



# Assistancy Strategic Discernment

## Celebrating Success, Creating the Future

JESUITS®

Feast of St. Peter Claver, September 9, 2012

## Strategic Discernment: Milestones and Momentum

*Are we there yet?* Anyone who has ever embarked on a long road trip with a child is familiar with that question. No matter what age, however, those on a journey are inevitably curious about the journey's end – what's the destination going to look like? What are some of the milestones along the way?

Our journey began in October 2004 when the Society of Jesus in the United States, in collaboration with its lay partners, embarked on a process of "strategic discernment" of how we can best respond to the apostolic needs of the people of God in the future. The Assistancy Strategic Discernment (ASD) involved extensive consultations, discussions, reflection and prayer.

The vision for the future that emerged from this process was first

presented in *A Meditation on Our Response to the Call of Christ* (2006). The *Meditation* described our mission as solidarity with "the least" and with "all," and challenged us to renew our existing commitment to Christ. *Responding to the Call of Christ* (2008) provided the concrete directions for the mission. Approved by Father General Adolfo Nicolás and promulgated by the provincials, *Responding* articulated mutual agreements in the areas of ministry, partnership, Jesuit life and governance. These four priorities were inspired in part by Decree 13 of General Congregation 34, which called for partnership in our apostolates and ministerial formation.

In his approval of *Responding to the Call of Christ*, Father Nicolás wrote, "your document provides an



Jacqueline Perez, New York province assistant for health care, receives a blessing from Rev. Anthony SooHoo, SJ (NYK). Photo courtesy of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus.

invaluable tool for the years to come as the Jesuit Conference Board responds continually to the Spirit who makes all things new."

We are halfway there. In the eight years since the ASD began, much has been accomplished and, through consultation and prayerful reflection, the Spirit has moved the process ahead. The mutual agreements presented in the text box to the left represent the forward-looking decisions made by the provincials on a wide range of issues.

Although our work will not be completed until 2021, this halfway point is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the successes and milestones along the way. This report hopes to do just that and to invite your participation in the next half of the journey.

The goal of strategic discernment was never simply reconfiguration. The goal was and continues to be vibrant ministries, partners rooted deeply in the Ignatian tradition and Jesuit communities that serve and inspire us toward a future rich in the service of Christ's mission. We have made great progress, and there is more to do.

*Are we there yet?* Not quite; to paraphrase the First Principle and Foundation, we must continue to desire and choose what is more conducive "to praise, reverence and serve God" in the years to come. In these pages, we highlight where we have been and where we are going...and with prayerful discernment and generous response, the Society of Jesus in the United States will get there.

### Mutual Agreements Made by the Provincials in *Responding to the Call of Christ*

The Society of Jesus in the United States will:

- 1) Establish written agreements regarding mutual commitments and respective responsibilities with each Jesuit apostolate (in progress).
- 2) Commission an inventory of partnership programs. Agreement changed to development of guidelines for partnership formation program design. (Completion: Fall 2012).
- 3) Identify and implement best practices for living the vow of poverty in Jesuit community life. Completed in *Community as Mission: Jesuit Life Now and Into the Future* (2011).
- 4) Formulate and implement norms for spiritually-healthy communities. Completed in *Community as Mission*.
- 5) Propose effective local and provincial responses to challenging community situations. Completed in *Community as Mission*.
- 6) Propose a framework for leadership development for men in formation. Completed in *Formation in Leadership for Mission, FILM* (2011).
- 7) Create a renewed and coordinated national effort for vocation development. Completed in *Weaving a New Net* (2008).
- 8) Complete reconfiguration transition from ten provinces to four provinces (in progress).

### Tell us what you think

In February 2013, the Jesuit Conference Board will meet to discuss next steps for the Assistancy Strategic Discernment. The provincials invite you to participate in that conversation by offering your input on the ASD accomplishments to date and where you hope the provincials' discernment leads.

Please log onto [www.Jesuit.org/ASDsurvey](http://www.Jesuit.org/ASDsurvey) to provide your feedback.

# Update from the President



Rev. Thomas H. Smolich, SJ  
President  
Jesuit Conference

Dear Brothers and Colleagues of the United States Assistancy:

Eight years ago, Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach met with the Jesuit Conference in Portland, Oregon. When asked what the focus of Assistancy-wide planning should be, he immediately responded: "What are the needs of the people of God in our time, and how can we best respond to them?"

