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# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits



Living Together in Mission:  
A Symposium on Small Apostolic Communities

by

Peter J. Henriot, S.J.

Joseph A. Appleyard, S.J.

J. Leo Klein, S.J.

Published by the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,  
especially for American Jesuits working out their *aggiornamento*  
in the spirit of Vatican Council II

## THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States.

The Purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

To achieve these purposes, especially amid today's pluralistic cultures, the Seminar must focus its direct attention sharply, frankly, and specifically on the problems, interests, and opportunities of the Jesuits of the United States. However, many of these interests are common also to Jesuits of other regions, or to other priests, religious men or women, or lay men or women. Hence the studies of the Seminar, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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## CONTENTS

### LIVING TOGETHER IN MISSION:

#### A SYMPOSIUM ON SMALL APOSTOLIC COMMUNITIES

I.	INTRODUCTION: A RENEWAL OF COMMUNITY LIFE	1
	by Peter J. Henriot, S.J., Coordinator	
	A. Definition of a Small Community	2
	B. Empirical Research	2
II.	SMALL COMMUNITIES AND LARGE INSTITUTIONS: LIFESTYLE AND JESUIT APOSTOLATE	5
	by Joseph A. Appleyard, S.J.	
	A. Introduction	5
	B. The Setting	6
	1. Narrative	6
	2. Reflection	7
	C. Lifestyle	7
	1. Narrative	7
	2. Reflection	8
	D. Talking to One Another	10
	1. Narrative	10
	2. Reflection	11
	E. Membership and Commitment	13
	1. Narrative	13
	2. Reflection	14
	F. Looking for Help	15
	1. Narrative	15
	2. Reflection	16



G.	Looking for Something More	16
1.	Narrative	16
2.	Reflection	18
H.	The Recent Past	20
1.	Narrative	20
2.	Reflection	21
I.	Overall Reflections: Community and Apostolate	22
III.	A SMALL COMMUNITY WITHIN A LARGE ONE	26
	by J. Leo Klein, S.J.	
IV.	A FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCE	30
	by Peter J. Henriot, S.J.	
A.	A Province Mandate	30
B.	Apostolic Placement	31
C.	Religiously Supportive	33
D.	Questions for the Future	34
V.	CONCLUSION: LESSONS AND QUESTIONS	36
	by Peter J. Henriot, S.J.	
CHECK LISTS:	The Publications of the INSTITUTE OF JESUIT SOURCES	41
	and of the AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR	43



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LIVING TOGETHER IN MISSION:

A SYMPOSIUM ON SMALL APOSTOLIC COMMUNITIES

I. INTRODUCTION: A RENEWAL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

by

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In the years since the close of the 32nd General Congregation, not a few Jesuits have remarked that the most challenging document of the Congregation is not Decree 4, which speaks of the mission of service of faith and promotion of justice, but Decree 11, which addresses the union of minds and hearts. This document is the most challenging, they argue, because it is the most radical--calling to accountability our life in community oriented to mission.

Whether or not it is the most challenging may be a point of argument; that it is indeed radical is beyond doubt. And therefore the question of community, and the renewal of community life according to the Ignatian tradition, becomes of central importance today.

To assist in the renewal of Jesuit community life, the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality has recently published a study by Michael J. Buckley, S.J., on "Mission in Companionship: of Jesuit Community and Communion" (Volume XI, no. 4 [September, 1979]). The present symposium addresses another topic of Jesuit community, the small apostolic community. The purpose of this symposium is to contribute to an understanding of the role of the small communities in the overall renewal of Jesuit community life. In three case histories, it looks at the concrete experience of different forms of small apostolic communities and tries to explain their goals, dynamics, and consequences.

That more and more Jesuits are experiencing life in small communities

in recent years is an obvious fact, especially in the American Assistancy. But this fact requires (A) some definitions, and (B) some empirical research.

#### A. Definition of a Small Community

A definition is fairly simple. A "small community" in the sense taken in this symposium does not refer primarily to numbers but to style. *Quantitatively*, it usually means from four to ten Jesuits living under the same roof; *qualitatively*, it refers to a way of sharing life that is distinctively communal in decisions taken, house jobs done, and religious practices followed. It is an "intentional" community in the sense that members explicitly agree that living together will have certain specific consequences relating to issues such as time spent together, procedures for making decisions, openness to each other, welcome to guests, and the like.

#### B. Empirical Research

Empirical evidence of the numbers and kinds of small communities is more difficult to come by. No one to my knowledge has done a recent extensive survey of this type of community in the American Assistancy. A cursory review of ten province catalogs indicates approximately eighty communities in the Assistancy which have five to ten members and an appointed superior. Many of these communities are connected with institutional apostolates such as parishes or retreat houses, and at least some of these would not consciously consider themselves "small communities" in the sense described in this symposium. In the New Orleans Province, for example, there are seventeen communities of five to ten members, but probably none of them might be referred to as "small communities."

The phenomenon of the establishment of small apostolic communities in recent years has given rise to a variety of questions which need serious answers. For example:

1. What has led Jesuits to form these communities? What do they supply that larger, more institutional communities either do not or cannot?
2. How do these communities relate to the Ignatian charism and the

tradition of the Society? For example, what if any is the link to the older experience of the "professed house" as a particular type of Jesuit community life?

3. What is the relationship of these communities to the wider Society, to various corporate apostolates, and to the province as a whole? How are they viewed by Jesuits who live in larger communities, especially the communities from which some may have moved to form the new small communities?
4. What goes on in the day-to-day life of these communities? What is required or expected of members in order to maintain community life, and what are the consequences?

This symposium does not attempt to answer all these questions, but through some concrete case histories it hopes at least to provide insight in the direction of some answers. The first paper is done by an English professor at Boston College, Joseph Appleyard of the Jesuit Province of New England. It describes in detail the eleven-year experience of efforts to live in small community by several Jesuits teaching or in administration at a large urban university, Boston College. The second paper, by the present provincial of the Chicago Province, Leo Klein, describes an eight-year effort by another group of university personnel to build a small support community *within* the larger community of Xavier University, Cincinnati. The third and final paper is by Peter Henriot of the Oregon Province, now director of the Center of Concern, and discusses the "foundational experience" of a new community established less than two years ago in an inner-city neighborhood of Washington, D.C., with members engaged in diverse apostolates.

It may be helpful to the reader to know how these three papers developed in the Assistancy Seminar. The paper by Joseph Appleyard came first, originally in a much longer version. It was decided to shorten that paper and to complement it with two other papers. Both Leo Klein and Peter Henriot felt that the Appleyard paper raised in sufficient detail some of the same points which they would make, for example, about community meetings, about relationships to larger communities, and about lifestyle decisions. Therefore their two papers are purposely much

shorter and concentrate more on the uniqueness of their own experiences.

The question of including a paper on small communities made up of people in formation arose early in Seminar discussions. After all, the small-community experience during the years of theology study is shared by most younger Jesuits today. Many also have this experience during their collegiate years. But it was decided to focus directly here only on small apostolic communities, since many Jesuits have questions about these communities in terms of time expended to maintain them, whether or not they would appeal to older Jesuits, and so on. Small formation communities are very important, but they are different and probably require attention by themselves.

