STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

DAY OF RECKONING: ESSAYS ON RACISM AND SLAVEHOLDING IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

GREGORY C. CHISHOLM, SJ
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially US and Canadian Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

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a word from Christopher J. Kellerman…

Near the beginning of her book *Caste*, Isabel Wilkerson (b. 1961) writes about the endless repairs required to maintain old houses. Problems are inherited when you purchase an old house, and new problems regularly arise. Problems not dealt with do not simply go away. Wilkerson compares this situation to what Americans experience living in the imperfect United States:

> Not one of us was here when this house was built. Our immediate ancestors may have had nothing to do with it, but here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress cracks and bowed walls and fissures built into the foundation. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now.[1]

The same surely can be said of today's conversations regarding Jesuit slaveholding. All would agree that no Jesuit alive today is morally culpable for the slaveholding of past Jesuits. And yet we are the inheritors of the legacy of the Society of Jesus—the same Society to which these past slaveholding Jesuits belonged.

In my conversations with Jesuits over the past few years, I have come to see that a disagreement exists concerning how to deal with this problematic aspect of Jesuit history. Some Jesuits feel it is not really a problem at all. "Why do we have to judge the Jesuits of the past by present standards?" they ask. "Slavery was accepted back then. The Society was doing the best it could with the information available to it at the time." By engaging in processes of reparations, these Jesuits argue, are we not throwing rationality to the wind and genuflecting before the emotional demands of the woke mob?

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[1] Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste* (New York: Random House, 2020), 16.

The trouble with these objections is that they are based on a false idea of the past. Plenty of Catholics denounced participation in the Atlantic slave trade during its operation. In 1547, Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) came to the informed opinion that the slave trade was full of injustices, and by the 1550s, there already were published denunciations of the trade. Black Catholic slave revolts occurred as early as the transatlantic trade itself, so we know that enslaved Africans were not happy with their forced displacement and condemnation to a life of unpaid labor.[2]

And yet Jesuit reliance on slave labor—a practice that began during Ignatius's lifetime and apparently without his objection—continued for centuries despite these denunciations and protests.[3] When two Jesuits in Brazil in the 1580s protested the slaveholding practiced by their Jesuit community, Superior General Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615) sent a visitor to investigate the matter. After the visitor consulted with other Jesuits who decided in favor of the legitimacy of slaveholding, the two dissenting Jesuits were recalled to Europe. Furthermore, other Jesuits, like Luis de Molina (1535–1600), were permitted to publish works that, while admitting the injustices of the trade, rationalized the purchase of enslaved Africans.[4] When in the 1680s the Spanish Council of the Indies examined the morality of the trade after two Capuchin priests preached against it, the Council referred to the works of Jesuit theologians like Molina to justify the trade's continued existence.[5]

It is a painful truth that, century after century, our superiors general and general congregations declined to prohibit slaveholding within the Society of Jesus. On the contrary, they permitted it and continually allowed our members to defend, against the objections of

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[2] See Christopher J. Kellerman, *All Oppression Shall Cease: A History of Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2022), 68–71, 74–75.

[3] For an example of Ignatius not opposing slaveholding by Jesuits, see the letter to him from Nicholas Lancillotto, December 5, 1550, in *Documenta Indica II*, ed. Joseph Wicki (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1950), 129–30; response from Ignatius of Loyola to Nicholas Lancillotto, January 27, 1552, in Ignatius of Loyola, *Epistolae et Instructiones*, Vol. 4 (Madrid: Typis Gabrielis Lopez del Horno, 1906), 116–19.

[4] See Kellerman, *All Oppression Shall Cease*, 76–89.

[5] See Kellerman, *All Oppression Shall Cease*, 92–101.

other Catholics, both slaveholding itself and participation in the Atlantic slave trade. Even as late as 1865, the Roman Jesuit-run journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* was still denouncing abolitionists and defending Catholic slaveholding.[6] With this history in mind, we can see that the slavery problem is not a Maryland Province problem. It is not even an American Jesuit problem. It is a Jesuit problem—one that goes back to our first generation.

In this issue of *Studies of the Spirituality of Jesuits*, three Jesuits give their own reflections on this history. In the first essay, Gregory Chisholm (UEA) discusses American Jesuit slaveholding in the context of the Society's broader slaveholding practices and explains why reparation is needed. Then, in the second essay, Billy Critchley-Menor (UMI) explores the historical processes of integration in Jesuit novitiates. Finally, in the third essay, Tim Kesicki (UMI) reflects on his work with the descendants of the 272 individuals sold by the Maryland Province in 1838.

We hope that these three essays help American Jesuits better to understand our history and the urgent need to continue our present reckoning with it. At some point, however, the global Society also will have to engage in this conversation. Why is it that the Society of Jesus ended up owning thousands of enslaved human beings, even when other Catholics were saying that such actions were mortally sinful? Why were we the order most known for defending the trade when priests of other orders were vigorously denouncing it? In short, why is it that the Society of Jesus took the side of the slaveholders rather than the side of the enslaved?

Responding to these questions by blaming Jesuit slaveholding on the general presence of sin in our world is both an accurate response and a convenient way to dismiss the problem and move on. Yet as we have learned from the sexual abuse crisis, such blaming and dismissal is insufficient for true healing. Just as examining the admission policies, formation processes, and ecclesial structures that facilitated the spread of the crisis has helped us to provide a safer environment for children,

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[6] Kellerman, *All Oppression Shall Cease*, 167, 170; see also Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 145–56.

so might a deep examination of our history of slaveholding help us to live out the mission of Christ more fruitfully today. What does it mean, for instance, that Ignatius, Francis Xavier (1506–1552), and other early Jesuits apparently thought that buying human beings and relying upon their unpaid labor was in line with our vow of poverty?[7]

Why did the early generations of Jesuits continually disregard the protests of other Catholics against the trade and create moral excuses, including racist ones, to justify Jesuit slaveholding? Is there something in our way of proceeding that facilitated this centuries-long rationalizing of injustices? Or in the *Constitutions*? Or even in the *Spiritual Exercises*? We often think of the pre-suppression Society as our boldest and most fruitful years, and some Jesuits not-so-quietly complain that our contemporary focus on social justice is a distraction from the original vision of Ignatius. But is the original and unchanged vision of Ignatius really what we should be striving to emulate when that same vision may have helped to facilitate such an abominable commerce as the Atlantic slave trade?

Addressing these and other questions will not be pleasant. Indeed, doing so could bring about radical changes in the way in which we understand our history and even our present-day governance structures and way of proceeding. But to borrow Wilkerson's analogy, the old house that we have inherited needs repair. "And any further deterioration," as Wilkerson writes, "is, in fact, in our hands."[8]

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Associate Provincial Assistant for Justice and Ecology

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[7] For Xavier on slaveholding, see the letter from Francis Xavier to Gaspar Barzeu, April 6–14, 1552, in Francis Xavier, *Obras Completas* (São Paulo, Brazil: Edições Loyola, 2006), 668; and the letter from Francis Xavier to Gaspar Barzeu, October 25, 1552, in Xavier, *Obras Completas*, 747. For Simon Rodrigues, see Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times, Volume 3: Indonesia and India 1545–1549*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1985), 526. For Manuel da Nóbrega, see Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond: 1540–1750* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 507–8. For Matteo Ricci, see Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984), 208–9.

[8] Wilkerson, *Caste*, 16.

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A Reflection on the Jesuits' Relationship to Descendants of People Held Enslaved by the Society of Jesus

Timothy P. Kesicki, SJ

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Jesuit Slaveholding, Sinfulness, and Reconciliation

Gregory C. Chisholm, SJ

Introduction

As both a descendant of American slaves and an American Jesuit, I come with vested interest and with hurt and with hope to this past and present encounter. Although I have struggled to be balanced in my treatment of Jesuit slaveholding and Jesuit commerce in slaves, I am also experientially aware of the effects that American slaveholding and slave trading have had on generations of Black Americans since the institution ended. I live with the effects that American racism, segregation, and marginalization have had on my family and on the families of my African American contemporaries.

The awareness of my Jesuit antecedents' involvement in slaveholding and slave commerce, as well as the experience of the effects of slavery on my family and forebears, produce a strong tension within me. I am painfully aware of the "twoness" of which W. E. B. Dubois (1868–1963) speaks in his twentieth-century study, *Souls of Black Folk*, that can ignite within me rage as well as concern.[1] I am enraged and concerned about the contradiction arising from a religious order whose mission was, and is, so identified with the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and yet, at a time and place, was so dependent on the exploitation of Black men, women, and children.

In this essay, I focus mostly on an instance of Jesuit sinfulness regarding slavery in North America within the Maryland Jesuit Mission/Province of the Society of Jesus. I consider the effects that this instance of slaveholding had on the Black slaves and their descendants as well as the effects on Jesuit slaveowners and on the Jesuits

[1] "One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder," in William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, Signet Classic, Penguin Books, 1969), 45.

who have continued in the mission. The instance involves the decision of the Maryland Province to divest itself of slaves belonging to the Province by selling them in 1838 to Louisiana plantation owners in the American south. My hope is that, by narrowing the focus from slaveholding in general to this specific instance, Jesuit communities, the Ignatian family, and the descendants of slaves may address a specific matter of sinfulness and bring to consideration how this Ignatian body may be reconciled with God and within itself.

At the outset, for context, I make a brief review of Jesuit slaveholding in Latin America and North America. This review pays particular attention to the moral considerations raised and to Jesuit attitudes toward slavery in the colonial milieu. Next, I discuss the concerns raised by Jesuits regarding apostolic works, which led to the sale of 272 Black slaves from the Maryland Province to the plantation owners. Then, I discuss the morality of this act in light of notions of the Common Good. Finally, I explore the implications of this sinfulness for generations of slave descendants and members of the Ignatian family, focusing on the need for a reconciliation that includes reparation.

