LIVING OUR Vocations

USA EAST PROVINCE | WINTER 2024
Dear Friends,

The Society of Jesus has always been guided by the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola and dedicated to the pursuit of justice, reconciliation, and peace. The need for peace has never been more urgent, as we find ourselves in a world marked by turmoil, conflict, and violence. Our Jesuit mission compels us to engage with the world’s challenges. This is why it is so important for our educational institutions, parishes, and social ministries to serve as beacons of hope and catalysts for positive change here and abroad.

We have several Jesuits of the USA East Province missioned in the Mideast, including Fr. Michael Bellafiore, SJ, who serves in Israel and offers some reflections in this issue of JESUITS magazine. Please pray for him and all those serving to help transform our world—accompanying refugees, promoting interfaith dialogue, or simply advocating for social justice.

We also highlight in this issue the new Fairfield Bellarmine campus, a two-year college in Bridgeport, Conn., that is giving students from underserved communities the opportunity of a Jesuit college education. We showcase how Georgetown Prep’s resident program reaches across states and around the globe, bringing a true multicultural experience to high school students. You’ll also read how the Ignatian Spirituality Project is offering spiritual retreats to those recovering from addiction or homelessness.

As always, caring for the Jesuits who have served in so many ministries—our men in formation and those in the later years of life—relies on your support. It is essential that we, as individuals and as a collective body, continue to work toward a more just and peaceful world.

May the Grace of God and the intercession of St. Ignatius keep you and your loved ones healthy and safe throughout the new year.

Sincerely in Christ,

FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

Very Rev. Joseph M. O’Keefe, SJ

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Provincial, USA East Province

““The Church must initiate everyone—priests, religious, and laity—into an ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other.”

— Pope Francis

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Provincial, USA East Province
New Appointments and LEADERSHIP

LOUAL PULIAFITO
New Provincial Assistant for Advancement

On Dec. 5, 2023, Mr. Loual Puliafito began his role as provincial assistant for advancement for the USA East Province. Loual came to Jesuits USA East with significant experience in fundraising and development and an even more extensive history with the Jesuits. Raised as a parishioner of St. Ignatius Church in New York City, he attended both the St. Ignatius Loyola School and Xavier High School in Manhattan and is a graduate of Fordham University.

Loual began his career in development at his high school alma mater as director of emerging constituent groups. He later served as director of institutional advancement at Monsignor Farrell High School on Staten Island before becoming director of development at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. He also worked closely with the Archdiocese of New York to restore the Cathedral during its $200 million capital campaign. Most recently, Loual was the chief advancement officer at St. Peter’s Prep in Jersey City.

His experience advancing the missions of multiple Jesuit and Catholic institutions, coupled with his deep faith and love of the Jesuit Charism, made him an ideal fit to lead the fundraising efforts of the province.

Fr. Stephen Katsouros, SJ, president of the Corne to Believe Foundation, who spearheads fundraising across the country for new two-year colleges accessible to students from underserved communities, was part of the search committee for the new province advancement position. “Loual’s commitment to the Jesuit mission is palpable,” said Fr. Katsouros. “He will represent our province effectively, and our supporters will respond positively and generously to Loual’s enthusiasm for the Society.”

Mary K. Rutherfurd, who served on the board of directors at America Media for 20 years and co-chaired a capital campaign for St. Ignatius Church in Manhattan, was also on the search committee. “Loual was the ideal candidate because he is truly dedicated to the Jesuits and has spent his entire professional life in fundraising and advancement for Catholic organizations,” she said. “He demonstrated his ability to build personal relationships, think creatively and strategically, and, most importantly, find generous new supporters. His outreach will inspire new believers in the Jesuit mission and new donors to support the province’s financial goals.”

Christopher Carter Lee has been appointed executive director of Loyola Jesuit Center in Morristown, N.J., succeeding Fr. Paul Campbell, SJ. Christopher was most recently the Boston Area Hospitaller of the Sovereign Order of Malta, establishing homeless outreach ministries in Boston and Providence. He also envisioned, founded, and directed Malta Camp USA, serving intellectually and physically disabled adults with supportive community between those with and without disabilities.