## II. SMALL COMMUNITIES AND LARGE INSTITUTIONS: LIFESTYLE AND JESUIT APOSTOLATE

by

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### A. Introduction

I wanted to call this essay "Who's Going to Cook the Eschatological Banquet?" Then a friend suggested adding: "And, Even More to the Point, Who's Going to Clean Up Afterwards?" But a title ought to be clear, so I've settled for one which promises a discussion of two phenomena of contemporary American Jesuit life, the growing number of small communities and the reexamination of the rationale for our work in educational institutions. In a number of ways the two seem to be linked.

There have always been small communities of Jesuits. Indeed, in the Society's history they may have been the norm rather than the exception. But in modern American Jesuit experience, community life has been patterned on the large institutional community of the scholasticate or the college or high school; small communities in retreat houses or parishes or city residences have tended to be organized as small-scale versions of the larger communities, variations of the model for the most part rather than alternatives. In the last ten years two circumstances have changed this situation. The first has been the reorganization of the theologates (and to a lesser extent of novitiates and collegiate programs), their move to urban and university settings, and their breakdown into small-community living situations. The second has been the emergence of *intentional* small communities, those which have grown up within larger college and high school communities or as alternatives to them. Both of these kinds of small communities have had to develop styles and organizational structures which are quite different from the older community pattern. To that extent they may be changing the contemporary Jesuit experience of the religious life.

It is the second phenomenon that I want to examine here. The theolo-

gate small-community lifestyle deserves its own study, particularly because it is now part of the ordinary experience of every American scholastic. But for the same reason it is something a scholastic cannot choose to avoid. It is also temporary, and there is a constant upward movement of its members, who enter as first-year students and leave three or four years later. The new communities which have developed on their own or within the large Jesuit colleges and high schools represent something else, a deliberate choice to look for alternative ways of living as Jesuits, by men who are generally experienced in and fully committed to their particular work. This seems to be an altogether new phenomenon in American Jesuit life, one which ought to be examined for its implications because it is likely to have a considerable effect on how we see our work in these institutions. Understanding it might also help defuse some of the strong feelings with which these small communities have often been criticized and defended.

What follows is based entirely on my own experience over the past eleven years at Boston College. It is unsystematic and intuitive as analysis, but it is the result of a fairly intensive involvement with one community process and of much discussion with similarly preoccupied Jesuits. The detailed history of that process is less important than certain features of it which, to the extent that they are characteristic of this kind of community, indicate something about the experience other groups will have and about the Society's institutions in the future. Because it is a case history of one community experience, it is best told as a narrative; the interspersed sections reflect on some of the implications of the process.

## B. The Setting

### 1. Narrative

The first talks about starting a smaller alternative to the large St. Mary's Hall community at Boston College took place in the winter and spring of 1970, when the whole community numbered about 140 Jesuits, many of whom had study-bedrooms in the student dormitories or in off-campus



houses, but who ate their meals in St. Mary's Hall and depended on it for other community activities. Several of the Jesuits who lived in the dormitories made a retreat together and enlisted others in the discussions that followed, and the group made a proposal to the rector during the summer of 1970. That same year a large house near the campus had been given to the province for the use of the B.C. Jesuits, by a couple who had been long-time benefactors of the school. The rector made the house available for the new community and it was called, after the family, Roberts House.

## 2. Reflection

The year 1970, when the idea for the new community took shape, is significant. The exhilaration of Vatican II had given way to uncertainty and even rancor. It was the year of the Cambodian invasion and of Kent State; Jesuits on campuses found themselves in the middle of demonstrations, sometimes ambiguously aligned against the policies of other Jesuits. To make things worse, Boston College had its own four-week tuition strike that spring, which brought a lot of educational and political quarrels to the surface. That was a time, too, when fellow Jesuits were leaving the priesthood in dramatic numbers. Viewed against this background of challenge and change, the move to organize a small community seems to have been a step towards achieving a sense of stability and identity as Jesuits. Most of us lived in the dorms, where you could improvise a breakfast or lunch or a late-night snack; we went out with fellow teachers or students or Jesuit friends; if we went to the main community, it was three or four times a week for dinner or to pick up mail. I recall someone saying that he felt he was at best on the periphery of the Society, and that if he was going to leave it ought to be by a conscious choice and not because he drifted out. That was a theme that kept coming up in the first discussions about Roberts House.

### C. Lifestyle

#### 1. Narrative

The community began operating during the summer of 1971 with fifteen

members, most of them in the age range of 35-50--full-time teachers and administrators, busily involved in committees, student activities, liturgies, and the other details of campus life. Seven of them lived in the house itself, the others in dorms or in the off-campus Jesuit houses. All ate dinner at Roberts House. Another half-dozen or so came fairly regularly for dinner, and were considered associate members of the community. There was a cook for the evening meal on weekdays, but at other times members shifted for themselves; several continued to eat breakfast and lunch at St. Mary's. The dishwashing and housecleaning and groundskeeping were done by members of the community, though later a part-time person was hired to keep the first-floor rooms clean. In general, the first group of community members committed themselves to eat dinner regularly at the house and to attend meetings (which were held about once a month or when something needed discussing) and community liturgies (which were irregular, usually in association with meetings or special celebrations). The community remained administratively a part of the St. Mary's community, its superior the rector of the whole Boston College Jesuit community.

## 2. Reflection

The issues which at first preoccupied everyone tended to get formulated in terms of *lifestyle*. People wanted a more satisfactory living situation and gathering place, "a dining club" several called it, whose virtues would be defined by what was thought to be missing in the larger community: it would be small, participative, hospitable, open to non-Jesuits. And so early discussions tended to be mostly about physical arrangements--the division of household chores, finances, furnishing the house, a Christmas party, a graduation lunch for some parents and students, and so forth. Criticism of the new community tended to be on the same level of lifestyle: the money it cost, the freedom with which its members entertained laypeople and especially women, the remoteness of it all from superiors' oversight, the lack of religious discipline there.

In retrospect, this preoccupation with lifestyle seems shortsighted. With the passage of time, the differences in material style between the groups seem less important. The *real* differences between the large commu-

nity and the small one were much less deliberately planned and only gradually noticed; they were not the substance of overt decisions so much as the unanticipated consequences which the new style fostered.

For instance, the decision to live in a smaller group, to eat together regularly, and to share the work of running the house had the inevitable consequence that the members of the community were thrown into each other's company in a variety of ways. As they got to know one another, as conflicts had to be resolved rather than avoided or suppressed, as friendships developed, as chance meetings in front of the refrigerator for late-night snacks turned into long discussions about work and the religious life and current issues, it became clear that the degree and kind of interrelationships which the community style fostered were good things in themselves, were in fact what the members had somehow missed in the older community and were looking for in the new community.

Another instance of the group adopting without any deliberation a style of acting that would turn out to be a crucial element of its identity was in the area of *decision making*. The process by which the original members came together, identified their discontents, and formulated a proposal for a new community was a lengthy one, involving a series of discussions over a year's time. A number of ideas were advanced, modified, rejected. Some who came to the meetings eventually left; new people joined. What all this meant was that, long before the new community was a physical reality, it had adopted as a fundamental mode of operating a consensus-based method of decision making. This seems, in retrospect, the most striking difference between the new and older communities.

