



JESUITS

Central and Southern

Winter 2024



*Nuestra Señora
del Camino,
ruega por nosotros*



MESSAGE FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear Friends in the Lord,
Peace of Christ!

As I am sure you have experienced, discernments usually involve competing “goods.” This is almost always the case when it comes to assigning Jesuits. As provincial, I have to weigh the competing good of serving in a province ministry versus the good of serving the worldwide or universal Society of Jesus. This local versus universal tension in missioning Jesuits has been part of a provincial’s task since the founding of the Society. Ignatius felt it keenly when he missioned his close friend, Francis Xavier, to the mission fields of India and Japan rather than assigning him to a ministry in Rome where Xavier could have accomplished so much for the Society and the people of God.

Ignatius knew the difficulty inherent in assigning Jesuits, and thus he aided the Society greatly in Part VII of the Constitutions which instructs us in making a choice of ministries. In particular, the Constitutions tell us that we “make the best choice in sending persons to one place or another [by] having the greater service of God and the more universal good before [our] eyes as the guiding norm.”

In this issue, you will read about Jesuits who have been missioned to serve the more universal good in Rome. Rome is the largest international commitment of the province; we have 15 UCS Jesuits serving there in nine missions. Each of these men could be serving with distinction in one of the province apostolates; however, they have accepted missions for the good of the universal Society and of the Church. We are not able to feature all of our talented men in Rome, but I hope the article will give you a glimpse of how they are serving the Society and perhaps soften the blow of them not serving in an apostolate in your city! Let us pray for each other and that each of us may make choices that serve the greater good.

In Christ,

Thomas P. Greene, SJ
Provincial

Amigos,
¡Paz de Cristo!

Como seguramente han experimentado, los discernimientos suelen involucrar la elección entre “bienes” en competencia. Esto es casi siempre el caso cuando se trata de asignar a los jesuitas. Como provincial, debo sopesar el bien de servir en un ministerio de la provincia frente al bien de servir a la Compañía de Jesús a nivel mundial o universal. Esta tensión entre lo local y lo universal en la misión de los jesuitas ha sido parte de la tarea de un provincial desde la fundación de la Compañía. Ignacio lo sintió profundamente cuando envió a su cercano amigo, Francisco Javier, a los campos misioneros de India y Japón en lugar de asignarlo a un ministerio en Roma, donde Javier podría haber logrado mucho para la Compañía y el pueblo de Dios.

Ignacio conocía la dificultad inherente en asignar a los jesuitas, y por ello ayudó enormemente a la Compañía en la Parte VII de las Constituciones, que nos instruye en la elección de ministerios. En particular, las Constituciones nos dicen que “hacemos la mejor elección al enviar personas a un lugar u otro [teniendo] el mayor servicio a Dios y el bien más universal ante [nuestros] ojos como norma orientadora.”

En esta edición, leerán sobre jesuitas que han sido enviados a servir al bien más universal en Roma. Roma es el compromiso internacional más grande de la provincia; tenemos 15 jesuitas de la UCS sirviendo allí en nueve misiones. Cada uno de estos hombres podría estar sirviendo con distinción en uno de los apostolados de la provincia; sin embargo, han aceptado misiones por el bien de la Compañía universal y de la Iglesia. No podemos destacar a todos nuestros hombres talentosos en Roma, pero espero que el artículo les dé una idea de cómo están sirviendo a la Compañía y quizás suavice el impacto de que no estén sirviendo en un apostolado en su ciudad. Oremos los unos por los otros y para que cada uno de nosotros tome decisiones que sirvan al bien mayor.

En Cristo,

Thomas P. Greene, SJ
Provincial



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Cover: Father Jonathon Polce, SJ, consoles a child in Senda 2, a migrant camp on the U.S.-Mexico border. Father Polce brought a group of students from Jesuit High New Orleans to Texas to learn about the situation on the border.



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Senior Community Blessed

Very Rev. Thomas P. Greene, SJ, on Nov. 12, 2023, presided over a dedication Mass and blessing of St. Ignatius Hall, the newest community in the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province. Approximately 70 friends, family and benefactors joined community members and other Jesuits for Mass, tours and a delicious buffet brunch.

Located in Florissant, Missouri, St. Ignatius Hall was built as a wing to an existing retirement community operated by Delmar Gardens. It has the feel of a standalone Jesuit community – including its own chapel, dining room, gym, movie room and a variety of gathering options – but with the additional amenities of the retirement community, such as onsite healthcare providers. The 65 senior Jesuits who reside there are happy, comfortable and safe.

The Jesuits of the province are grateful to all who helped make St. Ignatius Hall a reality.

St. Jean de Brébeuf Relic Tour

Jesuits of Canada and the United States are making a journey this Lent to offer people an opportunity to venerate the skull of St. Jean de Brébeuf. Following his martyrdom in what is now Ontario, Canada, Fr. Brébeuf's remains were carefully safeguarded, hidden and transported to prevent desecration or destruction. This Lent, they will journey throughout much of the United States, accompanied by Jesuits who will share the story of the North American Martyrs and how Jesuits continue to honor their missionary spirit today. Learn more at <https://brebeuftour24.org/>.

Bob Schepers Retires

Province Controller Bob Schepers retired at the end of 2023, after 24 years of skilled and dedicated service to the Society of Jesus. Bob provided invaluable assistance to five treasurers of the Missouri and USA Central and Southern Provinces. The Jesuits and employees of this province are grateful for his competence, careful stewardship and generosity in serving the province, and we extend our best wishes and prayers for his well-deserved retirement.



Bob Schepers



Jonathan Klimpel

Jonathan Klimpel became the new province controller on January 1, 2024. A CPA with 20 years of experience, he is looking forward to contributing to the mission of the Society of Jesus.



Ordinations

The province expects to celebrate the ordinations of two Jesuits on June 8, 2024, at St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis. You will be able to join us live at bit.ly/ordinations2024. Watch our website for Mass time. Please pray for our men in formation.



Father Vincent A. Giacabazi, SJ, professed his final vows on Aug. 22, 2023, at Rockhurst High School in Kansas City, Missouri. Most Rev. Thomas P. Greene, SJ, provincial, received his vows on behalf of the Society.



Daniel Everson, SJ, (front row, second from right) was ordained a deacon on Oct. 21, 2023, at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, California. Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ, Bishop of Oakland, presided.



Father Eric Ramirez, SJ, professed his final vows Nov. 1, 2023, at Regis Jesuit High School in Aurora, Colorado. Most Rev. Thomas P. Greene, SJ, provincial, received his vows on behalf of the Society.

Upcoming Events

DAYS OF REFLECTION

(bit.ly/DaysOfReflection2023)

DALLAS:

March 20, 2024

*Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House,
Lake Dallas*

ST. LOUIS:

April 9, 2024

White House Jesuit Retreat

CONVENT, LOUISIANA:

May 7 and 8, 2024

Manresa House of Retreats



TOUR OF ITALY

with Fr. J.P. Hough, SJ

March 4-16, 2024

bit.ly/ucs-italy-trip-2024



For more information about any of these events, visit the URL listed with the event or contact Ana Duran at aduran@jesuits.org or Pat Rubenstein at ucsadvancementadmin@jesuits.org.



Jesuits of the USA Central and Southern Province in Service to the Society and Church in Rome

When a man becomes a Jesuit, he enters not a province, but the Society of Jesus. Members of the USA Central and Southern Province serve not only within the boundaries of this province, but wherever they are needed “for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the rendering of any service in the Church that may be for the glory of God and the common good.” (*Jesuits Today*, GC32)

The province currently has 15 men serving the worldwide Society and Church in Rome.