On Jan. 1, 2024, Fr. Dennis Baker, SJ, began his new role as president of Loyola Blakefield High School in Baltimore. Fr. Baker spent five years as president of Xavier High School in Chuuk, Micronesia, where he oversaw considerable growth at the school, as well as leading it through the global pandemic. He has most recently served as director of engagement and planned giving at Xavier High School in Manhattan.

Alex Zequeira has been selected as the next president of St. Ignatius Loyola Academy in Baltimore, Md. Zequeira attended Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in Miami, Fla., and the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. He has been the head of school at Saint John’s High School in Shrewsbury, Mass. since 2016. Prior to that role, he was president of the Nativity School of Worcester for five years and earlier in his educational career was the founding principal of that school. Zequeira will officially start in his new role on July 1, 2024.

On Aug. 1, the day after the feast of St. Ignatius, Canisius College became Canisius University. Canisius celebrated both the founder of the Society and its university status on Aug. 1 with Mass celebrated with the Jesuit Community in the Christ the King chapel. The celebrant was Canisius’ new chaplain, Fr. Fred Betti, SJ. In August, ahead of the start of the fall semester, Canisius unveiled a refreshed branding initiative to introduce the school’s new identity.

In 2023, Canisius College successfully petitioned the New York State Education Department Board of Regents for university designation. On Aug. 1, the day after the feast of St. Ignatius, Canisius College became Canisius University. Canisius celebrated both the founder of the Society and its university status on Aug. 1 with Mass celebrated with the Jesuit Community in the Christ the King chapel. The celebrant was Canisius’ new chaplain, Fr. Fred Betti, SJ. In August, ahead of the start of the fall semester, Canisius unveiled a refreshed branding initiative to introduce the school’s new identity.
A Jesuit Education has long been the gold standard for forming compassionate, intelligent, and well-rounded men and women for others. Many who do not know the Society of Jesus are at least familiar with the alumni of their schools. However, for some college-bound students, Jesuit higher education is not an affordable option. Fairfield Bellarmine is working to change that.

Bellarmine is a two-year associate’s degree program grounded in the Jesuit tradition, serving the needs of students in the greater Bridgeport, Conn., area. Part of Fairfield University, Bellarmine opened in the summer of 2023 to an inaugural class of 44 students. “We offer the same core curriculum program that any Fairfield University student would take,” explained Fr. Kevin O’Brien, SJ, vice provost, and executive director of Fairfield Bellarmine. “That includes philosophy and theology, math and English, science and humanities. The curriculum fosters critical thinking and communication skills.” In their second year, students focus on one of four tracks: business, computer science, health studies, or liberal studies.

Bellarmine is located in the former St. Ambrose parish in the East End of Bridgeport, about seven miles from Fairfield University’s main campus. St. Ambrose was opened in the 1920s but was closed a decade ago. “We’ve repurposed the parish property to become a college campus, and the students have really lived in the place and made it their own,” says Fr. O’Brien.

Fairfield Bellarmine is not the first Jesuit community college
“We are building a robust internship and career counseling program to help students discern their future path.”

— Fr. Kevin O’Brien, SJ

program. That distinction goes to Arrupe College. Located on the downtown campus of Loyola University Chicago, Arrupe College opened in 2015. Fairfield University President Mark Nemec previously worked at the University of Chicago and was inspired by what Loyola University Chicago did with Arrupe College. When Nemec came to Fairfield, he wanted to explore what it would look like for the university to offer a similar program.

“At the same time, Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport was looking to develop a community college program to provide more avenues to higher education for Catholic high school graduates, particularly those from low-income backgrounds,” explained Fr. O’Brien. To help meet this need in Bridgeport, no student attending Fairfield Bellarmine pays more than $1,000 a year. The remainder of the aid for four-year degree. This can be due to a need to support their family or the fact that the field they have chosen does not require a four-year degree. Bellarmine expects that many of their computer science students will want to begin their career once they graduate.

No matter what students plan to do after graduation, Bellarmine faculty and staff are there to support them. They accompany these talented young men and women and help them become the person God calls them to be. “We create a culture of care, I call it ‘authentic care,’ a care that isn’t based on ‘what I want for you’ but ‘what do you want and how can we get you there,’” said Dr. Pamela Tolbert-Bynum Rivers, associate dean for academic affairs at Bellarmine. “I hope that those who never felt that they were college material—or even if they felt it, never thought that they would be here because of structural barriers—are able to thrive.”