His answer initiated what became known as the Assistancy Strategic Discernment (ASD) process. When word got out about the planning process, more than one Jesuit rolled his eyes and imagined yet another pamphlet gathering dust on a bookshelf.

Very little about the ASD has gathered dust. The initial ASD document, *A Meditation on Our Response to the Call of Christ*, published on St. Ignatius Day 2006, grew out of the extended reflection of the provincials and broad consultation in response to an initial draft. The *Meditation* invited the Society of Jesus in the United States – its members, colleagues and institutions – to enter into a fruitful and challenging solidarity with "the least" and with "all," a solidarity that identifies itself with those most in need and those committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The *Meditation* served as the foundation for the ASD's structure and participatory planning. Nearly 200 people participated in various commissions, meetings and feedback sessions throughout the planning process. On December 3, 2006, *Preparing the Future: An Invitation* was published, asking Jesuits and colleagues to respond to province reconfiguration

possibilities. Over 500 Jesuits and partners participated in the process. *Responding to the Call of Christ*, published in April 2008, highlighted strategic agreements and decisions in areas of ministry, partnership, Jesuit life and governance, including the decision to reconfigure the ten provinces into four. Regular updates on the ASD from the Jesuit Conference office have provided further opportunities for feedback and inquiry.

Six years after the *Meditation*, much has happened.

- The future of the Society of Jesus in this country will intentionally be different than its past. About 2/3 of Jesuit ministries now have a formal relationship with the Society. National vocation promotion on the Internet and in new media is a reality. Many ministry sectors have developed creative responses to the needs identified in *Responding*.
- Jesuit life looks different. We recognize some things are best done nationally, some regionally, and some locally. There is greater cooperation in *cura personalis* (care of the person) and *cura apostolica* (care of the ministry) across province boundaries.
- The eight agreements made by the provincials in the ASD process have become part and parcel of the Assistancy. Of those eight, one was changed, five have been fulfilled and two are well underway (see text box on page 1).

This report celebrates progress made during these years of the ASD. This is a tribute not only to those intimately involved in its decision-making, but also to those who play a role in making our lives and ministries of greater service to the Lord and to the Church. We have much to celebrate in response to Father Kolvenbach's simple statement. Many thanks to all who have helped bring us to this point.



Where do we go from here? What might be the next step in our strategic discernment? Perhaps there is a prior question: Why not

**"I am inviting, in all my visits to all Jesuits, to re-create the Society of Jesus, because I think every generation has to re-create the faith, ...the journey, ...the institutions. This is not only a good desire. If we lose the ability to re-create, we have lost the spirit."**

Father General Adolfo Nicolás, SJ  
Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today  
Mexico City, April 2010

leave well enough alone? Isn't one ASD enough?

The short answer is no. Jesuit discernment is never finished; like the prayer of the Examen, reflection on life as it is and God's hand in it is an ongoing matter. More to the point, much has changed in eight years.

- General Congregation 35: The Society of Jesus is distinctive among religious orders in making its general congregations the official interpreter of our Constitutions. GC 35, with its directives on mission and ministry, Jesuit life and collaboration, provides a specific impetus for ongoing reflection and action. As Father General Adolfo Nicolás reminds us, each generation has to re-create the Society. GC 35 is a new generation.
- The world is different: Globalization and digital communication continue to advance and change us. Former Catholics represent the second-largest "religious group" in the country. The Great Recession has changed employment patterns and financial resources for the foreseeable future. How might the Lord invite the Society to engage these issues?
- Lived experience: The provincials spend considerable time reflecting on the future of the ASD. At our February 2012 meeting, we had the felt sense that "Phase 1" of the ASD was coming to a close and that our energies needed to move forward. Time reserved for prayer and reflection at our May meeting confirmed this sense.

The provincials have set aside three days of prayer and conversation in February 2013 to consider next steps. In the meantime, your input – as brothers and colleagues – is crucial to finding God's will for us in this moment of re-creation.

The success of the ASD was built on consultation and collaboration with many people. This time of discernment also calls for even broader participation.

I invite each of you to participate in an online survey regarding next steps for the Society in this country. At your earliest convenience, please visit [www.Jesuit.org/ASDSurvey](http://www.Jesuit.org/ASDSurvey) to offer your perspectives.

Your responses will provide important feedback and guidance for the provincials in February 2013 and beyond.