I. Jesuit Slaveholding in Spanish and Portuguese Colonies

Jesuit slaveholding in the Americas was common from the sixteenth century to the Suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. Jesuit controlled haciendas, plantations, and missions used slave labor from Tierra del Fuego to Brazil into New Spain, from the Caribbean into Louisiana Country and Illinois Country and the Upper Country of New France, from Maryland to Kentucky to Missouri. Slave labor ensured the profitability of Jesuit lands and, as a consequence, provided financial support for the Jesuit Mission in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonial territories.

In various places and times, Jesuits used enslaved indigenous (Native American) people and also used Black people brought through the Atlantic slave trade to the Americas. By the Suppression of the Society

of Jesus, there were approximately 20,000 persons enslaved by Jesuits principally for work on farms but also in other capacities.[2]

Moral considerations regarding injustice in slavery were raised as early as the sixteenth century. For example, John Mair (1467–1550), at the University of Paris, challenged Spanish monarchs, asking whether colonization was justified at all. He also raised concern for the fair treatment of indigenous people enslaved in Latin America. Likewise, Dominican preacher Antonio de Montesinos (ca. 1475–1540) in the Caribbean, on the island of Hispaniola, and Dominican author Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1556) in Cuba, were outraged by the oppression and enslavement of indigenous people by Spanish colonists.

In this same vein, in 1588, Jesuit José de Acosta (1539–1600) argued for the humanity of the indigenous. There was no justification, he wrote, either for the use of force or for violence against those people. At this time, Jesuit missionaries themselves took practical steps to protect indigenous slaves, the most famous example of which were the Jesuit Reductions in Paraguay.[3]

However, there are few records of colonial voices in Latin America raised against the oppression of Black slaves. Las Casas in his writings initially suggested Black slaves as a substitute for indigenous slaves, although he would revise his position toward the end of his life. In one notable exchange between the Jesuit visitor to Mexico and Father General Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615), in 1594, the Father General grants permission for the sale of slaves by the local superior even though the level of the sale exceeded what would usually be allowed. He argued

[2] Clement J. McNaspy and Jesús Gómez Fregoso, "Esclavitud negra en América I–II," in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañia de Jesús* [*DHCJ*], Biográfico-temático, vol. 2, ed. Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín María Domínguez (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2001), 1254; Andrew Dial, "Antoine Lavalette, Slave Murderer: A Forgotten Scandal of the French West Indies," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 40, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-0801P003.

[3] McNaspy and Fregoso, "Esclavitud negra en América I–II," 1255; Christopher J. Kellerman, SJ, *All Oppression Shall Cease: A History of Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022).

that, in spite of the amount of money to be gained by the sale, the value of the slaves was not comparable to precious furniture.[4]

In that milieu, the Jesuits instead were often considered generous task masters in their comprehensive care, both physical and spiritual, of their Black slaves. Jesuit views on slavery reflected various justifications in vogue at the time: there is an inevitability to master/slave relationships in the human economy; it is better to serve as a Christian slave than to be a free infidel; and slavery enables the Christian to protect and to serve the poor. Nevertheless, Jesuit Martin de Funes (ca. 1560–1611), in the context of the sixth General Congregation (1608), wrote to the superior general condemning the ways in which Black slaves were treated.

Following complaints made by slaves in Peru and Mexico, the Jesuits developed a set of instructions regarding the fair treatment of slaves. In Cartagena de Indias, Jesuits Alonso de Sandoval (1576–1652), in his writing, and Pedro Claver (1580–1654), in his efforts to encounter newly arrived slaves, offer evidence both of the evils of Black slavery and of the racism inherent to the prospect of evangelization in their colonial era.[5] However, there is no indication that these men condemned slavery as an institution.

[4] McNaspy and Fregoso, "Esclavitud negra en América I–II," 1255.

[5] Alonso de Sandoval's *Naturaleza, policia sagrada y profana, costumbres y ritos, disciplina y catecismo evangélico de todos etíopes* (Seville: Francisco de Lira, 1627) offered insights on slavery into the twentieth century. Peter Claver, following the lead of Sandoval, his mentor, ministered to the temporal needs of newly arrived slaves as well as offering to them baptism and catechesis. Yet recent scholarship reveals a more nuanced view of Peter Claver: "This figure was an identity pillar that served the creation project of a single Cartagenan society, since it managed to unite the Spanish and Portuguese under the common objective of appeasing the pro-independence spirits of the Africans. In this sense, Claver did not serve the Africans as some suggest, nor was he useful to legitimize slavery as others suggest; Claver served to generate common objectives between rival European sectors in the port." See Paola Vargas Arana, "Pedro Claver y la evangelización en Cartagena: Pilar del encuentro entre africanos y el Nuevo Mundo, siglo XVII," *Fronteras de la Historia*, no. 11 (2006), 296. For more traditional views of Peter Claver, see William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1972), 256; Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1993), 23–24

Among colonial Jesuits, the morality of the commerce in Black slaves was an area of open debate. In the 1570s, Acquaviva removed, due to their advocacy for the end of slavery, two Jesuits serving in Bahia.[6] And by 1590, Jesuits in Brazil and Luanda had petitioned the superior general to allow active involvement in the slave trade for the financial support of a Jesuit college in Luanda. Likewise, in 1774, the Jesuit Provincial of Paraguay argued that the importation of slaves from Africa improved their status. However, in 1686, Jesuit Diego de Avendano (1594–1688) would stand out among Jesuits of the Colonial era in his advocacy for the end of all slave trading. He went so far as to demand restitution for slaves and would not allow for the acquittal of slaveholders. Thus, despite a clear Jesuit disposition toward slavery as an institution, there were some known and respected voices at the time that argued against slavery's evils or condemned the institution altogether.

II. Jesuit Slaveholding in North America

In North America, the Society of Jesus in a similar manner used slave labor to ensure the continuation of their mission efforts. The economy of Jesuit missions relied on the productivity of plantations and fur trading, as well as domestic care, each making use of forced slave labor. In the Maryland mission, the Jesuits became significant landowners and owned Black slaves by the beginning of the eighteenth century.[7] Ownership of slaves also seemed to include variously receiving them as gifts, purchasing them, selling them, and renting them out. In the early nineteenth century, the Maryland Mission extended the reach of Jesuit slaveholding by including slaves, most notably, in the expanding Jesuit missions westward to Kentucky and Missouri.

Likewise, French Jesuits owned plantations in French territories of the Caribbean and, by the early eighteenth century, established a

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[6] Kellerman, *All Oppression Shall Cease*, 76–77.

[7] Edward F. Beckett, SJ, "Listening to Our History: Inculturation and Jesuit Slaveholding," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuit*s 28, no. 5 (November 1996): 5–7; Maryland Province Archives, "Deed of gift between William Hunter, SJ and Thomas Jameson, January 30, 1717," *Georgetown Slavery Archive* [*GSA*], accessed November 25, 2022, https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/403.

plantation outside of New Orleans, regularly using Black slave labor in support of the plantations. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, French Jesuits also used indigenous and Black slaves in Illinois Country and the Upper Country of New France.[8] By the mid-eighteenth century, before the Suppression of the Society of Jesus, there were about two-thousand enslaved persons owned by Jesuits in North America alone.

The Suppression changed the future of slaveholding among the French Jesuits, since in 1773, the French government acquired all the real estate, institutions, and property owned by Jesuits. However, English Jesuit landowning and slavery endured, as the Maryland Mission Jesuits continued, after the Suppression, the incorporation of their holdings that had begun under English Penal Law. In fact, unlike nineteenth-century Jesuits in the rest of the Americas, Jesuits in Maryland reacquired most real estate, property, and slaves following the Restoration of the Society in 1814.

III. Jesuit Slaveholding in the Maryland Mission

The moral issues affecting Jesuit slaveholding in the Maryland Mission following the Restoration were not dissimilar to the Colonial Jesuit concerns in the Americas prior to the Suppression. Some in Jesuit leadership sought to establish an attitude among Jesuits that would ensure fair treatment of Black slaves. In 1749, George Hunter (1713–1799), the Maryland Mission Superior, writes to fellow Jesuits about Black slaves, that "they are members of Jesus Christ, redeemed by his precious blood, they are to be dealt with in a charitable, Christian, paternal manner."[9]

[8] Clement McNaspy, "Black Slavery in America; Kelly L. Schmidt, Ayan Ali, and Jeff Harrison, "Jesuit Slaveholding in Colonial Era Kaskaskia," Slavery, History, Memory and Reconciliation Project, 2020, https://www.jesuits.org/our-work/shmr/what-we-have-learned/kaskaskia/.

[9] Maryland Province Archives, "'Charity to Negroes': Rev. George Hunter's reflections on the treatment of slaves, 1749," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/243.

In this vein, Jesuits saw their responsibility to their slaves as including provision for food, clothing, accommodation, and age-appropriate special care. But as members of Jesus Christ, Black slaves also were given spiritual care, including catechesis, baptism, Mass, solemnization of marriages, and a distinct effort to maintain family unity. And after the Suppression, Jesuits who failed in their care of Black slaves were criticized or even removed from plantation work for this failure. However, in all circumstances, there seems to be little if any moral concern among European/American Jesuits in the Maryland Mission about slavery as an institution. As such, they shared the preponderant view of Black slavery held by Colonial Jesuits prior to the Suppression.[10]

For Jesuits in the Americas, slavery simply worked for their purposes. In fact, up until the early nineteenth century, slavery was advantageous for the Jesuits economically. Within the context of the institution, Jesuits certainly were concerned about the spiritual care and physical needs of the slaves. In much that Jesuits have written about slavery, this level of care was, on their part, a Christian obligation affecting their relationship with the divine both as individuals and as a Society. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no spiritual or moral inducement to prohibit the institution of Black slavery in general. The attitudes of abolitionists or "philanthropists" were known to Jesuits and gained purchase in Jesuit mission areas from Maryland to Massachusetts.