Several provided an overview of their ministries to give you, our companions in mission, a glimpse of their work in their own words.

Fr. David Brown, SJ

Research astronomer, Vatican Observatory

My job entails doing scientific research in astrophysics/astronomy on behalf of the Vatican Observatory. My work is mainly of a theoretical nature, but occasionally I also observe celestial objects using the Vatican Observatory’s Alice B. Lennon Telescope (and Bannan Facility complex) on Mt. Graham, which is located a few hours northeast of Tucson, Arizona. The results of such research are then presented at conferences where I can receive valuable input and collaborate with my scientific peers. Ultimately, such research is published in the standard peer-reviewed journals of the astrophysics community.

An average day will begin at about 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. with the celebration of Mass, followed by breakfast and then departure to the office (at Vatican Observatory offices at Steward Observatory on the campus of the University of Arizona when I am in the USA for about seven months of the year; or in the offices of Vatican Observatory headquarters in Rome). The morning is spent doing research, either analyzing data or working in front of the computer doing stellar simulations.

After work, I return to the Jesuit residence for our community Mass at 5:30 p.m. After dinner and some community, I usually return to my room and catch up on correspondence, read, do my hour of meditation, recite night prayer and then



Astronomer Fr. David Brown, SJ, observes the heavens using state-of-the-art equipment as an astronomer with the Vatican Observatory.



Father Mark Lewis, SJ, welcomes Her Excellency Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, Speaker of the Seimas, the Lithuanian parliament, to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. (Photo courtesy of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania.)

turn in around 10:30 p.m. When I am in Rome, I usually go to some of the nearby Catholic university campuses in the local area to hear confessions, celebrate Mass and join the students for dinner. I normally help with the celebration of Masses in the local area, both in Tucson and in Rome, during the weekends.

My scientific collaborators are from the Institute for Astrophysics (AIP) in Potsdam, Germany. The project is called Potsdam Echelle Polarimetric Spectroscopic Instrument (PEPSI). We are observing stars around which NASA expects to discover exoplanets (using its TESS probe). The hope is to find out the relationship, especially chemically, between host stars and the planets that orbit them. This could tell us a lot about those planets, including whether they may be habitable.

My most memorable experience last year was participating in a conference on Christianity in the Modern World at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, in Ponce. In the coming year, I am looking forward to the completion of the PEPSI project.

Fr. Mark Lewis, SJ Rector, Pontifical Gregorian University

I deal with outside institutions including the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the Jesuit Curia, the other Pontifical Universities in Rome, Italian government officials and various ambassadors. I preside over the Council of Deans that help me run the day-to-day operations, the Finance Council that helps shape the budget and examines spending, the Commission for Academic Quality and Research, and the Faculty Senate. I am helped by two vice rectors: one for academics and one who coordinates all the non-academic aspects of the school. There is also a fundraising component to my job.

Average days include appointments with various officials such as ambassadors, deans, representatives of business or philanthropy. I give institutional greetings to various symposia or gatherings. I also meet monthly with the Quality Commission and the subcommittee for the implementation of our strategic plan which we articulated last year after the visit of the Vatican Agency for Quality of Pontifical Academic Institutions (AVEPRO).

The completion of the AVEPRO visit and formulation of the strategic plan are perhaps the most impactful things that I accomplished in the first year of my term as rector.

I am looking forward to the challenge of incorporating the Biblical and Oriental Institutes into the Gregorian. That will be an important and significant move forward. I also think the implementation of the strategic plan will help strengthen the university for the future.

Br. Robert Macke, SJ Curator of meteorites, Vatican Observatory

My job is primarily twofold: I curate the Vatican meteorite collection and I research the physical properties of meteorites and extraterrestrial materials. The former involves processing requests for meteorite loans from other researchers, sending meteorites, keeping track of outstanding loans,



processing returned specimens back into the collection, and seeking meteorite donations to grow the collection.

The research part of the job is not easy to define, since it often changes as my research develops, but I measure the physical properties of meteorites, mostly density and porosity; people often send me specimens specifically for this measurement. Recently, I have been involved with the OSIRIS-REx space mission and analysis of the specimens delivered to Earth from the asteroid Bennu. I have been applying my expertise to the measurement of density and porosity of those space rocks. I am also involved in the Lucy space mission, which in early November passed by the asteroid Dinkinesh on its way out to study the Trojan asteroids near the orbit of Jupiter.

I work most closely with Br. Guy Consolmagno, SJ, the director of the Vatican Observatory and former curator of meteorites. We collaborate with Fr. Cy Opeil, SJ, and my former thesis advisor, Dan Britt, to study the thermal properties of meteorites.

Most of this past year has been spent in preparation for studying the specimens from the Asteroid Bennu brought back to the Earth by the OSIRIS-REx spacecraft. I designed and built an ideal gas pycnometer for measuring density and porosity of the specimens. The device is currently mounted to a glove box in the OSIRIS-REx clean room at NASA Johnson Space Center.

In my spare time, I like to make stuff. I created a YouTube channel (Macke MakerSpace) to share my creations. After a day of science, I often spend my evenings working on projects that will be showcased on that channel.

I look forward to two big things in the upcoming year. One is to get lots of data from studying the specimens of Bennu at NASA. The other is a personal project that I am working on: I was asked by the director of the Church of St. Ignatius in Rome to build a model of the church (complete with Fr. Angelo Secchi's observatory on the roof) to exhibit in the church itself for the Jubilee Year 2025. I can't wait to complete the project and see my handiwork on display in such a beautiful and popular venue.

Fr. Jesús Rodríguez, SJ

Regional Secretary for Canada and the United States for the Jesuit Curia

The regional secretary assists the regional assistant of Canada and the United States and works under the direction of the Secretary of the Society of Jesus. I receive all correspondence addressed to Father General (Arturo Sosa)

arriving from Canada and the U.S. I work with the regional assistant in the processing of letters and ensuring that letters are registered and eventually archived.



My normal routine once I arrive in the office in the morning is to review emails and begin the process of responding to correspondence received. We receive all sorts of letters, mainly from the provincials of the five provinces of Canada and the United States, and various requests that come in from the province offices. My work brings me in close contact with the province socii (assistants) and with a number of province staff members.

The relationship with the province socii is a particularly important aspect of my work: being available to help provinces! Sometimes this is by organizing meetings here in Rome or being a contact person for visitors to Rome. Sometimes I might help organize the men from Canada and the U.S. for meetings or celebrations.

I am a confessor at St. Peter's Basilica. I celebrate Mass for a number of women religious groups here in Rome. I also hear confessions at Holy Spirit Church, located across from the Curia, which is a Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

One of the most impactful parts of my work here in Rome is being at the service of Father General. Never did I imagine that I would work in Rome serving the international Society of Jesus, meeting Jesuits from all over the world, and seeing firsthand the organizational aspects of the Society. This never ceases to amaze me and is, indeed, the biggest grace of my work.

Fr. Luis Orlando Torres, SJ

Spiritual director at *Collegio S. Roberto Bellarmino*

Collegio S. Roberto Bellarmino is an international formation house for Jesuits doing licentiates and doctorates in Rome. I also serve at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, a Vatican institution for the training of diocesan priests for the diplomatic service of the Holy See. I am also available to accompany Jesuits living in other communities in Rome. At the *Bellarmino*, I help the rector organize the annual retreat for the new students and the semester retreats (Advent and Lent) for the whole community. At the Academy I give biweekly talks on various aspects of spirituality.

