



## **Extraordinary Apostolic Plans of the New York Province**

### ***The Demong Drive Accords, 1969***

A group of about 100 Jesuits was elected by the New York Province Jesuits who numbered over 1,400 at that time, just after the Suppression of the Buffalo Province and the reincorporation of the Buffalo Jesuits into the New York Province. They conducted a series of three multi-day gatherings over 12 months. They took place at Lemoyne College, at Morristown and the finally, at Demong Drive in Syracuse, where, at the end of the meeting, the actions to be taken were agreed upon.

Short rationales were prepared on secondary education, higher education and social-pastoral work that included retreat houses.

With regard to social-pastoral institutions/programs, the evaluation was based on (i) the viability of an institution in a competitive market where the share of the market captured by an institution was in decline or was impacted by volatility, and (ii) the difficulty of staffing issues.

There was even discussion about the reallocation of unrestricted funds from the closure of all eight institutions/programs, and a decision was made to reallocate restricted funds/endowments from four of those institutions/programs.

No final document was produced. It was rather a set of decisions.

With regard to secondary education, the document points to the challenges facing schools, and the urgent need to update their programming. Schools were to develop a program of self-renewal to be evaluated yearly by the Province. At the same time, the schools were evaluated in terms of viability. This led to the “prioritization” of schools, but not quite in the “Drop/Add” approach. The prioritized schools, Canisius High School, Colegio San Ignacio in San Juan, PR, Fordham Prep, Regis High School, St. Peter’s Prep and Xavier High School. A document from the Demong Drive meeting indicates that the Province would “resign from all responsibility, both financial and personnel, to Brooklyn Prep, Loyola School and McQuaid Jesuit High School.”

In the higher education sector, we observe a combination of “Drop/Add” decisions and strategic mission-driven initiatives. Here is the rationale for action in the higher education sector.

“If the Province is to continue its forward thrust in the field of higher education, it clearly cannot engage in these new apostolates, provide trained faculty and administrators for its large university, operate three rapidly expanding liberal arts colleges, and staff houses of formation both here and abroad. There is need for intensification, a concentration of effort, and careful selection. This will mean disengagement in some areas coupled with a deeper involvement in others.”

### *Growth initiatives*

“The Province will continue its commitment to and involvement in Fordham University, even increasing and improving its effective presence and style at this unique Catholic university.

“The Province will expand its commitment to LeMoyne College with the goal of making it one of the very best small liberal arts colleges in the East, even aiming, through recruitment, at national preeminence. It will have a large resident student body, challenging programs, and high-level academic goals.”

### *“Drop/Add” Decisions*

“The Province will continue to maintain Jesuits at Canisius College and St. Peter's College until Catholic laymen can assume responsibility for the administration of these two institutions. Jesuits who retire or move to other institutions will not be replaced.”

### *Innovative Projects*

#### *1. Harlem College Project*

“The Harlem College Project ... provides the Province with the opportunity to do, with government and foundation aid, what it could not do at St. Peter's or Canisius. The Project needs no defense for those in tune with the times. For Jesuits it means no tenure, shabby quarters, noise, even the danger of being mugged, but opportunity for hundreds of ghetto kids who can graduate into decency. The Harlem Project is no place for the timid or for those who are not willing to take their PhDs into the slums. In the United States, the Society has educated generations of underprivileged young people. But today we are in great danger of becoming caterers to the higher income elites. While this is not to be condemned in itself, it must not remain our sole apostolate in higher education. If the Harlem Project succeeds, it can open a new area for the Society in America.”

#### *2. Secular Campuses*

“Securing a teaching position in a secular university is easier said than done, especially when one is seeking several positions at the same institution. The first step is to find a campus where three or four Jesuits can secure teaching positions so

that they may found the nucleus of a team. For the moment it seems that the best approach would be to select the campus of a State University with its swarms of students and try to place a number of our Province Jesuits on the faculty. To be a team effort more than one is required. They could also be joined by Jesuit graduate students and even some lay students so as to constitute a true community. The Provincials are most serious in their support of this effort and will do everything to help initiate such an experiment, including a modest subsidy for the securing of a suitable house.”

### *Commentary*

The New York Province had created a “Committee for the Reappraisal of Apostolic Works of the New York Province”. It was created by then Provincial, VRev. John McGinty, SJ in 1963. The all-Jesuit Committee was chaired by Rev. Leo McLoughlin, SJ. The first meeting took place on August 21 of that year. The purpose of the Committee, as reflected in the Minutes of that first meeting, was “to evaluate the apostolic work now being done in the ministries entrusted to it with a view to making positive, concrete recommendations as to: 1) the continuance, curtailment or suspension of current works; 2) the modifications needed to ensure the effectiveness of present works; 3) the assumption of new works which the needs of our time demand of the Society.” The Committee would “consult with well-informed people outside the Society” about “how the Society can most effectively utilize its resources”. This process was to be completed by February 1964, just six months after the first organizational meeting.

