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# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Jesuits and Parish Ministry

PETER D. BYRNE, S.J.

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the studies, 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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The opinions expressed in *STUDIES* are those of the individual authors thereof. Parentheses designate year of entry as a Seminar member.

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JESUITS AND PARISH MINISTRY

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*Peter D. Byrne, S.J.*

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

29/3 · MAY 1997

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### *For your information . . .*

Is there a "Jesuit culture"? By "culture" I mean a pattern or patterns of norms, values, practice, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of Jesuits as individuals and of the Society of Jesus as a group, and that provide a frame of reference for interpreting the meaning of events and actions that occur within the Society or that impinge upon it from the outside.

Several recent articles prompt the question. The first article appeared as reflections by Myron Pereira, S.J., editor of *Jivan*, the ever thoughtful and provocative journal of the South Asian Assistancy. The second is by Andrew Hamilton, S.J., who teaches at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne, Australia. That article appears in the *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, the new journal edited in Rome by Joseph Tetlow, S.J., which at the same time continues in a different form the work of CIS, the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, established by Father Arrupe at the end of Vatican II and the Thirty-first General Congregation. I commend both articles, "Is There Such a Thing as Jesuit Culture?" in *Jivan* for October-November, 1996, and "Our Way of Proceeding," in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 7, no. 84 (Jan. 1997). The latter article, in its description of Jesuit spirituality, brought three requested responses, one from Sister Elizabeth Mary Strub, the former superior general of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus; another from Father Damian Sassin, S.J., who worked among the marginalized in the Philippines and is now the mission procurator of his German province; and the third from Dr. Marie R. Joyce, a clinical psychologist at the School of Social Sciences at the Australian Catholic University.

The *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* offers an international forum on the spirituality rooted in the Spiritual Exercises; it directs its articles primarily to members of the Society, to members of other Ignatian congregations and of Christian Life Communities, and to lay men and women of the Ignatian apostolic network. This journal appears in English, Spanish, and French three times a year and is published by the secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality at the Jesuit Curia in Rome. It is more than worth the yearly subscription price of \$23.00. The first issue has two articles by United States authors, and one each from Brazil, Guatemala, and Australia.

The May-June meeting of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is always somewhat bittersweet. It is the last meeting for those members who are completing their three-year terms on the seminar, and it is the time at which we announce the names of the new members who will become part of the seminar in the fall. This year four men leave the Seminar: Peter Byrne, whose essay appears in this issue of *STUDIES*; Frank Clooney and Dennis Hamm, whose essays appeared in earlier issues;

and Ernest Ferlita, whose study on the uses of the imagination and the Spiritual Exercises will constitute a future issue. I am sure I express the thanks of all our readers for the contributions these men have made to STUDIES: the members of the seminar will surely miss their presence and participation at our meetings. The new members are Richard Clifford (NEN), Gerald Fagin (NOR), Edward Oakes (MIS) and Timothy Toohig (NEN). I shall tell you more about them in the September issue of STUDIES.

*John W. Padberg, S.J.*

*Editor*

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# JESUITS AND PARISH MINISTRY

## Introduction

**Y**ou do parish work? I thought you were a Jesuit.” This reaction frequently surfaces when Jesuits mention that they minister in a Jesuit parish. In the public mind and imagination, so identified are Jesuits with education that people are often surprised to learn that parish ministry is a key work of the Society of Jesus. Many Jesuits wonder to themselves why we are in this ministry, unaware of how dramatically it has changed in the last twenty-five years, how complex it has become, and how much preparation and training the pastoral ministry now requires. Ignatius himself did not want parishes to be a Jesuit work. In his time a pastorate entailed a lifelong commitment, which would have severely inhibited availability for other ministries and missions. Also, caring for a parish was equivalent to holding a benefice, along with its accompanying canonical obligations and assured revenues, factors contrary to Ignatius’s ideals of poverty.<sup>1</sup>

Yet decree 19 of General Congregation 34 (GC 34), pointing out that nearly 3,200 Jesuits serve in more than two thousand parishes throughout the world, affirms that a Jesuit parish ministry is, under certain circumstances, an appropriate way to (1) serve faith, (2) promote justice, and

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<sup>1</sup> John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 73f.

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*Peter D. Byrne, S.J., last year completed a term as rector and president of St. Michael’s Institute in Spokane, Wash., and is now engaged in a sabbatical year while awaiting a new assignment. Previously he had been pastor at St. Leo Parish in Tacoma and St. Joseph Parish in Seattle. He can be reached through the provincial office of the Oregon Province, 2222 N.W. Hoyte Street, Portland, OR 97210-3286.*

especially (3) to live with the poor and to be in solidarity with them.<sup>2</sup> Decree 19 confirms a judgment formulated at a conference at Santa Clara University in the summer of 1987:

Leaders are beginning to realize what we practitioners have always known: that the average Catholic gets his or her first and lasting impressions of "church" from the parish; that it is there that the first incorporation into the Body of Christ takes place; it is there that the daily dramas of life, union, death, and resurrection are celebrated; and it is there that struggle, failures, and reconciliations occur. In short, they are finally seeing the parish as the vital and critical hand that first rocks the ecclesiastical cradle, and so its importance can hardly be overestimated.<sup>3</sup>

My purpose in writing this essay is to show that parish ministry, in addition to being personally very challenging and satisfying, fulfills the Society's criteria for ministry, namely, the service of faith, the promotion of justice, and solidarity with the poor. I especially want to illustrate how these three elements become blended and integrated in a Jesuit parish and also to suggest other creative possibilities. My primary audience here is Jesuits and their religious and lay colleagues currently engaged in Jesuit parishes. I hope these words impart encouragement for their ministry and stimuli for creative adaptation in their parishes. But I also speak to other Jesuits—scholastics, brothers, and ordained priests—who are considering parish ministry for the first time or as a change from past work. I hope they find information here to help their discernment. I will offer personal stories to illustrate the deeply satisfying and creative nature of this ministry and extensively appeal to decree 19 and other documents of GC 34 that provide a clear rationale for parish ministry. Since this ministry, and especially the role of pastor, requires preparation and training, I offer some suggestions that, on the basis of my experience as a pastor, I am convinced are of vital importance. I conclude with two questions and hazard some answers to each one.

Other than six years as rector of St Michael's Institute in Spokane, a first-studies program associated with Gonzaga University, all of my Jesuit ministry involved parish work. During special studies at St. Louis University in the late sixties, I lived and worked with Monsignor John Shocklee at St. Bridget of Erin, a poor parish in the heart of an African-American neighborhood in St. Louis. John Shocklee mentored many young Jesuits during their

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<sup>2</sup> GC 34, decree 19, "Parish Ministry," *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), §§420f. (p.199). All the citations from GC 34 are taken from this source.

<sup>3</sup> William J. Bausch, *The Christian Parish* (Mystic, Conn.: XXIII Publications, 1980), 1.

philosophy and theology studies. In the course of my own theology studies at Woodstock in New York City and the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, I worked in diocesan parishes. Then for fifteen years after ordination I was co-pastor and pastor in three Jesuit parishes of the Oregon Province: St. Leo's in Tacoma, St. Vincent de Paul's (The Downtown Chapel) in Portland, Oregon, and St. Joseph's in Seattle. I loved this ministry. In the Oregon Province the promotion of peace and justice often sprang to life first in our parishes, where solidarity and friendship with the poor was fact and not rhetoric. It demanded more than its share of paperwork, headaches, failures, and frustrations; but the work was mostly with people—people at their best, their most courageous, their most vulnerable, their most honest and tender. It was real. At the end of nearly every day, I had seen and heard enough of people's lives to fill my nights and days with awe, respect, and gratitude. The faith of individuals and the faith of a whole community were at the heart of this ministry.