I feel fortunate to have been involved in the ASD process, from Father Kolvenbach's response to the present moment. I am convinced the Spirit is very much alive in the Society of Jesus, and especially in the faith-filled work which builds the Kingdom of Christ. The Holy Spirit collects little dust!

Let us continue to be attentive to this Spirit of discernment, renewal and freedom. Thank you for your participation in the months ahead.

Christ's peace,

Thomas H Smolich, SJ  
President

# Embracing One Mission, Many Ministries

As an apostolic order, the Society of Jesus is all about mission and ministry. The number and diversity of our ministries in the United States suggest there are many ways to care for the good of souls. In an era of openings and closings of Jesuit works, ministries growing in size and complexity and more lay leadership, the Society recognized the need to strengthen its bonds with Jesuit ministries.

In *Responding to the Call of Christ*, the provincials set the goal of establishing written agreements regarding respective responsibilities with each Jesuit apostolate by 2011 and developing instruments for their evaluation by 2015. Decree Six of GC35 also affirmed the importance of distinguishing a Jesuit apostolate from an Ignatian apostolate by the former's clear and definitive relationship with the Society.

In 2008, we did not appreciate the complexities – legal, historical, and canonical – in structuring these agreements; the process has gone slower than first imagined. At the beginning of 2012, 91 agreements were in place, with another 26 expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year. These represent about two thirds of Jesuit ministries across the country.

In a formal sponsorship agreement, the institution commits itself to specific policies and actions which make it a Catholic, Jesuit ministry; the province affirms these markers and makes its own commitment to support the Jesuit identity of the work.

Provincials have found the formal agreements to be valuable; lay leaders also realize the importance of the Society's explicit commitment to an institution.

Progress by ministry sectors in carrying out the ASD agreements has been noted in presentations to the Jesuit Conference. The University Presidents met with the provincials in 2010 on the ASD and a follow-up meeting is scheduled for October 2013. Provincial assistants for social ministries presented a new missiology for our connections with international provinces and highlighted the work to be done on twinning relationships. JSEA leaders

and provincial assistants for secondary and pre-secondary education are developing a new model for *cura apostolica* for high schools; a pilot program is scheduled for 2014.

The net results are closer and more dynamic connections between the Society and ministerial leaders. At the May 2012 Jesuit Conference meeting, the provincials reflected on the changes in our ministries over the eight years of the ASD. Highlights of the conversation included:

- A deeper sense of one mission with many apostolates
- More linkages across works in most cities
- More attention to Jesuit identity in our ministries

- “A faith that does justice” at the core of almost all our ministries
- Growth in the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises

This progress in Jesuit ministries across the country is not exclusively due to the ASD, but the energy, cooperation and reflection that the ASD has generated throughout the Assistancy has been instrumental.

Our ministries are essential to the “care of souls” by lay colleagues and Jesuits alike. We are blessed that our ministries are thriving, and they continue to do so by being faithful to the call of Christ.



**Rev. Michael F. Weiler, SJ**  
Provincial  
California Province

By these documents the Society in the U.S. takes seriously Ignatius' vision of the Incarnation, that the movements and realities of our time must be the starting point for our service of the Church. Moving forward, we hold more loosely familiar ways of life and ministry so to make ourselves more agile and effective in evangelizing peoples untouched by the Gospel, but already hungry for the Word of God. We look to our colleagues in ministry to carry forward the good works begun in the last century and to be our friends and partners in the work ahead.

## Formal Sponsorship Agreements by Ministry Sector\*

Ministry Sector	Existing Formal Agreements	Agreements likely by end of 2012
Colleges/Universities	15	5
Secondary/ Pre-Secondary	60	7
Parishes	6	7
Retreat Houses/ Spirituality Programs	4	3
Social Justice Ministries	6	2
Other	–	2

\* as of February 2012



**Rev. Timothy P. Kesicki, SJ**  
Provincial  
Chicago-Detroit Province

Earlier this year I had a conversation with Father General about the newly merged Chicago-Detroit Province. He was careful to point out that we were ‘rightsizing’ our provinces in the United States and that this entire re-alignment should make us more fervent Jesuits and companions. When I visit the many cities of our new province, I hear great enthusiasm for the re-alignment we are doing in the

Assistancy and an eagerness to complete this process. I have experienced first-hand the benefit of sharing resources between provinces, allowing our emerging province to better serve our many ministries. I am confident that the U.S. Assistancy will continue to render great service to the Church and the worldwide Society in the years ahead.