In the large community, decisions had been made vertically, by the superior or someone in charge of a special area, with a certain horizontal sense of what was wanted or needed, at least when the system worked at its best. Attempts in the late sixties to formalize the horizontality by meetings, votes, polls, and surveys, or to create some sort of representative structure in the form of a community council or a board of directors, had been cumbersome and frustrating. The small community, in contrast, reverses this proportion; consensus seeking is the normal mode of handling any issue, and those who have responsibility for any part of the community

activity are expected to stay within the consensus or refer back to the whole group if a change is needed. This system empowers each individual to influence the group, gives him a stake in the decisions of the group, and--what is perhaps most important--both gives a maximum value to his own personal point of view and converts him by the very process of arriving at the decision into a full participant in the group's activity.

It seems now that the kind and level of *personal interrelationships* which small-community life, and particularly its method of decision making, made possible were really what the organizers of the new community had been looking for, rather than simply being the external features of the life-style they adopted. The real lifestyle changes were on this not-entirely-adverted-to level of personal relationships. This may be one of the most important points to consider in assessing what this kind of small-community movement can tell us about the future life of our communities.

#### D. Talking to One Another

##### 1. Narrative

In the second year of its existence, the Roberts House community members decided that they would spend a weekend together at a house owned by the B.C. Jesuits on the coast at Cohasset. From Friday to Sunday they talked about the community and B.C., in long unstructured discussions. There were liturgies, walks on the beaches, and rivalries in the kitchen. The pattern was a successful one, and the "Cohasset Weekend" turned into a regular feature of the community life; within a short time there were four each year, at the beginning and the end of each semester.

At first the principal topic of discussion at these meetings was the relationship of the Jesuit community to the academic institution Boston College. There had been a series of monthly seminars on academic subjects before Roberts House had come into existence, involving most of the same Jesuits; the Cohasset Weekends now became the place where this discussion was carried on. It was a large and prickly topic, and generated weekends full of talk without much sense of progress, though no one seemed to mind that.

In the third year of the community's existence, discussion at these weekends turned more towards personal experience of the apostolate, of religious life and priesthood. In the fall of 1973 it was decided to devote an entire weekend to faith sharing. In the opinion of many this was the most memorable of the Cohasset meetings.

Shortly after this faith-sharing weekend, in the early winter of 1973, a university planning committee invited comments from interested parties on what the future priorities of Boston College ought to be. Though the Jesuit community as such was not asked to respond, the Roberts House community was seized with enthusiasm for making some sort of declaration. The result, after some months, was a long document, "Jesuit Education at Boston College." It was a prototypical Project One rationale for our work, and in its final stages of preparation it was discussed and adopted by the whole Jesuit community.

## 2. Reflection

What was the real function of the Cohasset Weekends? One member suggested that they were a ritual, a liturgy, and that the important point was that we came together, ate, prayed, talked and walked on the beaches, whatever the results were in terms of conclusions worked out and decisions reached. Someone else said that the weekends were a symbol--the most visible embodiment--of the life of the community.

From one point of view they were an attempt to find a new way of authenticating ourselves as Jesuits. In the older style of governance in the Society, decision making, transmission of principles, and exhortation all worked vertically. An individual's sense of mission, indeed his being named to a particular job, came at the hands of a superior. It was also understood within a context of principles and motivations which were reasonably fixed and taken for granted, and were equally vertical in their relation to the province and the Society and the Church. The local institution was the embodiment of this mission. It gave meaning and context to individuals' lives.

For better or worse this verticality has weakened and in some respects disappeared, especially for Jesuits in colleges. The schools aren't "ours"

anymore, superiors can't assign men to particular jobs, rectors are not presidents, provincials are scarce figures on campuses, and tenure and professional identity have weakened our sense of being part of a group with an apostolic mission whose criteria are not simply those of successful American university administrators and teachers. It is not surprising that contemporary Jesuits need to find new ways of understanding their work and validating it as authentically Jesuit, nor is it surprising that these ways are essentially of the self-help variety. That is the process which I think has been at work in the Roberts House community's Cohasset Weekends, an informal, twice-a-semester, ongoing attempt to authenticate what it means to be a Jesuit in a university today. No large-scale answers have been found for big questions, but a number of initiatives have come out of the discussions. Perhaps the most important result has been the continual conviction of a number of Jesuits that the effort has been worthwhile, that they have experienced the Society at work.

Another point of view towards the Cohasset Weekends was suggested by a former member of the community, who saw the process in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs. In this schema physical needs are primary, then the need for security, stability, and structure; after these are satisfied the need arises for affectionate relationships, for friendship and love and a sense of belonging; finally there is a need for the kind of self-esteem and recognition from others that comes from success in work. The early Roberts House history illustrates the first stages of this process. The community gave the Jesuits who belonged to it a place of their own, a setting in which discussion could begin. There and at the Cohasset Weekends they worked out a point of view which gave them a structure and a sense of identity as a group.

The 1973-74 statement on Jesuit education continued the process. It was the expression of a new awareness of identity, and of a willingness to be identified. It asserted the continuity of the "younger" Jesuits' thinking with the traditions represented by the older community. One member called it a way of saying that we were willing to take over the family business. That its value was largely internal as a symbol of our identity was clear from the comparatively little notice that it attracted among

B.C. faculty and administrators and students. Jesuits elsewhere, though, were a ready audience for it and it had a wide circulation. Apparently they were interested in the same questions of apostolic identity as the B.C. Jesuits.

The Maslow interpretation suggests that intimacy issues would be the next to arise. That this was the case will be seen below.

#### E. Membership and Commitment

##### 1. Narrative

By its third year the community had gotten surprisingly large. Several new members had joined, and at one point twenty-three were regularly expected for dinner. Only seven or eight of these could live in the house itself, and some of the others developed quasi-community groupings in the off-campus houses where they had their study-bedrooms, and there were also some who lived at St. Mary's but came regularly to Roberts House for dinner. It became clear that expectations as to what community membership entailed had never been spelled out, and that community boundaries were quite blurred. Some came regularly to dinner and were around for all the community work, some came only now and then and helped out sporadically; some came to the Cohasset Weekends and some did not, some dropped in late and left early. And some of the older members moved unnoticed (perhaps even by themselves) to the outer edge of the community; they were around but not quite present.

The problem was not just that work was being shared unequally (though that was sometimes how it was perceived). More serious was that, given the consensus-style decision making and the importance of discussion as the primary vehicle of the community's evolution, some of the members were full-time at the center of the process, others were there only now and then, and some were just reading the minutes, as it were. And, given the cumbersome discussion-style of its decision making, the community as a whole didn't know how to say this to the members who were on the periphery. The problem was handled at the time by deciding to let the community numbers drop back a bit, and to spell out more clearly what membership in the community involved. The immediate difficulty subsided, but the center/periph-

ery tension had subsequent repercussions.