## I. The Service of Faith

**T**he mission of any parish is the creation of a covenant community centered on the Eucharist and God's Word, dedicated to pastoral care of its own members and to the service of the wider neighborhood, city, and world. Building and nurturing a faith community are the first services of faith offered by every parish, including every Jesuit parish, rich or poor. Every parish has this in common. Since the fundamental sacrament is the Church itself, realized in a specific local community, the power of this "sacrament" ensures that other discrete sacramental moments, from baptism through anointing, have efficacious power.

### **The Service of Faith through a Sacramental Community**

The sense of sacrament in general and the Eucharist in particular shapes all Catholic parish life. When a whole community celebrates the Eucharist with artistry, the sacramental expression awakens and transforms that community. When the assembly does the hard work required of it, and Jesuits and other liturgical ministers become "masters of ceremony," the whole parish flourishes and is energized for its mission outwards.

In nearly every Jesuit parish, including St. Joseph's in Seattle and St. Leo's in Tacoma, the assemblies, the Jesuits, and their lay and religious colleagues have given top priority to liturgy. To attend the Holy Week Triduum in most Jesuit parishes is to experience the power of the Catholic

heritage to stir and evoke religious imagination. Social consciousness and the call to justice sharpen as the community lives the ninety days from Ash Wednesday and Lent, through Easter, beyond to the missioning of the community at Pentecost.

## The Service of Faith through the Ministry of the Word

*My heart rouses  
 thinking to bring you news  
 of something  
 that concerns you  
 and concerns many men. Look at  
 what passes for the new.  
 You will not find it there but in  
 despised poems.  
 It is difficult  
 to get news from poems  
 yet men die miserably every day  
 for lack of what is found there.*

—William Carlos Williams

It is not always easy to “get news” from Scripture, from texts of another time and another culture; but people are dying or certainly withering—spiritually and metaphorically—“for lack of what is found there.” Every Sunday offers a guaranteed forum for proclaiming and breaking open the Word of God, for telling the story of Jesus and continuing to tell it until the listeners comprehend it. This is a valuable base for the mission of the Society, for those *consueta ministeria* of the Word articulated in the *Formula of the Institute*. Here is a base for the preaching of justice—consistently, persistently, until action ensues.

The hunger for God’s Word and for provocative preaching continues to grow in the lives of contemporary Catholics and points to the importance of this ministry. Strong preaching in a Eucharistic community is what is needed, preaching that appeals to the imaginative consciousness on both a personal and a communal level, that both forms and transforms a community of faith. Walter Brueggemann, the biblical scholar, is emphatic about the importance of preaching when he writes as follows:

The practice of such poetic imagination is the most subversive, redemptive act that a leader of a faith community can undertake. . . . This work of poetic alternative in the long run is more crucial than one-on-one pastoral care or the careful implementation of institutional goals. This is because the

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work of poetic imagination holds the potential of unleashing a community of power and action.<sup>4</sup>

Especially important for evangelization is the preaching at funerals and weddings. In the Northwest these two moments are often ecumenical events where many unchurched people gather. People are unusually open and vulnerable to the religious dimension of life at these times. A well-prepared, prayerful homily at these moments often stirs people to ask important religious questions, inquire about the Catholic faith, or even return to the community after years of absence.

### The Service of Faith and Formation of Lay Ministry

One summer at St. Leo's, our Jesuit staff participated in a six-week seminar on leadership. The Jesuit conducting the seminar asked us, "Are you willing to forgo the satisfaction of some personal one-on-one ministry, to step back and assume responsibility for the whole, while training others for ministry?" He was essentially asking, "Will you take the time to *form* ministers?" "Will you be Jesuits not only *for* others but Jesuits *with* others?" This seminar was held in 1973, long before GC 34's decree *Cooperation with the Laity in Mission*. It was a Copernican shift for me, a shift from direct ministry to the formation of our lay and religious colleagues.

One central task the pastor of a Jesuit parish oversees is the formation of a discerning and ministering community. This unfolds in a climate of trust, respect, freedom, and prayer. The pastor imbues the staff and the pastoral council with the skills of discernment, so that the key decisions of the community flow from this central Ignatian gift. Then he sees that other committees of the parish mature in this method. The long-term benefits of this formation in discernment are invaluable. I think Jesuits have a natural appreciation for the formation required in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program. We know how long it takes to form an alternative consciousness in people, that the Christian way is learned over a lengthy period of time and requires a blend of the affective, intellectual, mythic, and liturgical components.

Another of the chief leadership roles of the Jesuit pastor and parish staffs is to call every member to his or her fundamental baptismal right and responsibility to assume an active role in the parish community and in family, professional, and civic life. One key sign of healthy pastoral leadership is an atmosphere where parishioners come forward to offer their energy, ideas, and talents for the mission of the community.

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 96.

In nearly every American parish around the United States, in nearly every Jesuit parish, an explosion of lay ministries has taken place. This development and formation of lay ministers in Jesuit spirituality has important results. For example, the staffs of both St. Leo's and St. Joseph's are almost entirely lay, both parishes have lay administrators, and most staff members have made the Exercises in Everyday Life and now in turn direct others in this retreat. Most staff members make an eight-day directed retreat each year. They are well versed in Ignatian spirituality and the practice of discernment. This formation is typical of nearly every Jesuit parish.

But there is a serious caveat. The main focus of lay ministry, and hence of lay formation, is not primarily to do the ministry of the parish community, but to work for the reign of God in their families as well as in their social and civic milieus. Tom Sweetser, S.J., observes that "this call for volunteers and an emphasis on *parish* ministry should be secondary to stressing holiness in home and workplace."<sup>5</sup> Decree 13 of GC 34 stated that Jesuits are to offer "[themselves] in service to the full realization of this mission of the laity."<sup>6</sup> We need to offer our gifts of spiritual direction to those people who can influence public policy, invite them to make the Exercises, and provide the liturgical nourishment they need for their service and ministry to the world. Sweetser adds:

Imagine what a parish would look like if, at every Mass, activity, and program, the rallying cry was, "You are the grace bearer. Take the Good News to those who really need it the most, those in your homes, offices, malls, freeways, and airports. Practice the Gospel readings, share a peace greeting, extend Eucharist, be church to those you meet. We will help you. We will listen to what happens. We will accept whomever you bring back to our next gathering. We are behind you, but it is in your hands. No one else can touch the people you will interact with this day, this week, this month."<sup>7</sup>

Except for presiding at the Eucharist and other sacraments, women serve in every possible role in many diocesan parishes as well as those under the leadership of Jesuits and other religious communities. Women preach and preside at Communion services, head finance commissions, chair pastoral councils, and play critical roles in the mission and ministry of every parish. Patty Repikoff well exemplifies a woman who has served in Jesuit parishes and who has been formed in Ignatian spirituality. She graduated

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Sweetzer, "The Parish of the Future," *Commonweal*, September 13, 1996, 23.

<sup>6</sup> GC 34, decree 13, "Cooperation with the Laity in Mission," §331.

<sup>7</sup> Sweetser, "Parish of the Future," 23.

from Gonzaga University in Spokane in 1971, then went on to serve as a Jesuit lay volunteer in Texas and at St. Leo's for three years. Next she became an associate pastor at St. Leo's for nearly twelve years. In 1990 Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen appointed her parochial minister of St. Therese's parish in Seattle. No matter what her official title may be, she is the de facto pastor of the parish. Two Jesuits from Seattle University serve as sacramental ministers. While all this is good, the role of women in a Jesuit parish—and in any Catholic parish—is far more challenging and problematic than the general question of lay ministry. The pain, anger, sadness, disgust, and bone weariness of women continue to deepen. A Jesuit parish affords a crucial forum for listening to women and their experience, for evoking, supporting, and nourishing their gifts in the community.

