT

DECISIONS AND COMMITMENTS
OF THE UNITED STATES PROVINCIALS

IHS

Jesuits are never content with the status quo, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to discover, redefine and reach out for the magis. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed. Indeed, ours is a holy boldness, “a certain apostolic aggressivity,” typical of our way of proceeding.

General Congregation 34, Decree 26, No. 27

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2 April 2008
JCU 08/02

V. Rev. Thomas H. Smolich, S.J.
Jesuit Conference
1016 16th Street, NW Suite # 400
Washington, DC 20036
USA

Dear Father Smolich, P.C.

Thank you for the *Documents of the Assistancy Strategic Discernment*, which were waiting for me when I took office.

Let me express my gratitude for the impressive effort and extensive consultation that were part of the process for discerning the future direction of the US Assistancy. Involving so many people at so many levels in so many different ways has gathered the gifts and talents God has generously given us so that the Gospel can be proclaimed ever more effectively throughout your country. Congratulations for bringing this work to such a successful conclusion!

I am happy to approve the perspectives, priorities, and actions you have outlined in *Responding to the Call of Christ*. Thank you for stating clearly and concretely the direction in which you believe the Society of Jesus in the United States will move in the years to come.

The decisions you have reached anticipate many of the decisions made by the recent General Congregation, and the structures you have proposed will facilitate implementation of the Congregation's decrees. Although changing circumstances may require adjustments to specific details as implementation takes place, your document provides an invaluable tool for the years to come as the Jesuit Conference board responds continually to the Spirit who makes all things new. In addition, let me stress that your work provides a fine model of how conferences in other regions might read "the signs of the times" so as to be able to respond generously to the Lord's invitation to serve the Church.

You and all the Provincials who took part in this important work are to be thanked in a special way for your significant contribution to the mission of the Society of Jesus in the United States and throughout the world. I gladly join my thanks to those that Father Kolvenbach expressed in his letter to you on 14 January (JCU 08/01).

Be assured of my prayers for you and the other members of the Jesuit Conference as you implement the documents you have written; please keep me and my work in your own prayers.

Yours in Christ,

Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.
Superior General

LETTER FROM THE PROVINCIALS OF THE UNITED STATES PROMULGATING THE DECISIONS AND COMMITMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC DISCERNMENT

June 21, 2008
Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga

Dear Brothers and Partners in Jesuit Ministries,

In October 2004, as we were beginning our Strategic Discernment Process, Superior General Peter Hans Kolvenbach joined us in Portland, Oregon, for the Jesuit Conference meeting. As we wrestled with the right *words and phrases of what we wanted to do*, Father Kolvenbach gave us our *guiding inspiration: What are the apostolic needs of the people of God in our times, and how are we called to respond?*

That question has motivated our work for nearly four years: consultations with numerous Jesuits and colleagues; multiple meetings of groups, committees, commissions and task forces; countless planning updates, provincial letters and NJN articles, and generous prayer, conversation and reflection by too many people to list. We are happy to share with you, together with *A Meditation on Our Response to Christ*, the approved text of *Responding to the Call of Christ: A Renewed Way of Proceeding for Our Mission Today*. We are profoundly grateful for the many people who have made this effort possible.

Responding to the Call of Christ is the companion piece to the *Meditation on the Call of Christ* that we published two years ago. In the *Meditation*, we expressed our mission as solidarity with “the least” and with “all.” As a planning document, *Responding* makes the mission more explicit – service of those most in need and with those who come to experience the world from the perspective of “Christ’s poor” and act in companionship with them – and offers concrete commitments in areas of ministry, partnership, Jesuit life and governance to further that mission. For example, we have committed ourselves to formulate national norms for spiritually healthy communities by 2010, and to write sponsorship or sustaining agreements with all of our ministries by 2011.

Responding to the Call of Christ resonates strongly with the decrees of GC 35. For example, you will recognize our expression of mission in the decree “Challenges to our Mission today: Sent to the Frontiers.” Our reflections on local superiors are similar to the guidelines in “Obedience in the Life of the Society of Jesus,” and our commitment to support Ignatian Apostolic Partners is consistent with “Collaboration at the Heart of Mission.” Our reconfiguration process is clearly in line with the goals of “Governance at the Service of Universal Mission,” as is the ongoing development of the Jesuit Conference.

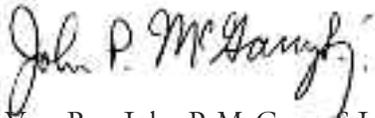
While the language of *Responding to the Call of Christ* is simple and to the point, its goal is a “great desire” appropriate to followers of Ignatius Loyola: a revitalized “way of proceeding” for the Society of Jesus in the United States that will prepare us to follow Jesus Christ in a changing and challenging world.

By 2021, we can hope that what the Strategic Discernment Process initiated in 2004 will be vibrant realities: ministries committed to the Society’s mission with dynamic relationships to the Society itself; Ignatian Apostolic Partners empowered to lead, train, and serve our mission; Jesuit communities that are vital and mission-driven, served by good leadership and encouraging a growing number of vocations; and governance in new provinces that supports our mission at national, provincial, and regional levels.

Such great desires can not rest merely on hope. *Responding to the Call of Christ* includes several commitments with timelines that we intend to keep. We will use these commitments in our own province discernment and planning, seeking to build deeper collaboration across our ministries and communities. We will also insure that our successors as provincials have the information and resources they need to implement the way of proceeding we have mapped out.

Responding has depended on the work of many people to whom we are very grateful. Making the vision a reality will once more call on many people—those already involved and partners and Jesuits of the future. We thank you in advance for your dedication to the mission of the Society, and for the generous spirit you will offer to bring these desires to fulfillment.

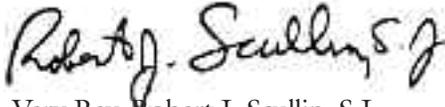
Sincerely in Christ,



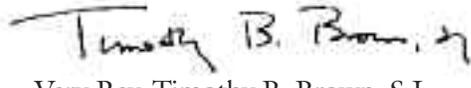
Very Rev. John P. McGarry, S.J.
Provincial, California Province



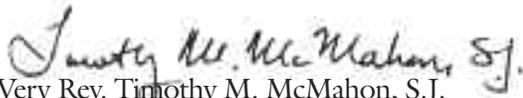
Very Rev. Edward W. Schmidt, S.J.
Provincial, Chicago Province



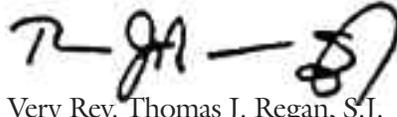
Very Rev. Robert J. Scullin, S.J.
Provincial, Detroit Province



Very Rev. Timothy B. Brown, S.J.
Provincial, Maryland Province



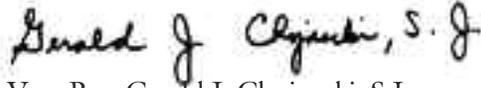
Very Rev. Timothy M. McMahon, S.J.
Provincial, Missouri Province



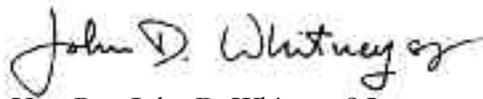
Very Rev. Thomas J. Regan, S.J.
Provincial, New England Province



Very Rev. Alfred C. Kammer, S.J.
Provincial, New Orleans Province



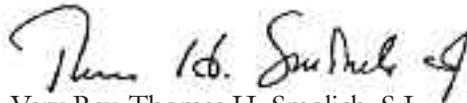
Very Rev. Gerald J. Chojnacki, S.J.
Provincial, New York Province