On an average day, I rise early and after some time in contemplative prayer, I celebrate Mass with a group of about 15 Jesuits of the *Bellarmino* Community. On Mondays, I celebrate the noon Mass at the *Gesù* church. I have an open-door policy, so anyone can come to talk at any time, or make an appointment. I usually direct two eight-day retreats per year. I also spend time preparing my talks for the Academy.

Last year, I did a series on discernment since the Holy Father has recommended that we teach elements of discernment to seminarians and diocesan priests. This semester, I have been giving instruction on spiritual conversation, since it is the method used at the Synod. I choose the topics for my talks after consultation with the president of the Academy. I usually have a study project to which I dedicate my free time. Jogging for about 45 minutes is part of my daily routine.

The most important thing I did last year was to listen to people's stories and accompany them in their growth in the Spirit. For me, personally, the celebration of my 50th anniversary of ordination with the Jesuits of Puerto Rico and with my family was a significant blessing. My brother wanted to give me a party with the whole family, even though he was very frail battling cancer. It was wonderful to watch him at the celebration, going from table to table, greeting our family members. As I looked at him, I said to myself, this is not my celebration, but his farewell party with the family. He died exactly a week after. It was a moving experience for me and for everyone present.

Next year I will be 80 years of age. Fortunately, I am in good health and willing to be of service to others. I love the simple way Ignatius talks about our mission as helping our neighbor ("*ayudar a las ánimas*"). In reality, we do not save souls, only God can do that, but we do help others grow in centering their lives in that which is essential for communion with God and care for our neighbor.



Father Mario Alberto Torres, SJ, presides at a Mass during a retreat for first-year theology students in Rome.

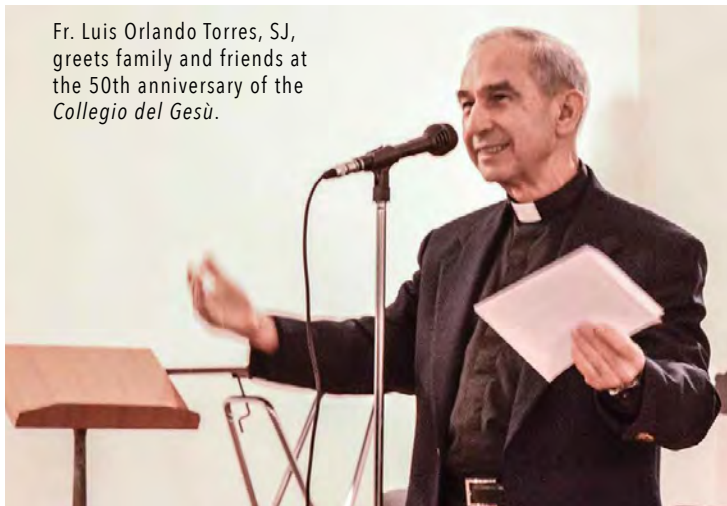
Mario Alberto Torres, SJ

Spiritual director and coordinator of apostolic placements at *Collegio Internazionale del Gesù*

As a spiritual director, I see myself as a companion along the journey (*compañero de camino*) for the scholastics at the *Collegio*. This year I accompany 22 scholastics; there are informal times of conversation and guidance with others as well. As coordinator of apostolic life, I establish relationships with directors of a wide diversity of works here in the city. I work closely with the other spiritual director in the community and with the rector. A typical day involves office work in the mornings and time for spiritual direction in the afternoons and evenings. Personal prayer time and Mass are early in the morning, and we have a community prayer time at midday. I try to take a walk along the Tiber River most days.

Three major highlights to my mission are: every August, I join our first-year scholastics in their Arrupe Month in Loyola, Spain. It's a beautiful opportunity to share about my life as a priest and to listen to their dreams and concerns. In September, I lead an eight-day retreat for the incoming first-year theologians. This is a grace-filled moment to get to know these scholastics as they transition from regency to theology studies. The third moment is the week before Holy Week, when I serve as one of the spiritual directors in the eight-day pre-ordination retreat for our third-year scholastics (ordination takes place the Tuesday after Easter). While there may be many things I could do for the glory of God, in these three moments I find the greater glory of God.

Fr. Luis Orlando Torres, SJ, greets family and friends at the 50th anniversary of the *Collegio del Gesù*.



Thank you to Michael Mohr, SJ, a UCS theologian studying in Rome, who assisted with this story.



Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries: Responding to Pastoral and Sacramental Needs

By Fr. Brian Strassburger, SJ

I first met Gaby and Meidy in July 2022 when a new shelter for migrants, Senda 2, was opening in Reynosa, Mexico. They were a lesbian couple traveling together from El Salvador, where they had faced discrimination based on their sexual orientation. They had come to seek asylum in the United States but found themselves stuck on the U.S.-Mexico border, which was closed at the time under the pandemic restrictions known as Title 42.

At that point, I had been serving on the border for over a year. I was first missioned to the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, in June 2021, with Jesuit Fathers Louis Hotop and Warren Broussard. We were sent to explore a new initiative for the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province. For Louie and me, it was our first assignment after being ordained priests. Upon arrival, we met with Bishop Daniel Flores, who gave us our charge: to read the reality of the situation and respond to it.

The reality we encountered was a migrant community in great need. We saw acute

material needs as evidenced by the squalid living conditions in shelters, but we also saw a nearly complete absence of pastoral and sacramental care. So, we started visiting shelters and camps on both sides of the border to celebrate Mass and listen to people's stories.

For most of our first year, there was a densely packed camp of migrants living under tents and tarps that covered the main plaza of Reynosa. People were stuck living there for months as the pandemic continued, and the border remained tightly sealed. As it became clear that the pandemic wasn't going to end quickly, local organizations

mobilized to build another shelter to provide more safety to migrants who were living in the plaza. This was the origin of Senda 2.

To call Senda 2 a shelter is generous. It is basically a large concrete wall – built by volunteer migrants – surrounding a pair of old baseball fields. Inside the walls, there is one large tarp, a few small wooden houses, and scores of tents. There are bathrooms and cleaning sinks built into the wall along the sides, and a kitchen in the back corner. The conditions are jarring: You can peer inside a tent to see a family of five with small children huddled on top of a couple of meager blankets, with their few possessions lining the tent.

In May 2021, the Reynosa city government decided to clear out the plaza. Migrants were awoken in the middle of the night to bulldozers and armed guards who demanded their immediate evacuation. The migrants dispersed to local shelters, including Senda 2, which wasn't ready for inhabitants. There was no septic system for the bathrooms, for example. But the migrants had few other choices.

Gaby and Meidy were some of the first residents, and they immediately volunteered to help. Most shelters in northern Mexico rely on the volunteer help of the migrants living there, because organizations that run shelters don't have the funds to fully staff them with paid employees. Gaby and Meidy began helping out in the bodega, where donated hygiene products, plates and cups, and cleaning supplies were distributed to people in the shelter. They both had professional work experience, so they developed a system to track inventory. In other words, they used their gifts to serve others.

We visited with Gaby and Meidy every Tuesday and Thursday when we visited the shelter and dropped off



Father Flavio Bravo, SJ, shows tender care for one of the youngest migrants on the border.

donations to the bodega. We were able to connect them with a lawyer helping migrants in the LGBTQ community, and a few weeks later, they were granted permission to enter the U.S. It was terrific news for all of us.