## 2. Reflection

A small community can't afford much blurring of lines between members and non-members, and there has to be a fairly high level of agreement as to what constitutes membership. The process by which the Roberts House community was formed illustrates these principles. A small group started the discussions; others were invited or heard about them; a series of meetings evolved a consensus; as concrete plans were made some dropped out and the others made a commitment to join the future community. Renovating and furnishing the house involved practically everyone in activities that were community-building in the most concrete sense. Everyone had a stake in inventing the details of community style: what was eaten, how guests were entertained, what magazines would be subscribed to, where the T.V. went, when Mass would be celebrated, who cut the grass and kept the books and put up the curtains.

A sociologist might look at this process and talk about commitment-building mechanisms--common work, shared discussion, renunciation of ties to other groups, the elaboration of a group ideology which confers a transcendent identity. Whatever we name the parts of the process, it is clear that the original members of the community experienced it and the community was the successful result. But as with any group its very success attracted others, and the problem of "second-generation" members appeared, those who hadn't had the original experience of building the community and, what was even more dismaying, didn't seem to want or need it. They were younger; their concerns were professional and personal--getting started as teachers, getting tenure--and some of them identified for certain purposes as readily with the St. Mary's Hall community as with the Roberts House group. And one reason, of course, why they didn't need to invent the Roberts House community for themselves was that it already existed.

It seems, in retrospect, that any new community is going to have to deal with the second-generation problem. The experience of the original members simply can't be reproduced whole in the new ones. The classic problem of religious orders is similar: The charism of the founder has to



be institutionalized. The small community finds itself in a tension between two courses of action. It can "institutionalize" by spelling out its conditions of membership and by reducing its demands on the participation of its members; in other words, it can go the way of traditional large communities. Or it can aim at recreating itself every year out of the energetic participation of old and new members equally. A realistic middle way would probably be to blend both courses of action: to make its principles explicit to new members, but to expect to be changed by the new members as time goes on. One thing is certainly clear: The original experience can only be preserved by being embalmed. If there is life in the community, it will evolve, as new members join and new issues arise.

One consequence, incidentally, of blurred membership lines and fuzzy expectations is that it becomes difficult for the group to confront anyone over his wayward behavior. Confronting someone is difficult enough in any circumstances, but it is impossible when there is no objective basis for deciding what is appropriate or inappropriate. In fact, it only seems likely to happen when there is a high level of agreement about the group's ideology *and* a strong sense of community created by the kind of commitment mechanisms already mentioned: working together, open discussion, giving up something for each other, and so forth.

## F. Looking for Help

### 1. Narrative

At one Cohasset Weekend during the spring of 1973, in the second full year of the community's existence, it was proposed that we needed someone who could devote time to finding ways of preserving the spirit of the weekends back in the ordinary workaday campus situation. This person would "remind" the community, between weekends, of what it had discovered about itself. The holder of the job would be called community "coordinator," not a superior but a kind of facilitator, chosen by consensus. He would also handle certain small administrative matters within the house, schedule events, keep track of guests, and be a liaison with the rector of the community and with the wider Society. This is the system Roberts House has followed up to the present. The first coordinator served for a bit more

than a year, then left B.C. for another job; the second person to hold the position has been in it from 1974 to the present.

## 2. Reflection

Was appointing the coordinator a move back towards a more institutional way of dealing with community issues, or was it an expression of a need for someone to help us go further and deeper than we had in reflecting about ourselves as Jesuits and about the community and its work? Were we saying that we had now come a distance together but we knew that we needed to go further, and that we wanted to take that risk, but couldn't do it without someone to be a prod and stimulus, to reflect us back to ourselves, to keep us--like a good spiritual director--honest and on the move?

In retrospect, it seems that we had both motives: We wanted a little more efficiency *and* we wanted to be pushed a bit in the direction of our ideals. Or, more accurately, some of us wanted one and some the other, and we were all a little fuzzy about the difference. It was a difficult job to give anyone to do, because he couldn't go much further than the community as a whole wanted to go, and the community was divided in its sense of what it wanted--a fact that is clearer now than it was at the time. Some of these divisions began to emerge a year or so later.

## G. Looking for Something More

### 1. Narrative

In the two years from the summer of 1975 to the summer of 1977 the Roberts House group fragmented into three separate communities, and then these three reorganized into two. The first move was made in 1975, when four members moved to an apartment in downtown Boston; they wanted, they said, a simpler style of life, away from the campus atmosphere, in a poorer section of the city. They still considered themselves members of the Roberts House community, came to its meetings and joined the discussions at Cohasset. A year later another group in the Roberts community decided to do something about a proposal that had been in the air for some time, to start a Jesuit community on the new campus that had been Newton College of the Sacred Heart, a mile or so to the west of Boston College, where the law

school was now located and several hundred freshmen lived. The university offered to renovate part of a house there and let the community live rent-free. Plans for this community went ahead, and four members of the Roberts House group moved there in the late winter, with three other Jesuits; the community was called Barat House after the foundress of the Religious of the Sacred Heart.

However, it became apparent, as the 1976-77 school year came to an end, that several of the Barat House group would be leaving for new jobs and sabbaticals, and that its future was hardly assured. A three-way discussion began, with the downtown group, Roberts House, and the fledgling community on the Newton campus. The discussion became an argument that brought out a number of latent issues in the whole group: strong feelings that the four who had moved downtown had weakened the original community; disagreement with the Barat House organizers over their conviction that they should develop a special apostolic function on the Newton campus; resistance on the part of the downtown group to moving to Barat House just to fill vacant rooms and to living in a community where a cook was employed for seven people; the inability of both the downtown group and the Barat House group to attract any new members from within the B.C. community; and the strains felt in the Roberts House community itself as members moved in and out and the original consensus about roles and styles weakened. Most of one Cohasset Weekend was spent on an unplanned airing of these matters. In its wake the downtown group and the Barat House group decided to join forces and split styles: they would live on the Newton campus and see what they could do in the school life there, and they would depend on each other for cooking and buying and household work. The revised Barat House community has been in existence for almost three years now. It is clear as time goes on, however, that there are now two distinct small communities, Roberts and Barat, and not one with two or three parts. A sign of this is the failure of the Cohasset Weekends to survive the split. For the first year some members of both communities continued to come, but as Jesuits new to B.C. joined the two communities, the old appeal to the camaraderie of the weekends became increasingly nostalgic and finally came to be seen as an obstacle to the growth of the individual communities, which still use

Cohasset but for their own meetings.

## 2. Reflection

Why did four members of the community move to Boston's South End? Their explicit reasons had to do with simplicity of lifestyle, interest in city problems, and desire to be a distance from the campus. Less explicit was a vaguely expressed sense that at Roberts House things were standing still. In retrospect it seems that the most basic reason for the move was a desire for a deeper sense of community, for a dependence on each other that did not seem possible at Roberts House. One observer said that the South End group left Roberts House for the same reason Roberts House left St. Mary's.

I have already referred to Maslow's thesis that, when physical needs and the need for psychological security and structure are satisfied, then the need for love and belonging arises, and finally the need for achievement in one's work. The process seems to have been operating in the Roberts House community as a whole, and to have affected the South End group first. There were bonds of friendship already among the four; they tended to be persons who needed and enjoyed a lot of community interaction (cooking on weekends, long after-dinner conversations, making plans for the next community event, and so forth). The South End situation was clearly suited to this kind of life; there they shared a small space, cooked their own meals, did their own shopping and housecleaning, had to take account of one another's schedules for the use of the car, and of course talked endlessly in a kind of non-stop community meeting.