At the same time we must be very mindful of men in parish ministry. A danger is always present that they will lose interest. We are exposed to the worst of both worlds: women cannot be ordained and offer their many gifts in priestly ministry, while parish staffs become overfeminized. We could easily become a church mainly of women headed by male priests. Pastors should make concerted efforts to invite men to make the Exercises, as well as to provide for them other spiritual formation peculiar to their needs. Kenneth Woodward, a Catholic layman and religion editor of *Newsweek*, expresses this concern. He notes that many people turn to the church after an absence when they have children, that the parish reaches adults through their children, and hence “addresses adults as parents.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to add this caution: “In short, religion in American life is not only privatized; it is also domesticated, identified with the side of life away from work, from the civic and the public; away from the side which, rightly or wrongly, is identified with the masculine” (ibid.). The times and GC 34 invite us to apply ourselves to the formation of both women and men. And that invitation must include formation for the promotion of justice.

## II. The Promotion of Justice

*Defenseless under the night  
Our world in stupor lies;  
Yet dotted everywhere,  
Ironic points of light  
Flash out wherever the Just*

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth L. Woodward, “Gender and Religion—Who’s Really Running the Show?” *Commonweal*, November 22, 1996, 10.

*Exchange their messages:  
 May I, composed like them  
 Of Eros and dust,  
 Beleaguered by the same  
 Negation and despair,  
 Show an affirming flame.*

—W. H. Auden

GC 32, especially in its decree 4, called upon every Jesuit ministry to undertake the promotion of justice. GC 34, in its decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice*, confirmed this thrust, while adding some critical nuances. All my experience has confirmed the belief that a Jesuit parish can be an excellent base for this mission. In the Oregon Province, parishes have frequently led the way.

### The Promotion of Justice at St. Leo's

An abundance of parishioners from St. Leo's are involved in direct ministry to the poor and in ministry for social justice and structural change. They fit Auden's description of ordinary people "beleaguered by negation and despair" who add light to neighborhoods "defenseless under the night" and to people who often "lie in stupor." St. Leo's houses a health clinic and a soup kitchen, has worked with the Archdiocese of Seattle and government agencies to remodel its old school building to house the office of Catholic Community Services, and has cooperated with other government agencies to provide low-income housing in the neighborhood. The parish has responded to every social issue in the Tacoma area for years: many parishioners have contributed financial support and have committed their time in creative abundance. The parish supported and worked for nuclear disarmament, is active on behalf of the homeless and street people, and has provided sanctuary for a family from El Salvador. The connection of faith, as expressed in liturgical and sacramental celebration, with the promotion of justice is especially strong.

St. Leo's integrates and blends together in a single fabric the faith-justice mission, especially as faith finds expression in weekly celebration of the Eucharist, as well as the sacraments of initiation, anointing, and marriage. The parish community dedicates substantial financial and human resources to these two dimensions of their mission. They retrieve ancient symbols, weave a new synthesis, and, on occasion, alter the ritual context to more emphatically highlight the requirements of justice and peace and the demands of Christian discipleship. The baptism I am about to describe, while not typical, demonstrates the constant challenge to connect cult to life,

ritual to justice. It does highlight, however, the need to connect ancient symbols and rituals to contemporary realities, even at the risk of upsetting and offending people.

The liturgy took place on a Sunday morning in 1978, not at the parish church in Tacoma, but thirty miles away outside the perimeter fence of the Trident submarine base at Bangor, Washington. As early as 1976 Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle had spoken out against the presence of the Trident weapon system and opposed as well the first-strike policy of the United States and the moral ambiguity of the whole arms race, calling Bangor the "Auschwitz of Puget Sound." He never told fellow Catholics that they had to draw the same practical conclusion that he had; rather, he invited all to reflect seriously on the moral implications of the whole arms race. So, on the day of the baptism, as pastor of St. Leo parish, I had joined the parents, their child, and other parishioners outside the base to witness against the Trident. I asked the parents, sponsors, and parishioners the ancient questions of renunciation and belief: "Do you renounce Satan and all his works? Do you renounce the glamour of evil? Do you believe in God, in Jesus Christ?"

On St. Ignatius Day, three months earlier, nearly a hundred Jesuits had gathered at the same fence to reflect and pray on our response to the whole arms race in general and the Trident submarine in particular. Pat O'Leary, the Oregon Province novice director, asked us to reflect on the Two Standards—on one side of the fence was planted the "standard" of Satan with his accompanying strategy, on the other side stood the "standard" of Jesus with his entirely opposite strategy. Now, three months after the feast of Ignatius, we were asking all gathered to renounce the standard of Satan and to embrace the standard of the crucified Jesus.

The day after the baptism, several parishioners and I protested by illegally entering the base. Federal marshals quickly arrested us and the next day we were arraigned. Several months later we were tried in federal court and sentenced to three years of probation. This was just one incident in a protracted witness on the part of parishioners against nuclear arms and the Trident. For the most part, the parish community supported this step. The parish-council president was strongly opposed, however, because he felt we were not addressing the more local and less glamorous issue of peace in families and personal relationships. We were able to speak about this personally and in a community forum. Another parishioner, a retired army officer, did not understand the action either, but realized my decision came only after thought and prayer. He had accompanied me to a Trappist abbey a week earlier, where I confirmed the decision to enter the base and be arrested. In retrospect I would say a few conditions are necessary before

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undertaking this kind of controversial action. First, I would never engage in it before I had been part of the parish for several years and pastor for some time. You must be a pastor before you can be a prophet. Second, it is important to communicate “early and often” to the parish what you are intending to do, stressing that your decision is a result of prayer. It is important as well that you remain open to critique, that you avoid self-righteousness, and finally that you stay connected with those who disagree with you.

### The Promotion of Justice and the Example of St. Joseph’s

St. Joseph’s in Seattle, similar in many ways to Holy Trinity in Georgetown or the Gesu near John Carroll University, is not a poor parish, nor is it situated in a poor neighborhood. Nevertheless, there is a strong link between the needs of the poor and the multiple resources of the parish. The justification for retaining Jesuit parishes like St. Joseph’s is this strong link between the ministry to the powerful and serving the needs of the poor. For example, the parish supports the Martin de Porres Shelter for older homeless men on the Seattle waterfront, provides overnight sleeping and shower facilities in the parish center for ten homeless men, financially supports a house in a nearby neighborhood for a homeless family, offers its former convent at a reduced rent as a residence for women in transition, and is the site for a weekly Eucharist for the gay and lesbian community. The parish supports a program called The Baby Corner that provides food, diapers, clothing, and medical help to infants and their mothers throughout the city. St. Joseph’s also has a special relationship with a Jesuit parish in El Salvador, a relationship that warrants a more detailed description.

St. Joseph’s parishioner Molly Carle some time ago asked me if I would be part of the first St. Joseph’s delegation to our sister parish of San Bartolomeo in Arcatao in the province of Chalatenango. For three years, starting with a visit to the parish by César Jerez, provincial of Central America, we had been in contact with the Jesuits and people of the parish in Arcatao. Jon Sobrino, the Jesuit theologian from the University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador, had recently been in Seattle and had addressed the parish. We were ready to make our first visit.

El Salvador was edgy and tense in October 1989. Both government and guerrilla troops contested Chalatenango Province and fire fights and skirmishes were common in the area. The Jesuits all over the country, and especially at the UCA, were speaking out strongly for a negotiated settlement. The first day in the country, the delegation visited the UCA, met with Sobrino and Jon Cortina, and stayed with the Jesuit Refugee Service in San

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Salvador. Then, on a rainy night, eight of us climbed into a small pickup truck, made our way through government check points, and headed for Arcatao. Troops stopped us at the last military checkpoint, but then gave us permission to proceed. After two days' travel by truck and on foot, we arrived in the village of Arcatao. The people extended us a most gracious and joyful welcome. We heard their stories, saw the terrible effects of the war, met with guerrilla leaders, visited secret hiding places, talked with torture victims, celebrated the Eucharist, and went to a village dance. We presented the parishioners with gifts, including ten thousand dollars raised by the people of St. Joseph's.