Very Rev. John D. Whitney, S.J.
Provincial, Oregon Province

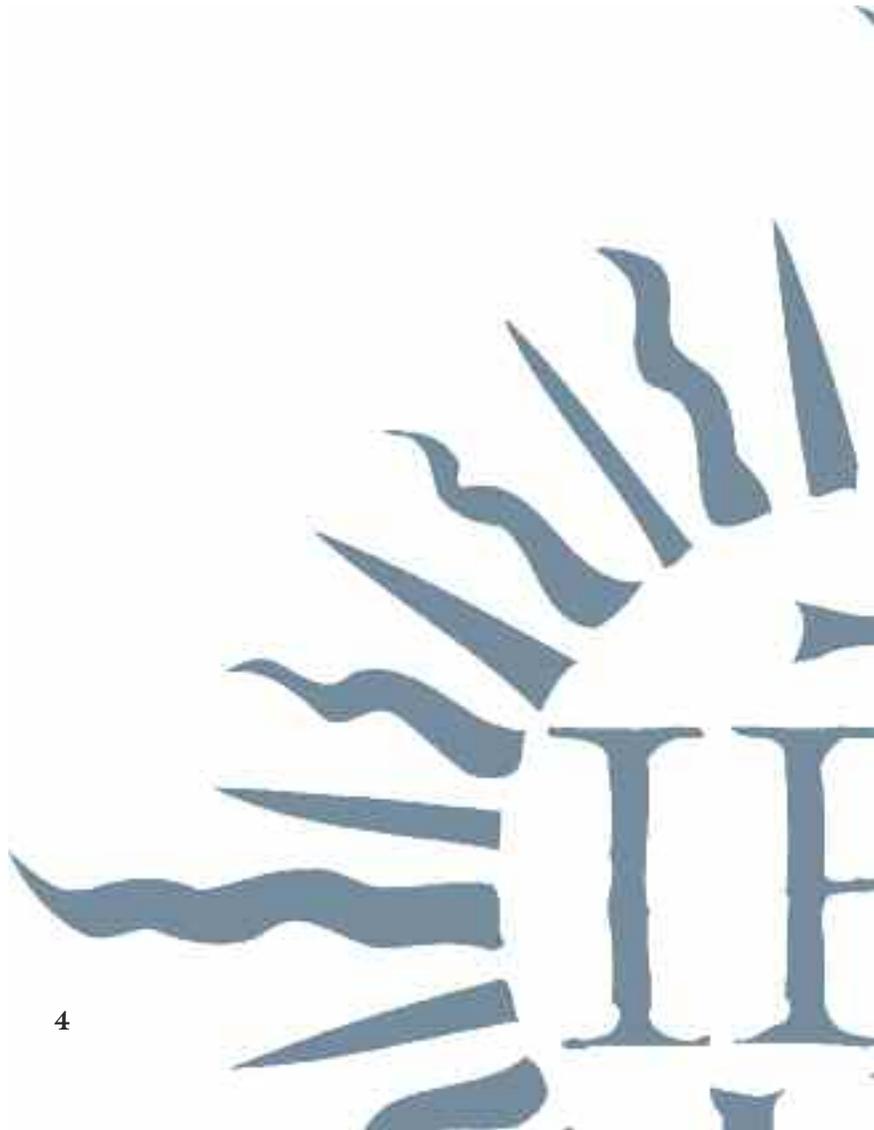


Very Rev. G. Thomas Krették, S.J.
Provincial, Wisconsin Province



Very Rev. Thomas H. Smolich, S.J.
President, Jesuit Conference of the United States

Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga
June 21, 2008



A MEDITATION ON OUR RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF CHRIST

FROM THE PROVINCIALS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSISTANCY



15. This principle [love] is the starting-point for understanding the great parables of Jesus. The rich man (cf. Lk 16:19-31) begs from his place of torment that his brothers be informed about what happens to those who simply ignore the poor man in need. Jesus takes up this cry for help as a warning to help us return to the right path. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37) offers two particularly important clarifications. Until that time, the concept of “neighbor” was understood as referring essentially to one’s countrymen and to foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel; in other words, to the closely-knit community of a single country or people. This limit is now abolished. Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The concept of “neighbor” is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of

love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now. The Church has the duty to interpret ever anew this relationship between near and far with regard to the actual daily life of her members. Lastly, we should especially mention the great parable of the Last Judgement (cf. Mt 25:31-46), in which love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life’s worth or lack thereof. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.

Benedict XVI, “Deus Caritas Est”

A MEDITATION ON OUR RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF CHRIST

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I

THREE PRELUDES

Composition of Place: Our Nation and Our World

1. In the contemplation of the Incarnation in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Holy Trinity looks upon the world, sees its wide range of needs, and sends Jesus into that world. Jesus is born in our human flesh, proclaims God's reign, gathers disciples, dies, and rises to new life. Before he ascends back to the Father, he sends his disciples into the whole world to preach and to serve as he did. In the United States today, he sends us still to a world that needs the challenge of his good news.
2. Our country is one of the most "faith-filled" in history, with high rates of church attendance, numerous religious media outlets, and strong religious claims on public policy. Out of that shared faith we have seen countless acts of generous service and compelling movements of greater unity and acceptance among the churches. Yet some of that faith is nominal and domesticated, often inclined to ignore the cross as it focuses on self-fulfillment and the protection of privilege. The challenging and transforming power of the Gospels and the call of Christ to the great Commandments of Love are easily repressed if faith is made to conform to us rather than we being conformed to the will of God.
3. At the same time, the United States is the unequalled power of the world. No other nation can compare with our wealth, our capacity to shape culture, and our ability to act unilaterally in geo-politics. Yet this status has not engendered a broader sense of solidarity with the rest of the world, but rather a pervading disregard for the realities and urgencies of the poor and disenfranchised. Not only do they carry our success on their shoulders, but they have little or no opportunity to encounter the healing and liberating message of Christ.
4. Of equal significance is the dynamic nature of our culture: creative, restless, forward-looking, novelty-oriented. The internet is its hallmark, bringing the world to one's desktop as information; conversation and entertainment appear with a few taps on a touchpad. The benefits of such access brighten all fields of knowledge and human activity. Yet the dark side of the internet provides a sharp contrast. Vices and addictions can stream into our offices and homes, and the sheer quantity of information – accurate and otherwise – can undermine the constants of human experience that connect us to each other and God.
5. As cultures interact more and more in this electronic world, we become more aware of the religious traditions that shape distinctive responses to faith, justice and culture. The "melting pot" dynamic of the United States can blend these differences, yet our Christian tradition has not always responded as neighbor to those who express God differently. Looking beyond our borders, there seems to loom a clash of the major religious families, particularly Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam – especially if they ignore the deepest truths of their religions and cannot dialog out of faith.
6. These realities shape the world in which we serve, and many – our students, colleagues, parishioners, alumni, to name a few – look to us for collaboration and direction in confronting such challenges. The true uniting of faith, justice, culture and dialog is Christ: his call of us to discipleship, his identification with the least of our brothers and sisters, his gift of the Eucharist where we partake of his very life.

Composition of Time: The Ignatian Vision

7. The Society of Jesus was born of a great desire. The visionary was Ignatius Loyola – wounded, converted, searching. His dream was to help souls.

8. Ignatius took the pilgrim road seeking to fulfill his dream in Jerusalem, in Spain, in Paris, and eventually in Rome. Through the power of an intense commitment grounded in his mystical experience of God, Ignatius gathered companions and formed a new community to serve the Church of his era, a Church divided and sometimes corrupt, yet ready for new life.

9. The Church of Ignatius' day was mostly a European Church, and Europe was restless. Horizons were expanding: Columbus landed in America the year after Ignatius was born; and as Ignatius prayed and did penance in Manresa in 1522, the first ships to circle the globe arrived home in Spain. Religious controversy tore political maps apart. The Catholic Church itself was in crisis, its priests often ignorant of the Gospels and Sacraments, its bishops often indifferent. New learning began to erode more than a century of certitude: in 1514, while Ignatius served at a Spanish court, the Polish civil servant Nicolaus Copernicus began articulating his heliocentric theories.¹ Ethics itself seemed to be unraveling. Loose morals and fiscal scandal among the clergy provoked calls for reform.

10. To this world – no longer flat, no longer the center of the universe – Ignatius and his young, well-educated friends brought energy, integrity, intelligence and vision. They made their voices heard in churches, piazzas, marketplaces – in any well-placed pulpit. They gave themselves to the service of the Church.

11. With a profound Christian Humanism, they used their intellectual and spiritual gifts for a zealous engagement of whatever culture they found themselves in – as missionaries, as guides in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as ministers of Sacraments living with the poor in hospitals, as scientists and theologians, and, signally, as innovative educators. What bound them together in their diverse works was a living and urgent faith in Christ Jesus.