But in spite of this, as well as British prohibitions against slavery in England and a known Catholic antipathy to indigenous slavery, the enslavement of Blacks by Jesuits never rose to the level of moral repulsion or social injustice. Instead, Blacks in the Americas always were considered a breed of humanity apart, not worthy of the respect afforded other men and women. Although one might argue that the Jesuits and their contemporaries were not responsible for these attitudes, which from

[10] The Society of Jesus in Maryland in the early nineteenth century seemed to see the possession of Black slaves as morally superior to their freedom in American society. To this point, Jesuit Stephen Dubuisson wrote that that slaves enjoy "happy tranquility and the succors of religion by being together on a good plantation," and that "free negroes do not know where to go." See Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, "'Is it expedient to sell these 300 slaves?': The Dubuisson Memorandum, 1836," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/95.

this perspective might be seen to represent a kind of congenital blindness, the denial of that human respect and the treatment of Blacks that flows from it remains one of the American world's most original sins.

IV. The Jesuit Sale of Black Slaves to Louisiana

This reflection on Jesuit slaveholding attends primarily to circumstances and moral decisions that affected the sale of most slaves from the Maryland Province in 1838. The effect of this act on the slaves themselves and on their descendants presents a special opportunity to focus historical issues, moral concerns, spiritual conversation, and, hopefully, reconciliation between the sinners and those who have been harmed.

Economic, social, and apostolic considerations in the early nineteenth century affected the sustainability of and interest in the six Maryland plantations that the Society of Jesus owned. First, the plantations themselves no longer were benefitting the Jesuit missions as they once had. The Jesuit plantations were home to approximately four hundred slaves, and on most of those Jesuit estates, barely half of the slave population was able to work, the rest being either too old or too young for labor. In many cases, produce from the farms could only just support even those living on the farms. The Jesuits also were heavily in debt from their development of Georgetown College and were being sued civilly by the Archbishop of Baltimore, Sulpician Ambrose Maréchal (1764–1828), for funds that he argued were due him in lieu of land and slaves.

By the 1830s, the movement for the abolition of slavery was building momentum with the rise of William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) and his newspaper, *The Liberator*. Here, social pressure was growing to free slaves and end the domestic trade in slaves. Furthermore, the awareness among the slave population of abolitionist sentiments raised fear among the Jesuits on the plantations of the possibility of slave revolts. On the other hand, Jesuits faced social pressure in Maryland to limit the number of free Blacks in the state.

At the same time, the apostolic character of the Jesuit missions of the Maryland Province was changing. Among Jesuits, there was a growing desire to develop a more robust educational apostolate as well as a stronger program of Jesuit formation. This manifested itself, for example, in a diminishing interest in circuit-riding as pastors among rural mission stations. Instead, the rising immigrant population from Europe redirected Jesuit ministry to urban centers, which called for increased financial support and manpower.[11]

And so, by the late 1830s, Jesuits in the Maryland Province faced a critical decision regarding their future. With the continuing development of Georgetown College, the beginning of St. John's College in Fredrick, Maryland, and the outreach to immigrants in several urban centers, the thrust of missionary activity was changing. American Thomas Mulledy (1794–1860), who had been named Provincial in 1837, saw, as did his American predecessor, William McSherry (1799–1839), the developing missions of the Society as most important. For these missions, the Society needed money, and the sale of slaves offered a direct way to obtain it. Clearly, manumission of the slaves would not benefit the emerging work of the missions, and the viability of plantations in the American South made those plantations a realistic market for the sale of up to 300 slaves still in Jesuit possession. And so, Mulledy developed a plan with Louisiana plantation owners to buy over 270 slaves from the Jesuits for cash.

Now, among the Jesuits it was well known that within the slave population, the greatest fear was the possibility that a slave might be sold. When reporting about the departure of slaves following their sale to Louisiana, Jesuit Peter Havermans (1816–1897) quotes a pregnant slave who asks, "What will become of me. . . . Why do I deserve this?"[12] In the record of the Maryland Province Congregation meeting of 1835,

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[11] See Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, "'Either the missions or the College must be neglected,' [Thomas F.] Mulledy to [Fr. General Johannes] Roothaan, October 28, 1833," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/508.

[12] Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, "'What will become of me?': Fr. Havermans reports on the anguish of the slaves, October 20, 1838 and November 12, 1838," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/226.

Jesuit Stephen Dubuisson (1786–1864) lists a single moral argument that arose, which reflects the concern of the slaves themselves to the sale. This one argument that takes account of the slaves' concern is listed among several moral arguments against the sale. He writes of "a great repugnance among the blacks of Maryland towards being sold and transported to the South." He goes on to say, "Is it not cruel, this idea to force them to depart with new masters?"[13] Nevertheless, at the Province Congregation, there was overwhelming support for the sale of the 272 slaves.[14]

The problems attendant on the transaction surfaced almost immediately. The size of the sale and the decision to sell the slaves to Louisiana scandalized Jesuits and non-Jesuits alike.[15] Due to the pressures of the sale, Mulledy began a fall into a period of alcoholism.[16] Soon, it also emerged that the conditions mandated by the superior general of the Jesuits for the sale were not met. Instead, the members of several slave families, not long after their displacement from Maryland to Louisiana, were separated. The superior general had also mandated that the profit from the sale be invested and not used for operating expenses. Contrary to those instructions, the initial payments were used immediately to settle mortgage debts at Georgetown College and to settle the suit brought by the Archbishop of Baltimore against the Society of Jesus. As a result, the superior general, Jan Roothaan (1785–1853), forced the resignation of Mulledy as Provincial and removed him to France for four years.

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[13] See Stephen Dubuisson, "'Is it expedient to sell these 300 slaves?'"

[14] In deliberating on the sale of slaves with the Provincial William McSherry, following the Provincial Congregation of 1835, Father General Johannes Roothan argues that it might be better to suffer financial ruin than for all of their souls to perish due to the sale of slaves. Nevertheless, Roothan approved, with conditions, the sale of slaves in 1838 by provincial Thomas Mulledy. See Peter C. Finn, "The Slaves of the Jesuits in Maryland" (master's thesis, Georgetown University, 1974), 124, http://hdl.handle.net/10822/1044615.

[15] Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, "'I had for a cook, at Alexandria, a black girl,' Fr. Dubuisson to Fr. Roothaan, June 21 and July 2, 1839," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/462; Robert E. Curran, "Black Slaves in the United States (XVII–XIX Centuries)," *DHCJ*, Biográfico-temático, vol. 2, ed. O'Neill and Domínguez, 1257.

[16] Anthony J. Kuzniewski, SJ, *Thy Honored Name: A History of the College of the Holy Cross, 1843–1994* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press: 1999), 42.

V. Sinfulness in the Jesuit Sale of Black Slaves to Louisiana

In reading correspondence among nineteenth-century Jesuits serving in the Maryland Mission, which became the Maryland Province in 1833, one is struck by the communal language used to describe individual Jesuit missions. Thus, at individual plantations, Jesuits would refer to the "family" at the plantation, including Jesuits, slaves, paid workers and, in some cases, tenant farmers. This terminology was used even at Georgetown and would include students.[17] This sense of "family" certainly reflects the attitude fostered by Hunter in his mid-eighteenth-century letter, described above, to the Jesuits of the Maryland Mission described. That attitude speaks of the "charitable, Christian, paternal manner" enjoined upon the Mission Jesuits in their treatment of "Negroes" to encourage virtuous behavior and win their souls.

The term "family" had the significant effect that Jesuits and their slaves maintained a level of mutual accountability. This attitude enabled Thomas Brown, an enslaved man in service to the Society for thirty-eight years, to appeal directly in 1833 to the Jesuit leadership of the Maryland Province, very likely the provincial, McSherry, on account of poor living conditions established for Brown and his wife by the Jesuits at Saint Louis University. Brown's letter presents Brown and his wife as persons who were "raised in the Society" and are "faithful servants," and who seem to anticipate a fair hearing from the Superior.[18]

At some level, there seemed to exist in the Jesuit missions a shared sense of mission. While not all Jesuits accepted that this

[17] See Peter Finn, "The Slaves of the Jesuits in Maryland"; Maryland Province Archives, "'Deaths in our Family': Fr. Neale describes the dire conditions at St. Thomas Manor, January 9, 1827," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/145; Georgetown University Library, "The number of our family, 1813," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/22; Maryland Province Archives, "Fr. Francis Neale describes difficulties arranging slave marriages and British pillaging during the War of 1812," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/368.

[18] Maryland Province Archive, "Letter from Thomas Brown, an enslaved man at St. Louis University, 1833," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/39.

communal sense was beneficial to the mission or to the Society, they did not doubt that the nature of "family," including masters and slaves as part of the same body, required acceptance of common responsibility and support for the common wellbeing of "family" members. This is also demonstrated in the common use of the sale and purchase of enslaved persons by Jesuits in order to enable a person from one plantation to marry a person from a different plantation. Here, the sale or purchase happened at the will of both Jesuit and slave for the common good within the body of family unity.

In this context, the sale of 272 slaves by the Jesuits in 1838 was a rupture in the communal sense of family. The effects over the next ten years on the sold slaves of the sale proved a clear injustice to their spiritual, sacramental, and emotional welfare. The Jesuit leadership clearly had washed their hands of those attitudes which had influenced from the eighteenth century the care of Black slaves while in the Maryland Province.[19]

In effect, instead of promoting the mutual benefit of segments of the family, the sale promoted the financial benefit and educational mission of the Jesuits while relativizing the pain and suffering that resulted from the forced removal, family separation, and dislocation of the slaves. On this note, the history of the Maryland mission from 1820 to 1840 indicates that there were alternative means of balancing the plantation ledgers and turning a profit, albeit not enough to do everything that the Society of Jesus desired to do in its Maryland Mission/Province. Instead, the desire for everything possible deprived more than half the "family" of what they needed for survival and wellbeing. This agreement with Louisiana planters thus represented a settlement for an individual good rather than for the common good. In this way, a principal segment of the mission "family" suffered harm as a result of a sinful decision against the common good of the "family."[20]

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[19] Maryland Province Archives, "Letter from James Van de Velde, SJ to Thomas Mulledy, SJ, March 28, 1848," *GSA*, accessed December 2, 2022, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/3.