Several weeks after our return, on November 16 I received a phone call early in the morning informing me of the deaths of six companions at the UCA, along with their cook and her daughter. In the aftermath of the murders, people from all over Seattle gathered together for two powerful liturgies, one that took place at St. Joseph's and the other in the streets of Seattle. Liturgy and social justice became powerful companions, yoked together for the deepening of faith and promotion of justice. This was true of Jesuit parishes all over the country as well as chapels on our high-school and university campuses.

On Sunday, November 20, 1989, one thousand people gathered at St. Joseph's to remember the murders of the six Jesuits, their cook, and her daughter. Men, women, and children came forward to venerate the cross, while an oboe pierced the air with the theme from *The Mission*. Jack Morris, S.J., spoke powerful and prophetic words that cried out for justice and peace in that grieving land. The next day seven hundred people streamed forth in silence from that same church carrying a large cross with a corpus. Silently we walked through neighborhoods, paused at Seattle University, then at St. James's Cathedral, and finally made our way down into the heart of the city. In the plaza of the Federal Building, several men raised high the corpus of the crucified Jesus.

More important, though, than these two riveting liturgies is the enduring and deepening relationship between the two parishes. Ten delegations from St. Joseph's have visited St. Bartolomeo's since 1989, two of them accompanied by the Jesuits who followed me as pastor. And two Jesuit pastors from Arcatao have visited St. Joseph's in turn. One also spoke to the Washington State Congressional delegation in the nation's capital. St. Joseph school children have made important connections with the school children of Arcatao. Parishioners have actively called for the closure of the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Ga. Internal documents from the Pentagon prove that the SOA was responsible for the training of several officers responsible for the deaths of the Jesuits at UCA as well as of many

other innocent Salvadorans. To sum up, this relationship has called St. Joseph parishioners to be mindful of a local church in another part of the world and made them aware of the oppression caused in part by American policy. It has also challenged us to receive the gift of the deep faith of these Salvadoran people. It was the poor who evangelized the rest of us.

The challenge for a parish is to hold three elements in creative tension: the requirements of pastoral care, quality worship, and the demands of justice. This is the integration that is so important. Walter Brueggemann writes that “vitality in ministry comes in helping a people link personal life to the places where God is at work in larger contexts. . . . There are no personal issues that are not of a piece with the great public issues. To divide things up into the prophetic and pastoral is to betray both.”<sup>9</sup> Most Jesuit parishes make these connections very well.

### III. Solidarity with the Poor

**D**ecree 19 commends parish ministry as an appropriate Jesuit ministry because it “offers a favorable context *to live with the poor and be in solidarity with them.*”<sup>10</sup> Not every Jesuit parish is able to achieve solidarity with the poor in exactly the same way. So much is contingent upon its physical location. A Jesuit parish in a poor neighborhood has a distinct advantage because the poor both surround and form the community. A Jesuit parish in a more affluent neighborhood must be creative and imaginative to achieve this most important quality of Jesuit ministry.

#### Solidarity with the Poor in Two Poor Parishes

Jean Vanier, founder of L’Arche, has often said that if we build the Church on the rich we will exclude the poor. However, if we build the Church on the poor, we will exclude no one. Toward the end of his life, Paul VI spoke to pilgrims from L’Arche who were in Rome: “[B]ecause of your sufferings you are closest to the heart of Jesus, and because you are closest to the heart of Jesus you are the heart of the Church.” The poor are the heart of St. Leo’s, the foundation, indeed the “cornerstone rejected by the builders.” They are people with mental illness released from state institutions and seeking affordable housing in the adjacent neighborhoods.

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<sup>9</sup> *Hopeful Imagination*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> GC 34, decree 19, §§420f. (emphasis added).

They are the homeless and street people. Increasingly society deems them all disposable and expendable, refuse for urban dumping grounds. But they embody the "sacrament of the poor" or, as Mother Teresa once observed, the presence of Jesus in "distressing disguise." The parade of characters at St. Leo's was, and still is, quite a spectacle. Gerry, impeccably dressed in suit and tie, was always getting married to Cyd Charisse. Sunday after Sunday in his role as parish usher and greeter, he invited anyone and everyone to the wedding the following Saturday. Adeline, a Blackfoot Indian, was mother of eight children, four of whom had died under violent circumstances. She would pray before the tabernacle and, like Rachel of old, weep so much that her blue nylon jacket became drenched with tears. Dan McDonald smoked his cigar before the 5:00 P.M. Saturday Mass and asked every week, "Father Peter, how's the flock?" After Communion he would pray out very loud, "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me."

Jesuits and their colleagues working in poor parishes can list their own cast of characters like these, the subjects of poignant, wrenching, though often hilarious, stories. Why did I, and so many Jesuits, love parish ministry so much? These people and their stories are so real. And ministry in a poor parish can afford opportunities for solidarity not always available in other Jesuit ministries, even other Jesuit parishes. GC 34 encourages us to become true friends with the poor "by frequent contact with these 'friends of the Lord' from whom we can often learn about faith."<sup>11</sup>

## **Freddy and Greg**

I wish to say something of my graced friendship with Freddy and Greg and with Michael, and explain how all three taught me and many others about faith and life. When people asked Dorothy Day how the Catholic Worker started, she replied that it was really quite simple. Hungry people came to the door of the Catholic Worker House and Dorothy and others offered them food. It was that simple. And I would say the same thing about how Fred Kobel and Greg Hanon, two men with mental handicaps, came to live with David Rothrock and me while we were co-pastors of St. Leo the Great in Tacoma. It was all so very simple. David and I had been ministering at the parish less than a month when around six o'clock one evening during September 1976 it all began. While walking home from the parish office, we met them loitering outside our school gym, an hour early for an event that was to begin at seven. Fred was fifty-five and Greg was twenty-six. Both had mental disabilities. Both had already spent

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<sup>11</sup> GC 34, decree 3, "Our Mission and Justice," §66.

years in state institutions. Now they lived semi-independently several blocks from the parish. Neither was a Catholic.

After introducing ourselves, we asked them if they would like to have dinner with us. They readily agreed. And so a can of this and that, a few leftovers, and ice cream made up the meal. At seven they were on their way. At six o'clock the next evening there was a knock on our door. I opened it to find Fred and Greg with large smiles and even larger appetites. The knock came again the next night and the night after that as well. Over an eight-month period Fred and Greg dined with us four or five nights a week, but we had by that time started asking them to help with the dishes.

Finally, David asked me if I thought God might just be asking us to invite Fred and Greg to live with us. We prayed and talked about it, then investigated the possibility with their social workers and their families. Finally, on St. Ignatius Day, 1977, they moved in with us and have not left since. They are two of the original founders of what eventually became Takoma L'Arche, an official community of the L'Arche Federation.

For the next four years we lived together in community. Soon a diocesan priest joined us, followed by several lay men and women. All this time I was the co-pastor and then pastor of the parish. Fred and Greg worked at Goodwill and were integral to the life of the parish. They ushered at the Sunday Eucharist, helped with children's liturgies, and touched the lives of the parishioners in countless ways. From both of them I learned about patience, simple joys, parenting, and juggling community life with the demands of the parish. There were times I could hardly believe I was trying to reconcile being a pastor of a parish with being "mother and father" to two men with mental disabilities. They taught both of us much about faith in Jesus, about human anguish, about the human heart's capacity of love. I came to appreciate Jean Vanier's insight that the deepest pain handicapped persons know is the sense that they are often a disappointment to their parents. I also began to learn for myself that the handicapped person has wonderful gifts to offer. Living with Fred and Greg made my ministry to other people, especially families, far more credible. We had to be for them what so many of our parishioners had to be for their children and aging parents. And it all happened because Fred and Greg had been hungry and kept knocking at our door. It was that simple.