# The United States Assistancy of Today and Tomorrow

Select Reconfiguration Milestones to Date and Those Planned for the Future

## California, Oregon

- Common formation gatherings (2010)
- Common assistant for social ministries (2010)
- Higher Ed leaders meet (2010)
- Province staffs meet (2011)
- Common novitiate in Culver City, CA (2011)
- Common publications (2011)
- Treasurers meet (2012)
- Committee on nuts and bolts and committee on vision for ministry (2012)
- Cross-province consultants (2012)
- Cross-province assignments (2012)
- Parish leaders meet (2012)

### Future Milestones:

- Common assistant for secondary and middle education (2013)
- Common formation assistant (2013)
- CFN and ORE provinces merge to form USA West (UWE) province (2017)

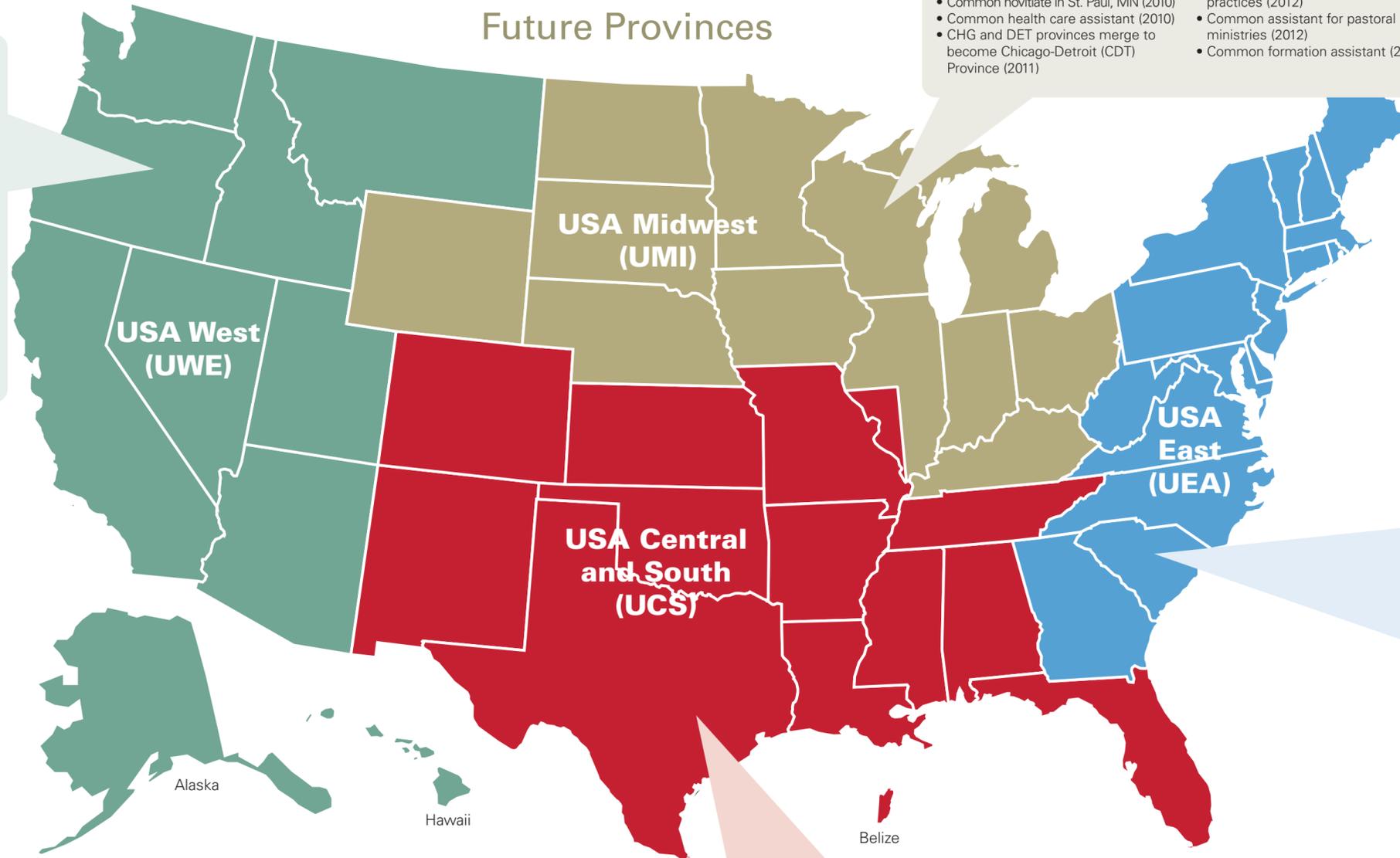
## Present Provinces



- ORE – Oregon
- CFN – California
- WIS – Wisconsin
- MIS – Missouri
- NOR – New Orleans
- CDT – Chicago-Detroit
- NYK – New York
- MAR – Maryland
- NEN – New England