The Barat House group split off a year later, overtly to take on an apostolic role on the Newton campus. Was the underlying motive the same need at this point in their lives for friendship and intimacy? Probably. The new community there included three members who had not been part of the Roberts House community, and it had a cook for the evening meal; but its organizers were, like the South End group, men who enjoyed and needed a lot of community participation, and its other members were certainly willing to go through all the work and talk which the community-building process required. However, they had less than a year to coalesce as a group before

job changes threatened their ability to continue.

Why did the South End group and the Barat House group eventually join forces? The overt reason was that three small communities divided by distance and subtle ideology would eventually grow apart, and that the ongoing discussion about Jesuit life and apostolate was too important to imperil by fragmenting it. In a sense, though, the South End group and the Barat House group had nowhere else to go. They were unable to attract new members from the St. Mary's or Roberts House communities--perhaps because they had already drawn off those who wanted and needed this style of life the most, perhaps because they inevitably communicated a certain righteousness as innovators and risk-takers that created a somewhat critical reaction. In the end the two groups needed each other because they were looking basically for the same thing, a deeper experience of community, of sharing each other's lives.

Somehow cooking stands out as the symbol of this dependence on each other. It divides the small community from the large one, and the more institutionally organized small community from the more participative one. The logo that guarantees purity in small-community style might almost be the slotted spoon or the wire whisk.

Older Jesuits who live in large communities are often baffled that others want to do their own cooking. To them it's a waste of time better spent on work, a drudgery that the efficient organization of community life frees them from, or at best an arcane skill someone might put to use for a late-night snack during vacation. The small-community experience on this point is quite different. Though for many cooking is recreation, it's even more important as a visible expression of depending on each other. Along with community meetings, it is the direct commitment mechanism of the small community.

But is there a danger in making cooking almost the only test of a successful small community? Is there the same danger in making small-community living the only route by which Jesuits can experience the intimacy of belonging together to a *societas amoris*? For some, certainly, living in a small community has meant a real growth in responsibility for their own lives, in identity, in intimacy, and in faith. Does this mean that every-

one has to move into a small community? Or does it mean rather that everyone should be able to take responsibility for his own life, grow in identity, experience intimacy, and strengthen his faith? And that there will be other ways to do this besides stirring pots and washing floors?

One might also question the limitations of small-community experience as a mirror of the Society's life. For one thing, it is highly selective in its membership, and depends on more traditional communities to absorb the aged, the infirm, the offbeat, the abrasive. And its history is too new and fluid. Does a small community depend on constantly being reorganized and revitalized? Can its members grow old together? Someone said that for him the crucial question is: Will you still love me when it's inconvenient? One possible answer is that we will learn how, as time goes on. Perhaps, as in a marriage, the relationships will need to be renegotiated, many times.

#### H. The Recent Past

##### 1. Narrative

Three current developments in the life of the B.C. community deserve some attention. One is the fact that for the past three summers now about a dozen members of the Roberts-Barat communities have made a common retreat. They have borrowed a beach house or hired one at off-season rates, and have lived in a style much like that of the Cohasset Weekends. Individuals have made their own retreats, but the group has come together for liturgy, dinner, and long unstructured evening discussions.

A second development has been a series of meetings, over the past three years, which have grown out of the Cohasset Weekends and have been addressed to issues of the academic apostolate, but have involved Jesuits from Holy Cross, Fairfield, and to a lesser extent Weston School of Theology. The latest ones have included scholastics interested in college and university work.

The third development has been an extensive self-study project by the whole B.C. Jesuit community, initiated by the rector, and extending to every issue that could be identified as germane to Jesuit life and aposto-

late at B.C. Committees have been at work, the program is in its second stage, and its final recommendations will emerge sometime during this academic year.

## 2. Reflection

These most recent phenomena can be related to processes already at work in the B.C. small communities. The common retreat seems to be a means toward sharing each other's lives on a deeper level. The distinctive feature of the retreat has been the striking openness of the long discussions, and the considerable ability of the participants to articulate the beliefs which they share. Someone revived the old term *amicitia spiritualis* (spiritual friendship) to describe the kind of friendship involved--not simply the bond of like-minded and complementary personalities who might have gotten along in any situation, but whatever it is that has made this community over the years the vehicle through which the experience of faith has been mediated for the Jesuits in it. These are the people, he said, with whom his journey towards God is being made, and made possible.

The three-way meetings about the academic apostolate continue the discussions which have always been a part of the Roberts-Barat community life. They mark a new phase, though, in that they look outward to other Jesuit institutions, and they now occur on a public scale that suggests much more confidence about the process and the likely results than did the halting and often self-lacerating conversations of several years ago.

The B.C. community's planning program is an effort of the wider Jesuit community, directed by a Jesuit from St. Mary's Hall, and on the surface it has nothing to do with the small communities. Doesn't it, however, have the same goal as the Roberts and Barat meetings over the past ten years: getting everyone to talk to each other about common problems, raising consciousness, increasing participation in decision making, helping Jesuits to take responsibility for their own lives and for the community's welfare? Is it feasible to imagine the whole community really doing these things? Who knows? It has taken almost ten years for the two small communities to evolve to where they are now. Perhaps in ten more years the B.C. community

will have a whole new structure. It would not be any more or less inevitable than what has happened in the last ten years.

The small communities are still closely bound to the larger St. Mary's community. Time has long since healed most of the abrasions between the groups. One rector, common budgeting, working together, some entertainment back and forth, personal friendships--these have kept the three residential communities together as one canonical and administrative entity. The current planning program both exercises these connections and exposes their fragility, particularly around sensitive topics like finances, which are so frustratingly difficult to get an overview of, and which are not easily dealt with in the consensus-style discussions which the small communities favor. Problems like this continue on, but it is not clear where they lead: to three separate communities, to continuance of the present situation, or to some other rearrangement? At the moment none of the alternatives seems more likely than the others, except probably the second.

#### I. Overall Reflections: Community and Apostolate

At one point in the course of a Cohasset Weekend discussion several years ago one of the community members said, "I get an image of us clenched like a fist and we want to smash somebody or something, only we don't know what." Powerlessness and anger were often just below the surface in much of the talk about our work at Boston College, though we were not aware of it. Frustration, we called it. It seemed that so much had changed--the university secularized, Jesuits pushed to the periphery of governance and decision making, student lifestyles liberalized to a degree unconscionable for some, the identity of priest-teachers challenged from within and without the Society as the seventies wore on. It wasn't that we wanted simply to reverse these developments, but we couldn't escape the nagging conviction that somehow things which mattered to us had been lost in the process and that we had to *do* something.

In retrospect I wonder whether most of the issues that the B.C. small communities have dealt with since their founding haven't been in one way or another the result of separate incorporation and the broader forces which brought about that development.



The agreement legally separating the Jesuit community from Boston College was signed in 1972, but the idea had been in the air for years. On the surface its main advantage to Jesuits was financial and legal: The Society could be master of its own affairs, free of responsibility for matters it could not control in the university. But, whether we knew it or not, separate incorporation also formalized two movements which had been taking shape all through the sixties: one of the university towards the secular and professional standards of American higher education, the other of Jesuits towards redefining their own religious identity in personal and communal terms. The two apparently unrelated movements--one a consequence of academic growth and success, the other of Vatican II and two General Congregations--in fact fed and provoked each other, and in opposite directions.

