
July 28, 2022

Dear Brothers and Partners in Mission:

I hope that you are all enjoying the summer.

As you may know, last month I delivered an address on the state of the province at our congregation in Spokane. I spoke about the fact that we are at a pivotal moment in the history of our still-young Jesuits West Province and asked that we engage in apostolic planning to look together into God's heart, to discern where we, as Jesuits and lay collaborators, are being invited to go.

Why is this a pivotal moment? What might happen if we missed this opportunity to engage in prayer and conversation with one another to discern the path upon which God is calling and sending us?

At the core of our Ignatian identity is the experience of being missioned in a union of minds and hearts. We are called to generous service that gives life — both to ourselves and to others. In doing so, our hearts look to the Lord to lead us, guide us and labor with us. We do this as individual men and women, and we do this as a body. But given the many demands of our good and vital work, it can be easy to begin losing sight of the Lord. It is then that we know that we must stop, look around and notice how he is present and at work.

When I look at our province, I see how busy we are with so many good ministries. We do extraordinary work that reveals Christ to our world, even as the resources of the province itself, both human and temporal, are diminishing. I believe we do so because, even in this diminishment, we are richer than ever in the ways that we share the abundance of our Ignatian spiritual heritage and in the deep commitment to partnership in ministry we live out every day.

At the same time, we cannot take any of this for granted. For if we do, we could soon find ourselves losing sight of the Lord. So, we must be intentional and deliberate in discerning how the Lord is calling us: to find life and grace in our diminishment on the one hand; and to bring even greater life through our spiritual heritage and partnerships on the other. If we fail to do this now, we will soon — too soon — find ourselves walking down paths where the Lord is no longer so evident to us, not because he is not there, but because we have forgotten how to recognize him and listen to him. We would then begin a time of wandering — losing our way, stumbling along, feeling the darkness closing in upon us, becoming afraid and uncertain, and, finally, losing that unity and sense of mission that define us.

Therefore, I am inviting each of you to participate in our apostolic planning process, which will be a time of listening to the Lord together. It will be grounded in Ignatian discernment, the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), our charism and our context. Apostolic planning invites us, and I am inviting you, to let go of long-held assumptions and practices, to look anew for the Lord, to respond generously to his invitation, and to allow our hearts to be transformed.

On a practical level, over the coming year you may be asked to engage in spiritual conversations, participate in a one-on-one interview, serve as a facilitator or a listener, or assist in some other capacity. Please be generous with your time and approach this process with spiritual freedom, hope and imagination. I know there will be many graces along the way, not the least of which is the unity that will come from our shared work and sense of purpose. Thank you in advance for your prayerful participation and assistance.

I am grateful to Province Treasurer Ed Fassett, SJ, for serving as my delegate for apostolic planning and agreeing to manage what will be a 12 to 15-month process. Ed will be assisted by our consultant, Charlie Kelley, who led the then-U.S. Assistancy through its own strategic discernment in 2005.

How we embark on this prayerful province journey, this broad consultative endeavor, will be the task of the 12 members of our Steering Committee. A diverse group of Jesuit and lay partners, the Steering Committee members will help shape and oversee this critically important work. This will be a time and labor-intensive project, and I want to thank the committee members for their generous yes to my call. Please see the attachment to this letter for a list of the Steering Committee members and the organizations they represent.

Following is our expected timeline:

Fall of 2022: Conversation and Consultation

The Steering Committee will meet for the first time at the Curia in Portland next month from August 14 – 16. Following that meeting, we will begin an intensive period of conversation and consultation that will take place in our works, in our communities and perhaps regionally. This portion of the timeline is geared toward information gathering, research and facilitated conversations.

January – May 2023: Deliberations and Discernment

In the second semester, we move into a period of deliberations and information processing, where we will ask for input as we begin to consider different paths to take. The Steering Committee will assess information received (data, research, consultations, etc.) and craft the key apostolic questions for deliberation. At the conclusion of this period, the Steering Committee will process responses into a draft apostolic plan that will be submitted to me.

June 2023: Draft Plan & Response

In June of 2023, our intention is to present a draft plan to the province and invite your responses. In the next several weeks, I will provide more details on how we plan to do this.

Summer of 2023: Final Preparation

Next summer, I will work with the Provincial Assistants, who comprise my Cabinet, and representatives of each sector of the province to develop a final plan.

Fall of 2023: Approval of the Apostolic Plan

After approval, we will submit the plan to Jesuit Superior General Arturo Sosa, SJ, for his consideration and approval. Once approved by Fr. General, we will begin a process of carefully planned implementation.