The last day that we saw Gaby and Meidy, we took a photo together. Meidy told us that she had chosen her shirt deliberately. The front read, “*Nadie es ilegal.*” (“No one is illegal.”) It was a good message, but what she actually wanted to show me was the

other side. That’s where I saw the logo for *Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes* (Jesuit Migrant Services), a migrant accompaniment network run by the Jesuits in Mexico. It turns out Gaby and Meidy had been accompanied by Jesuits in the south of Mexico when they crossed the border from Guatemala. And now they had met Jesuits in the north of Mexico, too!

I was taken aback – and also very excited. “I’m actually going to visit there next month!” Louie and I had planned a trip to visit the Jesuit project in Chiapas in the south of Mexico. We stayed in touch as Gaby and Meidy entered the U.S., and when we were in Chiapas, I texted them about my visit.

“Can I ask you one favor, Fr. Brian?” Gaby texted me while I was there. “Of course,” I responded. “Is there any way you can get me one of those t-shirts? I want one, too!”

I asked the Jesuit I was visiting for a couple of the t-shirts and a handful of stickers, too. When I got back to the U.S., I shipped the items to Gaby and Meidy in Harrisburg,



Joseph Nolla, SJ, shares his time and the Good News with a migrant in a quiet moment away from the bustle of the migrant camp.

Pennsylvania, where they had settled. They sent me a photo with big smiles on their faces as they held up the stickers and showed off their new shirts.



After more than two years of growth and exploration, in October 2023, we formalized our initiative on the border as *Del Camino* Jesuit Border Ministries. The name stems from *Nuestra Señora del Camino* – Our Lady of the Way – because so many of the migrants we’ve met have such great devotion for Mary.

The main focus of our ministry remains pastoral accompaniment and sacramental ministry. We also continue to provide humanitarian aid, including to Senda 2 in Reynosa.

With the pandemic ordinance lifted, migrants all along the border use the CBP One app developed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to request appointments daily to get access to relief in the United States. The average wait time is 2-3 months, which leaves people in shelters like Senda 2 for an extended time.

The migrants who join our humble Catholic community for Mass have found it to be a meaningful space of prayer and reflection. The Mass is simple, with an altar cloth draped over a folding table under the large dining tent, with folding chairs set up for people to sit. The extreme summer heat made things unbearable at times. Now that temperatures have dropped, people wrap themselves in blankets as they join for Mass.

There is no climate that is comfortable when you are sleeping in tents on the ground every day, as people do at Senda 2. But I have been amazed to see that there is also no climate that will stop people from emerging from their tents, gathering in folding chairs



Jesuit Scholastic Joseph Nolla joins Fr. Brian Strassburger in accompanying migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border.

around a makeshift altar, and celebrating the Eucharist together.

I witness time and again how the faith of migrants is a source of hope and strength during a dangerous journey and an uncertain wait – the strength to endure, and the hope that they will one day reach their destination, like Gaby and Meidy.

The story of Gaby and Meidy didn’t end with stickers and a t-shirt shipped in the mail. I recently shared their story at a talk over Zoom to parishioners of a Catholic church in the Harrisburg area. It hadn’t occurred to me when I planned the talk, but as I shared the story, it suddenly struck me: That’s where Gaby and Meidy settled! Here was a story of the border that had come right to their very own community. Immigration is not, after all, a border issue. It touches communities across the country. Since then, the social justice group of the parish has accompanied Gaby and Meidy as they navigate their court proceedings to seek asylum and apply for work permits. Their journey continues, and so does the accompaniment.

Father Brian Strassburger, SJ, and Jesuit Scholastic Joseph Nolla host *The Jesuit Border Podcast* to share stories and reflections about their and others’ ministries with migrants in shelters and camps along the border. In each episode, they interview people who accompany, serve and advocate for migrants and refugees. Find it wherever you get your podcasts.

Every day on the border, we encounter people like Gaby and Meidy. People who have fled situations of violence to seek protection in our country. We cry with them as they recount stories of being kidnapped by the local cartel. We laugh with them as we organize the kids into a game of Duck-Duck-Goose. And most of all, we pray with them, as we gather around the altar and ask for God’s grace to continue to accompany all those on the way in their migrant journey.

Nuestra Señora del Camino, ruega por nosotros.

Our Lady of the Way, pray for us.

MORE ▶ Learn more about *Del Camino* Jesuit Border Ministries at www.delcamino.org.
ON THE WEB

Leaning into Our Belovedness:

A Reflection for Lent

By Gretchen Crowder



I really feel for kids everywhere this year. I remember what a big deal Valentine's Day was when I was a child — it always meant coming home with a big pile of candy and an even bigger smile on my face. I also remember what Lent felt like as a kid, especially when it began the same week as Valentine's Day: It meant having my smile fade as I stared at that pile of candy and wondered if I had the fortitude to give it all up for Jesus.

This year, Valentine's Day, a day of love and joy and chocolate, coincides with Ash Wednesday, a day of dust and sacrifice and a stark reminder of our mortality.

At first glance, these two days could not be more different. In fact, I spent weeks pondering this dichotomy as I prepared what I would write about Lent 2024. But suddenly it hit me: Maybe they are not as different as I think they are. After all, they are both expressions of love.

For the past few years, I have been writing and speaking nonstop about a message that God planted in my heart years ago and fortified during my journey through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: God loves me as I am, no matter what. Even more, God loves every human being as they are, no matter what. This magnanimous love is the reason God sent Jesus to us in the first place. This magnanimous love is the reason Jesus left home and walked throughout Jerusalem teaching, healing, and welcoming all to his table. This magnanimous love is also the reason that when soldiers came to arrest him in the Garden, he went, and when more soldiers nailed him to the cross, he stretched out his hands and offered his life for us.

This magnanimous love God has for each of us is the foundation of everything.

I believe wholeheartedly that a Lent that begins with Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day on the same day — an occurrence that will only happen three times this century — gives us an opportunity to do something a little different. Of course, if you want to give up something that is getting in the way of your relationship with God, please do so. It is a valuable and time-honored way of preparing your heart for Easter. But I would also like to invite you to consider that when we know we are magnanimously loved by God, the sacrifice follows naturally.



What if this year we prepared our hearts for Easter by spending forty days leaning into and internalizing our belovedness?

What if this year we prepared our hearts for Easter by recognizing and celebrating that the greatest love of our lives is the one who walked the road to Calvary, stretched out his arms on the cross, and offered up his life for every one of us?

This may be a way that our journey through Lent can change us as it never has before.

So how do we do this?

First, we can ask for help through prayer.

St. Ignatius taught that God wants us to be honest in our prayer. God wants us to ask — right up front, right at the beginning of our prayer — for what we *want*. He didn't really want us to get hung up on whether or not God would give us exactly *what* we want exactly *how* we wanted it. That kind of thinking prevents us from being honest about what we *truly* desire. Instead, he just said “ask for it.”

So, I try to practice this in my own prayer. Ignatius called it “asking for a grace.”

This Lent, I want to ask Jesus for the grace to understand and internalize the magnanimous love he has for me personally. So here are a couple prayers that might help me do just that:

Dear Jesus,
Did you really think of me
while you were gathering your apostles
or healing the sick or calming the waters?

Did you really think of me
while you were being arrested
or while dying on the cross?

Did you really think of me
and even more *love* me
when you had so many
more *important* things to do?

Somewhere deep inside
I know You love me, as I am, no matter what
and I am working on
accepting and leaning into it.

Grant me the faith I need
so that I may see you
as someone who came for all of us
and each of us in turn,
as someone who loved all of us
and each of us in turn.