The Demong Drive Accords are in some sense the “offspring” of that initiative. Their actions decided upon are interesting for their practicality and their simplicity. One could characterize them as a set of decisions that represent the “Drop/Add” type of Apostolic Planning more than a “strategic initiatives” type of Apostolic Plan. Not much prologue to be found. Short and sweet.

New York Provincial, VRev. Robert Mitchell, SJ was met by some high expectations when he became Provincial. My impression is that he ran into a number of issues with apostolic institutions that needed to be addressed ... and addressed quickly.

### *Some takeaways*

- The decisions are interesting for their practicality and their simplicity.
- One could characterize them as a set of decisions that represent the “Drop/Add” type of Apostolic Planning more than a “strategic initiatives” type of Apostolic Plan. Not much prologue to be found. Short and sweet. No long document.
- The decisions are always related to one or another apostolic sector.
- No Province-wide initiatives could be identified, nor could we see any collaborative projects across sectors or even among institutions in a particular apostolic sector.

- We discovered no reference to Jesuit life initiatives.

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### **“Companions in the Mission of Jesus”, June 1988**

In 1988, as reflected in the Apostolic Plan, the Society of Jesus had evolved dramatically in the 19 years since the previous plan in 1969. The Planning and Renewal Process was originally planned for two years, with all Jesuits participating in an Annotation 19 retreat from November 1985 to April 1986, and then a planning process for Year 2. On the recommendation of the Planning Committee, the planning process was extended by a year, and completed in that was extended to three in the middle of the second year. The final document was published in 1988.

Then Provincial, VRev. Joseph Novak, SJ was on the faculty of Fordham University during the development of the Demong Drive Accords, and he was one of the 100 Jesuits to participate in that process. With his experience in the more rapid-fire Demong Drive process, he probably imagined that this 1980’s planning process would also take about a year to complete.

A series of “white papers” provided descriptions of the context of our ministries. They were on the topics of “Demographic and Social Trends”, “The Church”, “Spiritual Needs”, “Education”, and “The Economy”. A large attitude survey of Jesuits was conducted, and each local community prepared an “Apostolic Community profile”.

The contrast between the 1969 and 1988 Apostolic Plans could not be more stark. The 1988 Plan reflects the exhortations of General Congregations 32 and 33, the deeper understandings of the impact of the Arrupe Generalate on the Society and the mature phase of the renovation of the Spiritual Exercises.

A quick review of the Table of Contents of the final Plan document signals a profound change. Together with discernment about some practical apostolic decisions, this planning process, which coincided with those of Maryland and New England, focused on renewal: personal, communal, and apostolic.

### *Table of Contents*

- i. Letter from Father General
- ii. Letter from Father Provincial
  
- 1. Introduction
- 2. General Observations
- 3. Apostolic Communities
- 4. Training and Support of Local Superiors
- 5. The Exercise of Preferential Love of the Poor in All of Our Ministries, Particularly in Education of the Poor and in Education for Justice
- 6. Distribution of Manpower
- 7. Collegueship and Collaboration
- 8. Availability, Discernment, Mission
- 9. Ongoing Formation
- 10. Health and Wellness
- 11. The Structure of Province Governance
- 12. Intra-Province Cooperation
- 13. Inter-Province Cooperation
- 14. Use of Financial Resources
- 15. Communications
- 16. Formation Program
- 17. Vocation Promotion and Admissions

This description of the plan will not touch on any section of the Plan in any detail. We will look for how the 1969 and 1988 plans differ, and what those differences might suggest to us about the development of the Society of Jesus. We will include the decisions announced.

### *A New Perspective*

The New York Province, like the Maryland and New England Provinces, responded to the call from the Society of Jesus to review and evaluate its ministries. The text of the Apostolic Plan is striking. It is written in the voice of the Provincial: “The Province Renewal and Planning Process of the past three years has been a time of great grace for all of us.” A warm tone from the outset.

We find a profound sense of responding to calls of the international Society to apostolic planning. The calls seem to have energized the New York Province.

“The Thirty-Second General Congregation, in the decree ‘Our Mission Today,’ stated:

Each province or group of provinces must undertake a program of reflection and a review of our apostolates to discover what action is appropriate in each particular context.” (GC32, no.71)

Another striking difference is the focus on the process of Apostolic Planning, and the value of indifference and freedom when reviewing our ministries. A strong apostolic planning process is not one that foregrounds research and expertise, but one that is able to capture the subtle movements of Spirit. Experts tend to have the narrowest range of ideas and solutions to problems because of their high level of specialization. The General Congregation is calling on Provinces to think “open-mindedly” and to pray “open-heartedly”.