Individual Jesuits found themselves caught in this split. On the one side was *job*, on the other side *religious life*. It was very clear what job meant as the sixties wore on; competing in the marketplace as individuals, being judged by the same standards as everyone else, working in institutions whose values were more and more the professional values of an American academic life. It was less clear what religious life meant: change and experiment, collective and individual identity crises. Its outside and its inside were a push-pull antithesis: the great issues of the day--civil rights, the Vietnam war--demanded activism, but religious experience--in directed retreats, in one-on-one spiritual direction, in charismatic encounters--became more and more privatized. Both movements tempted Jesuits to look elsewhere than in academic life for an identity of their own as religious.

*Cura personalis* symbolized this split. For Jesuits in colleges and universities it said, in effect, that the role of the superior was to care for the religious life, the health, the personal crises of the individual, while all that pertained to his work life happened somewhere else. Now individual Jesuits have often operated this way, I am sure, integrating in a peculiarly Jesuit way secular structures with a religious point of view. But in "Jesuit" institutions we are not present only as individuals; we are undeniably some kind of community. Separate incorporation, though,

meant that we narrowed our idea of community down to what was "religious." When we went to work, we were fifty or eighty individualists in an institution that could be influenced no more by us than by any other individuals. This was the root of our feeling of powerlessness. We had officially announced our unwillingness as a community to control these institutions, but we were organized to do a communal job. Just "working at" one of these places didn't seem to be enough. We kept looking for a *collective* role in the new institutional arrangement.

This accounts for the obsessive discussion about apostolate that has been one of the hallmarks of small-community life at B.C. The people involved in these communities have been, by reason of age and professional training and the kind of jobs they hold, exactly the ones who have felt the tensions of separate incorporation most acutely. Older Jesuits could withdraw from the consequences of the change; younger ones will perhaps have known nothing different. But the ones in the middle have had to resolve the issues in their own experience. And the only resource they had was each other. Superiors had effectively declared themselves outside the discussion, and, curiously, at B.C. the Jesuits who held the top administrative jobs in the university stayed outside the discussion too. So a whole group of men in their thirties and forties and fifties developed a style of living together and talking to each other that appears, in hindsight, to have been designed precisely for dealing with the sense of powerlessness and divided identity that separate incorporation brought with it.

Hindsight also makes clear that they were inventing in their own experience a version of the process of community discernment described in the decree of the 32nd General Congregation on the Union of Minds and Hearts. That document attempts to yoke job and religious life in one phrase by describing the groups in which Jesuits live as "communities for mission" (Decree 11, no. 18). The phrase summarizes both an ideal and a problem: to live in a community so as to realize a mission. If the ten-year history of the B.C. small communities shows anything, it is that the process is a slow one, based on companionship, prayer, concrete apostolic experience, and lots of fraternal dialogue.

Separate incorporation has been more symptom than cause of the split

between religious life and work. Perhaps we should say, then, that the experience at Boston College is simply a microcosm of the situation of all American Jesuits who work in large institutions. Our needs would seem to be the same: the psychological security of belonging to a group with a clear identity, the love of close friends, and the self-esteem which comes from good work. How to satisfy these in the kinds of institutions that our schools have become is the common problem.

Small communities seem to have provided some of these needs: the security of belonging and the experience of friendship. They have not yet, at B.C. anyway, solved the conundrum of how really to work together as Jesuits in the university. They are "communities" all right; but they are not yet entirely, or at least not very self-consciously, "in mission." That problem, though, is not the crisis it was before the small communities came into existence; it is something we now seem to be able to face with patience and some confidence. Perhaps its solution lies somewhere on the next level of the community's evolution. Perhaps small communities will get beyond their preoccupation with cooking and meetings as the only way of addressing questions of Jesuit life and work. Perhaps under the overt commitments there is a covert truth that still needs to be formulated; and, when it is, small communities and large may merge into something quite unanticipated in all our visions of what's ahead.

### III. A SMALL COMMUNITY WITHIN A LARGE ONE

by

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September, 1971, saw the beginnings of a Jesuit "community within a community" at Xavier University in Cincinnati. Known as the "Jesuits in Residence" (JIR), this group remained for the next eight years centered on a ministry to students living on campus; yet the group's members always retained their membership in the main Jesuit community at the university. I will attempt here to describe the experience of this experiment in community life with a few observations on what the experimenters learned.

The JIR was formed in response to several needs. A strong program of province renewal, instituted in the late sixties by the provincial, had led by 1970 to a call for community evaluation of its lifestyle and ministry. The Jesuit community at Xavier struggled toward a series of plans for future development called for by the province assembly. This process revealed how difficult the community found it to make any but the most bland statements about itself without upsetting one or other group within the community. Some plan-statements eventually emerged, but along with them emerged a small group of community members who had found consensus among themselves on what they perceived as values for ministry, community life, and prayer.

This small group chose not to move out of the main community to form a separate community. Rather, they wished to show their sincerity by implementing their values within the larger community structure.

However, a coincidence of history provided a creative alternative for them. During the late sixties the number of Jesuits residing in the student residence halls with pastoral and disciplinary functions had declined almost to the zero point. They found it impossible to reach the students pastorally while they still retained disciplinary responsibility for a

much more permissive undergraduate population.

Through the spring and summer months of 1971 a nucleus of the original consensus group and other Jesuits who had later joined the Xavier community gathered together in a decision-making process on the possibilities of moving as a group into the student residence halls. Of the sixteen--all of them with full-time university positions--who considered the move, eight eventually withdrew. The remaining eight chose to live in the dorms, not as counsellors or prefects but as neighbors to the students: to learn about the students by sharing their life and to be whatever help they could by an adult presence. While the eight Jesuits' rooms were scattered among three student residence halls, they were given a two-room suite in one hall which provided a gathering place for recreation, discussion, and prayer.

In the process of arriving at the final decision, a great deal of support was given to the sixteen and later to the eight by the rector of the main Jesuit community. He encouraged them to make a careful decision and joined them in a three-day communal discernment leading to the decision. He was careful to explain their eventual move to the other members of the main community, pointing out how the work of this group formed a part of the apostolate of the total Jesuit community.

The JIR began its life with enthusiasm. They gathered every evening about eleven for common recreation. They met weekly for concelebration and with the same frequency for some sort of community gathering: either discussion or shared prayer. On two evenings a week they had dinner together in the student cafeteria. (They ate their other meals in the main Jesuit dining room.) Within the first year of their foundation they began the custom of going away together three times a year for a day at a time. These days were devoted to sharing their life experience of the preceding four months and to evaluating the quality of the JIR community life. Through the eight years of these days of reflection, the rector of the Jesuit community usually accompanied the group, a source of much support for the members of JIR.

In the eight years which followed its founding, the JIR came to incorporate several members who, for one reason or another, chose to live in the main community residence but who joined the dorm residents for their

group activities. While this went beyond the original "charter," it never seemed to distract the JIR from its orientation to the residence halls.