To access this report online, visit [www.Jesuit.org/ASDreport](http://www.Jesuit.org/ASDreport)

## Future Provinces



## Chicago-Detroit, Wisconsin

- Cross-province assignments (2009)
- Common formation gatherings (2009)
- Common province gatherings and ordinations (2010)
- Common treasurer (2010)
- Common novitiate in St. Paul, MN (2010)
- Common health care assistant (2010)
- CHG and DET provinces merge to become Chicago-Detroit (CDT) Province (2011)
- Common assistant for secondary and pre-secondary ed (2011)
- Common assistant for international ministries (2011)
- Unification of business offices and practices (2012)
- Common assistant for pastoral ministries (2012)
- Common formation assistant (2012)

### Future Milestones

- CDT and WIS provinces merge to form USA Midwest (UMI) province (2017)

## Maryland, New England, New York

- Common novitiate in Syracuse, NY (2003)
- Common vocations office (2005)
- Advancement directors meet (2007)
- Common formation office (2009)
- The Jesuit Collaborative (2009)
- Common magazine (2010)
- Common assistant for strategic planning (2010)
- Common social ministries office (2011)
- Common formation gatherings (2011)
- Common NEN-NYK assistant for pastoral ministries (2011)
- Common NEN-NYK advancement office (2012)
- Common events, ordinations, jubilarians, province days (2012)
- Common financial structures for NEN and NYK (2012)
- Secondary Ed leaders meet (2012)
- School Leadership Teams meet (2011 and 2013)

### Future Milestones

- Common treasurer for NEN and NYK (2013)
- Higher Ed leaders meet (2013)
- NYK and NEN provinces merge (2015)
- NYK-NEN and MAR provinces merge to form USA East (UEA) province (2020)

## U.S. Assistancy

- Revised curriculum for New Superiors Colloquium (2008)
- Unified management of international Jesuit scholarships for theological centers and graduate degrees (2009)
- Continuing formation for protection of children/living celibate chastity (2009 and 2013)
- Assistancy Tertianship Program (2012)
- Shared website and content management program for all provinces (2013 – 14)
- Assistancy-wide formatores meeting (2013)
- Assistancy-wide formation meeting (2015)

### Future Milestones

- Shared website and content management program for all provinces (2013 – 14)
- Assistancy-wide formatores meeting (2013)
- Assistancy-wide formation meeting (2015)

## Missouri, New Orleans

- Common formation gatherings (2008)
- Common novitiate at Grand Coteau, LA (2009)
- Secondary Ed leaders meet (2009)
- Common consultations (2009)
- Common formation assistant (2009)
- Common events, celebrations, province days (2009)
- Common admissions meetings (2009)
- Joint Commission on Ministries (2010)
- Cross-province regency assignments (2010)
- Shared magazine content (2011)
- Common pastoral outreach coordinator (2011)
- Higher Ed leaders meet (2011)
- Common social grants program (2011)
- Common superiors meeting (2012)
- Common vocation director and coordinator of vocation promotion (2012)

### Future Milestones

- Regional social ministries gathering (2013)
- Common financial practices (2013)
- NOR and MIS provinces merge to form USA Central and South (UCS) province (2014)

## Tell us what you think

To provide your input on the ASD process and this publication visit [www.Jesuit.org/ASDsurvey](http://www.Jesuit.org/ASDsurvey)

# Creating Healthy and Holy Communities



**Rev. Myles N. Sheehan, SJ**  
Provincial  
New England Province

What has excited me most about the ASD process? Three things: the degree of cooperation and shared work in moving forward together; the development of shared structures to create the opportunity for further movement and discernment; and new reflections on the future of our ministry and how we move forward into the future.

My hopes for the future? Again, three things: deeper growth in our spirituality as Jesuits as we continue the process of interior development as companions of Jesus; that the focus on Community as Mission from GC 35 becomes a priority for our communities; that the new provinces will allow new energies to continue some ministries, discontinue others, and be bold in starting new ministries.