[20] Nicole M. Flores, "Greed," in *Naming Our Sins*, ed. Jana M. Bennet and David Cloutier (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of American Press: 2019), 79.

That sin had an enormous effect not only on the wellbeing of men and women sold to Louisiana in 1838, but also on their descendants, regarding their fear, displacement, isolation, loss of spiritual solace, insecurity, and powerlessness. The experience is one that affects not only a first generation of displaced persons but also succeeding generations who would live in bondage and, later, segregation.

VI. Reconciliation with Those Harmed

Catholics understand that facing faults and repenting of them can be an opening to the forgiveness offered by God. Nevertheless, in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius of Loyola teaches that a heartfelt and genuine acknowledgment of our sin comes only through God's grace.[21] That grace includes an appreciation of how loved we are by God despite the sinfulness in which we have participated.[22] Here, God's grace provides the courage that people need to face their truths. To this end, the General Examination of Conscience offers a schema for carefully exploring, in the light of God's grace, how in thought, word, and actions a person may have participated in prejudicial, dismissive, or even racist attitudes toward others.[23] The exercise of such an Examen is important for all American Jesuits and their colleagues.

In this vein, it may be possible that the thoughts, words, and actions that resulted in the sale of 272 slaves in the Jesuit "family" are not so distinct from some attitudes and behaviors among Catholics, including Jesuits, today. Should that be the case, then one may be inclined to acknowledge individual sin as well as a participation in the sin of others, present and past. Disgust with and abhorrence of such sin may be expressed and should even give rise to heartfelt contrition. Finally, if God's love is expressed in the midst of these reflections, one might beg forgiveness from God, forgiveness from

[21] *Spiritual Exercises* 43, 55, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*.

[22] *SpEx* 61.

[23] *SpEx* 32–44.

the community of the church, and the forgiveness of those who have suffered the effects of one's sinful behavior.

Jesus Christ established the church as the sign and instrument of that forgiveness. As such, the church offers means by which the sinner may achieve wholeness through reconciliation with God, with the church, and with the neighbor. The time-honored form of ecclesial reconciliation includes heartfelt contrition, confession with the lips, the practice of complete humility, and fruitful satisfaction.[24]

Complete humility encompasses a personal decision to place oneself at the mercy of God. Within the context of the Spiritual Exercises, one seeks the grace of humility in following the path of the Second Week. Specifically, one earnestly seeks the grace to follow Christ in his own willingness to be vulnerable and in his own poverty. And the expression of complete humility in acts of reconciliation may happen communally as well as personally.

Finally, satisfaction, which bears fruit in reconciliation, involves an expiation or atonement for wrongdoing. Here, satisfaction may include some act that expresses remorse for the sin committed. If the sin involved harm to others, then fruitful satisfaction should involve reparation. The *Catholic Catechism* states that "one must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much."[25]

As regards reflection on past or present Jesuit sins that have marginalized others, reconciliation must involve engagement with those who endure the debilitating effects of racism, prejudice, racial privilege, or dismissiveness. For this reason, complete humility and satisfaction in reconciliation likely will take the form of engagement with others, as "simple justice requires." A number of current efforts at humility and

[24] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [*CCC*] (Vatican City and Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana and the US Catholic Conference, 2000), 1422, 1450; Robert L. Fastiggi, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation: An Anthropological and Scriptural Understanding* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books: 2017), 1–14.

[25] *CCC*, 1459.

reparation in the Society of Jesus have established such paths of engagement. As a case in point, several anti-racism groups, like the Jesuit Antiracism Sodality, have formed within the various US provinces of the Jesuits to address white privilege and sins of racism. These groups include a variety of activities to encourage reflection on thoughts, words, and actions that impact the lives of others, particularly those who are among underrepresented races, ethnicities, or classes in American life.

Also worthy of note is the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation, which is a project supported by the GU272 Descendants Association and the Society of Jesus in the United States. This foundation, funded corporately by the US Jesuits and by individual donors, is creating a new pathway that restores human dignity while ensuring and sustaining justice and equity. The Foundation hopes especially to repair the harm done to others.

Conclusion

Delving into the history of Jesuit slaveholding and facing the truth of Jesuit injustice toward Black slaves in the possession of Jesuits leaves me saddened, embarrassed, and angry. I have often shared with my Jesuit brothers the concern expressed by the mother of a very close friend and colleague from New Orleans as I was entering the Society of Jesus over forty years ago. She asked me, "how could you join such a racist religious order?" In the intervening years, I have certainly learned that racism does inhabit the thoughts, words, and actions of Jesuits now and in our past.

And so, I and many other Jesuits have come to recognize clearly, as stated in the documents of General Congregation 32, that to be a Jesuit "is to know that one is a sinner."[26] But by the grace of God, I also have come to understand that Jesuits are and can be so much more than our sinfulness. I certainly have come to appreciate the love of God expressed in the lives of many Jesuits and even through the Society's communal

[26] GC 32, d. 2, no. 11; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2009), 291.

reflections and actions. Indeed, Jesuits and the Ignatian family have a chance now to do something new and something very good through an engagement with those harmed by our sins of the past and present. In this way, reconciliation can reveal the grace of God's love here and now.

Jim Crow, SJ: Segregation and Integration in Jesuit Novitiates

William D. Critchley-Menor, SJ

Introduction

In 1875, Herman Koch (1849–1907) arrived with three others from Belgium to Grand Coteau, Louisiana to begin life as a Jesuit novice. In the house diary, the minister noted that Koch, whose family was from English Guyana, was "strongly colored." Jesuit Albert Biever (1858–1934) wrote about Koch's entrance in Biever's memoir about life in Grand Coteau and recalled that white novices "refused to enter the dining hall, stating that they would never sit at the same table with a Negro."[1] Unpacking the situation further, Biever wrote:

> Our European Superiors, not knowing the social conditions of the Southern States where the Negro had just emerged from slavery, thought that Mr. Koch because of his dark complexion and South American origin would prove a most valuable subject. Unfortunately this was not the case. The house doctor was called in for consultation and after close scrutiny declared Mr. Koch to be of the colored race. Poor young man who but yesterday was supremely happy in the hope that he had reached the goal of all his ambitions had now to pack up and tearfully resume the return trip to Europe. Mr. Koch himself stated that his father was a German physician and that his mother was a colored woman.[2]

Seven days after his arrival in Grand Coteau, Koch was dismissed from the novitiate and sent back to Europe. While he would eventually join the Jesuits in Belgium with the purpose of serving as a missionary in Calcutta, his desire to enter the Jesuits in America was dashed because he was not white.

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[1] Albert Biever, Diary, New Orleans Province Collection, unprocessed collection, Jesuit Archives and Research Center, hereafter abbreviated JARC.

[2] Biever, Diary, JARC.

Koch's story tragically supports the thesis of this essay: that white racial identity played a key role in acceptance to US Jesuit novitiates throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. After Koch's dismissal, it would be another eighty-one years until another man of color would be accepted to enter the novitiate in Grand Coteau. While the history of Jesuit slaveholding has become common knowledge, less known is the history of denying black men entrance into our novitiates. This history not only is important for recognizing the Society's role in upholding systemic racism in the past but also can help us understand the racial dynamics at play in the Society of Jesus today. This essay will provide a very limited entry into this history, mostly by focusing on the decisions to integrate novitiates.

I. Historical Efforts to Integrate the Society of Jesus

In the 1940s, Jesuits began systematically to approach the question of black vocations. John Lafarge (1880–1963) first pushed the North American assistant, Zacheus Maher (1882–1963), to encourage the US provincials to adopt a policy on admitting black men. When Lafarge encountered pushback, he softened his position, writing that the Jesuits must be bold, but "not [so] wildly bold . . . as to send Negroes into the Society in the South, but fairly bold, right here in NY."[3] He encouraged a gradual integration of the novitiates, believing that there was reason to discriminate based on race in certain regions.

Even as Lafarge capitulated in part to the racial hierarchy of the country, he gave Maher other reasons why black men should be accepted in places like the New York Province. Accepting "negros" into the order would be "an exemplification of our mission ideals at home, and *inter nos*," he wrote. It also would be "a test of our own personal humility, upon which all else is built."[4] According to Lafarge, it seems that accepting black men was not a matter of their vocations themselves. He does not stipulate anywhere in his correspondence with Maher that the

[3] Quoted in David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911–1963* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 260.

[4] John LaFarge to Zacheus Maher, August 24, 1944, Box 17, Folder 24, LaFarge Papers, Georgetown University Archives.

Society should accept black men because God may be calling them to the order or because they could contribute equally to the mission. His reasons center on the image and holiness of the white Jesuits. This may well have been because he was trying to push the issue in a way that was acceptable to his superiors, given the racist attitudes of the day. From the perspective he pushes, accepting black men would exemplify the ideals of the mission, give credibility to the Jesuits' social ministries, and, most telling, provide an opportunity for white Jesuits to practice sacrifice and humility—something like the white Jesuits' burden.

Eventually, Lafarge and Maher agreed that criteria for entrance should be based on the standard of usefulness, focusing on the good obtained by the order, not what may be beneficial to the candidate. This was in keeping with the Jesuit *Constitutions.* Ignatius makes clear that candidates should be accepted who present to have the natural and infused gifts that would make them "useful for what the Society aims at."[5] Ignatius was not as concerned with how entrance into the Society might benefit an individual on their own path to holiness or integration, but rather with how their membership in the order would aid its apostolic efforts.[6] Likewise, Ignatius also found nobility and social standing to be of benefit when considering a man's vocation. On this point, he wrote that such "extrinsic gifts" as "nobility, wealth, reputation, and the like" make a candidate "more suitable" for the Society.[7] While these criteria appear prima facie racially neutral, they easily could become, when seen through the lens of white Catholics' willingness to receive a black priest or teacher in a position of authority, racialized or having a racial character.