Composition of Our Context: The Church and the Society of Jesus Today

12. To look at our Church today is to see a mixed bag holding saints and sinners.² Despite manifold examples of holiness and good works, we face many difficulties. In our Church, the leadership is challenged and often dismissed. Structures are questioned. Buildings are abandoned and inner-city parishes closed. Millions who identify themselves as Catholics rarely practice their faith. A generation has little grasp of Catholic literacy. A moral collapse of some clergy has led to suspicion and distrust. Shrill voices and political tactics polarize Catholics. A generation ago Pedro Arrupe said we had “a planet to heal.”³ Today in the United States, there is a Church to heal as well.

13. Our healing will be made possible only by a wholehearted response to the call of Christ. While Jesuits are only a small part of the call to heal the Church and world, we must be willing to do our part, as Ignatius himself did, in assisting the labors of bishops and all our fellow Catholics. Ignatius knew that we must discern God's gifts and God's call in the context of our lives. So it is with us today. We build on the gifts.

14. An enduring resource for our mission is the *Spiritual Exercises*. We have all contemplated the classes of men, the degrees of humility. We have heard the call of the King. We have all chosen – perhaps reluctantly or tentatively at times, but in the end with open hearts and holy desires – to serve under the standard of Christ. The *Exercises* foster our enduring intimacy with Jesus Christ and the grace of discernment. This is our core identity.

15. We Jesuits enjoy many other gifts besides. Our elders built the schools and churches, prayer centers and social centers; in these men, we have gifts of wisdom and prayer. Our men in active ministry continue to teach, to inspire, to intercede, to care; in them we have gifts of dedication and imagination. Our young men learn and push and challenge; in them we have gifts of energy and hope and the ability to speak to tomorrow's world. As we continue to invest in and care for established ministries, we have also begun to use traditional expertise in new approaches. Every individual's ministry – old or new – is the ministry of the whole Society, from the sought-after teacher on a thriving campus to the hospital chaplain making his solitary rounds, from the bold community organizer to the gentle spiritual guide. The Church needs these gifts.

16. Frequently enough, Jesuits may remind themselves of their “limited resources” and “smaller numbers.” But far more remarkable are those who accompany us. We minister with partners who embrace Ignatian spirituality and effectively undertake the Jesuit mission. With us are friends and benefactors whose interest and support make our work possible. We have committed alumni, many of whom serve their schools and works beyond those schools, helping us sustain old ministries and start new ones. All of these are part of who we are. The Church needs these gifts too.

17. General Congregation 34 noted, “each Jesuit encounters the impulse to unbelief first of all in himself,” and it is only when he deals with that dimension of himself that he can help the world make sense of its questions.⁴ We must likewise confront the impulse to doubt, to fear, to compromise, to back away, to rest comfortably. Our mission requires our belief, our trust, our courage, our commitment, our resilience, our energy. With these we can confront crucial issues of Jesuit identity, common life, collective impact. With these we can attract the young men who will carry this mission forward into tomorrow.

18. Our heritage shows us that great things are possible. We have our saints and heroes to inspire us to dig in and do the work God offers us. We have our friends and colleagues to offer ideas, to make demands, to bring out the best in us. And we have the commitment of all our brother Jesuits who take up our founder's dream and join in our determination to contribute what we best can to serve our Church, to proclaim the reign of God, to help souls.

19. In our time and place, the vision of Ignatius still lives.

II

THE CALL TO GREATER SOLIDARITY IN FAITH

Who Calls Us: Our Lord, the Church, the Society of Jesus

20. As Jesuits, each of us has heard the call of Jesus to know him more intimately, love him more truly, and follow him more closely. Aware of our own sinfulness, yet drawn by Christ's invitation to become his companions, we preach his good news to draw others into the dynamic personal life of the Trinity.

21. For the past forty years we have heard the repeated call of our Church to make our own the "joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted..."⁵ With regular insistence, popes, synods, and conferences of bishops have urged us to look deeply into the reality and causes of global human suffering. Pope John Paul II peered beneath this world's dominant culture and values to detect and confront the "thirst for power" and "desire for profit" at the heart of its economic and political injustice,⁶ the false gods driving much of today's practical atheism.

22. Today the context of our Jesuit call is what our brothers at GC 34 saw as "a world beguiled by self-centered human fulfillment, extravagance, and soft living; a world that prizes prestige, power, and self-sufficiency."⁷ They challenged us to preach the Gospel to such a world in ways that "focus on transforming the cultural values which sustain an unjust and oppressive social order."⁸ Similarly, Benedict XVI reminds us that our philosophical, theological and other works must engage modern culture, promoting, with other parts of the church, "a culture inspired by the values of the Gospel."⁹ For U.S. Jesuits, then, our proclamation of the Gospel must acknowledge our nation's power, privilege, and position as well as the considerable influence of our institutions, our colleagues, and our selves within that nation.

23. Over the past few months, we provincials have prayed together and discussed, have spoken with our fellow Jesuits in groups and in personal manifestations of conscience, have conferred with many of our friends and colleagues in mission. We now come back to some haunting questions. Are there people in the world through whom Christ is calling out to us most urgently? Is his call being heard? And by his identification with them, are we ourselves called to greater identification, greater solidarity – not only with them, but also with Our Lord?

24. We ask these questions against the backdrop of our own labors and those of our companions in ministry during past centuries. We ask them as well in the context of the healing that is needed not only in the church but also in the world. And we ask them, aware of our gifts in the service of evangelization. The answers suggest a new perspective on our works and challenge us to a deeper conversion of our hearts and minds.

Solidarity with “The Least” and with “All”

25. Every human being is not only created in the image and likeness of God but is also one with Christ. In the parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25), Jesus identifies himself with “the least” of his brothers and sisters. Indeed, all of us count for the least, but our Lord goes to great pains to identify himself with those persons suffering the hardships of hunger and homelessness, thirst and nakedness, the alien and the imprisoned. As the Holy Father reminds us in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, the entire activity of the Church is evangelizing through Word and Sacrament embodied *in the service of charity*.¹⁰ “Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.”¹¹

26. In this light, how can we ignore the fact that those most in need of our solidarity are those who suffer painful hardships? Their misery seems almost inescapable. Many are trapped in poverty. So limited are their opportunities, their poverty has become structurally entrenched. Their lives are severely diminished; their hopes are crushed by a persistent and oppressive poverty that denies to all but the boldest the basics of human dignity and the opportunity to live happy and fulfilled lives. Perhaps the most pressing and painful examples are *forced migrants* (refugees, migrant workers, the undocumented); *inner city populations* (racial minorities, the elderly, the homeless, the persistently poor); *indigenous peoples* at home and abroad; and the *globally destitute, more than 800 million people who go to bed hungry each night*.¹²

27. These groups represent all those whom poverty relegates to the very margins of society where their dignity is ignored, their rights are violated, their humanity is degraded, and their hopes are shattered. Solidarity with them is not a matter of politics. It is part of our solidarity with Christ and the expression of our love for God.¹³

28. In light of the vision articulated in the parable of the Last Judgment and the Two Standards of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we need no persuading that “a preferential but not exclusive love for the poor”¹⁴ is more than something optional; we have an urgent duty to bring the Gospel to the entire contemporary world. This commitment may be offensive to some, but as Jesuits, we make choices that flow from our commitment to choose poverty, dishonor, and humble service of the least among us, even if it must be in the face of a culture promoting self-indulgent economics, political domination, and lifestyle enclaves.

29. This apostolic call became all the more poignant and vivid after Hurricane Katrina. Floodwaters swept aside the camouflage covering the radical inequities of two Americas, rich and poor, and reminded us of stark failures in our domestic social responsibilities. This call upon our attention and our care rises to heaven in union with the cries of the aborted unborn, the euthanized elderly, the invisible people with disabilities, and the hundreds of millions of women, men, and children starving across the world. Sadly, our culture seems only to hear their cries in times of disaster and fleeting media attention.

30. The need for solidarity with “the least” and with “all” is intensified by the emergence of global interdependence; it must be embodied in habits of life and social institutions far more lasting than ephemeral headlines and sporadic response to crises. Calling for personal and structural conversion, Pope John Paul II named this solidarity a “virtue.” As such, he said, it calls for commitment and action:

This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all.¹⁵

31. Our solidarity is not just with the poor. It must be as broad as it is deep, drawing all those with whom we work and those whom we serve into union with one another. This greater solidarity for the sake of the Gospel

and our mutual salvation begins to answer the questions that marked our discernment. Solidarity practiced in faith, as the late Pope observed, will not only challenge the dehumanizing “underdevelopment” that affects the poor; it also challenges the “overdevelopment” that “tends to reduce the person to an economic unit in an ever more oppressive consumer network.”¹⁶ This solidarity is for the sake of us all.