## Michael

St. Vincent de Paul Parish, more popularly known as The Downtown Chapel, is located in Portland, Oregon, on Sixth and Burnside, the collision point between the commercial center and skid row. Burnside

divides the two worlds. Just south of it rises a gleaming forty-story office building, home of the largest bank in Oregon. Sleazy bars and the Star Theater, home of porno movies, "Foxie Roxie," and other exotic dancers, line the north side.

The Chapel was an old skid-row hotel, remodeled and renovated to provide a worship space, a dining room and a meal program for seniors, showers and a clothing room for the homeless, and living quarters for the staff on the top floor. It was home to an unusual congregation, including the well-heeled and the no-heeled, as well as those whose heels were attached to unmatched pairs of shoes. We also welcomed smartly groomed women in middle-management positions at nearby offices as well as bag women smelling sour through layers of old clothes. Many a person slept off a drunk during a homily while sitting next to an executive who was wondering how to hold his shaky marriage together. There was room for all.

Outbursts from people in the congregation were not uncommon during the liturgy. Some of these were funny, a few violent, and many very poignant. Often the sound of snoring, or bottles dropping on the floor, or the screams of beaten people on the streets drowned out the words of a homily or the Eucharistic prayer. The Chapel held a great amount of human pain and anguish, and perhaps none more than that of a man I will call Michael, who came by several times a day.

Michael suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and would frequently yell out during the Mass or homilies. The most delicate time was at the penitential rite. He would think the homilist was accusing him personally of wrongdoing and grow agitated and volatile. I often would walk into a darkened chapel and hear Michael's *cri de coeur*, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

There were bright moments, however, especially if Michael kept on his medication and attended to basic needs. He was generous in helping out around the place and often would take one of us Jesuits for coffee or lunch. He bore both the passion and death of Jesus to a remarkable degree, but he also bore an occasional flicker of Easter hope. One Good Friday, Michael carried the cross in procession and then held it during the veneration. He got all dressed up, shined his shoes, and bore the cross with immense dignity and reverence. He certainly had "earned" the right to carry it because he so often found himself on it. At the Easter Vigil the next night, I asked him to carry the Easter candle. Again, Michael dressed up and buffed his shoes. As he held the candle, his face beamed and projected a flicker, no, a strong beam of hope. This man, who often groaned the psalms of lament in the darkened chapel, knew for a moment the audacious hope of Julian of Norwich: "You will have pain and affliction, trouble and strain and doubt.

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But you shall not be overcome and all shall be well. Yes, all shall be well, and all will be well, and you shall see for yourself that all manner of being shall be well.”

Worshipping alongside people like Michael, at both the Downtown Chapel and St. Leo's, were more educated and higher-income parishioners. The wealthy and gifted, the sound in mind and body also came and found their places and offered their gifts. They discovered the essence of Mother Teresa's prayer that we be found more worthy to serve the poor. They discovered the rich faith-life of many poor people. Decree 4 of GC 32 had strongly focused on what Jesuits would do for the poor to alleviate their suffering, what Jesuits would do to correct the structures of society. It did not adequately emphasize mutuality and reciprocity and paid too little attention to what the poor could give and teach Jesuits. A short time in a poor parish makes up for that omission. Without romanticizing either the poor or poverty, Jesuits soon realize that many who are poor possess a stunning faith in Jesus. Many enjoy a rich life of prayer and reflect a resiliency because of their hope and confidence in God. They are now the ones who often evangelize us. Jesuit parishes, especially at the inner core of American cities, may be burdened with seemingly insurmountable problems and, to paraphrase Paul in 2 Corinthians, be hemmed in on every side, see no way out of difficulties, be hard-pressed for money and other material resources; but the faith life of the people is often rich and buoyant.

Furthermore, a Jesuit parish ministry *with* and *for* the poor is often the compelling reason for other people, many of them our former students or Jesuit Volunteers, to come to a Jesuit parish to celebrate the Eucharist, to offer their gifts, to work for social change. At our best, we Jesuits are conversant with the poor and the well educated and powerful alike. Not only are we able to walk back and forth between each world, but we are also able to bring the gifts of one world to the other. As CG 34 reminds us, Ignatius and his early companions often “linked the ministry to the powerful to the needs of the powerless.” Jesuits continue to do so today. Jean Vanier is right: when a parish is *with* and *for* the poor, it excludes no one. The community can welcome all: the table is spacious, there is a place for everyone, there is room enough for all.

## IV. Preparation for and Skills Needed for Ministry in a Jesuit Parish

Contemporary parish ministry requires significant preparation, and pastoring requires very specific skills. Our current theological training does not address these requirements in any specific way. I would like to discuss the preparation of those who may be interested in this ministry. I begin my observations about the specific ministry of a pastor with a short story. It opens with a question: "How's your heart?" I knew the old African American woman was not asking about my aorta or my cholesterol count. Her bony finger tapped on my chest; she was asking about my heart, all right, or my soul, if you will. I paused, and then responded quietly but firmly, "My heart's OK, my heart is OK." So how's your heart? A pastor must be able to carry the pain and anguish of his people without breaking. While giving a retreat to Anglican priests, Dorothy Sayers observed, "Your people will know very quickly what you *really* believe about God and also what you *really* think about them."<sup>12</sup> Am I empathetic? Am I trustworthy? Am I consistent with the Word? Can I be vulnerable? Can I admit to a mistake and ask forgiveness? What do I *really* believe? What do I *really* think about my people?

Dorothy Day always wanted to stay close to the ordinary Catholic in the pew. I encourage all Jesuits—scholastics, brothers, priests—to be part of an ordinary parish community and worship there when not presiding at the Eucharist elsewhere. If you worship in a parish that initiates new members during the Easter Vigil service and that attends to the liturgical seasons with care and creativity, you will find that it expands the heart.

### Specific Skills for a Pastor

Decree 19 calls for the development of particular skills in Jesuits considering ministry in a Jesuit parish, especially as a pastor. These skills are also appropriate for scholastics doing regency in a Jesuit parish and priests or brothers contemplating a change of career. The decree lists the following:

1. homiletics
2. liturgy
3. catechesis

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<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Sayers, quoted by Delores Lekey in a talk entitled, "Toward the Partnership of Women and Men in Mission," *Origins*, October 12, 1996, 419.

4. socio-cultural analysis
5. social communication and
6. conflict management

This constellation of gifts and skills is simply not found in any one mortal! The days of the omniversatile performer are long gone. A Jesuit pastor must honestly assess his personal gifts, concentrate on two or three areas of need, sharpen his skills to confront these problems, and then elicit and support the gifts of other ministers and the entire parish. Peter Drucker, who has for years pondered management and leadership techniques, provides a few simple insights that I have found very helpful. A leader, he insists, should focus on the one or two things that he can do. If he does them well, he will greatly help the parish and advance the mission of the community. Good leaders (pastors) delegate, but they do not delegate the one thing that only they can do with excellence, the one thing that will make a difference, the one thing that will set standards. What I consider a matter of such importance for a pastor and so do not delegate to others is these three areas of parish ministry: homiletics/liturgy, socio-cultural analysis, and conflict management or religious leadership.

### *Homiletics/Liturgy*

Although it is important that the community hear homilies from a variety of preachers, the pastor plays the key role in preaching and should do it frequently. Thus he will provide unity of purpose and direction to the community. A Sunday homily requires significant time to prepare. Martin Luther King worked an average of fourteen hours on his weekly Sunday sermons. What did I find personally helpful and what do I recommend? High-school regency is a superb preparation for homiletics. If you can communicate with adolescents, you can be a good homilist. Specific recommendations? I read and pray Scripture frequently, using different translations, and I do this with affection. Immersion in poetry, literature, and drama stimulates the imagination, as does watching good plays, quality films, and carefully selected television programs.