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[5] *Constitutions* 147, hereafter *Const*.; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts,* ed. John Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1996), 74.

[6] *Const*. 152.

[7] *Const.* 161; ed. Padberg, 78. Ignatius makes clear that a man can join the Society without nobility, wealth, or good reputation, but that these extrinsic gifts make him an even more desirable candidate "to the extent that they aid toward edification." This raises the related point of the role of class in determining admission to the Society, recognizing that, while the racial makeup of the US Society of Jesus is heavily white, the majority of vocations do not come from the working class.

How the Jesuit vocation in America became racialized, or received a racial character, appears clearly in a letter from Maher to American provincials in 1945—the first official document on the topic of black vocations. With Lafarge's help, Maher sent the letter with some basic principles for provincials to consider. The main criteria for a candidate would be his ability to contribute to the mission. At the start, Maher says that, according to this criteria, race would not present a barrier. This is so, he proffers, because of "the age old practice of the Society [of Jesus] of admitting candidates of every race and color."[8] Referring to the fact that, globally, Jesuits had been accepting men of color as candidates for centuries, Maher suggests that there clearly is precedent for non-white Jesuits. Maher gives his own specific judgment on the topic:

> Such a candidate ought not to be excluded merely because of his color. If however because of his color it is judged that he will not be *useful* in a given Province, then efforts should be made to find a Province in which he will be useful, and he should be accepted for that Province, whether it is in the American Assistancy or in any other.[9]

With usefulness as the main criteria for admission, race easily remained a barrier to entry for black men in US provinces. Maher expresses as much himself, acknowledging that "the factors which enter into a determination of the usefulness of a given subject are so circumscribed that the Society relies on the prudence and good judgment of the Provincial to evaluate them."[10]

Even though Maher was trying to encourage provincials to accept black men, he was at pains to satisfy provincials who inevitably would deal with backlash. By suggesting that "because of his color" it could be judged "that [a black candidate] will not be useful in a given Province," Maher provides loopholes for provincials to continue denying, on no grounds other than racist ones, acceptance of black men into the novitiate. In other words, the only reason, according to Maher, that a black man would be considered useful in a given province but

[8] Maher to Provincials, Box 5.0054, Folder 1, JARC.

[9] Maher to Provincials, Box 5.0054, Folder 1, JARC. Italics in the original.

[10] Maher to Provincials, Box 5.0054, Folder 1, JARC.

not in another is the inability to send him to minister to people who would refuse him. Therefore, if a black man wanted to enter the Jesuits but a provincial was worried that white parents, Jesuits, or students would not accept him, that black man could be denied entrance on the grounds that he would not be useful in the mission. And so, when "prudence and good judgment" were combined with the racial hierarchy of the day, black men could be denied entrance to the Society. Thus, the governance at the time abused Ignatius's criteria of "usefulness" to deny black men entrance.

As a case in point, consider what happened to a young man who wanted to enter the Jesuits in New York in 1944. Lafarge, then editor of *America* magazine, wrote to Maher to tell of a young black man who was denied admission to the New York Province. Lafarge details how "well-qualified" the candidate was, with a good record in studies and conduct at the Jesuit college in Jersey City. Lafarge tells Maher, however, that the man was received by the provincial and told that "there would be no place to use him in the New York Province."[11] LaFarge was well aware that this criteria of usefulness left ample space for the discriminatory practice to continue.

In this way, even as they pushed for integration of the novitiates, the discourse of Lafarge and Maher reveals how whiteness, or maintaining a racially and culturally white order, remained an operating principle for the US Jesuits, since in this case, "usefulness" was easily coded for white. The underlying sentiment here is that Jesuits could imagine white people ministering to black people, but those same Jesuits found untenable the notion of black people ministering to white people. And so, just as white sensibilities and race science determined Koch's vocation in 1875, so too the whim of a racial hierarchy shaped the ways in which Jesuits understood capacity for ministry and influenced the application of black men to enter the Society in the early twentieth century.

It should also be noted that, if black men could be deemed *not* useful in a given province because of their color, then white people were considered useful in part *because they were white*. In this way, the many

[11] John LaFarge to Zacheus Maher, Georgetown University Archives.

white Jesuits who did enter the order received what Edward J. Blum calls a "spiritual wage of whiteness."[12] This means that their white racial identity afforded them the ability to pursue their vocation in the Society of Jesus—something that black men were not afforded.

After Maher's letter to provincials, the next time a recorded conversation took place at that level of Jesuit governance about accepting black men into the Jesuits was in the New Orleans Province in 1952, when a gathering of superiors, appointed delegates, and province consultors met to establish a formal policy for integration. At that time, the New Orleans Jesuits ended the practice of formal exclusion of black candidates from the Society, but their discourse reveals a vision more akin to assimilation than integration. In other words, if the province were to accept publicly identifying and identifiable black men, then they would plan to accept black men who could conform to the culture and mindset of the white community.[13]

The New Orleans Jesuits also determined to use the category of usefulness when discerning how to accept black men. To this point, a document sent to members of the province before the 1952 meeting included a list of positive and negative considerations regarding integration. The positives included the impetus it would bring for greater ministry among "negros," a "symbol of our own Catholic attitude on the race question," and a "practical means of lessening anti-negro feeling among ours."[14] Under difficulties, they listed the lack of applications from black men, "racial prejudice among our novices, more particularly among their parents and the supporters of the [Jesuit Seminary Fund]," as well as the difficulty in placing black Jesuits in teaching positions in white high schools.[15] On this point, R. Bentley Anderson (UCS) writes,

[12] Edward J. Blum, "A Dark Monk Who Wrote History and Sociology: The Spiritual Wage of Whiteness, the Black Church, and Mystical Africa," in *W. E. B. DuBois: American Prophet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 98–133.

[13] I use the qualifier, "publicly identifying and identifiable black men," to account for the reality of racial passing. Jesuit Father Patrick Francis Healey, the son of an enslaved woman, for example, joined the Jesuits in 1850 passing for white.

[14] Meeting Minutes, Racial Conference Grand Coteau, Box 1.0021, Folder 9, JARC.

[15] Meeting Minutes, Racial Conference Grand Coteau, JARC.

"The prospect of black priests, as representatives of Christ, administering the sacraments to white Southerners was fraught with many dangers, and these priests knew it."[16] The Jesuits also discussed what effect the acceptance of "Negroes" would have on the number of white vocations, worrying that allowing black men into the order could discourage white men from joining.

Aside from the question of usefulness, the Jesuits at Grand Coteau also were concerned about the ability for black men to assimilate into the life of the white Jesuits in the South. Here, a variety of concerns led to the conclusion that, if the province was going to accept black men, then they had to accept not only "useful" black men, but the *right* black men. Thus, the final draft of the policy that was sent to Rome for approval tempered the decision to accept black men by stipulating that the black candidates must show promise of conforming to whiteness. The proposed policy on admission for "Negro" candidates read:

> To underline clearly our Catholic attitude on racial justice, we must recognize that it is our settled policy not to exclude any postulant to the Society on the sole grounds of race. Our novices above all others, should be ready to accept any sacrifice of prejudices or feelings that the implementation of this policy may entail. Meanwhile, to make the transition as smooth as possible and to preclude difficulties later on, Ours whose advice is sought by Negro candidates for the Society should be particularly careful not to encourage any applicants who, by their appearance, character, educational background and temperament, do not give strong promise of successful assimilation.[17]

In the face of these attitudes, note that the Jesuit General Jean-Baptise Janssens (1889–1964) was critical of the Southern Jesuits' assimilationist stance, seeing the notion of "assimilation'' as thinly-veiled racism. And so, in his letter back to William Crandell

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[16] R. Bentley Anderson, "Black, White, and Catholic: Southern Jesuits Confront the Race Questions, 1952," *The Catholic Historical Review* 91, no. .3 (2005): 491.

[17] Crandell to Janssens, Province Policy, January 23, 1954, Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus.

(1909–1973) regarding the proposed policy, he objected to a capitulation to colorism that masqueraded as integration:

> I cannot approve that a Negro be rejected because he rather displeases us because of his "appearance." Whether he is black or white, it is necessary that he have a "respectable appearance"; but this "appearance" cannot be judged according to our norms as white men. A Negro with a large nose and thick lips appears deformed *to us*: these are pure prejudices, bordering on the ridiculous—we Religious have no reason to harbor them.[18]

This passage indicates that Janssens, coming from outside of the US context, could see how "ridiculous" it was to propose a policy of inclusion that allowed for excluding black men based on their appearance. To sharpen the point, even if the New Orleans Jesuits thought that their policy change was taking a step forward in racial relations, Janssens could see white superiority still influencing their judgment. On this point, in the handwritten note that accompanied his official response to Crandell, Janssens wrote:

> I ask that we whites not believe that we have the criteria of a better education among all men. I have long found more exquisite urbanity, if I might give only one example, among African adolescents in the Congo than among us Europeans. I ask that it not be required that they be assimilated to us but rather that we might imitate them in this manner![19]

Nevertheless, while the word "assimilation" was scrubbed from the final copy of the integration policy, the attitudes of expecting black people to conform to whiteness appeared in other ways apart from the policy on admission. For example, the policy included a section entitled "Other Obligatory Attitudes and Aims," to which each member of the Province was expected to adhere. One of these read, "If by positive effort we can progressively do away with the differences in cultural, educational and economic development which now exist between the negro and the white population, we will also be

[18] Quoted in Anderson, "Black, White, and Catholic," 499.