Amen

~ Gretchen Crowder

Oh, Lord my God,
You have called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in your tremendous love
you want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother's womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.

I am amazed,
Lord God of the universe,
that you attend to me and, more,
cherish me.

Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
and I will trust you and yearn for you all my days.

Amen

~ Fr. Joseph Tetlow, SJ

*God's love shines down upon me
like the light rays from the sun, or
God's love is poured forth lavishly
like a fountain spilling forth its waters
into an unending stream.*

- *The Spiritual Exercises, 237*

Another form of prayer St. Ignatius taught was the Examen. The Examen is a daily reflection on God's presence in our lives. In fact, Ignatius so valued the Examen that he instructed the early Jesuits that even if they had no time for any other prayer, they should pray the Examen twice daily – at midday and in the evening.

How can we use the Examen this Lent to help us accept
and internalize our belovedness?



An Examen on the Seven Last Words



Lord, when you say: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*

Help me hear: *I forgive you, even before you are ready, even before you have forgiven yourself. Let my forgiveness free you.*

Allow me to see those moments when I most needed your forgiveness today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *Today you will be with me in Paradise.*

Help me hear: *My love for you extends beyond the boundaries of this world. Take my hand.*

Allow me to see those moments when you were leading me toward something better today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *Woman, this is your son ... This is your mother.*

Help me hear: *I have never and will never leave you to face your perils alone, not in this world or the next. Trust in those I have chosen to surround you with.*

Allow me to see those moments when you were inviting me to companionship today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Help me hear: *I know what it feels like to be afraid. I know what it feels like to face persecution for doing what you believe is right. I also know that these feelings are never the end of the story. Trust that I walk with you now and always.*

Allow me to recognize those moments when I was afraid to follow you today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *I thirst.*

Help me hear: *I know what real thirst feels like, as well as real hunger and real, unbelievable pain. I remember my suffering as well as I remember yours. Have faith that I understand and tangibly know every part of you, body and soul.*

Allow me to see you feeling with me during my most painful moments today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *It is finished.*

Help me hear: *I knew that I could not do it alone. When my human body had done all it could, the rest was up to the Divine. When your human efforts are expended, trust in me to do the rest.*

Allow me to see those moments when you helped me go beyond what I thought was possible today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when you say: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*

Help me hear: *I sacrificed all of me for you because I loved you even then, no matter what. Let my love lead you to love others well.*

Allow me to see those moments when I loved others well and when I did not love others well today, and may these words of yours on the cross be a reminder that your love for me knows no bounds.

Lord, when I hear you say, somewhere deep inside of me,

"I love you, as you are, no matter what,"
help me really hear it, believe it, and know it
to the core of who I am.

I think it just may be what I need today
to continue to move ever closer to the person
you are calling me to be.

How will you pray?



We can do some spiritual reading.

Many theologians and spiritual writers have written on the magnanimous love God has for each of us. This Lent, I plan to spend some time revisiting their wisdom.

Like that of Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, who wrote in *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*:
“But the work one does seeks to align our lives with God’s longing for us — that we be happy, joyful, and liberated from all that prevents us from seeing ourselves as God does.”

Or Fr. James Martin, SJ, who wrote in *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self from Thomas Merton and Other Saints*:

“God desires for us to be the persons we were created to be: to be simply and purely ourselves, and in this state, to love God and to let ourselves be loved by God. It is a double journey, really: finding God means allowing ourselves to be found by God. And finding our true selves means allowing God to find and reveal our true selves to us.”

Or St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who wrote in *Story of a Soul*:

“Jesus, it seems to me you could not have overwhelmed a soul with more love than you have poured out on mine.”

What will you read?

We can have conversations.

Last April, I started a podcast called *Loved As You Are: An Ignatian Podcast*. I interview people and ask them about who God is to them, how they’ve come to understand their belovedness, and what challenges they’ve encountered. Their stories continue to inform my own. I have found that engaging with the stories of others has made my own story more complete over time.

There are many ways to engage in conversations, such as in book clubs or retreats, or simply allowing yourself to be open to unexpected conversations about faith anytime they happen to occur. What would it look like if this Lent we tried starting each conversation from a place of security in God’s love — both for others, and for ourselves?

What conversations will you have?

Finally, we can pay attention to how we love others.

In my life, recognizing how I love my sons has been a key way that I have worked on internalizing my own belovedness. Despite all the times they drive me crazy, I really do love them as they are, no matter what. I have since the moment they were born, and that love increases as I get to know each of them as their unique selves. Recognizing the love I have for my sons and reflecting on its immensity has shown me that it is possible, even probable, that if I as a human being can feel that kind of love for them, God can feel that kind of love for me — ten, a hundred, a million fold.

How will you love others well?

So, what do you think? Will you join me?

Will you do the work to prepare your heart for Easter by spending 40 days leaning into and internalizing your belovedness?

It just might change everything.

I invite you to pull this article out of the magazine to use throughout Lent. And join me Sundays at www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org for weekly reflections on being loved as we are, no matter what.



Gretchen Crowder is a campus minister and educator at Jesuit Dallas as well as a writer, retreat director and podcaster. You can find her at gretchencrowder.com and on *Loved As You Are: An Ignatian Podcast*, available anywhere you get your podcasts.

The Future in Grand Coteau:

Questions & Answers with Fr. J.P. Hough, SJ

Grand Coteau, Louisiana, is a beloved place for Jesuits and others who have found consolation in its quiet beauty. Jesuits have served the people of the area since 1838, with retreat and spiritual ministries offered through Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House and the Jesuit Spirituality Center. In the past year, the Jesuit novitiate and the pavilion for senior Jesuits were moved out of Grand Coteau. Now, Fr. J. Patrick Hough, SJ, has been tasked with reimagining the Jesuit presence in Grand Coteau and creating a new retreat center on the two campuses, one that offers the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in both preached and individually directed formats.

Here's what Fr. Hough has to say about the changes coming to Grand Coteau:

Q. What is your vision for Grand Coteau?

A. We are trying to be of service to the Church in the context of our own charism. We want to help the local dioceses by offering a large facility they can use for retreats. The vision is that Grand Coteau becomes more available as a place of encounter with God and God's creation, the Church and each other. We offer a facility of over 150 bedrooms, making it a real place of destination not only for the South but all over the country. We'll have retreats for ACTS, parish confirmation and priestly formation. We anticipate encounters to go from about 800 people a year to about 6,000 a year. The provincial has assigned a number of Jesuits to work there, so we can provide spiritual sustenance as confessors and spiritual advisors for parish groups.

We have a new mission, a new retreat center – and soon a new name – because we have a new reality.

Q. Why are these changes necessary?

A. There is a new invitation from the Lord through the provincial. It is to be open to a new kind of giving retreats and being open to others. We also need to become financially solvent.

Q. Are structural changes required?

A. One of the great things is that 10 years ago, we finished a major renovation of the facility, so the building is in tip-top condition. Every room has its own bathroom, the A/C units are in great condition ... people are just amazed at the quality of the facilities.

Q. What kind of support are you looking for?

A. Thankfully, friends and benefactors of the province have approached me with their desire to create a sustainable plan through fundraising. I'm working with a great team of experts from all over the province who are offering their time to help me. I believe God has already blessed us in this mission, because people have come forward wanting to help.

Q. For the people who've gone on retreats in Grand Coteau in the past, what will change?

A. I commit to doing my utmost to ensure that silent retreats continue for those people who want to come. Please bear with us as we restart and strategically plan how to make it financially viable and sustainable going forward.