To help students thrive and overcome any barriers in their way, PeJay Lucky, assistant dean for student success, created a “first-year experience” course. This required course helps Bellarmine students transition to college life. “We’re talking about mental health. We’re talking about academic advising. We’re talking through social identities and socialization. And we talk about financial literacy, among other things,” explained Lucky. In addition, Lucky partners with Campus Ministry to provide spiritual care for the students.

When it comes to the future of Bellarmine, the hope is to expand the campus by renovating more buildings. The administration also plans to expand the current class size, but there are limitations. While the campus does have room for more students, Bellarmine does not plan to exceed 100 students per year. This is to ensure that faculty and staff are able to provide care personally, or care for each student in their uniqueness in mind, body, and spirit. Class sizes will not exceed 20 students. “We believe that 20 is as far as we will go, to ensure that we are able to provide that close one-on-one care for students,” said Letang.

Making sure that students know that they are cared about is one of the most important things Bellarmine is doing. “Using a Jesuit term—radical hospitality—we’ve been able to create a place where students feel welcome and have a sense of belonging,” said Lucky. “It’s a place where students want to be.”
Georgetown Prep is the only Jesuit high school—and one of the few Catholic high schools—in the United States offering students the option to board. In fact, until 1960, most of Georgetown Prep’s student body lived on campus in Boland Hall. Today, a quarter of its students live on campus in a new campus center and residence hall that opened in 2022 for 120 students, with 16 apartments for dorm parents.

“The residential life program here at Georgetown Prep offers all students, both day and resident, all the benefits of an international boarding program. We are indeed a global campus,” said Georgetown Prep President Fr. James Van Dyke, SJ. “And this new facility has made it a place where these resident students, some who come from more than 8,000 miles away, can truly call home.”

Students from 15 states and 20 countries call Georgetown Prep home during the school year.

“The kids who live here are amazing,” said Residential Dean Joseph Harkins, ’96. “The bravery it takes to leave home at 14, sometimes from thousands of miles away, is unfathomable to me. I’m awed by how strong these boys are and how quick they are to welcome, accept, and help one another become a part of what we have here.”

What Georgetown Prep has nurtured on campus over the years is a diverse student community that builds on one another. Zhendong “Dino” Yu is a senior from Shanghai, China. “My on-campus living experience at
Malachi Streeter, junior resident

Georgetown Prep has enhanced my ability to communicate effectively with friends and peers,” he said. “My daily interactions have allowed me to refine my interpersonal skills, enabling a more adept and nuanced approach to communication with those in my immediate surroundings.”

Resident life at Georgetown Prep is a learning experience that indeed goes beyond the classroom. “Living with students from all around the world, I have learned about many other rules and values from different countries, cultures, and even religions. Understanding the diverse principles of life, I am able to reflect and adapt my own set of values. I have become more open and thoughtful about my faith and the ultimate purpose of life,” explained Juneho Yeo from South Korea, who is also graduating this spring.

A robust dorm parenting team, consisting of faculty who reside with their families in apartments within the residence hall, is a key factor to this successful program. The modern, spacious living quarters, coupled with a true desire to make students feel at home, is a testament to why 16 teachers have dedicated themselves, and their own families, to life at Prep. In addition to serving as residential dean, Joe Harkins is a dorm parent, living on campus with his wife and daughter. “Our dorm parents are dedicated to this on-campus community, and they believe in our common mission. They want to help these boys grow into good men, and they do so by living with each other for a while, going to class together, playing sports together, joining clubs together, those differences move aside, and they become more like brothers than friends. It’s a beautiful thing.”

“The residential program has helped me become a man for others,” said Eric Cruz, a junior from St. Ignatius Loyola Academy. “I consider my roommate one of my brothers. I have known him since the first week of freshman year. We have grown together and learned about each other’s personalities, interests, and dedication. I am grateful to be part of this loving community.”

Akeem Clark, a junior from Washington Jesuit Academy (WJA), is grateful for Sunday Mass on campus. “Mass helps me continue to connect deeper with God. Being a resident always gives me the opportunity to increase my faith and knowledge in God, taking another step further than what WJA had already done for me.”