[19] Quoted in Anderson, "Black, White, and Catholic," 499.

making the negro more acceptable to the white population."[20] Here, the goal of making the negro more acceptable to the white population undergirded the decision to integrate the novitiate. In other words, by joining the Jesuits, black men could make themselves more acceptable to the white population by ridding themselves of cultural practices that differed from those stemming from the white culture of the order. In this way, whiteness continued as an operating norm in the Society of Jesus even as the order "integrated."

II. Persistence of Racist Attitudes in the Society into the Twentieth Century

That Jesuits in the United States owned and sold slaves has become common knowledge. Less well known is that the racism that allowed for such tragic behavior continued to influence the Society's corporate policies well into the twentieth century. Furthermore, the impact of this corporate racism persists today. On this point, Jesuits of color have written about their experiences of racism in the Society of Jesus and continue to share with us the pain that they can experience in our brotherhood.[21] Instances of this pain have included such explicit experiences of racial profiling as Jesuits mistaking brother Jesuits as service workers in Jesuit communities.[22] They also have included feelings that the Society continues to perpetuate white privilege by focusing the

[20] Meeting Minutes, Racial Conference Grand Coteau, JARC.

[21] Ted Cunnungham and Barthelemy Rousseve's experiences of racism in the Society are recounted in George R. Riemer, *The New Jesuits* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971). Gregory C. Chisholm and J-Glenn Murray write of their experiences in William A. Barry, SJ, and James F. Keenan, SJ, eds., "How Multicultural Are We?," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33, no. 5 (November 2001). See also Joseph Brown, SJ, *To Stand on the Rock: Meditations on Black Catholic Spirituality* (New York: Orbis, 1998); Patrick Saint-Jean, SJ, *The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice: A Month of Meditations with Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Anamchara Books, 2021); Christopher Smith, SJ, "For a Church that is Unafraid to Welcome Black People," *The Jesuit Post*, February 21, 2021, https://thejesuitpost.org/2021/02/for-a-church-that-is-unafraid-to-welcome-black-people/.

[22] Henoch Fente Derbew, "Address to Father General Arturo Sosa, SJ," May 23, 2018," text provided by author.

majority of its apostolic efforts on serving upper-class white families.[23] Note here that the sentiment does not seem to be that ministry with white, upper-class families is bad. Rather, the concentration of apostolic resources and the situation of our communities seem to communicate an investment and accountability to white demographics.

Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991) raised this point in his 1967 letter to US Jesuits on interracial relations. Under the heading of "reasons for failure," Arrupe offers a list of reasons why US Jesuits have expended so little effort on behalf of the black community. Among them, he lists "the insulation of far too many Jesuits from the actual living conditions of the poor, and hence of most Negroes, and unconscious conformity to the discriminatory thought and action patterns of the surrounding white community."[24] While things certainly have changed since 1967, the fact remains that the majority of our apostolic and community life is lived in service to and among wealthier white people.

Conclusion

In this essay, I do not intend to recall the history of racism in the Society and its persistence over time to cause shame or to incite a negative, overly critical view of our order. On the contrary, I believe that this tendency, which can present itself as a temptation in present day conversations regarding race and historical reckoning, comes from the evil spirit. Nevertheless, we do need to recall this history. In his social encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti,* Pope Francis (b. 1936) writes, "Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting."[25] Without a conscious review of these dynamics, we risk missing where racism continues to lurk.

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[23] Smith, SJ, "For a Church that is Unafraid to Welcome Black People."

[24] Pedro Arrupe, SJ, "The Interracial Apostolate," *Woodstock Letters* 97, no. 3 (Summer 1968), 297.

[25] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (October 3, 2020), 97, https ://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

When in 2018 the city of Carbondale, Illinois awarded Fr. Joseph Brown (UMI) the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, he told the crowd that throughout his life people have called him a "troublemaker." He rejects this label:

> If you go to the doctor's office and he says, "I'm very sorry, but you have all of the manifestations of having Stage 3 cancer," the doctor is not a troublemaker. Maybe those two packs of cigarettes a day were. But whatever we have become addicted to, when somebody says you got to stop—enough is enough—don't call them a troublemaker—change.[26]

With Brown's wisdom in mind, we can make an examen of our body in terms of its racism and then strive for healing. Despite our history and attitudes, God has been and will continue to be faithful to our least Society. In all things, may we beg to move toward greater liberation and conversion to accompany Jesus more fully in his mission.

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[26] Stephine Esters, "Father Joseph Brown Honored with Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Community Service," *The Southern Illinoisan,* January 14, 2018, https://thesouthern.com/news/lo.

A Reflection on the Jesuits' Relationship to Descendants of People Held Enslaved by the Society of Jesus

Timothy P. Kesicki, SJ

I. Slavery, Memory, and Contrition

In 2019, Jesuit provincials in the United States, through the structure of the Jesuit Conference, began a partnership with Descendants of Jesuit slaveholding. The partnership developed over three years of dialogue and led to the creation of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation. The building of relationships, rooted in faith and hope, has been at the heart of this partnership.

Many of the Descendants profess the Catholic faith passed on by their ancestors, and this shared communion has provided a solid foundation for the dialogue. Prayer, especially the Spirituals, guided our earliest encounters. Fr. Joseph Brown (UMI) highlights the importance of Spirituals in carrying on the wisdom of the Ancestors: "We take the walk of faith, employing all the mystical gifts handed on from generation to generation."[1] The Spirituals offered us an unbroken link to the faith of those who were held enslaved.

In the Spiritual "Wade in the Water," we sing the lyric, "God's gonna trouble the water."[2] This is a mantra of many who have waited patiently for justice. Enslaved persons sang this in the hope that God would trouble the waters and deliver them from their suffering. Fr. Brown views this Spiritual as a "compass for our way into

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[1] Joseph A. Brown, SJ, *To Stand on the Rock: Meditations on Black Catholic Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 4.

[2] Alan Lomax, *The Folk Songs of North America in the English Language* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 470.

African American spirituality."[3] He then invites us into the "troubled waters" when he declares, "We are not afraid of facing the dangers in the water, because some of the disturbances of life come from God, in order to 'make all things new.'"[4]

Howard Thurman, who had a profound influence on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement, invokes the power of this Spiritual with these words: "For [the enslaved] the 'troubled waters' meant the ups and downs, the vicissitudes of life. Within the context of the troubled waters of life there are healing waters, because God is in the midst of the turmoil."[5] Thurman continues, "Do not shrink from moving confidently out into choppy seas. Wade in the water because God is troubling the water."[6] We naturally fear the uncertainty of troubled waters, but the work of reconciliation often flows from these waters. GC 36 calls us to compassion and action "by an encounter with the Christ who is revealed in the suffering, vulnerable faces of people, indeed in the suffering of creation.[7]" Whether we are "rowing into the deep," or "wading in troubled waters," the plight of the poor and the suffering will upend our comfort and security.

A. Wading into the Troubled Waters of our Past

In 2016, God troubled the waters for Jesuits in the United States. Jesuits have long known their history of slaveholding, especially their participation in the domestic slave trade. But this history has expanded from a written tradition to a living witness. Thanks to the work of nineteenth-century Jesuit scribes, generations of archivists, and current researchers, Jesuits have been brought together with the living descendants of their slaveholding past.

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[3] Brown, *To Stand on the Rock*, 4.

[4] Brown, *To Stand on the Rock*, 4.

[5] Howard Thurman, *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals*, rev. ed. (Richmond, IN: New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), 90.

[6] Thurman, *Deep River*, 94.

[7] GC 36, d. 1, no. 20; "Companions in Mission of Reconciliation and Justice," *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2017), 21.

I was attending a meeting of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) in 2016 when the *New York Times* ran the front-page headline: "272 Slaves Were Sold to Save Georgetown. What Does It Owe Their Descendants?"[8] It did not take long before members of the conference approached me and asked, "How is the Society [of Jesus] going to respond?"

While Jesuits are experienced at working with people who have suffered oppression, reconciling with their own history of oppression is more challenging. My understanding of the oppressor and oppressed relationship is influenced by the writings of the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire. He writes:

> The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor—when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love.[9]

Friere's call to "risk an act of love" does not come with an expiration date. Sometimes, a historic sin may appear calm on the surface and consigned to the past, but one only has to dive beneath the surface to experience the troubles that still exist in the present. It is not enough for us to gaze over the sea of history and injustice; we must dive in and trust that God is there.

I was called to this work through two successive events. The first happened when Georgetown University, in cooperation with the Society of Jesus, was preparing for its Liturgy of Memory, Contrition and Hope in April of 2017. I was asked to apologize for the Jesuits' history of slaveholding in the United States.[10] The second happened when Jesuit

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[8] Rachel Swarns, "272 Slaves Were Sold to Save Georgetown. What Does It Owe Their Descendants?" *New York Times,* April 16, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/us/georgetown-university-search-for-slave-descendants.html.

[9] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 49–50.

[10] "Remarks of Fr. Timothy Kesicki, SJ, at Georgetown University's Liturgy of Remembrance, Contrition, and Hope," in *Facing Georgetown's History: A Reader on Slavery,*

General Father Arturo Sosa wrote a letter in response to a Descendant petition inviting the Descendants into a dialogue with the Jesuit Conference under my leadership.[11] At the heart of each of these events was a relationship with Descendants and the call to "risk an act of love."

B. The Church and the Faults of the Past

The US Jesuit provincials sought wisdom from the church in beginning the dialogue process. In the late 1990s, the International Theological Commission met in Rome to prepare for the Jubilee Year of 2000. The Jubilee called for an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian. Then, in 2000, Pope John Paul II apologized for the past sins of the church.

In its document, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," the commission reflects on his apology.[12] The authors consider, in addition to biblical, historical, and pastoral perspectives, ethical criteria for reconciling with the sins of past generations. They observe how, "in certain situations, the burden that weighs on conscience can be so heavy as to constitute a kind of moral and religious memory of the evil done, which is by its nature a *common memory*. This common memory gives eloquent testimony to the solidarity objectively existing between those who committed the evil in the past and their heirs in the present."[13]

However, the document distinguishes carefully between subjective and objective responsibility. Jesuits today do not bear subjective responsibility, because they did not commit the sin. People have asked me, "If I never held anyone enslaved, what responsibility do I have for

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Memory, and Reconciliation, ed. Adam Rothman and Elsa Barraza Mendoza (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021), 284–85.