What am I doing to look toward the next phases? Three final things: spending more time with the Constitutions to get a better sense of Ignatius' genius in developing Our Way of Proceeding; understanding that being provincial is less about doing things – although there is plenty of that – and more about developing familiarity with God and not being a slacker with prayer; trying to listen more attentively to my brother Jesuits on their hopes, fears, gripes, and joys as we move to our future.

A quick look at *Responding to the Call of Christ*, the 2008 text which documents the mutual agreements the provincials made in the ASD process, reveals more agreements (five) devoted to Jesuit life than to the other three priorities combined. While the mission of the Society and its expression in our ministries is the ASD's primary focus, Jesuit life issues became very important in the provincials' discernment. In this area, the ASD process has been remarkably successful.

*Responding* commissioned four task forces to look at Jesuit community issues: our life of poverty; spiritually-healthy communities; the role of the local superior; and challenges to healthy Jesuit living. Jesuits and colleagues worked to generate best practices in each area and ultimately developed an Examen process for communities. *Community as Mission: Jesuit Life Now and Into the Future* is the result of their work. The document, complete with drop-down menus and space for additional comments and best practices, can be found on the Jesuits-only section of [www.jesuit.org](http://www.jesuit.org). *Community as Mission* was a topic at the recent Procurators Congregation and was much appreciated by the international Society.

Leadership development also arose as a key need in Jesuit life: how does the Society prepare men in formation for leadership roles in community and ministry? The new program, Formation in Leadership for Mission (FILM) was created to answer that need. In conversation with local superiors and formation assistants, men in formation develop leadership skills through classes, workshops and apostolates. One year into FILM, initial reports are positive.

Vocation promotion was another focus of Jesuit life discernment. A task force to address this concern developed *Weaving a New Net*, a proposal for coordinated, digitally-based vocation promotion for the Assistancy. This has become the foundation for a nationally-based promotion effort, extensive Internet vocation videos and content, and a

renewed interest in vocations across provinces.

The ASD process has also increased cooperation among provinces in several areas affecting Jesuit life. Province health care coordinators now work together to make our retirement centers places of genuine welcome to our senior brothers. New community patterns (consolidated communities, city-wide communities, superiors with multiple communities) are tested in one province and, if successful, duplicated in others. Common novitiates, an Assistancy-based tertianship program, and a revised New Superiors Colloquium have been established to better support healthy and holy Jesuit life.

One aspect of religious life which will be with us for a long time is the impact of the sexual misconduct crisis. Praesidium, Inc., an independent organization committed to the safety of children, has certified all of our provinces as meeting the standards set forth by the *Instruments of Hope and Healing*, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men's expression of the values of the Dallas Charter.

Our screening, outreach to victims, review boards and appropriate care and supervision of those who have offended are without peer among nonprofit groups. The Society is also a leader in continuing education for the protection of children and healthy living of celibate chastity. The 2009 video case studies for continuing education have been used by dioceses and other religious communities, and the next set is in progress. While we cannot rest on our laurels, and old cases will continue to come to the fore, we have made great strides in the last eight years.

Jesuits are inherently restless, looking for the *magis* in all things. Although our communities are not yet perfect, they are different than they were and will continue to evolve as places of grace and mission for friends in the Lord.



**Rev. David S. Ciancimino, SJ**  
Provincial  
New York Province

We are blessed. Jesuits and our partners in ministry have embraced new models for ministry, leadership and collaboration. Collaboration with our partners has deepened richly as responsibility for mission and leadership in the Society is owned and shared. Jesuits in formation have a bold, broad and inclusive vision of the Society. They provide models and glimpses of our future.

We are in a process of discovery, creativity and learning. As Jesuits, we strive to be aware of the ebb and flow of historical circumstances and attempt to navigate the currents of our own times with deliberation, reflection, discernment and prayer. I believe we are responding boldly to the call of Christ with as much vigor and agility as we can muster with God's grace.

God will bless our future. Faithful and generous service to the Church will lead us to new opportunities and possibilities for mission. Responding to the needs of the people of God may at times require even greater freedom. We need to pray for that freedom. I am convinced there is life and grace among us.

# Preparing a New Generation of Partners



Rev. Mark A. Lewis, SJ  
Provincial  
New Orleans Province

One of the gifts of the ASD has been its call to apostolic partnership. We now seek to further the real and effective collaboration of the past with an additional commitment to the enrichment of our colleagues in the Ignatian tradition.