One Call, Many Voices

32. The call to solidarity we have situated in the context of our culture and contemporary world is ultimately the call of Christ to everyone. It is a mission, then, shared in solidarity with all Christians. As Jesuits, we answer that call armed with the special charisms, traditions and works of our Order, especially the *Spiritual Exercises*. But no matter what our work, from university to infirmary to barrio, it is for the glory of God and the help and salvation of souls. Even within the Society of Jesus, there is a great variety of voices, an array of talents, but we are all at the service of the call and the mission. Some are gifted at social analysis, others at immediate and effective working with people at the margins of life or society. Many are scholars, many are missionaries. Whether teaching, preaching, giving the sacraments or praying for the society, our voices are as varied as the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, but there must be one message: to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves. That is the radical foundation of our solidarity with “the least.” Thus, while this new perspective does not necessarily mean that we change our works or ministries, it does require that all of our works be somehow informed and motivated by it.

33. Our mission today is not a mission of Jesuits alone, but a mission in solidarity with numerous women and men who share the spirit of Ignatius. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, we are all asked to respond generously to the call of Christ the King – even to the extent of accepting hardship for the sake of his mission. We recognize that colleagues, alumni, parishioners, retreatants, benefactors, and others have heard the call of the King and have entered into our communal mission. Many are now responsible for the care of ministries founded by Jesuits, and these partners will lead them in continued service to the Gospel. Many also now stand at the center of American society in places and positions that can make them friends of the poor and humble Christ and, together with Christ’s poor, artisans of a new society. Together, then, we accept Ignatius’ invitation to save our souls through service to others.¹⁷

34. The apostolic perspective that emerges from a meditation on our contemporary response to Christ, in short, calls all Jesuits and colleagues to conversion.¹⁸ Every institution that presents itself as “Jesuit” must answer this call as well.

Living the Solidarity

35. Solidarity with “the least” and with “all” is actually not new and certainly not alien to us. This reflection, rather, is more like a “repetition” meditation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, whereby we enter more deeply into the sources of life and faith that have moved us to respond to God in love. We re-enter the mystery of our faith, of our vocations, of our discipleship, but now with the added perspective that our solidarity with Christ calls us to a more profound conversion. Such a conversion opens our imagination to new ways we might encounter and serve Our Lord. More importantly still, it invites all of us, no matter what our work or station, to experience a zeal and love that is as strategic to the world as it is necessary for our happiness.

36. In higher education, when we do scholarship and research that lifts the human spirit and heals the human body, when we provide an environment where love and service to others are fostered in our students, when we nurture them in their faith life and in the greatest traditions of Christian Humanism and train them to be scien-

tists, doctors, teachers and businesspersons of integrity, when we engage our benefactors or alumni to build not only a better university but a better world, when we stand openly in “solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless,”¹⁹ when our students travel to Central America or Africa to see a hidden face of Christ, when national and international realities are critically examined with an advocate’s eye for the downtrodden, when our faculties reach out to China or send libraries to Africa, we are working in solidarity with “the least” and with all.

37. In secondary and pre-secondary education, when our curricula that enhance excellence in scholarship and sport point to the greater glory of God, when dedicated Jesuit and lay partners devote themselves to faith development and spiritual formation that free our students from cultural and religious myths of power, pleasure and possession, when service projects open young eyes to suffering and oppression in their own cities and neighborhoods, when *Kairos* retreats give students a felt experience of the power of the Holy Spirit across race and culture, when parents share a school’s commitment to those who cannot afford to attend, when alumni return to ask how they can make a difference in our broken world, when we imagine and create new centers of education such as Cristo Rey or Nativity schools, when the seeds of great dreams, holy aspirations and the passion for justice are sown, we are living in true solidarity.

38. In our pastoral ministries, when we recognize Christ present in those we console and instruct, when we bestow him in the sacraments, whether to politician or prisoner in their poverty, when we serve inner city parishes and the poor, frail and alienated who worship there, when we twin our parishes with marginalized communities in the developing world, when we offer our retreat centers to those without home, when we help a bewildered single mother keep her unborn child, when we accompany our parishioners, our staffs, our friends on the road not to despair but to Emmaus, when we carry Eucharist and Reconciliation to all who need them in the languages they speak, we express a true solidarity that unites us and those we serve to the poorest of the poor.

39. In our social ministries, when we address the great inequities in our nation as apostles bringing the good news, when we accompany the gang member to a job interview, when we demonstrate our solidarity with those in the developing world in deeds, not mere words, when we serve the immigrant or refugee regardless of document status, when we encourage students to attend the March for Life and the Ignatian Family Teach-In, when we lobby for human rights and housing rights, when we analyze the structures that create our world so in need of healing, when we help communities to organize themselves to claim the goodness of God in this world, when we become part of or encourage our families and friends to join and support the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, or Boys Hope Girls Hope, we deepen the solidarity that already exists and, once again, profess our faith.

40. In our other ministries, from communications to the arts, whether serving internationally or locally, in the animation of the mission or the creative solitude of the scholar, we are likewise united as servants of Christ’s mission in broad and deep solidarity.

41. When we give our lives to the Lord in formation and studies, when we struggle to find him in our apostolates, our prayer, our community, when we encounter the Lord in our service of the Church, when we embrace new languages and new cultures, when we deepen our commitment to religious life and priesthood with Christ poor and humble, we are preparing ourselves for solidarity with Christ’s people under the banner of his cross.

42. When we endure the poverties of infirmity and dependence, we once again do it in solidarity with the least of our brothers and sisters, praying with and in Our Lord, not only for the works of the Society but with the words of Jesus and all who call on his father, “Into your hands, I commend my spirit.”

43. Finally, when we as provincials bind ourselves to deepen our own commitment, when we open ourselves to yet unknown ways of responding to the call of Christ, and when we call our brothers and communities to reflect on our vocation in the light of “the least” and “all,” we do this in solidarity with them, and in union with the Lord.

III

UNION IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST

44. We offer this meditation as a challenge to renew our existing commitment to Christ. We deepen our commitment because we take seriously the Church's reflections about the Gospel's place in the contemporary world and about the responsibility of every Christian to act in solidarity with neighbors near and far. We recognize that we are one group of workers in a vast vineyard and that many others can teach us much. But we also realize that this moment in our history, a *kairos* moment, invites us to deeper reflection and a wider course of action. This new perspective must shape our response in prayer, discernment, and concrete actions, helping us to know more authentically the answer to the question: "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison and did not come to your help?"

45. Ours is a Eucharistic faith. And the Eucharist remains the center of our lives as Jesuits. But there are *two* sacraments of the "real presence." At communion, in our own poverty we receive the body and blood of Christ under the humble appearances of bread and wine. When we reach out, however, to the least and to all, we reach out in justice and mercy to Christ himself, now under the appearances of our neighbors. For he has said of them as well, "This is my Body." "You have done it for me." When we labor in solidarity with the least of our brothers and sisters, it is not merely a work of justice. It is a matter of faith. It is a matter of whether we believe in Him whose name we bear.

Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola
July 31, 2006

A.M.D.G.

Notes

¹ The year 1514 is frequently cited as the latest date for composition of a small work (“Small Commentary”) that Copernicus circulated; a printed work (“On the Revolution...”) did not appear until after his death in 1543.

² See St. Augustine’s doctrine of the church, cited in Alister E. McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction, p. 20.

³ Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *A Planet to Heal*, 1977.

⁴ General Congregation 34, Decree 4, No. 20.

⁵ Vatican II, *Church in the Modern World*, 1965, No. 1.

⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, No. 37.

⁷ GC34, Decree 26, No. 5.

⁸ GC34, Decree 4, No. 28, 3.

⁹ “Pontiff Exhorts Jesuits to Heed Ignatius’ Legacy,” *Zenit*, May 4, 2006.

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Section 19. Emphasis is in the papal text.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Last Sentence of Section 15 (Quoted in full in the box on the title page).

¹² United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*, pp. 6-9.