“We put our new resident building in the center of campus so that our boarding students are at the center of it all and can interact daily with our day students beyond the classroom,” said Fr. Van Dyke. “Resident students from overseas often spend Thanksgiving with one of our day student families, and during the pandemic, one of our local families took in a resident student for more than a year.”

Dr. David Sauter, SJ, an English literature teacher who has been at Georgetown Prep since 2010 and served there more than 25 years throughout his Jesuit career, said, “I have known students who moved away from a life of privilege, students who devoted their lives to the service of the poor, students who experienced a community of love and support which they would not have experienced had they not attended Georgetown Prep. This has been a place of physical safety for some, a place without fear for others, a stable home environment for still others, and, I hope, a place of respect and security for all.”

While the new building and facility has certainly given the resident program a much-needed facelift and more living space, Harkins notes that the culture and love that permeates the program was there when they all lived in the 100-year-old Boland Hall. “The feeling I get when I see the boys working and playing together, watch a dorm parent helping someone with homework, or see my daughter riding her scooter down the hall and being treated like a little sister by the boys … that great spirit of family lives strong.”

Mandarin teacher Wei Kelley works with students in the kitchen of the new residence hall’s student center to help them learn about food from other cultures.

Residential Dean Joe Harkins, ‘86, and President Fr. James Van Dyke, SJ, pause after a school liturgy for a picture with resident students from left to right: Quinn David Xing, San Diego, Calif.; Zhao Richard Li, Shanghai, China; Guoxi Kao, Woodbridge, Va.; and Changze Zeno Song, Beijing, China.
Three Jesuit novices of the USA East Province pronounced first vows on Aug. 12, 2023, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse, N.Y. Pictured are Niko Lignore, SJ, Fr. Nick Colalella, SJ, and Luke Olsen, SJ. They now continue their Jesuit formation as brothers in Christ, companions in the Society of Jesus.

On June 10, 2023, the USA East Province ordained three Jesuits to the priesthood at the Fordham University Church, which was quite the international celebration. Ordained were Justin Grosnick, SJ, from the USA East Province; Josué Salguero, SJ, from the Central America Province; and Alcidio Tembe, SJ, from the Southern Africa Province. They were among 17 Jesuits in the United States and Haiti ordained last summer. Friends, family, and fellow Jesuits gathered to celebrate these men completing their formation journey to the priesthood.
Jesuit novices from the USA East Province enter Saint Andrew Hall in Syracuse, N.Y., for the two-year Novitiate program, culminating in the profession of perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

In First Studies after the Novitiate, most Jesuits study philosophy and theology for three years at Loyola University Chicago, Saint Louis University, or Fordham University.

In Regency, Jesuits work full time for two or three years at a Jesuit work or apostolate, such as an educational institution, or in pastoral ministry.

In Theology, Jesuits continue advanced studies for three years at one of three locations in North America (the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, Calif., or Regis University in Toronto) or at the Gregorian University in Rome.

Recently Ordained includes men who completed theology studies and who were ordained as priests.

Jesuit Brothers undergo a slightly different but equally rigorous formation process of studies and apostolic work.

Tertianship is the final step in the formation process, and the period of preparation before making final vows in the Society of Jesus.
APOSTOLIC PLANNING PROCESS

Culminates in Rome

By Fr. John Swope, SJ | Provincial Assistant for Apostolic Planning

Apostolic planners from provinces around the world gathered in Rome for an international conference.

As we opened the international Conference on Apostolic Planning in Rome on December 5, 2023, we began with prayer to embrace our total reliance on the Holy Spirit.

The invitation from Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General, drew together 120 presenters and apostolic planning officials from Jesuit provinces all over the world to share best practices and learn together.

In his keynote address, Fr. Sosa recalled that “[as the Society of Jesus] we want to be instruments of God’s action in history in the same way the Holy Spirit inspired Ignatius of Loyola and the first companions.”

“We want to be instruments of God’s action in history in the same way the Holy Spirit inspired Ignatius of Loyola and the first companions.”

— Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General

This is the charism we have received, and we need to renew it in our life-mission also through discerned apostolic planning.” Dismissed at every turn throughout the conference was the idea of an apostolic plan as a set of narrowly focused actions that would be executed through our current institutional commitments.

