



Discernment of Jesuits in Formation

Introduction

The Jesuits in formation met in June 2022 for initial input in the apostolic planning process. Then, for several days after Christmas 2022, they met again for more spiritual conversation about the apostolic future of the USA East Province. Their deliberations focused on central questions.

Inspired by the formation gathering last June and our pre-reading and prayer over the last month, the question for consideration invites us to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the movements and experience of these meetings.

- Based on the movements of the spirits, which apostolic priorities or people in need are we as a Province called to focus on in the next decade?
- What features will Jesuit communities need to have so that we can advance those priorities and respond to those people in need?
- What sacrifices will our communities and apostolates have to make so that we can advance those priorities and respond better to those in need?

We will now turn to a description of the significant movements of the spirits and the fruits of their prayer and reflection. The voice of this report, “we,” is the Jesuits in formation.

The Board has prepared digests of the regional gatherings of lay colleagues and Jesuits and of the Jesuit community discernments. We encourage you to read them on the [Apostolic Planning website](#).

These digests will help the Board as it drafts an apostolic plan for the Province, which will include specific objectives, timelines, and accountabilities. In their drafting, the Board will seek further input from Jesuits and lay colleagues. An email will be sent next week detailing how the Advisory Board will continue its consultations.

Vision

We are available for mission and we trust in those who are missioning. Trusting the Spirit, we look to the future with hope, joy and excitement while respecting the great work of the generations that have gone before you. Apostolic reorganizing in the USA East Province will be a paschal experience of passion and rebirth. We have a realistic approach to the future: we are fully aware that we will give up some of our Jesuit culture and we anticipate a lengthy disentanglement from our institutions that we will bear with patience. We want to see a lot of proper nouns in the apostolic plan.

Priority of Ministries

Youth and young adults ...

We have a sense of urgency around the drift of young people away from religious experience and their search for meaning. Schools and institutions are ready made for a Jesuit community to work within them. We have a natural missionary field of tens of thousands of young people in Jesuit schools. Perhaps our ministry needs to have the radical freedom of a Pauline dynamic that handed over the local Christian community to local leaders, moved on to another city, but returned to see how they were doing. Isn't this the kind of relationship that we should have with Ignatian institutions?

Those on the margins ...

We need to articulate how the Province can be present on the margins and with which marginal groups? Can we also consider among the marginalized those who were harmed by the Church or disenchanted by its lack of integrity and honesty? Can we consider as marginalized those who are distant from a more intentional religious affiliation? How can the Province prioritize those on the margins?

We are called to excellence of service on the margins. How do we prioritize those on the margins? Do we decide to work with the systematically excluded, those who are even systematically excluded by adopting the system that we have also bought into. We need to do this under the banner of the Cross. We need to be willing to fail under the banner of Christ or we will collapse under the weight of our own hubris.

Perhaps the Province needs to rediscover the missionary zeal of the early centuries of the Society of Jesus to accompany the marginalized.

Hispanic ministry

Hispanic ministry resounded strongly among us. This is not an apostolate, but it is a marginalized group in need.

Seekers and searchers

We need to go to the “nones” and the completely unchurched. Jesuit communities need to be fashioned to do this.

Jesuit Life

We need to reestablish a Jesuit style. The style of Jesus. Friends in the Lord. Collaborating in ministry. You need to show that you love our life. We agree that if you live this way, you will be perceived as trustworthy.

Francis’ “style of Jesus” raised as exemplar for the synodal path – encounter; listen; discern.

Jesuit communities: effective witness as a family of slender means ...

To be counter-cultural, to have integrity of life-mission, and to be trustworthy, we should live in actual poverty where our lifestyle reflects the lifestyle of the people you serve. In doing so because of our commitment to Jesus Christ, we will be seen as close to the Christ poor and humble. Our ministry will grow in credibility. As Jesuits in formation, you have a desire to live poverty – spiritual and actual – with the poor and humble Christ.

A transformation of lifestyle ...

We need to create communities that have a visible and trustworthy mission ... “a community mission with a community missioning letter.” We should be in ministry together sharing joys with others. We should work together in community. We are currently “siloe out!” Individualism and the lone ranger lifestyle are no longer required in the Society of Jesus today.

So many challenges and stresses are part of the modern life of those to whom we minister. We sense exhaustion and loneliness in men and women whom we serve, yet Jesuits in many communities live an individual lifestyle as well where we are validating a dehumanizing way of life. Instead, we need to talk more openly about spiritual matters among ourselves to learn and model for each other how we should be engaging in meaningful conversations with those whom we serve.

A welcoming community ...

We need to move away intentionally and progressively from hotel communities. Freedom from older Jesuit institutions and university communities. They make us look like the need to move out of these houses that make us look like the ‘1%’.

Jesuit communities must be more welcoming. We need to be closer to the people that we serve. We need to refashion ourselves in healthy communities that are defined by the quality of our encounter with the people we serve.

Apostolic Sectors

We did not focus on any particular apostolic sector, and when we did, it was because institutions are useful in so far as they are helpful to meet those whom we serve, and, at the same time, they are obstacles because of the unavoidable compromises and attachments they create.

Overall, not much mention of choosing one ministry over another. Why? Because it is not your choice, it's the provincial's decision. We appreciate your comment that "it's more about HOW we do our ministry than what or where."