¹³ Sacred scripture uses the Hebrew word *anawim* to identify the poor, the afflicted, the remnant who keep faith in their creator. The *anawim* of our time are those living an entrenched poverty that leads to powerlessness and marginalization. It is the *anawim* whom the prophets defend and Jesus befriends, and because they are made in the image of God, denying their dignity is a blot on this image. This call to solidarity, then, is rooted in biblical justice.

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II often described the option for the poor in these terms.

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, No. 38.

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1999, No. 32.

¹⁷ See the First Principle and Foundation in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

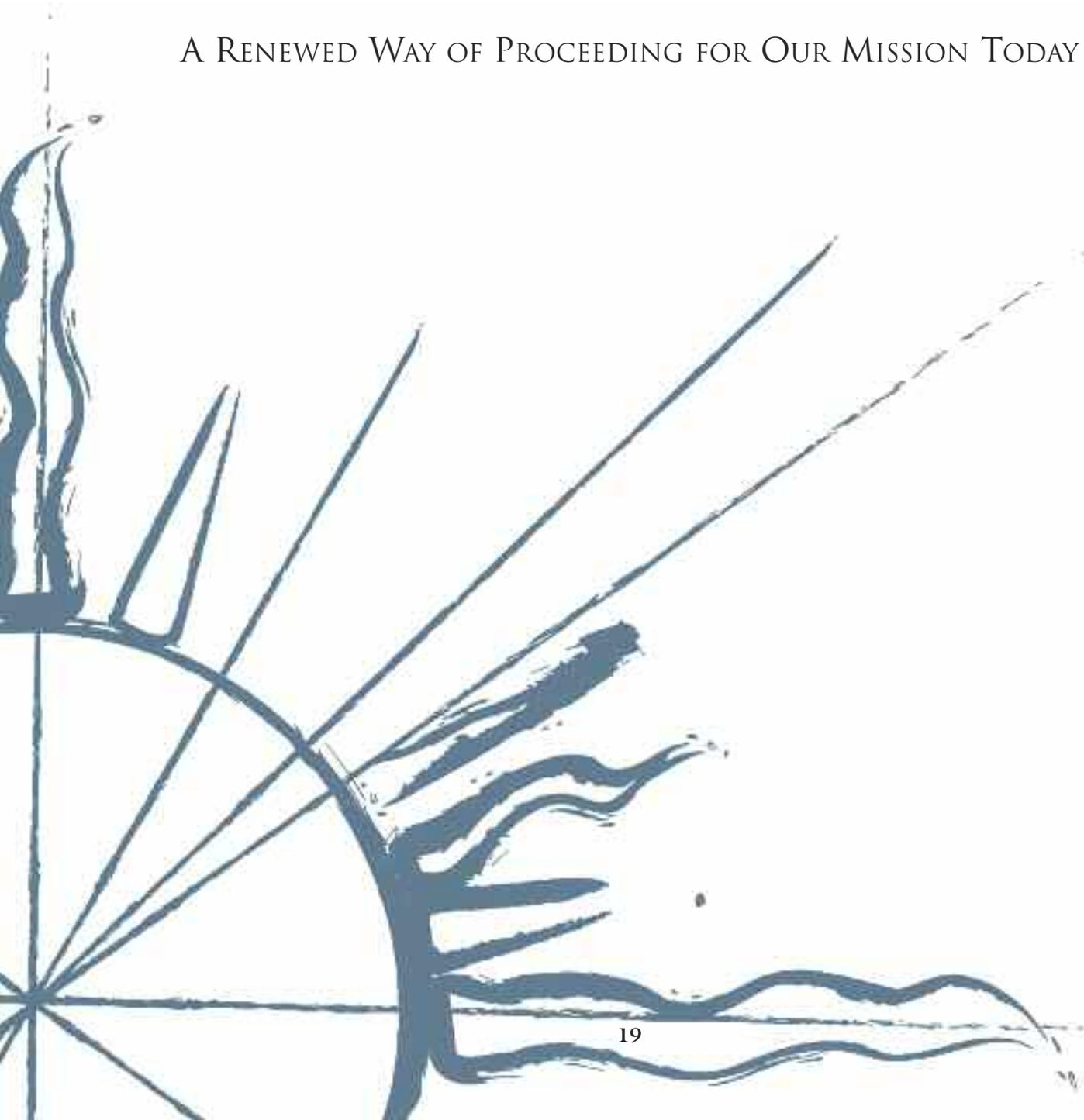
¹⁸ In both *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986), the U.S. bishops underscore the need for widespread conversion in order to accept the teachings of the Church on war and peace and economic justice.

¹⁹ GC34, Decree 26, No. 14.



RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF CHRIST

A RENEWED WAY OF PROCEEDING FOR OUR MISSION TODAY



Legend has it that Saint Ignatius, when he sent Saint Francis Xavier to the East, told him: “go, set the world alight.” With the birth of the Society of Jesus, a new fire was lit in a changing world. A novel form of religious life came about, not through human enterprise but as a divine initiative. The fire that was set alight then continues to burn in our Jesuit Life today, acting as “a fire that kindles other fires” (Saint Alberto Hurtado). With it, we are called to set all things alight with the love of God.

General Congregation 35, Decree 2, #25

RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF CHRIST

A RENEWED WAY OF PROCEEDING FOR OUR MISSION TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

In the second part of the meditation on the Kingdom from the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius invites those facing an election to “gaze upon Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and all the world assembled before him.” This twin vision lies at the heart of Ignatian discernment. Ignatius instructs us to listen carefully to the inner call of Christ directed “to them all, and to each person in particular.” At the same time, he directs our gaze outward to see the world from the perspective of the King who invites us to join him in his work.

Beginning in October 2004, the Jesuit Conference urged every Jesuit within the United States Assis-tancy to join in a process of discernment that would extend through several phases. On the Feast of St. Ig-natius in 2006, we invited our brother Jesuits to pray and reflect upon *A Meditation On Our Response to the Call of Christ*. The following pages outline a practical way of proceeding that has emerged from our shared experiences of the *Meditation*.

In addition to our own ongoing deliberations, the Conference formed several task forces including both Jesuits and men and women who join us in our ministries, encouraged conversation at recent province congregations and province days, circulated preliminary reports, and solicited comments at web sites estab-lished for this purpose. These responses were then given to all ten provincials. We subsequently formulated a series of directives for the future at the July 2007 Jesuit Conference meeting.

Why engage in this formal discernment now? The Society of Jesus in the United States has under-gone an enormous transformation in the last forty years, and change will continue to occur for the foresee-able future. Preoccupation with the decline in our numbers and the aging of our membership - among the most visible changes - should not obscure several other important developments in Jesuit life. Many institu-tions founded and supported by the Society of Jesus have continued to prosper and grow to the extent that the relationship between the institution and the Society has been modified, as has the role of individual Je-suits serving within them. As women and men who are not Jesuits have assumed greater responsibility for these institutions, we can no longer presume that a large number of Jesuits will necessarily be assigned to them, even less that Jesuits will automatically fill all leadership positions.

Many Jesuits continue to be engaged in these ministries of education, spiritual guidance and direct service. At the same time, we have begun a number of new ministries, working in small teams or in collabo-ration with others within the Church. Most Jesuit communities have become smaller, less institutional, more welcoming of guests, and more likely to be comprised of members working in a variety of ministries.

The decrees of recent general congregations have urged our ministries to reflect greater “solidarity with the poor.” This challenge occurs at a time of astonishing prosperity within the United States, a conflict that surely holds implications for our lives and our communities as well as our choice of ministries. Most Ameri-cans now experience geographic as well as social mobility. As a result younger Jesuits may feel less investment in a particular province, region or school than did earlier generations. Routine air travel and instant world-wide communication have provided an international perspective that can alter our sense of apostolic priori-ties. These factors, and others, have challenged the provincials and every Jesuit to examine our way of proceeding as it is carried out at the province level today and as it will be in the future.