In the coming weeks and months, I will reach out again with progress reports. We plan to establish a dedicated web page where we will post updates, reflections and more specifics about this process.

In just a few days, we will celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius, which also marks the conclusion of the Ignatian Year, the Society's worldwide commemoration of seminal moments in our history. As we thank God for our past, we look to the future and to the prayer and spiritual conversations that will animate our apostolic planning. Though we do not yet know where God is leading us, we know that we will walk this path together, growing in relationship, in trust and with a clearer sense of how we are being called to serve the people of God.

With prayers for all of you and for the work we now begin.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sean Carroll, SJ', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean Carroll, SJ
Provincial



CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Spiritual Conversation Participant Guide

Background

In his letter of July 28, 2022 initiating an apostolic planning process for the Jesuits West Province, Fr. Sean Carroll, S.J., provincial, invited Jesuits and Partners in Mission to stop, look around and notice the ways that God is present and at work in our ministries, and to consider the ways God continues to call us and guide us in our work. By doing so, he suggested, we are looking into God's heart to discern where we are being invited to go. It is this invitation that is at the very heart of our apostolic planning.

This fall the province is inviting Jesuits and colleagues to engage in this kind of reflection and discernment in conversation with one another. Throughout the province - in Jesuit communities, in apostolic works sponsored by or affiliated with the province, and among women and men who share a commitment to the mission of the Society of Jesus – conversation groups are being convened to reflect on God's presence and call in ways that will inform and shape the apostolic planning process.

Participation in a conversation group will involve the following:

- Pre-meeting personal reflection on the topic for conversation
- Participation in a facilitated 60-75 minute small group conversation with colleagues
- An opportunity for participation in a second small group conversation in early 2023

A report summarizing the principal themes of your conversation will be prepared by a group member and submitted to the apostolic planning steering committee. These reports will also be compiled and posted online (without attribution and with controlled access) for review and further reflection by Jesuits and colleagues. The Committee will process these reports in January 2023, and will use this information to recommend the next steps in the planning.

Preparation

In the days prior to your small group conversation, please set aside some quiet time for reflection. Specifically:

1. Read and reflect upon Sean Carroll's letter of July 28, 2022 that accompanies this guide, noting any thoughts or questions that come to mind as you do so.
2. Then turn your attention to your own work, and the work of your organization, focusing especially on times when you have experienced or witnessed joy, hope and consolation in the work, and reflect on these questions:
 - a. Where and in what ways do I see the Spirit present and moving in this work today?
 - b. How do I hear the Spirit calling our work today: what opportunities might we be invited to pursue; what future do I imagine and desire for our work?
 - c. What obstacles might we face in pursuing this future, and how might we face these obstacles?

3. Either during or following this reflection, you may wish to jot down some notes on your responses. These will be helpful as you consider what from your reflection you would like to share with others.
4. Finally, in his letter, the provincial calls this a “pivotal moment” for discerning the apostolic future of the province. As you prepare for your sharing, it might be helpful if you to consider what, if anything, you consider “pivotal” about this moment.

Small Group Conversation

Your small group conversation will be facilitated by one of your colleagues, and will follow this format:

1. Opening Reflection and Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth. Amen.

2. Self-Introductions and Check-in

3. **Sharing I:** Each group member is invited to share what they wish from the fruits of their preparatory reflection. While one member is sharing, others listen attentively, noting what they are hearing and feeling, and withholding any response to the sharing.

4. **Sharing II:** Each group member is invited to share their experience of listening to others:

- a. What did I hear?
- b. Was I struck by any common themes?
- c. Is there something I expected to hear, but did not?
- d. Was I especially moved or touched by something someone said?
- e. Where did I experience harmony or resonance with others as they shared? Where did I experience dissonance?
- f. Did any insights occur to me?

5. **Review:** Group members are invited to look back on the whole conversation and note the principal themes of the sharing, paying attention especially to areas of strong convergence, and any notable differences in perspective.

Follow-Up

1. Your group recorder will write a summary report on your meeting, drawing from the conclusions reached during the **Review** of the meeting. You will receive a copy of this report. The report will be sent, as well, to the steering committee, and posted online (without attribution and with controlled access), along with reports from other conversations, for review and further reflection.
2. After having reflected on your conversation and read your group report, you may wish to make additional comments about meeting. You may do so by accessing the comment form at: [Spiritual Conversation - Participant Feedback Form](#)
3. You will also be provided with an opportunity to participate in a follow-up conversation in early 2023 to review and reflect upon the steering committee’s processing these fall conversations.