It seems that God is inviting us to have a fresh look at our mission in Grand Coteau. I want to ask our friends who read this to pray not only for the means to do this, but also for the people we need to help us complete this beautiful but challenging mission to create a sustainable plan for the next 200 years.

MORE ▶ For the full interview, visit www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org.
ON THE WEB



Province Supporters Pledge \$1.5 Million for *formation*

By Fr. J. P. Hough, SJ, and Paula K. Parrish, CFRE

Raymond Hyer and Hector and Claire Vila want to challenge friends of the Jesuits to support formation financially.

The three Tampons recognize the impact Jesuits have on the communities in which they serve. And they know a big part of that is because of the formation process Jesuits undergo. So, together they pledged a \$1.5 million donation to help sustain Jesuit formation – the largest non-bequest gift in the history of the Jesuits USA Central and Southern (UCS) Province. They hope other benefactors will accept the challenge to sustain Jesuit training into the future.

“This is an unprecedented gift with transformative power,” said Very Rev. Thomas P. Greene, SJ, provincial of the UCS Province. “We have been blessed with gifts from foundations, corporations and other organizations for formation, but never one of this magnitude from individuals. We are deeply grateful to Ray Hyer and Claire and Hector Vila.”

Jesuit formation is a lengthy process. Following a path laid out by St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, the period from entrance to ordination can take as many as 13 years. It can be another 10 years before a Jesuit is called to final vows. The formation period for Jesuit brothers is similar in length, depending on their academic focus.

Academic studies, experiential learning, direct ministry with the marginalized and opportunities for spiritual growth create Jesuits who are prepared to serve the needs of the Church and the Society of Jesus in high schools, universities, parishes, retreat centers and other ministries around the world – in short, wherever they are called.

The cost of this training averages more than \$50,000/year for each Jesuit. The expense is borne by the Jesuit province. The USA Central and Southern Province currently has more than 65 men in formation.

Mr. Hyer was motivated by a desire to support the Jesuits in formation whom he has met personally. “They give me such hope for the future,” he



Father J. Patrick Hough, SJ, and Raymond Hyer

“We want to ensure that future generations will be blessed by having Jesuit priests enrich their lives!”

– Claire Vila

said. “I did not attend a Jesuit high school, but I love the Jesuits and all they have done, especially here in Tampa.”

Claire Vila and her husband, Hector, have a long history with the Society of Jesus. “Hector and I were both educated by Jesuits, married by a Jesuit priest and our grandchildren were baptized by Jesuit priests,” she said. “We want to ensure that future generations will be blessed by having Jesuit priests enrich their lives!”

Recognizing both the value of the formation process and its stress on province finances, Mr. Hyer and the Vilas determined to make this transformative gift, one that will significantly impact the province’s ability to train Jesuits for the future. The province hopes their gift will encourage other friends to support formation.

“God has called incredible men to join the Jesuits,” said Fr. J. Patrick



Hector and Claire Vila

Hough, SJ, executive director for advancement for the province. “I have placed my trust in God to provide the resources to form them into the future priests and brothers the Church expects of us today.”

Both Mr. Hyer and the Vilas are long-time generous donors to Jesuit High School in Tampa. Before his retirement, Mr. Hyer was chief executive officer for Gardner-Gibson and Gardner Asphalt Corporation, privately-owned family businesses in Tampa. A graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, he values Jesuit education and sent his sons to Jesuit Tampa. His grandsons have also graduated from the school.

Dr. Vila was recently named *Alumnus of the Year* by Jesuit High School in Tampa. A graduate of the Louisiana State University School of Medicine, he is a managing partner in Pediatric Dental Anesthesia Associates in Tampa.

The province is blessed with donors who understand, appreciate and support Jesuit formation – and its results. Mr. Hyer and Dr. Vila have agreed to make calls on donors with Fr. Hough to encourage other significant gifts for formation.

“We have just begun to take on this challenge to ensure the faithful throughout our province that the Jesuits they depend on for their sacraments and their spiritual direction will be following the same rigorous path St. Ignatius traveled on more than 500 years ago,” Fr. Hough said.



Spirituality, Service, Fraternity:

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR SENIOR JESUITS

By Therese Fink Meyerhoff



Fathers Robert Hagan, SJ, and Richard Hadel, SJ, team up to share Ignatian Spirituality through Jesuit Prayer.

A few months ago, I received an invitation to visit St. Ignatius Hall, the new community in St. Louis for senior Jesuits and those Jesuits who require nursing care. The men wanted to learn more about Jesuit Prayer, a spirituality platform offering each day's readings, a reflection and a prayer. The Jesuits were a wonderful audience and responded graciously to my invitation to write for Jesuit Prayer. Not only did great reflections ensue, but so did some beautiful stories of generosity, service and fraternal care.

A little about Jesuit Prayer: It is available online at www.JesuitPrayer.org, as an app you can download to your phone or tablet, or as a daily email. The reflections are brief and inspiring in their relatability. Authors are

asked to write for a six-week cycle, meaning they write a reflection for a particular day of the week for six weeks. More than 500 Jesuits and collaborators have written for the site since it began in 2012.

Following my presentation at St. Ignatius Hall, several Jesuits volunteered to write for Jesuit Prayer, including Fathers Jerome Neyrey, Robert O'Toole, Joseph Tetlow, Richard Vogt and Stephen Yavorsky. These wise and holy men have been sharing the consolation of Ignatian Spirituality throughout their lives and were eager to continue this ministry in a new way.

Many of the Jesuits at St. Ignatius Hall find ways to serve in addition to their "official" assignments to pray for the Church and the Society. Many say Mass or hear

confessions at local parishes. Some continue to write for publication. Others continue a lifelong ministry of spiritual accompaniment, either in person or from afar using computer technology.

Father Richard Hadel, SJ, is one of the St. Ignatius Hall Jesuits who gives spiritual direction and hears confessions. He also wanted to contribute to Jesuit Prayer. A poet and experienced spiritual writer and preacher, he has beautiful words to share. However, he has vision challenges caused by macular degeneration that prevent him from using a computer, and he thought perhaps he would not be able to participate in this ministry.

Enter Fr. Robert Hagan, SJ, a longtime friend of Fr. Hadel, who gives spiritual direction and directs online 31-week retreats in daily life. He also helps with the pastoral care of the Catholics who live in the adjacent retirement community and drives his brother Jesuits where they need to be, like doctor appointments.

“We’re friends, and our friendship has grown since we’ve lived here (at St. Ignatius Hall),” Fr. Hagan said of Fr. Hadel. “I was aware that Dick really wanted to contribute to Jesuit Prayer, but that he might have a little trouble on the production end. So, I volunteered to have him dictate it to me, and I type it up.”

“I was very pleased and grateful,” Fr. Hadel said. “He’s made it pretty easy for me.”

“We’ve enjoyed it,” insisted Fr. Hagan.

Fathers Hadel and Hagan agreed to let me sit in on one of their dictation sessions. During the meeting, they discussed the scripture for the day, then Fr. Hadel dictated his reflection to Fr. Hagan, using a handheld magnifying glass to read what he had previously prepared. The two respectfully and learnedly conferred on some phrasing in the reflection. Once it was dictated, Fr. Hagan read it back to confirm the accuracy. He asked, “Is that good?” To which Fr. Hadel replied, “I don’t know if it’s any good, but that’s what I wrote!”

Jesuits who write for Jesuit Prayer are most often assigned the Sundays or Tuesdays of the cycle, but Frs. Hadel and Hagan took on the final six Saturdays of 2023. Each wrote three charming and thought-provoking reflections based in their own histories and their own personal relationships with God.