We sensed that Fr. Sosa was calling us to something greater and more ambitious. Our planning here in the USA East Province with lay partners and Jesuits has endeavored to set a pathway of renewal of our Jesuit life and to pursue new apostolic pathways to bring the Jesuit mission to life.

As this issue of JESUITS magazine went to press, we are making the final preparations of the Apostolic Plan for the USA East Province. We expect to send the plan to Fr. Sosa in mid-February for his review and approval.

Many challenging decisions about our shared apostolic future await us. Fr. Sosa encouraged us to be bold and steady in making future apostolic choices. “Ignatius transmitted a charism and an experience that leads us to choose, to make decisions aiming at the magis, at the best service, at the greatest good. However, we resist ... only with the help of the Lord’s grace will we be able to face the discerned choices by which the Society can best contribute to the greater glory of God.”

We anticipate that by the time our summer issue of JESUITS comes out later this year, our USA East Apostolic Plan will have been approved by Fr. Sosa and that a Commission on Ministries will be ready to begin implementation of certain aspects of the plan. We look forward to sharing the key elements of the plan both in print and online. Please pray for the Jesuits, lay colleagues, and the works of our province as we move toward the approval of our apostolic plan—one that will guide us to better serve others and bring people closer to Christ. AMDG.

Fr. John Swope, SJ, USA East provincial assistant for apostolic planning, engages between sessions with Fr. Joseph Arun, SJ, from the Chennai Province in Southeastern India.
In Washington, D.C., Susan S. volunteers for the Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP) women’s team, helping to lead overnight retreats and spiritual reflection circles for women in recovery who are striving to rebuild their lives.

Susan said that even though she is not Catholic, she was drawn to Ignatian Spirituality because friends had mentioned how the Spiritual Exercises had helped them navigate life’s challenges. This led Susan to seek a spiritual director at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, a Jesuit parish in Georgetown, and to attend an Ignatian retreat.

When she stepped back from practicing tax law a few years ago, Susan searched for volunteer opportunities. She was ultimately drawn to ISP because she knew firsthand how important a strong spiritual foundation was for recovery.

“My spiritual experience has been primarily through 12 Step spirituality, and now with doing the Exercises, it has been enhanced,” she said.

As the United States continues to confront twin crises of homelessness and substance use addiction, the Ignatian Spirituality Project, a national Jesuit ministry, accompanies individuals facing both challenges, leveraging the gift of Ignatian spirituality to help light the path of recovery.

Research seems to bear that out. A study from the American Psychological Association found “that higher religious faith and spirituality are associated with increased positive coping, greater resilience to stress, an optimistic life orientation, greater perceived social support, and lower levels of anxiety.”

Through her volunteering with ISP, Susan accompanies others who are eager to incorporate spiritual practices into their lives in the midst of significant challenges. As a professional, middle-class woman, when Susan decided she needed help getting sober, there were individuals and networks available to her, she said. Many of the women she has met at ISP retreats, however, have lacked access to those kinds of resources, and, in addition to addiction and homelessness, many of them also grapple with wounds stemming from abuse, racism, and poverty.

“It’s clear that things are happening for these women, that seeds are planted,” during the retreats, I can tell that it’s a very important experience for them.”

— Susan S., Volunteer

As part of an ISP retreat, participants pray together around a bonfire.
Familiar with place that we’re invited meets us — experiences where God meets us—and it’s from this place that we’re invited to grow and change.”

— Christine Curran, Executive Director

Susan said. “During the retreats, I can tell that it’s a very important experience for them.”

Founded 25 years ago by Fr. Bill Creed, SJ, and his friend Ed Shurna, ISP began offering overnight retreats to homeless men in Chicago. Within a few years, this grew to include a women’s program and then over the years expanded to more than two dozen cities across the United States, Canada, and Ireland. In the USA East Province, ISP currently has active teams in Boston, Mass., Providence, R.I., Ridgewood, N.J., and Atlanta, Ga.

Today, in addition to retreats, ISP volunteer teams provide thousands of spiritual reflection circles at partner homeless service agencies and recovery homes. These one-hour sessions are supported by the ISP Journey mobile app, a platform connecting more than 600 volunteers, including formerly homeless ISP alumni who have stepped up to become facilitators and leaders in the organization.