I set aside one full day every week for reading, writing, reflecting, and thinking. This is a real work day—not a day off! This habit and practice is essential if we are to prevent parish ministry from becoming one endless conveyor belt of tasks. Imagine yourself as an artisan, a crafter of words and images. Writing to “speak” has different requirements than writing to be read. To state the obvious, a homily is a spoken event, and the spoken word demands concrete and vivid language and repetitions. The more controversial a homily, the more it speaks to injustice and oppression, the more artistic it

must become. The homily calling for justice or denouncing social oppression must be more evocative than imperative. Scolding and harangue do not move or transform people. "If the text is to claim authority it will require . . . an artist to render the text in quite fresh ways, so that the text breaks life open among the baptized as it never has before."<sup>13</sup>

Any Jesuit contemplating ministry in a Jesuit parish, especially as pastor, also needs to make every effort to develop the art of presiding. A presider acts as an artisan, a "master of ceremony," whom the community entrusts with its heritage and expects to be conversant with all the rituals of the tradition. From an interior place of prayer, the presider, much like a conductor with a musical score or a director with the script of a play, coaxes life from the rituals, revealing as much of their power and beauty as possible. The presider needs not so much to memorize the rituals as to know them "by heart." Moreover, a presider must take time to know the physical space of the worship area, find its energy, grow in affection for that space, and respect all the sacred moments that have unfolded there through the years. He must think through the choreography of a baptism, a wedding, a funeral, and then walk through these long before they actually happen. This takes time as well as a certain humility and willingness to receive feedback and critique. The video camera is not deceived, forgives little, but it is a good teacher.

### *Socio-Cultural Analysis*

In parish ministry, as in all ministry, we will base our actions upon a theory, a particular theology, whether we know it or not. "There are no philosophy-free zones into which we can, somehow, escape. . . . We have to take care about the quality, the cogency, the truth of the theories we are espousing, but especially those we are practicing."<sup>14</sup> GC 34 asks Jesuits to become skilled in socio-cultural analysis in every ministry they perform. We have to know the social location of ourselves as Jesuits and ministers, and the profile of our parishioners, the neighborhood where we minister, the city where we dwell. It is important to appreciate the institutional impact of the parish on a neighborhood, to know the housing market, the state of public schools, not to mention the tremendous influence of sports and

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Robert J. Egan, "To Think What We Are Doing: Intellectual Formation for Jesuit Mission," from a talk given at St. Michael's Institute in Spokane, Washington, November 22, 1996.

entertainment on popular imaginations and the history of different racial groups.

Moreover, Jesuits might carefully analyze what negative impact our mobility and availability have on a parish. A rapid turnover of personnel can weaken the sense of stability and continuity of efforts and programs. A new pastor can reverse the work and direction a community has pursued, and his successor can in turn lead the parish in yet another direction. Reflecting on churches, Wendell Berry states that though they may draw their membership from the local community, they rarely involve themselves with “issues of local economy and local ecology on which community health and integrity must depend.”<sup>15</sup> He goes on to strike a note of caution:

Nor do the people in charge of these institutions [churches] think of themselves as members of communities. They are itinerate, in fact or in spirit, as their careers require them to be. These various public servants all have tended to impose on the local place and the local people programs, purposes, procedures, technologies and values that originated elsewhere. Typically, these “services” involve a condescension to and contempt for local life that are implicit in all the assumptions—woven into the very fabric of the industrial economy. (152f.)

### *Conflict Management and Leadership*

Many pastors spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with conflict: parishioners want exceptions made to sacramental policy; choirs scorn different musical styles of another group; committees wrangle over budgets; groups of every political and ecclesial persuasion suspect each other of having too much influence; staff members and Jesuits differ regarding authority and responsibility; chancery officials complain that pastors do not turn in reports promptly. Every tension in church life around the role of women, liturgy, sexual morality—to name just a few of the obvious ones—can reach white-hot intensity in the parish. Much conflict revolves around who has authority and how it is exercised. As he collaborates with his staff and parishioners, a pastor must be candid with them about the canonical authority that the pastor holds, state very clearly how each particular decision will be made, and define how it will be implemented. To maintain sanity, a pastor must cultivate friendships, with both lay people and brother Jesuits. And some of these should come from outside the parish! It would benefit him to see a spiritual director frequently, exercise regularly and vigorously, and have a life outside the demands of the ministry. Finally, I

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<sup>15</sup> Wendell Berry, *Sex, Freedom, Economy, and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 152.

encourage a pastor to have a consulting therapist with whom to talk over all the dynamics of transference and countertransference that so easily crop up in pastoral ministry.

In sum, a peculiar type of religious leadership is incumbent on the pastor of a parish—more poetic and lyrical than practical. The pastor can delegate the important dimensions of management and administration and many other functions to qualified lay people. But he should retain and emphasize religious leadership. Only the intervention of this artistic and poetic sense can detect the presence, purpose, and call of God in people's lives, in the community, and in the larger social context.

## V. Two Concluding Questions

### What Distinguishes a Jesuit Parish?

Before we think we have something dramatically different to offer as Jesuits, we would be wise to appreciate and master the fundamentals of parish ministry. We cannot forget the nuts and bolts of parish ministry and start implementing some special Jesuit focus. If pastoral ministry is compassionate, if preaching and liturgies are prayerful and strong, if the mission to the poor is central, if care to the weakest member occupies the forefront—then this ministry is utterly important to the Church, whether the parish is Jesuit or not. Moreover, we would be wise to deeply appreciate and honestly value the local diocesan clergy, the mission of the diocese, and the goals of the local bishop. I have thought that we should choose as our mentors some good diocesan pastors before assuming a pastorate in our own parishes. Having said what is somewhat obvious, I offer a few observations. There are features Jesuits bring to their ministry: we do possess a certain ethos, style, and tone, a way of proceeding, that give a Jesuit parish its particular personality and strength. Besides the emphasis on formation mentioned earlier, I wish to add the following characteristics.

#### *Place*

Location is almost destiny, hence its importance for a Jesuit parish. We do not belong everywhere. "Ignatius loved the great cities" because they were the intersection points where the "transformation of the human community was taking place, and he wanted Jesuits involved in the process."<sup>16</sup> I propose that a Jesuit parish be fundamentally, though not

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<sup>16</sup> GC 34, decree 4, "Our Mission and Culture," §110.

exclusively, urban. I acknowledge that some of the most important parishes of the Oregon and Wisconsin Provinces are on Indian reservations, that key Maryland and Wisconsin parishes are in rural parts of the Carolinas and the Midwest respectively, and that the New Orleans Province staffs a large parish in a wealthy Dallas suburb because the bishop knew the Society had resources to make it a model parish for the diocese. Notwithstanding all that, I would argue that our primary place as Jesuits is in the city, especially the inner city. In cities Jesuits fulfill the observation of Paul VI in his address to the general congregation in 1974:

Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the front line of social conflict, there has been and there is confrontation between the deepest desires of the human person and the perennial message of the Gospel, there also have been, and there are, Jesuits.<sup>17</sup>

An urban parish ensures that one critical institution remains to stabilize and strengthen a neighborhood. Many parishes stand alone as the most powerful and remarkable multicultural, public communities in a city neighborhood. They are our best basis for organizing the community to improve the lot of an entire neighborhood. While other parishes can certainly do marvelous things in the promotion of faith and justice, a parish in a poor neighborhood dramatically increases the possibility for solidarity with the poor and the actual chance to live with them and become their friends.