[11] Arturo Sosa, SJ, "Letter to Mr. Joseph M. Stewart," June 20, 2017, https://www.descendants.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/6.20.17_letter_from_sosa_Redacted.pdf.

[12] International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," December 1999, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000307_memory-reconc-itc_en.html.

[13] International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation," 5.1.

what happened in the past?" The document addresses this by stating that "subjective responsibility ceases with the death of the one who performed the act; it is not transmitted through generation."[14] But the document goes on to call for an *objective common responsibility,* recognizing that "the evil done often outlives the one who did it through the consequences of behaviors that can become a heavy burden on the consciences and memories of the descendants."[15]

The document then speaks of "a *solidarity* that unites the past and the present in a relationship of reciprocity."[16] This solidarity and a relationship of reciprocity would permeate the dialogue process.

II. The Process of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation

The initial dialogue between Descendants and Jesuits was piecemeal and widespread. Reconciling a centuries-old sin would not come easily. By 2017, three different Descendant Groups had formed: The Descendants of Isaac Hawkins, The GU 272 Legacy Alliance, and the GU 272 Descendants Association. Jesuit provincials and I met with many Descendants and heard their stories and expectations. It became clear that we needed outside facilitation to advance the dialogue.

In the spring of 2018, Descendant, Jesuit, and Georgetown leaders approached the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. Kellogg was known for its work in Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation. The foundation generously agreed to sponsor a formal dialogue process between the three descendant groups, the Jesuits, and Georgetown University. This led to five multi-day convenings over the course of two years. The first convening was of the three Descendant groups, represented by five designated leaders from each group. This Descendant convening

[14] International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation," 5.1.

[15] International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation," 5.1.

[16] International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation," 5.1.

took place in August 2018 over the course of three days. The fifteen descendants, representing the three groups, met on the campus of Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They concluded by choosing three leaders who would form a leadership committee to continue the pursuit of unification among Descendants.

The second convening was with the US Jesuit provincials and representatives from Georgetown University. This took place on the campus of Xavier University in New Orleans over the course of three days in November 2018. This second session helped to set the stage for a joint convening between Descendants, Jesuits, and Georgetown. In 2019, there were three joint-convenings, again on the campus of Southern University.

At the heart of the dialogue was the truth of the past as shared by both the Descendants of the enslaved and the successors of the enslavers. This was a historic first for any major organization in the United States that had benefited from slaveholding.

A. The Witness and Testimony of the Three Descendant Leaders

Cheryllyn Branche, who currently serves as president of the GU 272 Descendants Association, is a fourth-generation granddaughter of Hillary and Henrietta Ford, whom the Society had enslaved. From the moment we met in April 2017, her desire for a personal relationship with Jesuits amazed me. The same is true for Earl Williams, a fifth-generation grandson of Isaac Hawkins, whose name appeared first on the manifest of the 272 whom Georgetown sold in 1838.

Joseph Stewart too is a fifth-generation grandson of Isaac Hawkins. After learning of me in a letter that he had received from Father General, Joe readily invited me to his home. As I reflect on Paulo Friere's call to "risk an act of love," I am humbled that these Descendants took the initial risk in extending their hands to us. In a March 2021 interview with the *New York Times*, Joseph Stewart said of the Society,

"They did not come running to us, but because we went to them with open arms and open hearts, they responded."[17]

Not only have these Descendants taken a risk by extending themselves to us, but they have also shared moving testimonies of those who took risks for them. Cheryllyn Branche recalled a time when her family changed parishes in New Orleans. They moved from a predominantly African American parish to one where her family was forced to sit in the back. In 1961, her mother was physically removed from a neighboring parish church by three ushers, yet she persevered in her practice of the Catholic faith. She appealed to Archbishop Joseph Rummel who heard her cry and removed the pastor. Cheryllyn notes that Archbishop Rummel was instrumental in desegregating archdiocesan schools. Cheryllyn upholds the prophetic faith and witness of her mother and her grandmother—who both prayed the rosary each day—for risking such acts of love.

In this vein, Earl Williams shared his experience of being Black and Catholic when in the 1960's his family moved from Louisiana to Lockport, Illinois. After his family chose the front pew in a predominantly white parish, the pastor introduced them at the start of Mass by saying, "The Williams Family are now members of this parish, and we welcome them. If anyone has a problem with this, you can leave."[18] Earl honors the risk that his parents and the pastor took in confronting, out of love for their children, such racism.

In yet another story of courage, Joseph Stewart grew up on Grosse Tete Bayou in Louisiana, where his ancestral family was re-located when the Society sold Isaac Hawkins in 1838. In order for Joseph to attend his first five years of elementary school, his mother had to transport him and his siblings over 3,600 times in a pirogue boat, which is a small, light vessel, quite common on a Louisiana bayou, that one can carry

[17] Rachel Swarns, "Catholic Order Pledges $100 Million to Atone for Slave Labor and Sales," *New York Times*, March 15, 2021, updated May 10, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/us/jesuits-georgetown-reparations-slavery.html.

[18] This and other uncited quotations come from my personal and privileged conversations with members of the Descendant community, who have given me explicit permission to share them here.

more easily onto land. Joe reflects on how his mother crossed the bayou multiple times a day knowing that neither she nor her children could swim. What a risk she took to educate her family! Joseph, former board chairman of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, now chairs the board of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation.

These and other testimonies of those who "risked an act of love" have permeated the dialogue between Descendants and Jesuits. At the heart of the dialogue is the witness of their enslaved ancestors—ancestors who were never given a voice, but who speak through the witness of their lives.

B. The Process of Truth and Racial Healing

During the dialogue process, the Descendant leaders shared their pain and their hopes for the future. Cheryllyn Branche once said, "You Jesuits are called to be more than you have ever been. Embrace and understand this call." Cheryllyn has been making the Spiritual Exercises in everyday life and learning more about the religious order that once owned and sold her family. She uplifts what Saint Ignatius Loyola taught, asking Jesuits, "Didn't your Founder encourage you to make a difference in the world, to move beyond your own being and beliefs and do more?"

For his part, Joe Stewart knows that God is going to hold him accountable for his ancestors' legacy. But as regards his way of proceeding, he finds himself quite unorthodox in how he now engages his church. As a child, he was an altar boy and even discerned entering Saint Benedict Seminary in Covington, Louisiana. Now, he finds himself standing up to the church that he has known his whole life and challenging it to grow from this sinful history. Here, he asks with vigor and passion, "Are we going to go on rationalizing and being pacified by how things have gone on in our lives for the past 400 years or has God put before us an opportunity to move with love and with peace to another kind of human family?" He continues, "No Jesuit would want to live the life many Descendants have experienced in Maringouin, Louisiana, or the life of an enslaved person who was sold." He then raises the question as to whether the Society will relegate this history to the past or accept an obligation to atone for its sin.

On this note, Earl Williams has a familiar mantra that he repeats each time we are together. When asked why we should make a commitment to one another, he answers, "Because He said so!" Earl believes that our reconciliation project is both his personal vocation and the call of Christ to all of us today.

Likewise, Cheryllyn, Earl, and Joe together point to this line from the GC 36 document "Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice," which cites Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium*: "We are called to find Christ in the poor, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them, and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them."[19] Here, Cheryllyn, Earl, and Joe remind us that "the poor" includes those who bear the weight of past sin and injustice.

C. Restoring the Dignity of the Ancestors: A Call to Transformation

A 2017 letter and petition from Joseph Stewart to the thirty-first Superior General, Father Arturo Sosa, revealed much of what the Descendants had learned about the plight of their ancestors. The letter asked Fr. Sosa to investigate "the unmitigated and enduring harm inflicted upon God's one human family by the Society of Jesus' direct, extensive and long-term engagement in slavery."[20] They highlighted the abandonment of pastoral care for their ancestors who were sold and drew specific attention to early nineteenth-century correspondence between the Maryland Province and the twenty-first superior general, Father Jan Philipp Roothaan, who served from 1829 to 1853.

The authors of the letter took note of Fr. Roothan's initial objections to the sale when in 1836 he wrote that "it would be better to suffer financial disaster than suffer the loss of all our souls with the sale of the slaves."[21] After continued pleas from the province to sell the 272, Fr.

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[19] GC 36, d. 1, no. 15; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, 20.

[20] Joseph M. Stewart, "Letter to Rev. Arturo Sosa, SJ," May 5, 2017, 1, https://www.descendants.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/05.05.17_petition_to_sosa_Redacted_0.pdf.

[21] Quoted in Edward F. Beckett, SJ, "Listening to Our History: Inculturation and

Roothan placed conditions on the sale. He said that negotiations could only be conducted with potential masters who would both recognize and assist the enslaved persons' right to practice freely their Catholicism. In addition, the sale could not be done through intermediary agents, which condition he intended to prevent avaricious agents who might break up married couples and families, since he decreed that husbands and wives were never to be separated from each other and that children were preferably not to be separated from their parents.[22] He further stipulated that such provisions be made a condition of the actual bill of sale. Above all else, the enslaved must be provided with priests.

Fr. Roothan also wanted to care for those "whose age or health prevented their sale or transport," writing that "their sale or transport must be provided for 'as justice and charity demands.'"[23] He then instructed The Maryland Jesuits on how to use the proceeds from the sale. On this point, he wrote that money received from the sale "could not be used to purchase supplies for the farms, or for the retirement of debt," nor should it "be used on construction of Jesuit schools for lay people."[24] Instead, Roothan wanted the proceeds to be used for the education of Jesuits, and so placed in a fund where they could be invested or fructify.