The mission of ISP is to invite people recovering from addiction and homelessness “to encounter God’s love, hope, and healing through spiritual companionship that transforms lives.” Overnight retreats and spiritual reflection circles offer an opportunity for participants to share their stories in a safe, supportive environment.

“At ISP, we say that everyone has a sacred story,” said Christine Curran, the group’s executive director. “For those of us familiar with Ignatian Spirituality or the 12 Steps, we know the importance of our own story. Because it’s in our life experiences where God meets us—and it’s from this place that we’re invited to grow and change.”

She added, “It’s by sharing our own struggles and joys around the circle that we can begin to heal, find new meaning, and reframe the narrative.” In doing their own personal work, ISP team members “become people who learn how to walk with others.”

Prioritizing the lived experience of alumni volunteers who can relate to the communities they serve, and advocating for an end to homelessness more broadly, has fueled ISP’s growth over the last 25 years. This year, the ministry will serve more than 5,000 individuals, and it counts more than 20,000 people as alums.

Among them is Joe C., an ISP alum who today volunteers to lead retreats and spiritual reflection circles in Boston. When Joe C. first met ISP, he was newly sober, overcoming an addiction to heroin that had challenged him most of his adult life. He was living in a Boston shelter and was confident that he was on the road to recovery. But his journey didn’t feel complete.

“There was a piece of the puzzle missing, and I had no clue what it was,” he recalled in a recent interview. During a stint in a detox program, desperate for it to take, Joe broke down and tried something he hadn’t previously thought would help. Joe hadn’t been connected to religion in a long time, and he wasn’t necessarily looking for God. He wasn’t even sure he believed. But he had heard others say how prayer and a belief in a higher power had helped them on their road to recovery, so he figured he had nothing to lose.

“I got down on my knees and I prayed to God to remove the desire and release the compulsion and obsession to use [drugs],” he said.

Shortly after, his curiosity was piqued when a local ISP team member visited the home where he was living and extended an invitation. “Come check us out,” Joe remembers hearing. “We have people who understand where you have been and can accompany you on your journey.”

Joe, along with another man living at the shelter, accepted the invitation. They attended a “spiritual tune-up,” an ISP spiritual reflection circle. After that, Joe made a retreat, where he was able to connect with others who had faced similar challenges in life.

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Joe is now a Boston team leader and an ISP Ambassador of Hope, a national alumni leadership program launched in 2018. When he encounters someone who might benefit from the resources offered by ISP, he first lets them know the programming is not religious.

Instead, he talks about spirituality, which many people haven’t considered could be an important part of recovery. “You know, I didn’t want any part of God, or any religion,” Joe said of his early involvement with ISP.

But by focusing on his spiritual life, by being connected to others who have been there before and having the space to ask questions and go at his own pace, Joe found a connection with God and to a community that has helped him stay sober. He’s been paying it forward for more than a decade.

There’s no preaching or evangelizing or moralizing. “Religion can scare people, myself included, especially if you’re newly sober,” he said.

— Christine Curran, Executive Director

For those of us familiar with Ignatian Spirituality or the 12 Steps, we know the importance of our own story. Because it’s in our life experiences where God meets us—and it’s from this place that we’re invited to grow and change.”

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Members of the Ambassadors of Hope celebrate at their opening retreat.

Women gather with their prayer shawls at the end of an ISP overnight retreat.

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“If just opened my eyes, and I just felt the presence of God like I had never felt before,” he said.

Joe is now a Boston team leader and an ISP Ambassador of Hope, a national alumni leadership program launched in 2018. When he encounters someone who might benefit from the resources offered by ISP, he first lets them know the programming is not religious.
The Office of Ignatian Spirituality’s Ministerio Hispano Ignaciano (MHI) and its new website, MinisterioHispanoIgnaciano.org, aim to make Ignatian spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius available to those who feel more comfortable speaking in Spanish; offer practical resources to participants not geographically close; and, most importantly, share with people the process of having a spiritual conversation with Jesus. These are lay folks. It’s what the Church needs now.”

“The Spiritual Conversation Groups are a way to share with others the process of having a spiritual conversation. We want people to learn about and enjoy this way of talking about God and their faith, which is very Ignatian. Overall, 99% of our leaders are lay folks. It’s what the Church needs now.”

