

Jesuit Mission [Board Formation module #3]

The mission of each Jesuit school is particular to that school's context, to its location and its history and to the families and students it serves. At the same time each Jesuit school shares and implements the mission of the Society of Jesus.

Jesuit high schools and middle schools serve more than 51,000 students in the US and Canada. These schools succeed in many ways, but especially as apostolic instruments of the Society of Jesus. They claim proudly to continue the tradition of Jesuit education, for example, rigorous academics, critical thinking, effective communication, strong moral foundation and disposition towards service. After Vatican II the schools joined in the heightened awareness of the Spiritual Exercises which in 1970 formed the transformational inspiration of the JSEA Preamble. In increasing response to the restatements of Jesuit mission from Jesuit General Congregations, the schools have moved as centers not just of tradition but more so of mission. Throughout this 40-plus-year development, lay persons alive with Ignatian spirit and committed to continuing the mission of the Society of Jesus have moved well into the key positions of apostolic leadership across the entire Jesuit school network. Accompanying, learning from, and assisting this entire development has been the Jesuit Secondary Education Association. School governance is now established as a partnership between a largely lay board and Jesuit representation.

Ignatius Loyola said that the mission of the Society is to help souls, that is to help persons to the wholeness that God intends. Early on for Ignatius and the Society, that mission came to include the ministry of schools. That mission has been restated by the Society in recent decades.

After Vatican II the worldwide Society of Jesus articulated its mission as the "service of faith that does justice." Jesuit superior general Fr. Pedro Arrupe then challenged Jesuit students and alumni to use their Jesuit education as men and women for others within their families and professional life, within the Church and their local communities. Pope Francis expressed this vision on July 31, 2013 to Jesuits and their colleagues in Jesuit works.

Jesuit General Congregations, the Society's highest governing body, have stressed the following elements of Jesuit mission: Jesuits and their works:

- Join with Jesus Christ in building the Church for effective service to all people
- Promote faith in Jesus Christ and present the message of the Gospel: evangelization
- Work for justice as an essential dimension of faith
- Dialogue with cultures and other religions

Promoting the faith that does justice, a priority for all Jesuit ministry, is directed towards:

- Collaboration with the laity in mission
- Attention to intellectual ministries
- Solidarity with the marginalized and with creation
- Exercise of respect for and care of the environment

The key spiritual gift and resource for Jesuit mission is the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.

Information

From the texts of recent General Congregations [link]

Reflection Questions

- What aspect of the mission of the Society challenges me as a trustee?
- At this point in time how do the deliberations of our board advance the Society's mission?
- How does the current agenda of our board committee help the school prepare "men and women for and with others"?

[below is the material for the Information link.]

Our **mode of proceeding** is to trace the footprints of God *everywhere*, knowing that the Spirit of Christ is at work in all places and situations and in all activities and mediations that seek to make him more present in the world. This mission of attempting "to feel and to taste" the presence and activity of God in all the persons and circumstances of the world places us Jesuits at the center of a tension pulling us both to God and to the world at the same time. Thus arises, for the Jesuits on mission, a set of polarities, Ignatian in character, that accompanies our being firmly rooted in God at all times, while simultaneously being plunged into the heart of the world. (GC 35, D. 2, n.8)

Jesuits must manifest—especially in the contemporary world of ceaseless noise and stimulation—a strong **sense of the sacred** inseparably joined to involvement in the world. Our deep love of God and our passion for his world should set us on fire—a **fire that starts other fires!** For ultimately, there is no reality that is only profane for those who know how to look. We must communicate this way of looking and provide a pedagogy, inspired by the *Spiritual Exercises*, that carries—especially the young—into it. (GC 35, D. 2, n.10)

Our aim is to be ever **available for the more universal good**—indeed desiring always the *magis*, that which is truly better, for the greater glory of God. (GC 35, D. 2)

Serving Christ's mission today means paying special attention to its **global context**. Globalization, technology, and environmental concerns have challenged our traditional boundaries and have enhanced our awareness that we bear a common responsibility for the welfare of the entire world and its development in a sustainable and life-giving way. (GC 35, D. 2, n. 20)