“What is required is not so much a research program as a process of reflection and evaluation inspired by the Ignatian tradition of spiritual discernment, in which the primary stress is on prayer and the effort to attain ‘indifference,’ that is, an apostolic readiness for anything.” (GC32, no.72)

The General Congregation that elected Fr. Kolvenbach takes the reflection on process one step further and calls the Provinces to engage in Communal Apostolic Discernment.

“The Thirty-Third General Congregation, in the decree ‘Companions of Jesus Sent into Today’s World,’ presented us with this challenge: If we are to fulfill our mission, we must be faithful to that practice of communal apostolic discernment so central to ‘our way of proceeding,’ a practice rooted in the Exercises and Constitutions. This way of proceeding calls for a review of all our ministries, both traditional and new.” (GC33, no.39)

“Such a review includes: an attentiveness to the Word of God; an examen and reflection inspired by the Ignatian tradition; a personal and communitarian conversion necessary in order to become ‘contemplatives in action;’ an effort to live an indifference and availability that will enable us to find God in all things; and a transformation of our habitual patterns of thought through a constant interplay of experience, reflection, and action.” (GC##, no.43)

“And in his letter to the whole Society of March 5, 1985, Father General, commenting on the apostolic planning taking place in the Society, wrote: Whatever remains aloof from this movement of the Spirit will disappear. On the other hand, the apostolic work which enters into it by means of apostolic discernment, recapturing thereby the moment of election in the Spiritual Exercises, ratifies the Society’s incorporation into the paschal work of the Lord who died in order to rise again.”

“We have to do this if we are to abandon our habitual way of “absolutizing our perceptions and actions.” We have to do it if we are to be open to “the newness of Jesus the Savior” bringing to fulfillment in our history the Paschal mystery present in everyone who has been called to live the true life and to bear fruit in abundance.” (GC33, no.17)

GC33 and the renewed thinking of the Society of Jesus set the table for the New York Province to engage in planning.

The chapter, “Apostolic Communities”, touches on the reconciliation of the different models of apostolic communities that are alive in each local community of the New York Province and how communities can seek their reconciliation. And sets out reconfiguration plans for communities in Buffalo, Syracuse and 83rd St.

The Chapter, “The exercise of preferential love of the poor in all of our ministries, particularly in education of the poor and in education for justice” sets out many of the initiatives that reflect this call from the Universal Society.

The Chapter, “Colleagueship and Collaboration”, sets out a great new vision for working together with the lay partners in our works. The document defines colleagueship as the “deep and intimate sharing of the Ignatian goals of our apostolates among the Jesuits and non-Jesuits involved in the work. And I will define collaboration as a phase of cooperation between Jesuits and non-Jesuits that is not as deeply Ignatian in character as colleagueship but is nonetheless helpful for promoting the ultimate goals of the apostolate. The community plans for fostering colleagueship and collaboration over the next five years are an absolutely critical component of our Province Plan. I am encouraged by these local plans, and I will insist that strong efforts in this regard be implemented and evaluated. The future viability of our apostolic works depends on this.”

The document also offers the comment that because of colleagues and collaborators in leadership positions in our institutions, that our apostolates are more effective, and we are more effective. This perspective was absent in the Demong Drive discussions.

The chapter, “Availability, Discernment and Mission”, has a strong tone and sets out what needs to be in place so that a Provincial can effectively mission a Jesuit. At the same time, it comments on the preferred way for Jesuits to labor.

“Team ministries are to be generally preferred to those in which a Jesuit works alone. I view the corporate nature of our apostolic work as crucial. While reaffirming the value of assigning some individuals to work alone where this seems best, I am convinced that our apostolic effectiveness is .in general much greater when we work together toward common goals. Our unity of purpose and our union of minds and hearts are more important than our numbers. This will become increasingly obvious as our numbers decrease even further in the years ahead. We can still attain great and good goals with fewer men truly working together, and inspiring others to strive with us for the same goals. And for those laboring alone, I will strongly insist that their connection with a Jesuit community be an integral part of their lives.”

While we cannot be sure what was meant by “team”, it may be the case that the USA East apostolic plan will establish some clear orientations about working together and living together in community.

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*Takeaways to help orientate our USA East Planning process*

When comparing the two apostolic plans, we observe:

- Higher levels of participation by communities in the process of Apostolic Planning in 1988.
- A shift from research and expertise to prayer and discernment with data/research and expertise as supports.
- From a weaker to a stronger focus on mission.
- In the wake of separate incorporation of institutions, we see a more objective and critical view our sponsored institutions, less identification with them, and more expressions of freedom regarding the missioning of Jesuits.
- A stronger emphasis of the quality of life of individual Jesuits and communities.
- A clear pivot toward communal apostolic discernment, and the focus on discerning interior movements of the Spirit.
- A strong focus on the welfare of each Jesuit as a human person who is at the center of the planning process.
- A stronger concern for health and wellness and the definition of steps to care for individual Jesuits and for communities, especially the care of our infirmed senior Jesuits.