The programs include an Intro to the Spiritual Exercises (Ejercicios Espirituales de Iniciación), the School of Ignatian Spirituality (Escuela de Espiritualidad Ignaciana), Spiritual Conversation Groups (Grupos de Conversación Espiritual), and Ignatian Communities (Comunidades Hispanas Ignacianas). “Ultimately, the goal is to form those who can help others develop a relationship with God and get closer to the Exercises,” explains Carlos Aedo, executive director of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality (OIS). “The Spiritual Conversations Groups are a way to share with people the process of having a spiritual conversation. We want people to learn about and enjoy this way of talking about God and their faith, which is very Ignatian. Overall, 99% of our leaders are lay folks. It’s what the Church needs now.”

The Spiritual Conversation Groups (Grupos de Conversación Espiritual) meet monthly for online discussions after reading a chapter of a book. One member facilitates based on methodologies and prayer suggestions presented at previous gatherings. This shared Ignatian spiritual pilgrimage is important to participants.

“Being part of a group helped me understand Ignatian spirituality and learn to really discern in a group setting,” describes Alicia Ángeles from St. Aedan Church in Jersey City, N.J., and a participant in multiple programs. “We learn from each other. Hearing about different views and experiences allows you to see an outside perspective, which opens your mind and heart.”

“The Intro to the Spiritual Exercises (Ejercicios Espirituales de iniciación) offers a virtual first experience of the Exercises. Participants receive weekly companionship in Spanish with volunteer lay companions from all over the world who are trained and supervised by Casa Kino, a center for Ignatian Spirituality located in San Diego, Calif. Partnering with the center has been key, and participants have been grateful for the opportunity.”

“I’d heard of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises before, but I didn’t know what it entailed,” says Nathaly Reyes, a current participant from St. Anthony Oceanside in New York. “When I was told that I needed to pray for an hour a day, I thought to myself that I would try to pray for a half hour. To my surprise, I went over the hour! I was shocked. I felt happy, energized, and excited to see what I would feel in the days to come. This is something that I have never experienced before.”

“The School of Ignatian Spirituality (a.k.a., the Escuela) goes a little bit deeper. It consists of five in-person sessions throughout the year, along with regular individual check-ins and support available online.

“I am learning so much more about what I always believed is true: acting on good works and caring for our Earth and each other,” says Alicia. “And I am learning to have better conversations with Jesus.”

Sindy Collazo, associate director of Hispanic Ministries for OIS, has witnessed the effect the graces of Ignatian spirituality have had on participants. “Of course, we have the saying ‘finding God in all things.’ But literally, participants in the programs have expanded their vision of where God is and how God works in their lives. These are cradle Catholics, practicing all their lives, and yet this aspect that Christ is with me, side by side, on my journey and I’m helping with His mission is new for them. It’s a treasure for them. It gives me real joy to see this change in them. And it makes me wonder how many more people need to hear this message.”

In describing the new programming, Zandra Schiemann, program coordinator for Hispanic Ministries at OIS, says, “Sometimes when people start talking about these concepts, it’s like something far away, or beyond them. We have made it simpler, a bridge for people to enter into Ignatian spirituality. Simple steps. They can do it. They can learn.”

Ministerio Hispano Ignaciano isn’t just introducing Ignatian spirituality to participants but mentoring them as well.

“My dream is for the program to be sustainable, that the participants will ultimately not depend on us,” continues Zandra. “Our participants don’t necessarily stay in the same place. There are deportations, people get sick, you never know if they are okay or not. But in any place that they are, they can continue this spirituality that we have brought to them.

“Participants like Alicia. She always says, ‘Teach me to be a better person. Teach me how I can speak in public.’” Zandra tears up as she continues, “This is the reality of what our programs are doing. More than just helping someone learn the Exercises or spirituality. It’s to be a better person who is able to share with other people.”

Alicia, in kind, expresses gratitude for what she has received. “I am thankful for the full support I have. I don’t know what I would do without it. I wanted to make sure I could tell others about these concepts through my experiences. Ignatius said, if the other saints could do it, he could do it better. Well, I figured I better try it for myself, so I could tell others what they were missing out on.”
None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master. While we live, we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die, we die as his servants.