An organization’s identity emerges not only from its history and official statements but also from its current practice. Ideally, these three elements form a unity. At least they should not contradict one another. During this period of communal discernment, we Jesuits of the U.S. Assis-tancy have prayerfully examined our traditions, mission and current practice with a view toward setting directions for the future. As could have

been predicted, we found many activities notably productive, and the provincials enthusiastically affirm their commitment to them. At the same time, we acknowledge that in some cases the relationship between Society and institution has already shifted and the understanding of “commitment” may need re-definition. As the reports, comments and deliberations have continued, we have also noted some areas of dissatisfaction or neglect that call for attention. Most importantly, however, we have identified several new possibilities in response to Lord’s invitation to us. At the end of the process, after examining the data, listening to the comments, discussing, deliberating and praying together, we have set directions for the future in four specific areas: Ministry, Partnership, Jesuit Life, and Governance.

These directives have been formulated as a statement of future direction for the entire Assistency. They do not, however, shift responsibility away from the regional province to a centralized authority in the Jesuit Conference. Acting as a unified body, we, the members of the Conference, have committed ourselves and our successors to a framework within which individual provincials will initiate, adapt and test local policies for the benefit of the men and ministries in their region. Timetables for implementation of the provisions of this statement may be adjusted because of local situations, but the itinerary has been set.

I

MINISTRIES

Jesuits in the United States engage in an astonishing variety of ministries, all of which contribute to the Society's fundamental mission of caring for "the good of souls." These diverse works, each in its own way, support the Church's mission of evangelization of peoples and the Society's commitment to the service of faith through the promotion of justice. In charting a direction for the future, we intend to provide norms and procedures to clarify the role of individual apostolates as integral parts of the Society's single mission and provide a framework for greater collaboration and mutual support among existing ministries.

Apostolic Priorities

The provincials will collaborate with directors of works and other apostolic leaders to establish appropriate Assistancy wide ministerial directions, norms and standards for new and existing works.

- a. In keeping with the mission of the Society of Jesus, we will make apostolic choices that promote a mature, active faith that expresses itself in a commitment to those most in need. Ministries of education, the Spiritual Exercises, and evangelization and instruction in Catholic doctrine, among others all contribute to the promotion of faith, the building of a more just world, critical encounter with culture and inter-religious dialogue.
- b. In evaluating ministries, we will observe the norms specified in the "Solidarities with 'The Least' and 'The All,'" as described in *A Meditation on Our Response to the Call of Christ*, (pp. 7-9). Specifically, we are committed to those most in need (e.g., forced migrants, inner city poor, indigenous populations and the globally destitute) as well as those, often the most capable of addressing these issues, who come to experience the world from the perspective of "Christ's poor" and act in companionship with them.
- c. We will respond to requests from the broader Society of Jesus.
- d. We will engage in appropriate consultation with directors of works and other apostolic leaders to establish and maintain ministerial priorities and to promote inter-provincial collaboration and *cura apostolica*.

Social-Cultural Analysis

Building on our tradition of intellectual ministry, the Jesuit Conference will provide the provincials with practical resources to better understand and influence how social, economic, cultural and governmental structures serve the cause of human dignity.

- a. In evaluating apostolic opportunities, we will involve Church leadership, representatives of the Society and its ministries, universities and intellectual centers, those involved in ministry, local communities, and those served by our works.
- b. Through the work of a research coordinator, the provincials will be informed in their decision-making by existing networks of scholars and those engaged in ministries. The coordinator will organize opportunities to reflect on the “signs of the times” as needed.
- c. We will also address appropriate research topics raised by provincial leadership, local bishops and other Church leaders, as well as those directly involved in ministry.

Province Responsibilities

The province is the primary venue for implementing ministerial directions.

- a. We will coordinate province planning with national and international priorities and with the planning of other provinces.
- b. We will utilize practical resources for understanding the cultural contexts in defining apostolic priorities, as described above in Section I.
- c. We will consult regularly with bishops and other leaders to assure the Society’s cooperation with Church initiatives and to employ the Society’s charism most effectively in addressing local needs.

Jesuit Ministries

Provincials will work with the leadership of local ministries to implement the Society’s ministerial directions.

- a. We reaffirm our commitment to those foundational ministries of our charism (learned ministry, evangelization, dialogue with culture, service to the poor, etc.) within Jesuit institutions.
- b. We are committed to utilizing established ministerial directions in making decisions regarding opening, sustaining or withdrawing from ministries.
- c. In initiating new Jesuit ministries to address the articulated needs of local communities, we will deliberate with other concerned parties as appropriate.
- d. We will engage in appropriate consultation when the Society of Jesus withdraws from a ministry.
- e. We will work with the directors of works and apostolic leaders to incorporate in the ministries the values and objectives outlined in *A Meditation on Our Response to the Call of Christ*.

Mutual Agreements

The provincials will collaborate with directors of works to establish written agreements regarding mutual commitments and respective responsibilities for each Jesuit apostolate.

- a. We will clarify the relationship between the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit community, and the apostolic institution in ways that will preserve and promote the Jesuit and Catholic character of the institution.
- b. We will work with the directors of works, trustees, and other ministry leaders to articulate, by 2011, agreements that are mutual and measurable.
- c. With the directors of works we will develop appropriate instruments for measuring the implementation of these agreements by 2015.
- d. We will articulate Jesuit and Catholic evangelical emphasis on faith, justice, dialogue and culture.

II

APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIPS

From the days of St. Ignatius, Jesuits have collaborated with men and women who share our sense of mission for the good of the apostolate. While Jesuits in the United States have a long history of working side by side with others, in recent years the growing importance of our companions in ministry has transformed the relationship. Jesuits bring a unique contribution to this partnership as spiritual animators and living representatives of the Jesuit tradition of consecrated service to the Church. At the same time, those who are not Jesuits often fill positions of leadership and set directions for the ministry.

All who share a commitment to the mission of the Society of Jesus and labor on its behalf can be considered “apostolic partners,” but the notion admits wide latitude and gradation. It includes those who are active Catholics, have embraced Ignatian spirituality, and view their involvement as a personal ministry. But it also extends in some way to those who contribute to the good of the apostolate with little reference to matters of personal belief. The provincials of the United States appreciate the collaboration of all, yet propose a series of guidelines to help identify and assist those partners willing to deepen their own Ignatian spirituality and assume greater responsibility for an institution’s Jesuit identity, that is, to become Ignatian apostolic partners.

Spiritual and Apostolic Enrichment

The provincials will work with leaders of Jesuit sponsored institutions and other organizations to provide and enhance opportunities for spiritual growth for those engaged in Jesuit apostolates.

- a. We will commission an inventory of current successful programs for partnership development from across apostolic sectors to be presented to the Jesuit Conference by July 2008.
- b. We will support programs in Ignatian spirituality for new and current apostolic partners. These programs must have appropriate sensitivity to cultural diversity and inter-religious dialogue.
- c. We will develop and maintain programs to train Ignatian apostolic partners to give the *Spiritual Exercises* and offer spiritual direction in Jesuit apostolates.

Ignatian Apostolic Leadership

The provincials will work with the leaders of Jesuit-sponsored institutions and other organizations to develop formation programs for Ignatian apostolic leadership.

- a. We will assist in the creation and networking of programs in Jesuit history, Ignatian spirituality, and an awareness of “faith that does justice” for those in leadership positions in Jesuit sponsored institutions.
- b. We will encourage formation in Ignatian apostolic partnership as part of orientation and continuing education for every trustee at Jesuit institutions.
- c. We will support apostolic partners who show potential for Ignatian apostolic leadership.

Communications

The provincials will work with Jesuit-sponsored institutions and others to devise a national strategy that will enhance an awareness of apostolic partnership.

- a. We will promulgate Assistancy-wide guidelines for apostolic partnership across all sectors.
- b. We will expand technological resources that foster, develop and network apostolic partners and partnership resources.
- c. We will provide opportunities for apostolic leaders to contribute to the directions and goals of the provinces and the Assistancy.

Policy

The provincials will work with the leaders of Jesuit-sponsored institutions and other organizations to make apostolic partnership a constitutive element of all planning and activity.

- a. We will make a commitment to apostolic partnership a consideration in the selection of provincials and local superiors.
- b. With leaders of institutions, we will see that the Spiritual Exercises and other Ignatian programs are available for key personnel in Jesuit ministries.
- c. We will urge that each Jesuit ministry include in its mission statement a clear commitment to Ignatian apostolic partnership as a way of proceeding.

Structures

The provincials will work with the leaders of Jesuit-sponsored institutions and other organizations to sustain and develop national, regional and local structures to support apostolic partnership in the service of our mission.

- a. We will foster cooperation among the varied ministries within regions to maximize apostolic effectiveness.