From parish councils and finance advisors, to presidents and principals, to retreat house directors and provincial assistants, leadership is shared in many ministries of the province. It is my hope that this will continue to strengthen the institutions we now maintain, and allow us to discern future directions in our service to the Church and the society in which we live.

I also hope that the formation in leadership for our younger brothers will help them embrace and magnify this commitment to apostolic partnership. As the next generation of Jesuits moves deeper into ministry and leadership, they will do so with long-established and trusted relationships with many partners. In their own way they will imitate the work of Ignatius and his first companions who sought friends who helped them in a variety of ministries. Together and in solidarity, they will lead and serve the Church for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls from the perspective of many gifts but one Spirit, many vocations but one mission.

*“Finally, our vocation requires full acceptance of the fact that our mission, that is, the mission of the Church, is far greater than what any single Jesuit can dream to do.... That is why we need a spirit of total cooperation with others, be they lay persons, diocesan clergy, other religious or even people from other faith traditions.”*

*Father General Adolfo Nicolás, SJ*

When Father General wrote these words in February 2011 on the 20th anniversary of the death of Father Pedro Arrupe, the spirit of cooperation and collaboration with our lay partners was more than just a vision: it had become a practical reality. In the eight years since the ASD began, record numbers of lay collaborators have embraced the Spiritual Exercises. Efforts such as the Ignatian Colleagues Program, an

increasing leadership at Jesuit high schools, universities and retreat houses. There are more lay employees on our provincial staffs, and these partners are deeply committed to the Society and our mission. Formal or sustaining agreements between ministries and the Society are the rule, not the exception.

In our various ministries we've learned that Jesuits don't have to be in charge, but we do have a responsibility to form Ignatian leaders, just as we form Jesuits. Likewise, we've learned that the Society doesn't have to sponsor a work for that work to thrive as a Jesuit apostolate, but we do need to support these works through formation programs. Xavier College Preparatory High School in Palm Desert, California, and Hopeworks in Camden, New Jersey, represent

## Jesuits don't have to be in charge, but we do have a responsibility to form Ignatian leaders, just as we form Jesuits.

AJCU-sponsored national initiative to offer Ignatian formation to administrators at Jesuit colleges and universities, and the Jesuit Collaborative, the East Coast ministry focusing on Ignatian Spirituality, have flourished.

Although the declining number of Jesuits was a factor in strategic discernment, the ASD was never about molding lay leaders to fill a void. It is about sharing Ignatian vision and preparing a new generation of partners, and in that regard, there is much to celebrate.

Partnership formation programs – from orientations for new collaborators to board member programs – have developed at our works throughout the Assistancy. In addition, the provincials have commissioned a curriculum outline to design additional programs for ongoing partnership formation. Lay leaders who embrace and nurture our mission are exercising

this kind of success. Partners are not only sharing Ignatian mission and collaborating, they are also promoting vocations and asking young men to consider a vocation.

St. Ignatius told us to go forth and set the world on fire. That call is now being heeded more than ever by legions of lay partners across the nation.

### Tell us what you think

To provide your input on the ASD process and this publication visit [www.Jesuit.org/ASDSurvey](http://www.Jesuit.org/ASDSurvey)



Rev. James M. Shea, SJ  
Provincial  
Maryland Province

With my interest in spiritual and ministerial formation, I am especially happy with our growth in the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises. A renewed vision of this core ministry is evolving in our parishes, retreat houses and schools.

I am also encouraged by the renewal of Jesuit life. We are strengthening the role of the local superior, with better formation and support for superiors and clearer expectations for the office. Many communities now enjoy a richer liturgical life and great attention to communal prayer. We are reflecting more intentionally about our community lives through community meetings and annual apostolic conversations with the local superior. We have an Assistancy approach to formation of our younger members, encouraging depth, availability for universal mission and preparation for leadership. We have made significant progress in caring for our aged and infirm members and in reflecting on the vocation of senior members.

Spiritual depth is at the heart of our renewal. I pray that we may grow in that spiritual depth through the grace of great desires to serve God's people as single-hearted companions of the Lord.