A more troubling evolution in the life of the JIR came with the changes in membership caused by the yearly province list of assignments. Some of the original group moved on to other apostolates; some men newly assigned to Xavier were invited to join JIR and accepted. Membership grew to thirteen one year.

Only the perspective of time helped the group to realize that the newcomers (with all the best will in the world) had missed out on the original covenant which had formed the group. Some changes in the original commitment to group activities bothered a number of the "founding fathers." The newcomers, for their part, insisted that they couldn't go along with a given activity just because the original group had agreed to it. Throughout the life of the group this issue remained a source of uneasiness.

While some of the group's activities changed or dropped, others remained in place with continued support. These were the three-a-year days of sharing, the weekly concelebration, and the nightly recreation. The days of sharing were always well attended (close to a hundred percent each time) and provided something akin to a mutual account of conscience, carefully made and respectfully received.

Whenever the JIR evaluated itself it never failed to review its relationship with the main Jesuit community. Any criticism of the larger group was always balanced by a probing self-examination on whether JIR members were fulfilling their own responsibilities to the community as a whole. The large community did not seem to resent the presence of the JIR. As a matter of fact, individuals in the JIR were often called upon to take responsibility in the large community: chairing committees, implementing projects, serving as house consultants. But a lingering guilt continued to dwell in the breasts of some JIR members that they should be contributing more to the larger group.

It may well have been that lingering sense of responsibility to the large community which kept watch for the day when the JIR members might abandon any separate identity and, while still living among the students, focus their Jesuit community life, prayer, and discussion within the large

community residence. The spring of 1979 saw the ultimate vote of JIR to "self-destruct"--less out of frustration than with a sense that at least some of its original goals had been achieved.

The JIR was probably more of a success in building its own community than in forming apostolic consensus based on experience of residence-hall life. The students were generally happy to have the Jesuits around, and many profited from the pastoral presence. But there remained among the Jesuits quite a spectrum of attitudes on how to live with the students, without too much serious discussion of the implications of that spectrum.

Perhaps one major lesson emerges from the experience of the JIR. The values of small community can be achieved to some extent by a relatively small group which "caucuses" within the larger group without separating itself from that larger group. Members of the smaller group are not "lost" to the large community and yet are not forced to the least common denominator currently imposed by the pluralism of large university communities. Intimacy with one's fellow Jesuits, shared prayer and planning, and the continuity of a regular recreational group can flourish within a larger structure and enrich it at the same time.

#### IV. A FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCE

by

Peter J. Henriot, S.J.

In late August, 1978, five Jesuit priests and one scholastic moved into an old two-story row-house on the corner of 4th and K Streets, N.E., in Washington, D.C. Thus began the "K Street Community," an apostolically diverse small community situated within a poor neighborhood.

Since the K Street Community is still quite young (only sixteen months old as of this writing), the reflections which follow can be nothing more than a description of the "foundational experience." It is, of course, the description of the experience as perceived by one member; the reflections, however, have been discussed and refined in community dialogue. I want to highlight here a few characteristics of the community which emerged during the discernment of the founding period, since these point to some of the strengths which I believe we have felt as well as to some of the challenges which we continue to face.

##### A. A Province Mandate

The first characteristic to note about the K Street Community is that it exists as the result of a mandate of the province. In 1976 the Maryland Province had approved as one of its goals in the next few years the establishment of three new communities, in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, described as "apostolic communities of slender means." In response to this goal, the Provincial Assistant for Social Ministries coordinated a series of meetings with twelve to fifteen Jesuits living and working in the Washington area, all of whom had previously expressed an interest in participating in such a community. Coming together from September, 1977, to June, 1978, we reflected on several points relating to the style and tone of the community, its location, and the process necessary to establish it.

The "province mandate" characteristic was symbolized early on by a



meeting with Al Panuska, Maryland Provincial, who indicated certain guidelines he wanted to be followed by the new community. Among the guidelines were, for example, religious spirit, regular Eucharist and community meetings, a simple lifestyle which included sharing of housework, and hospitality, especially for other Jesuits. He also stressed that he wanted the process of establishing the house to be open so that (1) any Jesuit in the area could attend the meetings (notices were put into the Province Newsletter) and (2) other communities would not feel that they were being "judged" or "rejected." (This process was discussed with local superiors in the area.) This made us particularly sensitive not to give an appearance of being a small group "running away" from regular community life or cut off from the rest of the Washington Jesuit scene.

Once the provincial had confirmed the membership of the group of six--following the choices which individuals made as community specifics became clearer--he appointed a local superior. The six members included a parish pastor, a special student, and four men engaged in national offices relating to the Society. The role of the superior has been quite active both internally (for example, by coordinating community meetings and holding the community accountable to its decisions) and externally (for example, by attending meetings of province superiors and by relating to other Jesuit houses). While recognizing that in this small group we all had responsibilities for each other, we also experienced that in the tradition of the Society the superior takes on some additional specific care for the individuals as individuals and for the community as a "whole" that is much more than simply a sum of the individuals.

#### B. Apostolic Placement

Certainly one of the most important decisions made during the early discernment meetings was to locate the new community in relationship to an ongoing apostolate of the Society. We felt that it would not be good to be in a "vacuum," a group of men living in but not related to our neighborhood. Desiring a Jesuit apostolic situation of some sort, we decided to locate close to St. Aloysius Parish and Gonzaga High School. The fact that some members of the community were to be related to these institutions gave

us a reason for being in the black neighborhood where we finally settled.

How could we relate to the neighborhood? This question was--and still is--one that occupies a lot of our attention. The pastor of St. Aloysius Parish is a member of our community, as is one of the associates (the scholastic who was ordained ten months after the community was set up). One scholastic who has lived with us has taught in the high school; another has worked in a parish-based apostolate with the poor. But the remaining members all have full-time jobs out of the neighborhood, jobs which require considerable travel away from the city. So we have had to work at finding ways of being present to the neighbors. We made a conscious decision not to set up an institutional presence; that is, the house would not be a rectory or social-service center or local meeting place. We would live as neighbors among neighbors. This has meant for us such things as getting to know the youngsters, welcoming visitors, attending wakes and funerals, helping out during a bad snowstorm, loaning and borrowing tools, asking for help with our stalled car, taking a common concern about the appearance of our front yard and corner, and the like. We have grown in this effort, through some idealism and frustration, toward more realism.

One important consequence of the apostolic placement has been a conscious effort for a modest lifestyle. "Being with the poor" continually challenges us regarding our needs and various practical decisions about the house. To be honest, we have tensions about what this should mean. But we have found that answers come, not in reflections on abstract ideals, but in decisions on concrete circumstances. This has meant doing our own construction work (the rented house required considerable attention), shopping, cooking, and cleaning for ourselves, using public transportation, and watching closely a modest monthly budget with an eye to living somewhat close to how most of our neighbors live. For example, a key criterion for furnishings has been the question of whether the neighbors would feel comfortable visiting in this house. Similarly important, however, was whether fellow Jesuits would also feel comfortable visiting us. Appearing "awkwardly different" to either group could be a sign that a simple lifestyle appropriate to a Jesuit had not yet been achieved.