“Fathers Dick Hadel and Bob Hagan wrote reflections that, in 150 words, gave Jesuit Prayer readers a glimpse into what it would be like to hear these men preach a homily or offer spiritual direction,” said Lauren Gaffey, Jesuit Prayer editor and senior associate director of communications for the Jesuits USA Midwest Province.

“Primarily encompassing Advent and Christmas Scriptures, they wrote about ways that each of us can prepare our hearts and our lives to celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world,” she said. “Fr. Hagan shared bits of his life and connected the shared experiences many of us have with the people we encounter in the Gospel. Fr. Hadel brings the scenes to life, providing context to the Scriptures to help in our understanding. In one piece, Fr. Hadel wrote ‘I’d love to see [Jesus] smile, to see him smiling at me and with me’ – a mental image that couldn’t help but bring a smile to my face as well.”

Both priests enjoyed the process – as do most Jesuit Prayer authors. Even before the two partners had completed their first set of six reflections, they volunteered to write more.

“You will probably develop a following,” Fr. Hagan teased his friend.

“Fathers Dick Hadel and Bob Hagan wrote reflections that, in 150 words, gave Jesuit Prayer readers a glimpse into what it would be like to hear these men preach a homily or offer spiritual direction.”

– Lauren Gaffey



Jorge Roque, SJ

Rooted in Relationship with God

By Therese Fink Meyerhoff



Jorge Roque, SJ, and other Strake Jesuit College Prep faculty learn about the history of the Society of Jesus during a tour of the Jesuit Archives in Rome.

Jesuit Scholastic Jorge Roque really enjoys his work at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in Houston. He teaches four sections of senior English and one section of junior theology. He's the assistant coach for the school's spikeball team and moderator of the Bad Movie Club. And he loves the opportunities to build relationships with students and other faculty. But all that said, work is not the center of his life.

"It's not the work that satiates my heart, even though I love it," Roque says. "It's my relationship with God that matters. As much as I love being a Jesuit, the root of my happiness is my relationship with God. Being a Jesuit is the fruit of that."

God initiated this relationship when Roque was a student at St. Edward's

University in Austin, Texas. After being an agnostic in high school, Roque returned to both God and the Catholic Church, where he witnessed the example of two priests on campus, whom he describes as normal, humble, faithful men. "They didn't draw attention to themselves," Roque said. "They were just there for people when needed."

Around that time, Roque was assigned one of Fr. Bernard Lonergan's books for a philosophy class. Father Lonergan was a leading philosopher and theologian of the 20th century. Roque was "blown away" by Fr. Lonergan's writing and by the fact that he was a Jesuit priest.

"It widened my concept of the priesthood," he said. "He was an intellectual. He wasn't afraid to ask

questions – his whole philosophy was built around asking questions. He had an insatiable curiosity, and he's testifying to Christ. What he did wasn't traditional religious work, but it really was glorifying God."

All those things were in Roque's mind when he commented to a friend that the life of a priest seems like a good life. When his friend asked if he'd ever consider becoming a priest, Roque realized the answer was "yes," though he'd never consciously thought it before.

"That planted the seed in my heart," he recalls now. "I couldn't get it out of my head."

He began imagining himself as a priest and felt real consolation. "To feel that peace was hard to ignore," he says. "That was the inner movement that kept drawing my attention to religious life. I had to pursue it."

He attended a vocation discernment retreat in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, where he met Jesuits for the first time. It was also his first time in silence and praying with Scripture the Ignatian way. He loved it.

"That's where I felt the confirmation from God, and I decided to apply. I wanted to act on the consolation." He entered the novitiate the following August.

As a novice, Roque found further confirmation when he made the Spiritual Exercises. "It was a moment of third-grade theology: God loves me, I'm a sinner and he forgives me," he says. "The Exercises made the core of Christianity personal. I really did feel God's love. Before that, I believed it, but during the exercises, I felt it in my heart."

That love has become the core of his life and the source of his joy.



Father Chris Kellerman, SJ, blesses a group of participants at the Ignatian Family Teach-In in Washington, D.C.

Father Chris Kellerman, SJ Advocates for a Better World Based in Catholic Social Teaching

By MegAnne Liebsch

Even as a kid, Fr. Chris Kellerman, SJ, was what he calls a “political junkie.” At 10 years old, he was taking out 15 books at a time from the local library in Arlington, Texas. History, in particular, captured his imagination.

“It was that love of history that brought me to the idea that political conversations and elections today are making new history, hopefully making *better* history, a better world,” Fr. Kellerman said.

His passion for the twin strands of history and contemporary political action has informed much of his Jesuit vocation. Currently, Fr. Kellerman serves as secretary of the Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology (OJE) in Washington, D.C.

“Our goal is to advance Catholic social teaching as a source of influence on legislation and policy here in the United States,” Fr. Kellerman said.

“We do this through federal advocacy and government relations on behalf of the Jesuit major superiors.”

Derived primarily from Scripture and papal documents, Catholic social teaching is meant to help Catholics and all people of goodwill build a more just society informed by Gospel values. OJE advocates for policies that uphold human dignity, such as comprehensive immigration reform and a more robust social system to support children and families.

Father Kellerman believes the Church’s teachings can also help heal the fractured politics currently prevailing in the United States.

“We’ve got to get out of our silos and talk to one another,” he says. “The national conversation can get so vicious and uncharitable. But if we can reach out to one another

as being fellow people made in God’s image, and if we try to exercise love for one another, then we can talk from a place of goodwill and honesty about these tough issues that confront our society.”

For Fr. Kellerman, his position at OJE is a “full-circle moment.” As a political science major at Texas Tech University, he interned for a semester at a political organization in Washington, D.C. It was during this time that Fr. Kellerman began discerning a vocation to religious life.

“And now here I am back in Washington, D.C., working in a job that involves politics – but this time as a Jesuit priest,” Fr. Kellerman laughs.

Prior to his current position, Fr. Kellerman served as visiting fellow and interim director at the Jesuit Social Research Institute at Loyola University New Orleans (JSRI), where he conducted research on racial justice, environmental racism and the Catholic Church’s historical relationship with slaveholding. His research on slavery ultimately formed the basis of his 2022 book *All Oppression Shall Cease: A History of Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Catholic Church*.

Father Kellerman subsequently worked in the Offices of Justice and Ecology for both the USA Central and Southern and Midwest Provinces before moving to the nation’s capital to lead the Office of Justice and Ecology.

“I’m really excited to see what we can do to help build a better world,” he says.

MegAnne Liebsch is the communications manager for the Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology where she develops stories and resources that promote deeper engagement with issues of social and environmental justice.

Reflections on Lay Collaboration with Jesuits

By Mark McNeil

The Preamble to the Constitutions of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (1970) offered a response to some troubling and pressing questions regarding Jesuit education. Chief among these was, “Does it really make sense to call a school ‘Jesuit,’ when many or most of those teaching and working in Jesuit schools are not Jesuits?” The positive answer posited by the preamble’s Jesuit authors may be understood as an invitation to collaboration: “If the faculty at a Jesuit school are men and women whose lives are inspired by the Ignatian vision, then the question about the percentage of Jesuits on the faculty is not an overriding issue.”

Now in my 13th year working with adult formation in a Jesuit high school, I am convinced that forming genuine collaborators requires fostering a true sense of shared history and ongoing growth in appreciating and experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. When both are present, Jesuit schools will thrive with a sense of shared mission and vision.