## Strengthening the Assistancy



**Rev. Thomas A. Lawler, SJ**  
Provincial  
Wisconsin Province

Looking ahead to an emerging new reality of a smaller Society of Jesus in this country, we can take comfort knowing that our younger men in training are of the highest quality in faith and talent. They seem to have a sense of what it means to be a Jesuit with a universal vocation, a Jesuit "without borders." By virtue of their age and closeness to the origin of their vocation, they remind us of the faithful and creative work of the Holy Spirit calling us to rekindle the charisma of Ignatius and Xavier, friends in the Lord with holy desires and a passion for doing great things for God and the Church.

This is also a time to celebrate the gifts and contributions of our coworkers and friends with whom we serve side-by-side for the greater glory of God and the overall good of the Church. It is not clear yet what our "smaller-ness" will look like. There is no crystal ball. Yet, with faith, hope and trust, we pray for the grace we most need, trusting that the Lord will provide and prepare a way for us and guide our steps on the way.

Assistancy Strategic Discernment was never primarily about governance. At its best, the Society's governance supports Jesuits and their colleagues in the various ministries which share the single mission of the Society. The ASD's initiatives in governance, then, are all about building and strengthening the mission of the Society.

One of the key questions for the ASD has been a simple one: what is best done nationally, regionally/provincially and locally to further the mission? At the local level, the most obvious development has been the emphasis on the role of the local superior, and the revised program of the biennial Colloquium for New Superiors reflects this.

At the regional level, from ten provinces in 2006, we have embraced a path toward four provinces in 2021, and provinces are working together day-by-day with an eye toward unification. Province ordinations, formation meetings and other gatherings have all taken place across province boundaries, creating a more inclusive environment characterized by shared faith and camaraderie. Scholastics more and more see themselves as a single group, operating across current province boundaries.

There is greater collaboration and sharing of resources among provinces, and cross-province committees are in place to serve the Assistancy in health care, communications, finance and advancement, among others.

For example, by 2013 the nine provinces will have a single website content management system, facilitating even greater

collaboration. The project includes a major overhaul of province websites, the Jesuit Conference website and a new vocations site. These sites for the first time will share common web content, unified messaging and a cohesive graphic identity.

Province staffs and assignments also are beginning to model this new reality. Each of the four future provinces already has a common novitiate, and has, or is moving to, a common national formation program. A single staff member often serves multiple provinces, preparing for the shared vision of a single province. Cross-province assignments within a future province are becoming more common, and cross-province consultants meetings are a regular reality.

At the national level, the Jesuit Conference office has taken on responsibility for programs that were previously handled at the province level. For example, all scholarship assistance for international Jesuits is now handled by the Conference office rather than nine province offices. The new Assistancy tertianship program has just begun in Portland, Oregon, replacing individual province programs and allowing better use of personnel and physical resources.

Of course, these changes have no value in themselves. Rather, they will be judged on how they enable the Society to better meet the needs of God's people in a changing world.

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**Rev. Douglas W. Marcouiller, SJ**  
Provincial  
Missouri Province

"Aren't you done yet?" I sometimes get that question from friends outside the Society who suppose that our current task is a simple restructuring of back-office operations. In fact, however, we are doing more than that. We are broadening our vision and deepening our collaboration, and that takes time.

The young men who join us know that they are joining the worldwide Society, not just a province. With the help of others, they cultivate the intellectual and spiritual gifts needed for our shared mission. Most join women and men serving in Jesuit works that have a clearly articulated and regularly assessed mission and that participate actively in regional and global networks. Rooted in Jesuit communities whose common life bears witness to the Gospel, with confidence and creativity, in poverty, chastity, and obedience, all of us are deepening our service of the mission of Christ, in the Church and for the world.

That's what our national strategic discernment is about, I believe, and no, we're not quite done yet.



**Rev. Patrick J. Lee, SJ**  
Provincial  
Oregon Province

As we reflect on the development of ministries in the United States since the Society's re-founding in 1814, it seems to have been a period of great growth. Institutions of higher learning and secondary schools have flourished, as have retreat houses, parishes and many other works that have also been very important to the life of the Catholic Church for these past 200 years. It has all been a work of the Spirit.

The Spirit is still at work as the Society moves into a new phase of its ministry in the United States. The ASD is putting together structures that will move us forward as we attempt to discern the next ministerial steps the Society in the USA needs to make. The Spirit is very much alive. The way is not totally clear as yet. As provincials we are being called to enter more deeply into

discernment and to turn ourselves over to the guidance of the Spirit. It is a moment of hope and joy, a moment in which we seek to see the Lord more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more nearly.