


Jenny Go

## THE JOURNEY TO PARTNERSHIP

*Precis: In this report to the Rome Consultation, the author details how she and Jesuit partners brought ignatian pedagogy to an assistancy's schools. She organized numerous international programs, and established two international groups to "ignatianize" Jesuit schools in the future. She gives her conclusions from these long years' experiences.*



I feel happy but at the same time unworthy of this invitation to share with you our work regarding partnership and ignatianizing our schools in the East Asia and Oceania Assistancy. I am thankful for the memories and the dreams of this journey regarding the spiritual formation of faculty. To God who placed Jesuits and lay people beside me, and to the Jesuits and lay people whose spiritual strength and sense of dedication have helped to keep our Jesuit schools ignatian, I owe a debt of love and gratitude.

The history of the spiritual formation of faculty involves the building of relationships; relationship with God, relationship with Jesuits, and relationship amongst the laity. At this moment the questions I would like to reflect on regarding collaboration and partnership are, "What have we done", "What are we doing", and "What ought we to do" regarding partnership in schools. Finally, "What have we learned from these experiences."

### What Have We Done?

Allow me to begin by sharing my own experience of partnership in one particular school. After finishing a master's degree in education at

Fordham University in New York, I went home to the Philippines where I applied and was accepted for a teaching position at Xavier school. As a teacher, no other spiritual formation activities were offered to us except a three-day retreat once a year. We enjoyed an employee-employer relationship with the Jesuits. After a few years as teacher, I was assigned as a department chairperson, then as assistant principal, and after a few more years as principal of the elementary and secondary schools. As I was part of the leadership team, the

director of the school, Fr Ismael Zuloaga, shared with me a number of documents and materials relating to the mission of Jesuit education. During that period I experienced more collaboration and involvement in the decision-making process. But the spiritual formation of teachers remained as before, one three-day retreat per year.

The change in 1972 from a Jesuit to a laywoman principal was a paradigm shift. It was a change that both Jesuit and lay people found difficult to accept because in 1972, General Congregation Thirty-One had just been promulgated; no norms or protocols were spelled out regarding the role of the laity in administrative and leadership posts in the education apostolate. There was in 1972 no General Congregation Thirty-Four to guide us regarding cooperation with the laity in the apostolates of the Society. For the Jesuits, making a lay person a partner was rather more acceptable on the cognitive level than on the affective and behavioral level. To them, it was like giving the company store away to an outsider; it was like allowing a hired hand to take a position in the family corporation which by right belonged to a son. For the lay colleagues, parents and alumni, the question was, How can a lay person be as capable, good, and knowledgeable as a Jesuit? "Give us a Jesuit", they said; "we do not mind if he is blind, deaf, or has other physical handicaps." Some Jesuits and lay faculty accepted the change, others resented it, and still others did not care. Those who resented the change undercut and undermined the decisions we made.

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The sharing of spirituality, responsibility and power with a lay woman meant a number of “gear shifts” for Jesuits, from acceptance of a woman's presence at an all-Jesuit meeting to acceptance of a woman's authority over the work of a Jesuit. With the shifts, the roles for Jesuits and lay people in Jesuit institutions changed.

With the advent of change, there were concomitant negative currents in the school: 1) people struggled to accept the new leadership role placed on the laity; 2) faculty resisted change in their teaching and learning styles and in relating with each other as colleagues, not employees; 3) the non-Christian and unchurched faculty and non-academic staff resented being asked to join a special spiritual growth group. You can visualize the horrendous uphill course we had embarked on. While analyzing the situation, the leadership team made up of Fr Zuloaga as Director, Fr J. Caycedo as Treasurer, and I as principal realized that the key – the most important piece missing to help us create a sense of community and a smooth transition – was the faculty's lack of understanding of: What constitutes Jesuit education? What is our mission in Jesuit education? What is the faculty's responsibility, both Jesuits and laity, in this mission?

As you know, in the late sixties and early seventies the culture and context of Jesuit schools placed heavy emphasis on the schools' academic excellence, and therefore many professional academic training programs took place at Xavier. On the other hand, human excellence, the spiritual formation of teachers who are the models and formators of students' spiritual growth, was trailing miles behind. The leadership team felt the need to flesh out our structures with the important missing pieces which were programs for the spiritual formation and growth of teachers. We dreamed of strengthening the goal of human excellence in our school and of creating the collaborative school culture needed in an authentic Jesuit school.