### *The Spiritual Exercises and the Practice of Discernment*

A Jesuit parish, whether serving the highly educated or the poor, offers a base and forum for the gift of Jesuit spirituality. Two main gifts that we offer from our tradition, of course, are the Spiritual Exercises and the practices of personal and communal discernment. In the Northwest, the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life has found both its origin and continued home at St. Joseph's and St. Leo's. People come from all over the respective regions to participate. This ministry also takes place in many other Jesuit parishes around the country, such as Holy Name in Camden and Holy Trinity in Washington, D.C. The Oregon Province has further adapted this ministry by offering a five-day retreat at various parishes. Retreatants come for the day, attend a focus talk and a liturgy, and meet with a spiritual director. However, they return home each night. A further step would be to offer the Exercises in the downtown cores of major cities, where they would

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<sup>17</sup> Paul VI, Allocation to General Congregation Thirty-Two, quoted in GC 34, decree 6, "The Jesuit Priest: Ministerial Priesthood and Jesuit Identity," §169.

be more attuned to the schedules of those in the professions of business, law, medicine, and the arts. This would make the experience of the Exercises available to those who can afford neither the time nor the money to go to retreat houses.

Another critical gift of the Society is discernment, which can be employed both in personal decision making and, more generally, on behalf of the parish and other groups. The parish milieu allows ministers to make an explicit appeal to faith-based language and symbols that help tremendously in the task of communal discernment, whether the question at hand is to enter into a sister-parish relationship with a Jesuit parish in El Salvador, offer sanctuary to refugees from that war-torn land, alter a Mass schedule, provide a convent at a reduced rent as a shelter for women in transition, or determine parish budgets.

At St. Joseph's, communal discernment was a powerful antidote to the more political model in which those parishioners with a good education and excellent verbal skills could predominate. The formation of a pastoral council adept in the practice and art of discernment allowed the voice of the least vocal or polished member in the community to emerge and be heard. Members must learn to attend to the movements of personal prayer, overcome a certain "tone deafness" to the voice of the Spirit, and realize that the Lord's will is not always manifested in majority vote but sometimes in the lone voice that articulates the deeper values of the Gospel. I found that skill in discerning parish questions helped people make better decisions in their personal life as well.

### *Jesuit Companions*

Both at St. Leo's and St. Joseph's, I ministered with two Jesuits who also happened to be very good friends and companions in the Society. Though initially we gave it little explicit thought, we soon became aware how important this relationship was, not only for ourselves but for the rest of the parish as well. Our friendship and companionship edified others at least as much as anything else we did. People appreciated the affection, the laughter, the bond of our Jesuit companionship. They never begrudged our taking the same day off and leaving the parish center temporarily priestless. Our commitment to each other seemed to give implicit support to spouses and motivate them to dedicate time to each other; and it prompted everyone to attend to the needs of friendship. I have since reflected that superiors hardly ever factor in the reality of friendship when missioning Jesuits to a work. We forget so easily that the affection and love of Jesuits as friends and companions in the Lord have enormous apostolic power and energy.

### *An Apostolic Network*

GC 34 spoke of the emergence of an apostolic network: co-workers, former Jesuits, religious men and women, people who find in the Spiritual Exercises a “common spirituality and apostolic motivation.”<sup>18</sup> In Seattle several faculty members from both Seattle University and Seattle Prep are also parishioners at St. Joseph’s. Several members of the Board of Trustees and many religious women belong to the parish as well. Many parishioners are active in the civic life of Seattle. Scores of former Jesuit Volunteers have settled in the Seattle region and look for ways to deepen Ignatian spirituality. Such a widespread network fosters better communication and provides personal and spiritual support for these persons and groups. Jesuits involved with their various alumni groups should increasingly invite them into the larger mission of the Society and the Church, and not just solicit their funds for particular institutions.

### Should the Society Have Parishes as a Ministry?

Ignatius did not think the Society should have parishes, but the reasons he advanced certainly no longer obtain. Benefices and fixed revenues are no longer an issue, and a pastorate usually lasts only six to twelve years and often far less. But let us consider, for a moment, an argument against Jesuits’ involving themselves in parishes. One factor that many people complain of is the rapid turnover of Jesuits and the effect that has on community. Decree 6, “Ministerial Priesthood and Jesuit Identity,” might add other reasons for the Society not to engage in this ministry:

Wherever they are, Jesuit priests make their apostolic contribution to the life of the local church, while at the same time being faithful to their charism and keeping their freedom for mission. At any given moment, the Jesuit priest lives in a particular local church, and willingly cooperates with the local bishop in the Church’s mission. *But he recognizes that in every local church, it is the particular charism of the diocesan clergy to be the primary agents of the bishop’s pastoral care; because he is not a diocesan priest, he recognizes that he exercises his ministry in complementary ways.* As such, a Jesuit tries to direct what he does as a priest towards those who are not easily reached by the Church’s ordinary ministry.<sup>19</sup>

The parish is the ordinary ministry of the Church. However, many people will not avail themselves of this ordinary ministry, so one could argue that the Society should not be engaged in parish work. The challenge

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<sup>18</sup> GC 34, decree 13, §355.

<sup>19</sup> GC 34, decree 6, §175.

for Jesuits, however, and their partners in parish ministry is not to abandon this ministry but to find creative ways from the parish base to reach people described in the two following passages from GC 34:

Since the foundations of the Society, Jesuits have exercised their ministry most particularly where needs are greatest, where there are not others to minister to these needs, and where the most universal good may be found.<sup>20</sup>

This spirit continues to shape what Jesuits do as priests: their ministry is particularly directed towards those who have not heard the Gospel, those who are at the margins of the Church or society, those who have been denied their dignity, those who are voiceless and powerless, those weak in faith or alienated from it, those whose values are undermined by contemporary culture, those whose needs are greater than they can bear.<sup>21</sup>

Can Jesuit parish ministry meet this challenge? I am confident that the parish can be one very good “base” from which to move out and reach these people. I am confident my Jesuit companions and their lay and religious colleagues in Jesuit parishes will continue to find the equivalent of the “public squares and markets, hospitals, and prisons, ships in dock, fortresses, playing fields, hospices and hostels” where Ignatius and the early companions engaged people through preaching and spiritual conversation.<sup>22</sup> I am confident in their creativity, resourcefulness, and imagination to respond to the new challenges of the congregation—the needs of God’s people to experience a deepening of their faith and the cry of the poor for the justice of God.

To conclude, my personal experience and reflection not only on decree 19 but also on other decrees of GC 34 have convinced me of the value of the ministry of a Jesuit parish. I would undertake this ministry again and strongly encourage other Jesuits to consider it as well. Jesuit parishes in the United States are blending and integrating in remarkable and very creative ways the service of faith, the promotion of justice, and especially solidarity and friendship with the poor. It is these final values of friendship and solidarity that were so generously possible for me in parish work and are possible for so many others as well. Parish ministry, as I mentioned earlier, has afforded me and many other Jesuits the opportunity to meet people at their best, their most courageous, their most vulnerable, their most honest and tender. It afforded me the grace first to meet and then to live with Fred Koble and Greg Hanon, a singular and amazing grace that still affects my life.

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<sup>20</sup> GC 34, decree 6, §168, citing *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, [622].

<sup>21</sup> GC 34, decree 6, §169.

<sup>22</sup> O’Malley, *First Jesuits*. Unfortunately, I have lost the page reference for this quotation.

# SOURCES

## GC 34: Decree Nineteen

### PARISH MINISTRY

#### Parish Ministry Today

420 1. Approximately 3,200 Jesuits labor in two thousand parishes throughout the world. In recognizing the important service to the Church represented by this investment of manpower, we affirm that “the parish apostolate is not contrary to our Constitutions” and add that, under certain circumstances, it is an appropriate apostolate for carrying out our mission of serving the faith and promoting justice.<sup>1</sup>

421 2. The parish, moreover, offers a favorable context to live with the poor and to be in solidarity with them.