- b. We will include apostolic partners in all appropriate national and local structures dealing with the ministry.
- c. We will continue to link Jesuit ministries and apostolic partnerships to the mission of the local and the universal Church.
- d. We will contribute appropriate funding to support this investment in apostolic partners.
- e. We will concentrate our resources on forming Ignatian apostolic partners who are most central to the mission and who have demonstrated a deep commitment to Ignatian spirituality in their own lives.

III

JESUIT LIFE

Jesuits profess a total commitment to Jesus Christ who binds them together as a community of friends in the Lord. We come together in prayer, conversation and the Eucharist. Through individual and communal discernment we take responsibility for apostolic choices in light of our call to serve those in greatest need in companionship with those most able to help address that need. Our life together provides the setting for our dedication to continual reflection and renewal and a lived solidarity with the poor, which in turn leads to a profound availability for mission. Viewed in this light, community life cannot be separated from our apostolic effectiveness.

The Vowed Life

The profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience flows from our identity as men on mission under the banner of Christ and manifests a Jesuit's witness and service to the Kingdom.

- a. Poverty: We will review the sections of the "Statutes on Poverty" and the "Instruction on the Administration of Goods" that relate to community life. By December 2008, we will identify and implement the best practices regarding budgets, community surplus, and common life within and across apostolic sectors.
- b. Chastity: We will encourage the continued development of a healthy chastity by seeking to identify characteristics of successful community living, as noted below. We will continue to strengthen policies that insure the safety of children and clarify appropriate boundaries in all ministerial relationships.
- c. Obedience: We will support a lived experience of obedience in community life. This includes fidelity to the common life, transparency with provincials and local superiors, and availability for mission.
- d. In our efforts to strengthen the role of the local superior, we affirm that: i) the annual conference between the local superior and each Jesuit in the community be the norm; ii) all new superiors will attend the New Superiors Colloquium; iii) each province will provide on-going training for local superiors.

We will renew reflection and recommendation on our vowed life in the event General Congregation 35 issues an expected decree on obedience for the universal Society.

Community Life

The provincials envision communities of friends in the Lord whose apostolic nature is the foundation for both our ministries and our individual call to holiness.

a. Learning from the experience of the most successful communities, we will formulate national norms for spiritually healthy communities by 2010 and implement these norms by 2012. The norms could focus on expectations such as:

- ♦ Daily Eucharist and weekly community Eucharist
- ♦ Daily community prayer
- ♦ Weekly community meal where all are expected to be present
- ♦ Regular community gatherings for prayer and spiritual conversation
- ♦ Days of reflection at the beginning and end of each year, including community goal setting and an annual communal *examen*
- ♦ Community jobs for all members
- ♦ Appropriate customs for hospitality, especially for our apostolic partners.

b. We affirm that communities must provide support to our brothers in their difficulties. In light of the particular stresses that accompany sickness, infirmity, and behavioral problems, we will commission a comprehensive study that proposes effective local and provincial responses by 2010.

Jesuits as Leaders

The provincials recognize the importance of forming Jesuits for leadership roles in both governance and in the apostolates.

a. We recognize that Jesuits are called to leadership in many forms: as priests and brothers, teachers, board members, pastors, superiors, administrators.

b. We have developed an initial framework for leadership formation, and will appoint a task force to propose, by May 2008, comprehensive directions for this effort.

Vocation Development

The provincials are acutely aware that vocations are essential for the mission of the Society of Jesus in the United States. The changing realities of American culture, the Church, communications and attitudes toward commitment present a formidable challenge.

a. We affirm that the responsibility for identifying potential candidates for the Society of Jesus rests with every community and every individual Jesuit.

b. We are forming a task force to propose comprehensive directions for a renewed and coordinated national effort that will report back to us by May 2008.

IV

GOVERNANCE

The declining number of available Jesuits has made it clear for some time that a fundamental restructuring of provinces is in order. Quite early in the discernment process, we realized that numbers are not the sole consideration. Our decisions have incorporated new models of ministry, which are based on fewer Jesuits and greater involvement of apostolic partners. We are guided by the confidence that by combining human and financial resources from a wider geographic area we can achieve greater flexibility in maintaining relationships with existing apostolates and provide greater opportunities for innovation.

While we are conscious of organizational objectives for the good of the mission, we remain committed to the Society's insistence on *cura personalis* as the core of its way of proceeding. The size of the newly enlarged regions will still allow the manifestation of conscience to remain a key factor in a provincial's decisions about the men and the mission.

Province Boundaries

After testing several models, reviewing demographic data and soliciting reactions from the Assistancy, the provincials chose a reconfiguration that will eventually reduce the number of provinces in the United States from ten to five.

- a. A north central province will include the present Wisconsin, Chicago and Detroit Provinces. A south central province will combine the present Missouri and New Orleans Provinces, with the exception of the states of Georgia and South Carolina. These states will be united to the present Maryland Province, which will join New York and New England in a new eastern province. A northwestern province consists of the present Oregon Province; a southwestern province is the present California Province. These two provinces, while maintaining their autonomy, will explore opportunities for greater coordination of their activities.
- b. The transition will take place in stages and is envisioned to be completed by 2021. The provincials will monitor progress and set intermediate goals as the process continues.
- c. We will begin the process immediately, exploring opportunities for coordination and collaboration as appropriate. When looking toward more formal regional collaboration, we envision several areas of new apostolic energy and expanded ministry. Oregon and California have much to share with one another in the areas of Native American and Hispanic ministry. Chicago, Detroit and Wisconsin share a common evangelization in urban settings as well as commitments in Africa where the separate existing ministries will now be able to explore new possibilities through combined resources and shared experience. Missouri and New Orleans see new possibilities in the Gulf Caribbean arising from their presence in Belize, twinning relationship in Central America, cooperation with the Antilles Province in Miami, and the new social research center at Loyola University with its focus

on migration. Maryland, New England and New York will build upon the foundation of the Jesuit Collaborative, a tri-province apostolate of the Exercises, as well as looking toward Atlanta for new ministries and support of existing ones.

Many first steps have already taken place, such as combined novitiates and province days. In the near future, province consultors, province directors of ministries, retreat house and parish personnel, representatives of higher and secondary education, province staffs and development offices will begin exploring practical steps for collaboration and consolidation.

d. Provincials of existing provinces, acting in collaboration, will consider assignments of men and other resources according to the new configuration.

e. To prevent misunderstanding, we will take every step possible to provide assurances and accurate information to bishops, the local churches, apostolic partners, benefactors, alumni and other concerned parties.

The Jesuit Conference

The provincials acknowledge that policies affecting ministry are best formulated by the provincials and local apostolic leadership. The Jesuit Conference and its president provide organizational support and national coordination for local ministries.

a. We have entrusted to the president the responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the policies we adopt through the Strategic Discernment process of the United States Assistancy.

b. The president will encourage greater co-responsibility among the provincials for supporting the unified mission of the Society of Jesus in the United States. This will include an annual apostolic conversation with each provincial and an opportunity to comment on the *terna* for a provincial.

c. The president will ask those responsible for overseeing and supporting the internal governance of the Society, such as treasurers and vocation promoters, to review their work in light of the Strategic Discernment.

d. The president will become major superior of the first studies programs, which will become Assistancy works. He will finalize formal agreements for each program that will spell out understandings between the university, the local province and the Jesuit Conference.

CONCLUSION

Our response to the call of Christ in this day and time, the result of our collective meditation on the Kingdom, points out the direction of the United States Assistancy for the foreseeable future. The prayer and work of every Jesuit and apostolic colleague during the upcoming years of implementation will determine the ultimate success of our strategic discernment. We are grateful for your companionship in this process and are confident in what we can accomplish together laboring with the Lord in service to those who most call upon our love and compassion.

With the Strategic Discernment now entering the ordinary governance of the Society, we ask you to remain engaged in this process - individually and as communities - and to bring the graces of your own prayer and response to the account of conscience. As provincials, we ask of each other and our successors faithfulness to the way of proceeding emerging from our Strategic Discernment. If we are diligent in our implementation, this way forward will transform the Society of Jesus in the United States as we know it and embolden our response to the call of Christ.