### C. Religiously Supportive

A characteristic which we all felt from the start should be strong in our community life together was an explicit support for our religious life and for the work to which we were missioned. The six of us were extremely busy people but desirous of something more in our lives as Jesuits. And in community interchanges we saw the need to take steps to structure-in that "more." In both the preliminary meetings and the meetings of our first year, there was frequent discussion of the tension between the poles of "community" and "mission." Which comes first? In our lives as Jesuits, should we consider our common life together as the priority, and the apostolic work as secondary; or is our work to take precedence over the demands of community? The question, as everyone experienced, has very concrete consequences on decisions relating to expenditure of time, psychic energy, and presence. We tended to answer the disjunctive question by saying that there cannot be an absolute rule of priorities since to be a Jesuit is to be a man in community on mission (Decree 11, nos. 14 and 15, of the 32nd General Congregation).

In our reactions to the structures and practices of religious community, we have experienced many differences--some of temperament, some of ideology, some of theology, some of age. (A common taking of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test revealed an interesting mix of personality types in the community.) But we have followed, with surprising faithfulness, these structures:

1. Weekly community meetings for house business, discussion or faith sharing, liturgy.
2. Regular evening liturgies and occasional shared prayer.
3. Every six to eight weeks, a full day "away" for prayer, discussion, and recreation.
4. September and May, a discernment weekend "away" for evaluation and planning.

The common commitment to these structures as a high priority for all of us has, in itself, been experienced as a tremendous religious support for each other.

Our communal discernment and faith sharing have moved through items relating to community relationships, personal faith, apostolic commitments, and Jesuit development. When one man was preparing for ordination, we reflected on the meaning of priesthood for each of us. When another was to pronounce vows, we shared our growth in personal understandings of contemporary religious life. Frequently, we simply take time to answer: What is moving at this moment in my life, my work, my community?

By way of a personal reflection, many people have asked me about the *time* it obviously takes to be part of such a community, time taken away, in fact, from my regular apostolate. I can honestly answer that, whereas I probably have spent quantitatively less time in my work, qualitatively I have felt more present to it precisely because of the religious support offered by the life of the community.

#### D. Questions for the Future

We have concluded each "day away" with a communal discernment exercise in which we try to capture the moments of light and darkness in our discussions and life together. Reflecting on the "foundational experience" of our community, the preliminary discussions, and the first year and a half together, we have noted the following areas in which more growth is called for.

First, how do we provide for continuity and integration of new members into the "foundational experience," especially as original members move on? Three scholastics and a novice have lived with us for periods of three to six months. The community now numbers seven--the physical limit. The mix of people is young, all under fifty, and from three provinces. Given our jobs, there will surely be future mobility. We need continually to discern new directions.

Second, with or without new members, as we live together we face new challenges. Personal relationships shift with growth, apostolic experience, and so on. The level of interchange and communal discernment grows deeper--or becomes superficial. What are the implications for Jesuit life experiences? For example, we have discussed the possibility of making our

annual retreat together at some future time.

Third, how do we relate to the larger Society, in the Washington area, the province, and beyond? Our experience of small community heightens our awareness of the constant challenges for all individual Jesuits and communities to keep in contact with brothers in other apostolates and living situations.

Fourth, what are we being called to regarding the consequences of "being with the poor"? How is this affecting our apostolates? We must not "play act" at being poor, but are there further steps we might take to simplify our lifestyle or at least to avoid "escalation"? One topic we are currently discussing--with very mixed clarities and feelings--is a structure for common personal budgets.

Fifth, what will be our relationships to the neighborhood as it changes over the next few years? Inner-city Washington, like many large northern cities, is "going white," and our neighborhood--not very far from the grounds of the Capitol--will inevitably be affected. What will this transition mean for us?

These and other questions the K Street Community will be facing after the initial excitement of our "foundational experience" passes. The characteristics I have sketched here will, I believe and hope, influence our search for answers. It is certainly too early to say what a thorough evaluation might reveal of this experience. But speaking personally, as a Jesuit, I have found it good to be part of the experience.

## V. CONCLUSION: LESSONS AND QUESTIONS

by

Peter J. Henriot, S.J.

*Small Is Beautiful* is the catchy title of a very influential contemporary treatise on development, as well as the confused slogan of a well-known political figure on the West Coast. But is it also the honest judgment which can be made of recent Jesuit life in small communities? Based on the experience sketched in the three papers of this symposium, it seems fair to say that "life *can* be beautiful" in small communities--but only if it is worked at!

Decree 11 of the 32nd General Congregation stressed several elements of structure, practice, and quality of life together which are essential if renewal of Jesuit community life is to take place. All of our communities, in the American Assistancy and elsewhere, have moved in varying degrees along this path of renewal in the past several years. Part of the difficulty--and the ease--of working for the renewal is that we do so in the context of simultaneous calls for renewal of community in our Church and in our world. The task is big, but many are working on it.

As indicated in our introduction, this symposium has aimed at contributing to an understanding of the role of small apostolic communities in the overall task of renewal of Jesuit community life. Efforts at living in these communities are one way--and by no means the only or the most effective way--of promoting that renewal. Much more obviously could this be said about "living together in mission" in small apostolic communities. But the purpose of this symposium has not been to describe an ideal but to report on experience.

The three papers have shown several *common* emphases and concerns in describing very distinctive situations. Each community placed an importance on the members' being supportive of each other in their growth in religious life and in apostolic activity; each valued a deep level of sharing about the members' experiences; and each faced similar challenges

of relating to larger communities and of integrating new members. The "human scale" of life together has commonly brought out both good and bad points in the members of the communities, through what might be described as the "chemistry of closeness."

There were also *different* emphases and concerns among the three cases. The issue of "simple lifestyle" (poverty considerations) varied in different groups, as did the explicit attention to the role of a local superior. Dependent upon the character of the community and apostolates involved, the degree of "life together" also varied. Each case also showed a uniqueness which can be attributed not to different structures and practices but to different personalities, interests, and options of the members.

Throughout the American Assistancy, as well as in other parts of the world, Jesuit effort at small apostolic community is probably being experienced with much the same successes and failures, ease and difficulty, as are seen in the cases reported in this symposium. Major questions about this effort remain, those mentioned in our Introduction and others suggested by the descriptions of the three cases. Is this only an ephemeral experience, a passing fad? Is it too expensive, a drain on the financially strapped institution of a large community? Is it a distraction from serious work? Is it elitist? What effect has it had on community life in larger houses? Is it a charism to live in such a community or simply a consequence of natural desire or personality?

In my judgment, the small-community phenomenon does appear to be here to stay--indeed, to grow--in religious life in general and in Jesuit life in particular. One clear lesson we can learn from the reflections offered in this symposium is that very conscious attention to the *motivation* for this form of community living is necessary in order for its *maintenance* in the stream of religious renewal. For us Jesuits, that motivation must be very Ignatian, as expressed in the document on the Union of Minds and Hearts: "Where, then, do we begin? We begin with the Ignatian insight that the unity of an apostolic body such as ours must be based on the union of each and all with God in Christ. For if we have come together as a companionship, it is because we have, each of us, responded to the call of the Eternal King" (Decree 11, no. 6, of the 32nd General Congregation).





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