Romans 14, 1-9, 11-12
Save the Date!

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Marriott Copley Place | Boston

Contact Ann Marie Houston for details ahouston@jesuits.org or 617-607-2814.

The James F. Keenan, S.J. Memorial Golf Outing

Next year, the USA East Province will hold the inaugural James F. Keenan, S.J., Memorial Golf Outing to commemorate the life and work of its namesake.

“Naming the Golf Outing after Jim Keenan was a no-brainer,” said Bill Miller, Golf Outing chair. “These outings are all about bringing people together to socialize and to celebrate the gift of life that we’ve been given. And that’s what Fr. Keenan was all about.”

For more than 65 years as a Jesuit, Fr. Keenan touched the lives of thousands of students, alumni, parents, and friends. His many years as a teacher and school president meant that he was often called on to marry former students and baptize their children and even their grandchildren.

Over the last 15 years, Fr. Keenan supported his province first as the assistant for advancement and eventually director of donor relations. In these roles, he helped raise millions of dollars for the Jesuits of the New York, Northeast, and USA East Provinces. He would personally call hundreds of benefactors on their birthdays each year, sending thousands of handwritten thank you notes, and hosting countless fundraising events. Fr. Keenan was the face of the Jesuits for so many on the East Coast. More often than not, his weekends were spent celebrating weddings and baptizing newborns, whether he was needed around the corner or across the country.

Fr. Keenan continued to faithfully serve his province and the people of God until the day he passed —August 13, 2023, at the age of 86.

To gather with other Jesuit grads and friends of the Society in memory of Jim—now without his physical presence but certainly with his spiritual presence—is going to be a gift to me and to so many for years to come.” — Bill Miller
Fr. Michael Bellafiore, SJ
Pontifical Biblical Institute – Jerusalem

Bethlehem University and here at the PBI in the Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) program.

What has it been like being so close to the suffering and unrest in Israel?
It is particularly distressing to hear stories of the Hamas invasion and of the tribulations of the people in Gaza. It is also a little strange to live in an oasis of relative quiet and safety while the killings, controversies, and suffering take place not so far from us. The Jesuits know Israelis, Palestinians, and migrants who have been touched directly by the conflict. JWL colleagues of mine in Tel Aviv have had some close calls with missile attacks. I have heard a few missiles headed in our direction from Gaza being intercepted by the Iron Dome. But these missiles explode above Bethlehem. Practically speaking, the conflict has disrupted the semester at Bethlehem University. I have had to conduct my class of 42 students online. I hear of the toll that the conflict takes on them and of their uncertainty about the future. The Jesuits here pray and ponder how we can be of help. I am heartened by the bravery — physical, moral, and spiritual — of heroes who have risen to the occasion. Israelis, Jews, and Palestinians, as well as migrants, risked their lives for one another during the first days of the invasion. It is impressive to hear how Israeli advocates of peace who lost loved ones in the invasion are persevering in their belief in peaceful solutions. The local Catholic church under the leadership of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa has been a strong and urgent advocate for reconciliation and peace. Pope Francis’ frequent phone calls to Holy Family parish in Gaza and his other interventions have been a powerful source of support to many people here.

What are your prayers for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East?
My prayers are that there is healing for all who have suffered; the aggrieved parties may not have their hearts consumed by revenge; Israeli society might be able to work toward a new, productive unity; people in Palestine and Israel come to the realization that things cannot go on as they have; Christians play an effective role as agents of reconciliation and peace; the small, still voices for peace may not be discouraged but still speak and be heard; the global community assist in the situation in a harmonious and productive way; the Holy Spirit might hasten the process of a long-term solution to the political situation; and Christians, Jews, and Muslims make common cause in this process.
Friends in the Lord ~ United on Mission

Pictured left to right: The USA East Province 2023 vow profession class: Mr. Nicholas Lignore, SJ, Fr. Nicholas Colalella, SJ, and Mr. Luke Olsen, SJ; Fr. Thomas Roach, SJ, imposes hands on his brother Jesuit, Fr. Justin Grosnick, SJ, during the Rite of Ordination to the Priesthood; Jesuit friends Fr. Daniel Gustafson, SJ, and Fr. Harry Geib, SJ, at a province event.

To learn more, visit BeAJesuit.org