Shared History

By definition, a Jesuit priest or brother lives a life “inspired by the Ignatian vision.” Jesuits undergo a lengthy formation, complete with experiences that laypersons simply do not and cannot share. So, is lay collaboration with Jesuits largely superficial, extending only to taking care of tasks but not reaching the deepest motivating ideals and aims of Jesuit schools?

Hiring decisions in Jesuit institutions are crucial to building a truly Ignatian community. If laypersons hired at Jesuit schools do not have a fundamental desire to live a faith-filled life “inspired by the Ignatian vision” in some way similar to that of a Jesuit, then it is difficult to think of them as more than filling support roles. However, if there is a sincere desire by the lay faculty or staff member to join in the mission of the Society of Jesus, we may then think of Jesuits and committed laypersons at Jesuit schools as engaged in a meaningful, lasting and effective formation process that draws from



Mark McNeil visits with his friend and colleague Br. Casey Ferlita, SJ, a longtime Jesuit presence at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory School who died in 2021.

the same rich sources of inspiration, albeit with differing formative paths.

After working in a Jesuit school for nearly a decade, I had only a surface appreciation of the history and spirituality of the Society of Jesus. This changed dramatically after hearing a passionate and insightful presentation on the life of St. Ignatius. This inspired in me a desire to learn more about the early Jesuits and the source of their remarkable achievements through the centuries. Not long later, I joined colleagues on a pilgrimage to Spain. We rented two cars and fumbled around the country for a week, looking for places connected to St. Ignatius. This journey was transformative.



Mark McNeil, right, and colleagues from Strake Jesuit College Prep deepen their understanding of Christ's life during a visit to the Sea of Galilee.

Ignatius became very real to me as we read his autobiographical reflections in the places where he experienced the most important moments in his early spiritual development.

I felt a connection with his human struggles with stubbornness and scrupulosity, as well as his intense desire to figure out how to listen to the call of God in the inner recesses and movements of his soul.

This connection with Ignatius naturally led to a desire to know more about the Spiritual Exercises, but my sense of closeness to Ignatius also made me feel increasingly connected to the Jesuit charism. This growing sense of connection was deeply enhanced through the years in my work with various Jesuits who warmly welcomed me to labor alongside them.

In my formation work with adults at our school, we quickly begin the process of getting to know Ignatius and other early Jesuits. From this familiarity flows, in time, a sense of connection with that history, an ongoing history that we have a share in creating.

Spiritual Exercises

It is often noted that St. Ignatius developed the Spiritual Exercises *before* the formation of the Society of Jesus. He shared the Exercises with laypeople, believing that sincere and committed Christians could benefit from the spirituality that would eventually become the basis of the formation of Jesuits. Therefore, laypersons may participate in the same animating spirituality that forms Jesuits. When this is truly the case, they are co-laborers toward the same aims.

Ignatian spirituality is a wonderful gift Ignatius left for the Church and the Society of Jesus. Although not everyone will experience the full Exercises, there are many ways to

St. Ignatius and his Exercises belong to us all, and, if we laypersons truly embrace them, this sense of belonging justifies calling Jesuit institutions “Jesuit.”

grow in appreciating them. Creating paths for this growth is vital to the ongoing formation of Jesuit institutions.

My first efforts to experience the Spiritual Exercises were clumsy but sincere. I spent many lunch periods in my office, a copy of the *Exercises* in hand, experimenting with Ignatian contemplative prayer. Later, I would experience an eight-day Ignatian retreat and twice the 19th Annotation form of the Exercises; the second being one of the most important formative experiences of my adult life.

Uniting my hopes, dreams and experiences with the life of Christ, examining my deepest motivations and desires, and experiencing the gentle but firm press of my director to discern God's call at that moment in my life added much depth and richness to a sense of belonging and connection with the Jesuits. Our formation work at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory involves a regular effort to make such experiences available to all.

Recently a second-year novice attended a formation meeting at our school during which we discussed some of the forms of prayer in the Exercises. After the meeting he excitedly said, “Have you done the Exercises? You talk like someone who has had that experience.” This reminded me of an old friend who moved from the United States to Mexico nearly 20 years ago. He mentioned to me a while back that a taxi driver in Guadalajara expressed surprise when my friend told him that he grew up speaking English. “You sound like one of us!” he replied. Similarly, I feel a true sense of belonging to the Society of Jesus. Not, of course, as a Jesuit, but as a collaborator.

St. Ignatius and his Exercises belong to us all and, if we laypersons truly embrace them, this sense of belonging justifies calling Jesuit institutions “Jesuit.”



Mark McNeil is the assistant principal for formation at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in Houston.

IN MEMORIAM

May God grant them light, joy and peace forever in heaven.

FATHER GLENN R. MUELLER, SJ



Father Glenn R. Mueller, SJ, died Oct. 15, 2023, at St. Ignatius Hall in Florissant, Missouri. He was 82 years old, a Jesuit for 62 years and a priest for 50 years.

Remembered by his Jesuit brothers for his compassion,

he taught for several years before beginning the parish work that would be the focus of his apostolic ministry. He served at St. Stephen's Mission on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming; St. Agnes Cathedral Parish in Springfield, Missouri; St. Joseph's Parish in Pueblo, Colorado; St. Francis Xavier Parish in Kansas City, Missouri; St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis; Guardian Angels Parish in Kansas City, Missouri; and St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Grand Coteau, Louisiana.

Last year, as he celebrated his 50th Jubilee as a priest, Fr. Mueller wrote:

God blessed me in many ways. I thank the Lord for His call to be a Jesuit and a priest. When I had the good sense to listen, the people I had the privilege to encounter loved and patiently taught me a lot about life and how to let the Lord work through me. Through them I learned what the vocation to be a Jesuit and a priest is all about.

FATHER RICHARD D. PERL, SJ



St. Louis native Fr. Dick Perl, SJ, will be remembered for his love for the people of Central America and his sense of adventure in service, which began as a Jesuit novice when he went on a ten-week pilgrimage to

Mexico with nothing but a small backpack and \$150. He first served in Central America as a regent at St. John's College in Belize City, Belize, but returned several times to serve at St. Martin de Porres and St. Peter Claver Parishes. He also did pastoral work in Honduras for ten years, first in Olanchito, then in Yoro. His final active assignment was ministering to the Latino immigrant community at St. Anthony Parish in Kansas City, Missouri.

Father Perl had a deep appreciation for every land in God's amazing world, an openness to every person's story, and complete trust that God would take care of him in every circumstance.

He died Dec. 22, 2023, at St. Ignatius Hall in Florissant, Missouri. He was 75 years old, a Jesuit for 57 years and a priest for 45 years.

MORE ON THE WEB

For complete obituaries, visit the province website:
JesuitsCentralSouthern.org/in-memorial

We remember with gratitude all that God has done through their lives of service to God and God's people.

THEOLOGY STUDIES PREPARE JESUITS FOR SERVICE OF THE FAITH.



All Jesuits study theology at the graduate level. For those preparing for priesthood, the course of study is typically three or four years. For Jesuit brothers, theological formation helps to equip them for later ministries.



The Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States hosts three theology centers: Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, California, and Regis College,

the Jesuit School of Theology in Toronto, Canada. Given the international nature of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits of the USA Central and Southern Province may also be missioned to study theology at other Jesuit theological

centers in the world, such as in Madrid or Rome.

After completing a Master of Divinity (MDiv), a Jesuit scholastic is ordained to the diaconate, enroute to being ordained to the priesthood.

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