#### Goals and Characteristics of a Jesuit Parish

422 3. A parish is Jesuit if, committed to the pastoral goals and policies of the local church, it also “participates in the apostolic priorities of the Society”<sup>2</sup> and in the mission plan of the province, according to “our way of proceeding.”<sup>3</sup> As central to its life, the parish gathers as a community to celebrate its joys, struggles, and hopes—in the Word, in the Eucharist, and the other sacraments—in well-planned, creative, and inculturated ways. A parish becomes an evangelizing community committed to “justice and reconciliation” and makes its popular devotions relevant to contemporary needs.<sup>4</sup>

423 4. A Jesuit parish is energized by Ignatian spirituality, especially through the Spiritual Exercises, and by individual and communal discernment. It tries to provide well-developed programs in catechesis and formation for both individuals and families; it offers opportunities for spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> GC 31, D 27, n. 10

<sup>2</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “Creativity in the Pastoral Ministry,” to Jesuit pastors of South Asia (JEPASA), 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Pedro Arrupe, “Some Guidelines for the Parish Apostolate,” *AR* 17 (1979): 893.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GC 32, D 4, nn. 17f.

direction and pastoral counseling. Following the model of the election in the Spiritual Exercises, it helps individuals to discern their vocation in life.

424 5. The parish opens itself progressively to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and reaches out to alienated Christians as well as to non-believers. It grows into a participative church through such means as basic human and ecclesial communities and promotes opportunities for lay participation and leadership.

425 6. In its service of the faith, a Jesuit parish is called upon to develop strategies to promote local and global justice by means of both personal conversion and structural change. Networking with other Jesuit apostolic works as well as other ecclesial and civil organizations, it opposes all forms of discrimination and contributes to a genuine culture of solidarity which transcends parish boundaries.

### **The Jesuit in a Parish**

426 7. A Jesuit is missioned to a parish, Jesuit or otherwise, in order to contribute meaningfully to its total life. He should be selected for his lived spirituality and pastoral competence. He must be able to interact positively with various age groups and should have the necessary skills for working collegially with laity and other members of the parish staff.

427 8. Jesuits in parish ministry should have ongoing contact with other Jesuits, diocesan pastors, and other religious ministering in the region. They should spend time with them for collective reflection and common action.

428 9. A Jesuit destined to become a pastor must have special training, especially in such skills as homiletics, liturgy, catechesis, sociocultural analysis, social communication, and conflict management. In addition, opportunities for contact with model parishes and appropriate pastoral-training centers must be available to him for ongoing formation. It is also recommended that apostolic experiments in parishes be made available to Jesuits from the early stages of formation.

### **A Mandate to Father General**

429 10. We mandate Father General to evaluate and update our existing norms for accepting and withdrawing from parishes and to communicate the results to the whole Society.<sup>5</sup> Given the many different types of parishes in the world, provincials will need to adapt the norms to local situations.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. GC 31, D 27, n. 10.

# A MISSION STATEMENT FOR PARISH MINISTRY

*Parish life stretches to the limit all the brains, the talents, the spirituality and the resourcefulness that the best Jesuit has. And it goes on 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year.*

—A Jesuit in Parish Ministry

## What is parish life today in the United States?

Leaders are beginning to realize what we practitioners have always known: that the average Catholic gets his or her first and lasting impressions of “church” from the parish; that it is there that the first incorporation into the Body of Christ takes place; it is there that the daily dramas of life, union, death, and resurrection are celebrated; and it is there that struggles, failures, and reconciliations occur. In short the parish is finally being seen as the vital and critical hand that first rocks the ecclesiastical cradle, and so its importance can hardly be overestimated.<sup>1</sup>

**Why does the Society of Jesus choose parish ministry as one of its apostolic works today?** Because the parish is where people of all stages of faith are gathered and empowered day in and day out for mission in the world. Insofar as our Society is mobile, specialized, and diversified in a variety of apostolates, it also needs to be engaged in parishes where grassroots faith is expressed, nurtured, and formed daily. By being present here we have much to give; we have much to receive and learn.

**What does the Society of Jesus have to offer?** We have much to give parish life, graced as we are by our Ignatian spirituality which offers practical ways to foster personal love and companionship with Christ. Our spirituality touches not only individual hearts, but also the heart of a parish as a whole. Daily, it supports lives of service to the Church, as well as empowers lives of mission to establish the Kingdom of God **now** in the surrounding communities of the parish. Our spirituality gives people a way of proceeding in apostolic discernment that actually roots communal and personal decisions in a mutually professed desire to follow the Person of Christ—his mind, heart, and way, in our own time. In the parish, the Society brings the energy of its most prized resource, the *Spiritual Exercises*, to the Body of Christ for daily use.

**How are the Society of Jesus and all of its ministries affected by this choice?** Basically, the Society is enriched and all its ministries are comple-

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Bausch, *The Christian Parish* (Mystic, Conn.: XXIII Publications, 1980), 1.

mented. Parish communities and related diocesan contacts offer the Society catalytic opportunities for further development, expression, and sharing of its charisms. This happens most of all in the lives of the Jesuits in parish ministry as they are affected, nurtured, and informed through the mutual sharing of their talents, gifts, and faith lives with the people of the local church. Such growth affects the body of the Society of Jesus at large. Without parishes, the Society of Jesus is like a body without one of its eyes and ears and part of its soul.

Therefore, as a *community of priests, brothers, and scholastics*, we fully embrace working in parish ministry in the United States. We are committed to the formation of parish communities fulfilling the mission of Christ in the world, especially in places where the need is greater.

In order to be *true to this commitment*, we hold the following to be **essential elements** of our Jesuit parish ministries:

#### 1. LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

- ◆ characterized by a spirit of creativity and a willingness to adapt to the cultural realities of the communities we serve, e.g., racial, ethnic, youth, singles, elderly, middle class, and many more
- ◆ characterized by prophetic and spirit-filled preaching which consoles and challenges, and which results in deeper understanding of God's love and the destructive natures of sin and sinful structures
- ◆ supported by paraliturgical devotions which are in the spirit of Vatican II, which arise from our charisms and traditions, and which nourish the spiritual life of people who find God in them

#### 2. EVANGELIZATION

- ◆ by pre-evangelization of those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ
- ◆ by full use of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- ◆ by re-evangelization of the middle class through a gospel critique of our culture and its addictions
- ◆ by traditional means of Catholic schools, adult and youth religious education programs, as well as by means of media, creative

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experiments, small communities, Christian Life Communities, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and many more means

### 3. COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY in determining and fulfilling the mission of the Church

- ◆ with Catholic laity, empowered in our mutually shared baptismal call to ministry and leadership
- ◆ with diocesan priests, women and men religious, as well as with the American bishops and the Pope
- ◆ with Jesuits in the local parish apostolate, with Jesuits in the province parish apostolate, as well as with Jesuits in other works and communities of the Society
- ◆ with other Christian faiths, those of other faiths, and all people of goodwill
- ◆ by associating with and affecting civic services, political structures, and the entire temporal sphere

### 4. A PREFERENTIAL LOVE for the Poor

- ◆ characterizing all of our parishes
- ◆ sharing directly in the lives of the poor and those at the margins of society
- ◆ fostering liberation from the addictions of consumerism, sexism, racism, rugged individualism, national chauvinism, and other cultural evils contrary to the Gospel
- ◆ expressing solidarity with the disenfranchised and empowering them to change unjust social structures

### 5. Manifesting and imparting JESUIT CHARISMS rooted in the Spiritual Exercises

- ◆ by fostering the **spiritual growth and apostolic commitment** of the whole parish and of individuals through spiritual direction, all forms of the Spiritual Exercises, preaching, the sacrament of reconciliation, and so forth
- ◆ by use of **communal apostolic discernment of decision making** with the staffs, pastoral councils, and other groups

- ◆ by personal and communal life characterized by **Ignatian discernment** (action and reflection) and an attitude of **availability** (generosity), **mobility** (progress and growth), **universality** (multicultural consciousness), **prophetic witness** (the cutting edge), and the **sense of mission** (sent into the world)
- ◆ most especially through a **personal and corporate spirit of detachment** which encourages and demands that we respond fully to our missions and simultaneously work toward responsible relinquishment of our apostolic works into the capable hands of our collaborators

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