We started in a big way, with a *bang*. All faculty members were invited to attend the *Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching*, which we also called *Colloquium on the Service of Teaching* so that non-Christian teachers would view teaching as a service and Christian teachers would view it as a vocation. The American Assistancy had generously shared the

Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching with us. It was Mr Jerry Starratt, Fr Vincent Duminuco and Mr Bernie Bonillette who came to the Philippines to train us. To continue the momentum started at the Colloquium, we began with a spiritual growth program which took place every Friday afternoon during school time and which all faculty and non-academic staff members were expected to attend. For Catholic and other Christian teachers, the sessions consisted of faith sharing, morality and ethics, special preparation for liturgical feasts such as Easter or Christmas. The program included a monthly reflection day and a three-day retreat every year for all. For teachers who had no faith tradition, their spiritual growth program consisted of gospel values formation sessions. The life of St Ignatius; the apostolic mission of Jesuit education; the history, tradition and ignatian way of proceeding; and so forth, were also shared with all teachers. For department chairpersons, besides all the other spiritual growth activities, we added a management-team Saturday once every semester for discernment, prayer, planning and sharing of the general congregation's documents on education, on collaboration, on justice and preferential option for the poor, and so forth and so on. Somehow the eight-day retreat was never introduced to lay people in the sixties and early seventies. Eight-day retreats were thought of as an activity reserved for religious. The kernel of this experience at Xavier school seeded and came to bloom as spiritual formation activities in the East Asia Assistancy's Schools Renewal Program.

### **What Are We Doing?**

In 1983, after twenty-three years at Xavier school, I was asked by Fr Daven Day, who at that time was the Secretary for Education of the East Asia and Oceania Assistancy and who is at present the Provincial of Australia, to work as the assistancy's Assistant Secretary for Education. This was another step towards greater involvement as partner. To keep our Jesuit schools in the assistancy ignatian in culture, Fr Day and I felt the need to begin by introducing the Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching to as many schools in the assistancy as possible. The strategy we took was to train a number of people to do the Colloquium on the Service of Teaching

and together with these Jesuits and lay people, we went to different schools sharing the Colloquium. The Colloquium became the starting point for the spiritual formation activities of many schools.

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During the period of work with Fr Day, besides three-day retreats, we offered an eight-day directed Spiritual Exercises to fifty principals, conducted by Fr Howard Gray and assisted by eight others, Jesuits and sisters. We also undertook the formation of two groups: the Secondary School Administrators'

Program and Inigo Friends. The two groups exist to this day. The SSAP is composed of secondary school principals. Inigo Friends is also composed of principals, but principals who have a great moral influence in their countries. These latter were invited to join the international Inigo Friends and to focus on strengthening their own spiritual formation and that of colleagues. They declared their commitment through a promise: daily Eucharist, daily examen of consciousness, daily half hour of meditation, yearly retreat, works of mercy or justice. Members of Inigo Friends are to be a support group for each other in their mission.

The SSAP was our strategy to secure the on-going ignatian formation of the present principals. As "gatekeepers" of their schools, they would be responsible to oversee that new programs and initiatives take root in their schools. Inigo Friends was our strategy for assuring a deeper spiritual formation of principals who we hope would eventually be associated more closely with the Society. The emphasis of Inigo Friends was on the Spiritual Exercises, prayer and service. We have continued to offer the Spiritual Exercises to SSAP members over the years.

Our dream that every lay person should have the opportunity to do the eight-day retreat or the Exercises in Daily Life is still being worked on. Some countries have done more, some less. Instead of just one international Inigo Friends group, we have started national groups with the same spirit but different names, e.g., in the Philippines, "Friends in the Lord." These groups are not limited to principals but include teachers and

department chairpersons. After the most recent SSAP workshop for eighty participants, fifty-seven indicated they wanted to go through the eight-day Spiritual Exercises, now scheduled for 4 to 12 August, 2002.

Inigo Friends has not been a total success because in countries like Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Macau, the number of teachers without faith tradition can be as high as ninety-eight percent. And for other countries, the number of unchurched teachers can also be very high. In situations which I have just mentioned, there was need to begin with the first step of introducing Christ to the non-Christian and unchurched teachers so that the more general and foundational Catholic cultural identity can be established. We have found it difficult to ask teachers without faith tradition to implement *Ignatian Pedagogy* or as we call it, *Reflective Pedagogy*, since the pedagogy is based on the *Spiritual Exercises*. Unless teachers have some notion of the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatian Pedagogy is implemented, but without conviction.

Why did Inigo Friends not succeed as an international group? Here are the basic reasons: 1) When we came together for our retreats, there was an enormous language barrier. 2) To come together, we needed financial support which was difficult to come by. 3) Our first moderator, Fr Daven Day, was co-opted to become Provincial of Australia. 4) Our second moderator, Fr Alfred Deignan, was also co-opted to become Regional Superior of Hong Kong and Macau. 5) The province delegates or national secretaries for education felt that it was time for individual countries to carry out the concept, since it can be most effectively and economically undertaken at the school or national level. 6) We were very selective regarding who we wanted to have as Inigo Friends.

**A**llow me to mention some specific new initiatives:

□ In Australia, the Loyola Institute has been established which has pro-grams in place to see to the ignatian formation of teachers, senior and middle level administrators, school leaders, and members of school councils and boards.