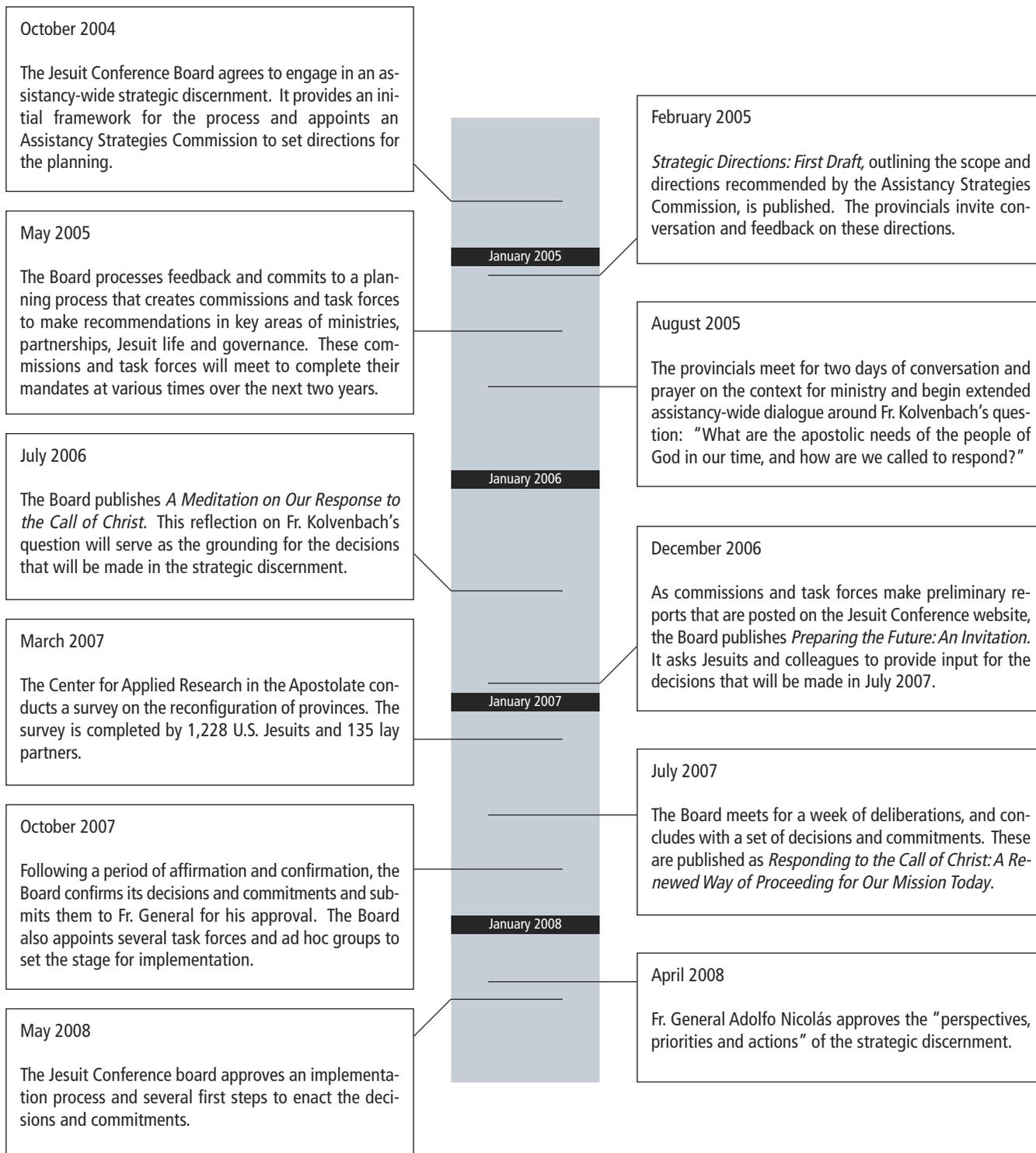
In December 2004, we introduced this process to the Assistancy in words that speak to us again. “Ignatius and his early companions believed that if they put their gifts together to serve the Church, God would work wonders. With confidence in the God who called us into being and invites us to labor with him in this place and in these days, let us listen carefully and respond boldly to the Spirit, and trust that God will work wonders among us. May God who has begun this good work in us bring it to completion!”

Submitted to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, October 10, 2007.

Approved by Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, April 2, 2008.

A.M.D.G.

STRATEGIC DISCERNMENT MILESTONES



Further background on the process is available in *Documents of the Assistancy Strategic Discernment* at <http://www.jesuit.org/ASD>

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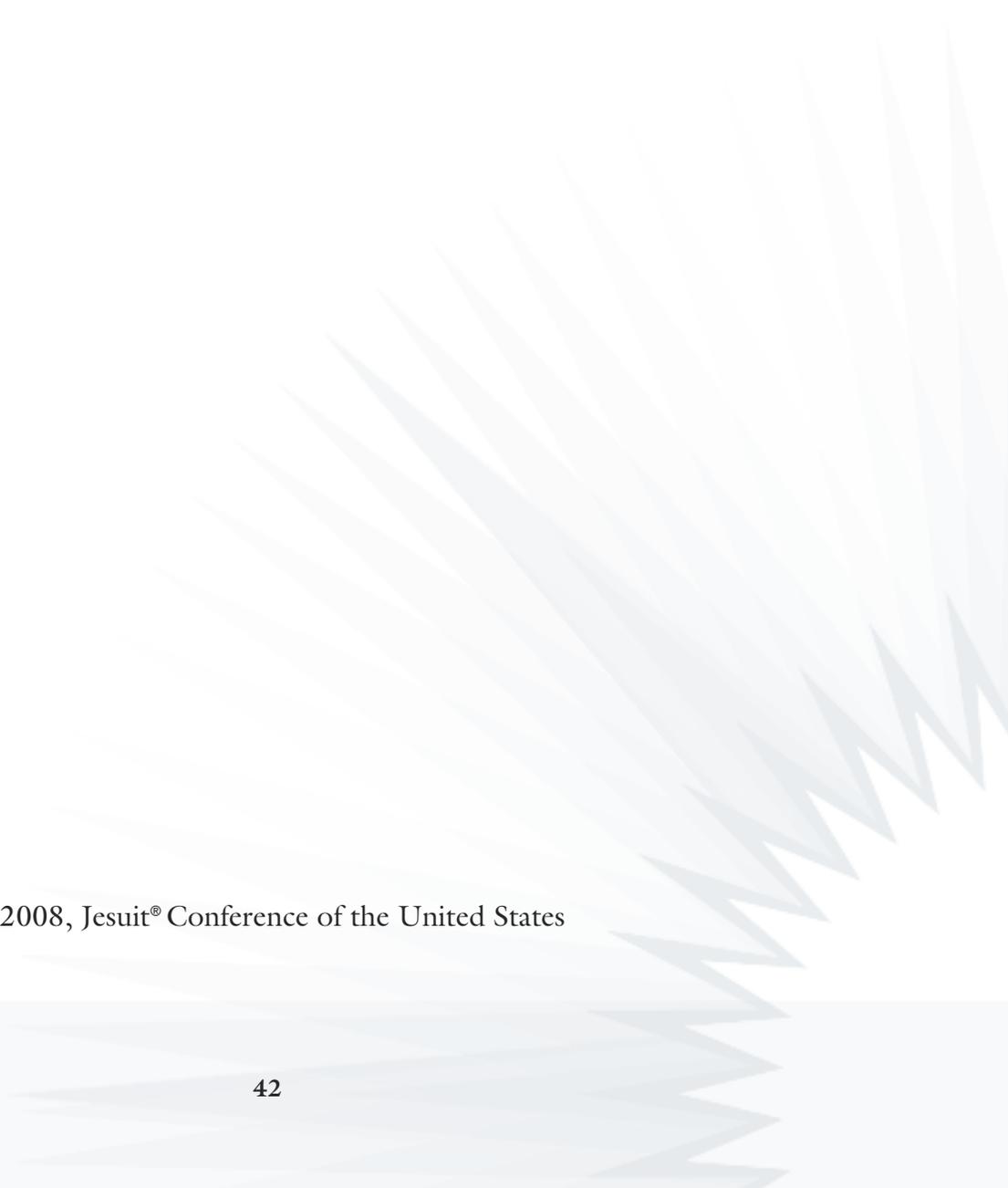
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"I skate to where I think the puck will be."

Wayne D. Gretzky



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