Having read these conditions, the Maryland Province sold the enslaved people to Henry Johnson, the fifth Governor of Louisiana. Johnson used the 272 as collateral and sadly lost them to the bank when he faced insolvency. When the bank became the default owner, the province no longer could honor the Roothan conditions. In the end, as Thomas Murphy writes, "Neither the transportation of the slaves, the disposition of the money received, the capacity of the buyers to pay off their mortgage, nor the subsequent religious lives of the slaves worked

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Jesuit Slaveholding," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 28, no. 5 (November 1996): 37.

[22] "27 December 1836 letter from Roothan to McSherry," in *Facing Georgetown's History*, ed. Rothman and Berraza Mendoza, 129–30.

[23] "27 December 1836 letter from Roothan to McSherry," in *Facing Georgetown's History*, ed. Rothman and Berraza Mendoza, 130.

[24] "27 December 1836 letter from Roothan to McSherry," in *Facing Georgetown's History*, ed. Rothman and Berraza Mendoza, 130.

out well. Only the condition of the farms in Maryland changed for the better through this transaction."[25]

On that note, ten years after the sale, the vice-provincial of the Missouri Province, Fr. James Oliver Van de Velde (1795–1855), toured Louisiana. He noted that the nearest Catholic church was about ten miles away from where the 272 lived and toiled.[26] He found other plantation owners who were willing to contribute toward the construction of a church, and they wanted the Maryland Jesuits to lead the effort with a $1,000 contribution. And so, he wrote these challenging words to the province:

> To tell you the truth, I am of opinion that the Province of Maryland is in conscience bound to contribute to it, and thus to provide for the salvation of those poor people, who are now utterly neglected, and whose children grow up without any notion of religion. Justice as well as charity require that their former masters should step in to aid other well-disposed persons to procure them the means of salvation.[27]

There is no recorded response from the province. For many living Descendants, it has been as painful for them to read about the spiritual abandonment of those whom the Society baptized and catechized as it has been for them to read about the sale of human life. Furthermore, the fact that the ancestors of these Descendants kept the faith of their own ancestors also teaches the Descendants today about the power of faith.

These Descendant leaders have faced this bitter history with anguish and hope: anguish that their ancestors suffered such a cruel fate, and hope that Fr. Roothan's desires for their ancestors could inspire a vision of truth and reconciliation. After sharing the truth of the past with one another, they began to envision a moral response to honor the dignity of their ancestors and repair the moral breach between them and

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[25]Thomas Murphy, SJ, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838*, Studies in African American History and Culture, ed. Graham Russell Hodges (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 202, 203.

[26] Fr. Van de Velde served as vice-provincial from 1843 and was later appointed Western Provincial. He was later appointed Bishop of Natchez in Mississippi.

[27] Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland*, 205.

the Jesuits. They envisioned a charitable foundation that could redress this sin and that could benefit future generations. Throughout the dialogue process with Jesuit provincials, they shared, "You sold our ancestors once, we do not want to sell them again. . . . we do not want to take anything for ourselves, but to invest in future generations."

III. The Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation

On March 16, 2021, the *New York Times* publicized the creation of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation. The Foundation is the Descendants' vision for restoring the dignity of their ancestors. The vision is rooted in what they learned about the 1838 sale, which included Isaac Hawkins, Hillary Ford, Henrietta Ford, and the other enslaved persons whom the Jesuits sold to plantations in Louisiana.

The mission of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation is to be "a moral and intellectual leader in the pursuit of truth, racial healing and transformation in America."[28] The three components of the foundation are as follows: (1) to fund institutional and community-based programs that teach the truth about slavery and work to reconcile the legacy of slavery in America, (2) to promote the educational aspirations of Descendants, and (3) to meet the emergency needs of impoverished elderly and/or infirm Descendants. Since Jesuit slaveholding in the United States is broader than Maryland and the 1838 sale, the foundation intends to serve all Descendants of Jesuit slaveholding.

Note too that the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation is a Descendant-led partnership with the Jesuits and as such does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Society of Jesus. However, while it is not a Jesuit sponsored work, it was founded in response to the history of the Society and will rely on this ongoing Jesuit partnership to succeed. Three Jesuits serve on this board: the current president of the Jesuit Conference, Fr. Brian Paulson (UMI), the former

[28] Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation, "What We Do," Descendants.org/what-we-do.

provincial of Jesuits West Province, Fr. Scott Santarosa (UWE), and myself. My own provincial has missioned me to the Jesuit Conference to continue the dialogue with Descendant leaders and to lead the effort to capitalize the trust that will fund the foundation.

Related to that trust, in 2019, the Descendant leaders and Jesuit provincials signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This joint memorandum "includes a meaningful financial investment of $1 billion to capitalize this Trust, with the Society of Jesus providing a significant initial contribution."[29] The Society has publicly pledged to raise $100 million to provide this initial contribution.

Despite our unity in this collaboration, Descendants and Jesuits know that there is not one Descendant voice or viewpoint on reconciling this history. To this point, on March 25, 2022, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article entitled, "For Georgetown, Jesuits and Slavery Descendants, Bid for Racial Healing Sours Over Reparations."[30] The article highlights how Descendants in search of cash payments oppose this vision for a charitable foundation. Likewise, in April of 2021, the *New York Times* published an article about Maryland Descendants who also opposed the proposed foundation.[31]

Some of the Descendants who oppose the foundation were originally part of either the GU 272 Descendants Association or the dialogue process, but then walked away from them. On a related note, in March of 2021, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* ran the story, "Descendant of Jesuit Slaves in St. Louis Applauds New Initiative but Isn't Sure How It Will

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[29] GU 272 Descendants Association and the Society of Jesus, "Memorandum of Understanding," September 20, 2019, p. 2, https://www.descendants.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/9.20.19_mou_between_jesuit_and_descendants_final_all_signatures.pdf.

[30] Lee Hawkins and Douglas Belkin, "For Georgetown, Jesuits and Slavery Descendants, Bid for Racial Healing Sours Over Reparations," *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-georgetown-jesuits-and-slavery-descendants-bid-for-racial-healing-sours-over-reparations-11648232089.

[31] Rachel L. Swarns, "A Catholic Order Pledged $100 Million to Atone for Taking Part in the Slave Trade. Some Descendants Want a New Deal," *New York Times*, April 17, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/17/us/catholic-church-jesuits-reparations.html?auth=linked-google1tap.

Affect Her."[32] The Descendant leaders and the Jesuits are well aware of these reactions and we respect these varied opinions. We also recognize that the process could not include every Descendant nor fulfill every expectation. We are confident that choosing a moral response over a legal strategy will offer the most sustainable vision for the future.

While the foundation is still in the developmental stage, we encourage Jesuits and companions to study its mission and goals. Note too that the foundation hopes to see this partnership expand well beyond the provincials and Descendant leaders to include all people related to this sinful history. Most importantly, this vision invites the whole church to wade into the troubled waters of its past. On this point, we know that Jesuit slaveholding is but one chapter in the sordid history of Catholic slaveholding. For our part, we hope to respond to this history with courage and faith.

[32] Jesse Bogan, "Descendant of Jesuit Slaves in St. Louis Applauds New Initiative but Isn't Sure How It Will Affect Her," March 10, 2021, https://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/faith-and-values/descendant-of-jesuit-slaves-in-st-louis-applauds-new-initiative-but-isn-t-sure-how/article_5d479f07-105d-55a6-afcd-465b00079a9e.html.

Past Issues of Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits

1/1 John R. Sheets, *A Profile of the Contemporary Jesuit: His Challenges and Opportunities* (Sep 1969).

1/2 George E. Ganss, *The Authentic Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Some Facts of History and Terminology Basic to Their Functional Efficacy Today* (Nov 1969).

2/1 William J. Burke, *Institution and Person* (Feb 1970).

2/2 John Carroll Futrell, *Ignatian Discernment* (Apr 1970).

2/3 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Response of the Jesuit, as Priest and Apostle, in the Modern World* (Sep 1970).

3/1 John H. Wright, *The Grace of Our Founder and the Grace of Our Vocation* (Feb 1971).

3/2 Vincent J. O'Flaherty, *Some Reflections on Jesuit Commitment* (Apr 1971).

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3/4 Jules J. Toner, *A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will* (Sep 1971).

3/5 John R. Sheets, *Toward a Theology of the Religious Life: A Sketch, with Particular Reference to the Society of Jesus* (Nov 1971).

4/1 David B. Knight, *Saint Ignatius' Ideal of Poverty* (Jan 1972).

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4/3 Ladislas Orsy, *Some Questions about the Purpose and Scope of the General Congregation* (Jun 1972).

4/4 George E. Ganss, John H. Wright, John W. O'Malley, Leo J. O'Donovan, and Avery Dulles, *On Continuity and Change: A Symposium* (Oct 1972).

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5/1–5/2 Vincent J. O'Flaherty, *Renewal: Call and Response* (Jan and Mar 1973).

5/3 Pedro Arrupe, "Art and the Spirit of the Society of Jesus"; Clement J. McNaspy, "Art in Jesuit Life," in *The Place of Art in Jesuit Life* (Apr 1973).

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7/3 William J. Connolly, *Contemporary Spiritual Direction—Scope and Principles: An Introductory Essay* (Jun 1975).

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8/1 Charles E. O'Neill, Acatamiento: *Ignatian Reverence in History and in Contemporary Culture* (Jan 1976).

8/2–8/3 Horacio de la Costa, "A More Authentic Poverty"; Edward F. Sheridan, "The Decree on Poverty," in *On Becoming Poor: A Symposium on Evangelical Poverty*, with discussions by Michael J. Buckley, William J. Connolly, David L. Fleming, George E. Ganss, Robert F. Harvanek, Daniel F. X. Meenan, Charles E. O'Neill, and Ladislas Orsy (Mar and May 1976).

8/4 Robert L. Faricy, *Jesuit Community: Community of Prayer* (Oct 1976).

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