□ Similarly, in the Philippines, the Loyola Institute has been established with programs for the ignatian formation of teachers and for training of lay people as directors of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Added to this are Ignatian

Spirituality in Education workshops, directed by Fr Howard Gray, for basic education administrators and teachers. These workshops are coordinated by the Office of Mission and Identity.

□ In Japan, there are two annual seminars, for middle management and for new teachers. The former concentrates on the *Profile of a Graduate at Graduation*, the latter on *The Figure of Christ in the Gospel*. Given the non-Christian background of the majority of the staff and following our own “modus Parisiensis”, an ordered sequence of presenting Christ first and in depth is a priority.

□ In Indonesia, there have been eight-day National Ignatian Leadership Programmes.

□ In the region of Micronesia, the lay principals and other senior administrators from the two Jesuit high schools have participated in the Inter-national Jesuit Education Leadership Program organized by the assistancy’s education office. Training is done on the school level for administrative and teaching staff, beginning with school orientation and formation activities such as faculty retreat and prayer times.

□ In the Region of Hong Kong/Macau, there are Staff Development Days each year with a programme for Ignatianizing the staff and making them more aware of our Christian values. A number of staff, often with the principal, participate in the Jesuit Educational Conferences.

### **What Have I Learned from These Experiences?**

1. To have two groups come into partnership is a long process. The process does not happen overnight. Coupled with spiritual formation, the process can begin with the formation of a small group of Catholic teachers committing themselves to the mission of the school. It begins with knowing each other as persons working and praying together to take responsibility, e.g. for the achievement of the mission of the school.

2. To make partnership an achievable goal means determination and conscious efforts to work on it – from both sides.

3. Sharing spirituality is the key to partnership. For teachers who have no faith tradition, this means sharing our Christian values without necessarily labeling them as *Christian* values. Without this as a base, partnership



cannot be meaningful and the building of a school community, a community with and for others, is not achievable. Unless they commit themselves to the mission, lay people will take partnership only as “the handing over of power” and it can become “climbing the corporate ladder.”

4. For Catholic and other Christian teachers, there is a preparation period before they are moved to do the Spiritual Exercises. I see the need for a lay or Jesuit spiritual animator or facilitator for each school or a group of schools.

5. Relationships are built. Even our relationship with our spouse is built and with proper care, our love for him or her grows deeper with each passing year. The same for our friends. Partnership does not mean we will be without tensions or conflicts. We are people with personality differences; but if we start with a firm resolve to overcome these differences through union with Christ, the road to partnership will be more easily traveled. I remind myself that perfect unions are pre-arranged in Heaven.

6. We need to allay the fears of some Jesuits about “giving away the company store.” A metaphor that comes to my mind: The laity is not “buying out the store;” this is not a corporate takeover; it is a merger of our gifts and riches but not our identities. It is truly two *partners* – retaining their identities and working together to do God's will and for his greater glory and honor.

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7. Jesuits have, among other strengths, the ability to work with great motivation, great fervor and great efforts but very often they do it alone. In a globalized and digitized world, Jesuits perhaps have to work more as a team amongst themselves, using all their international resources for partnership amongst themselves. The habit of team work can be revitalized at formation time during the novitiate, scholasticate, and regency years. Jesuits who are the owners of the school must set the tone.

8. Educating the laity towards responsibility and accountability is

necessary. This re-sponsibility must extend to the task of forming the next generation of lay ignatian leaders.

9. Our heaviest responsibility is to look for ways of incorporating our culturally diverse faculty into our Christ-centered ignatian culture with sensitivity to their needs and to the possibilities in and value of their contribution. Perhaps using the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we can help our Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian sisters and brothers to understand their own reality and the movements of the Spirit in them.

**W**e laity look to the future with optimism that the invitation to partnership with the Jesuits, although not an easy task for either side, is nevertheless a change for the better. It is the *magis* and *cura personalis* for all of us. This partnership does not necessarily have to be through associations but rather through the sharing of the apostolic mission we are called to serve. Partnership can be achieved through the charism of the *Spiritual Exercises* as our link and our communion of hearts. The *Spiritual Exercises* can be the water drops which pierce the rock of our hearts, our water in a time of spiritual drought, a friend who can light the way when we find our soul in a strange land. It does not matter how slowly we go, so long as we do not stop working at understanding, respecting, and appreciating the distinctive role each of us has. Partnership does not mean only Jesuits sharing of their responsibility, authority, and spirituality. It also means the life-long task of mutual spiritual formation, of collaboration in preparing future ignatian leaders, of praying together for priestly vocations, and of growing in our personal vocation of a deeper love of Christ and doing His will.

The triple sharing is perhaps one of the best ways of keeping our Jesuit schools ignatian. Our spiritual strength must be larger if not equal to our vision.