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OREGON PROVINCE PLANNING THE IMPACT OF COLLEAGUESHIP

Précis: The author gave this report to the Rome Consultation 2002 on Exercises and Partners. A married woman, she has been a provincial assistant for pastoral and spiritual ministries for nine years. She brought to her tasks organizational skills and a deep attachment to Exercises. She has facilitated extensive structural changes and the spread of the ministry of Exercises.



I first met Fr Tetlow in 1994. As a relatively new provincial assistant, I had designed the Ignatian Spirituality Institute, a three-day event specifically developed for formation of spiritual directors and those whose ministry is animated by the Spiritual Exercises. I had written to Fr Tetlow and invited him to be the presenter. He said yes! Now I have to tell you that I was very intimidated by this Jesuit who had written *Choosing Christ in the World*, an important contribution to the formation of our spiritual directors. And part of my own training had been viewing and discussing videos of Fr Tetlow's conferences and talks on the Exercises. When my husband and I went to pick him up at the airport I was very nervous but as you all know Fr Tetlow has a disarming personality and instantly put me at ease. Needless to say I have come to value his friendship, wisdom, and encouragement these many years. He is one of the Jesuits who has mentored, challenged, and encouraged me and whom I claim as friend.

The common threads in these relationships with the Society are a love of the *Spiritual Exercises* and a commitment to mission as it is proclaimed in the Society's congregational documents. For me the documents from General Congregation Thirty-Four are particularly meaningful. Decree 13

says:

General Congregation 31 urged us to “foster the cooperation of the laity in our own apostolic works”. Since that time a growing cooperation with the laity has expanded our mission and transformed the ways in which we carry it out with others. ... The Society of Jesus places itself at the service of this mission of the laity by offering what we are and have received: our spiritual and apostolic inheritance, our educational resources, and our friendship. We offer Ignatian spirituality as a specific gift to animate the ministry of the laity [332, 337].

I am profoundly grateful to the Society for its vision in this ministry and for supporting the many lay people who have been and are currently directing Ignatian retreats. The Oregon Province Jesuits have offered their expertise and their encouragement for many years and they continue to invite lay people to participate in this important work of the Society.

My history with the Society. Prior to joining the Provincial staff, I was social ministry director at St Leo Parish, an inner city Jesuit parish in Tacoma, where I developed several social service entities. During my years at St Leo, I trained as a spiritual director and then as a director of the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL). I have been a spiritual director for eighteen years.

When I came to the province staff position from St Leo's, I brought much experience in organizational structures and planning. Fr Provincial Sundborg wanted better communication structures and more in-depth planning. What I brought that wasn't in his original thinking was a deep love for ignatian spirituality and a lot of energy and enthusiasm for the ministry of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

As province pastoral assistant for almost nine years, I have had the opportunity to work with many Jesuits and lay people who have the same love of ignatian spirituality. I am the only lay pastoral assistant in the U.S.

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assistancy. It has been an interesting experience to be the only non-Jesuit and the only woman at meetings where there have been ten or maybe seventy-five Jesuits!

I can honestly say that the Jesuits with whom I have worked have always been supportive of me personally as well as of the role I have in the pro-

vince. I believe that the provincial's way of proceeding when I joined the staff was crucial to the acceptance of a layperson, particularly a lay woman, as pastoral assistant. The provincial, Fr Stephen Sundborg, wrote a letter to the Jesuits and outlined the role I would have on the province staff. He was very clear that I had the authority as his delegate to make decisions and that I was responsible for the oversight of the ministries in my care. He and I then made a tour of the province to formally introduce me. When Fr Bob Grimm became provincial, he also made it clear that I was the person with whom the men work.

Although the provincial takes accounts of conscience, I am the one who meets on a regular basis with the Jesuits and staff of the various pastoral ministries. The provincial listens to my observations and recommendations regarding the ministry of Jesuits and takes them into account in his discernment for missioning men. When, on occasion, some have tried to deal directly with him about areas that he sees me responsible for, he has told them to work with me. He is very clear that as pastoral assistant it is my responsibility to oversee the parish and spirituality ministries of the province.

The impact on province planning. In the province there are seven parishes, two retreat houses, a spirituality center based in a parish, the Ignatian Resource Center in Seattle, five organizations for Spiritual

Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL), and the CLC. Part of my work is to assure ongoing formation for the laypersons and Jesuits in these parish and spirituality ministries.

The province has a rather elaborate structure of seven commissions. I chair two of them: the Parish Ministry and Spirituality Commission, which is made up of a staff representative and the pastor from each of the seven parishes, a Jesuit scholastic, and a Jesuit teacher of liturgy with experience in parish ministry; and the Spirituality Commission, which includes Jesuit and lay partners from our retreat houses, spirituality centers, CLC, SEEL's, and two university people with a focus on spirituality and justice. The commissions are charged with advising the provincial about the direction and needs of these ministries and with providing vital linkage among these ministries and with the other apostolates in the province. (We appoint scholastics to all seven of our ministry commissions so as to help prepare them for apostolic ministry and develop their collaboration skills.)

The Oregon Province was the first in the United States to have lay presidents in the high schools. The high schools formed a board, which many years ago became the province commission, and then modeled a way of proceeding for the other apostolates. A Jesuit and a layperson (funded by the schools) do the overall coordination for the high schools. We used a similar model as the SEEL's developed around the province.

The interest in the *Spiritual Exercises* has continued to grow and to affect apostolic initiatives and planning. It certainly has an impact on how Jesuits and lay colleagues view mission. Ignatian spirituality has spread far beyond Jesuit apostolates and is becoming more and more a vital part of the spiritual life of many Catholics and non-Catholics. The *Spiritual Exercises* are being adapted for street people, recovering alcoholics, and people who have not been catechized. Jesuits have been especially responsive to the formation of lay people as directors of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Jesuit scholastics are showing a great interest in the ministry of the Exercises. In a world filled with dark forces and in many ways spiritually adrift, Ignatian spirituality has much to offer. The *Spiritual Exercises*, a gift to the Church and the world, offer hope and clarity in a time of spiritual and cultural upheaval and confusion.

Oregon Province history of collegueship. Lay colleagues have been directing Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL) for the past nineteen years. The first group of us were invited to make the Annotation 19 Exercises and discern our call to be prepared to direct the SEEL retreats. Since those early days, SEEL retreats have been being offered by Jesuit and lay directors throughout the province. We use several different models and I would like to tell you the story of a few of them.

□ Puget Sound SEEL. The original Annotation 19 retreat in Seattle was started by a Jesuit and a Holy Names sister in 1983. This group operated somewhat independently of the province and eventually organized themselves as a corporation. Four years ago they realized that under that arrangement they had no status or formal connection with the province or the Archdiocese of Seattle. They asked to enter into a sponsorship relationship with the province. We developed a sponsorship agreement similar to those formulated for the secondary schools. Sponsorship is the affirmation by the Society of Jesus that a ministry is in the ignatian tradition and will have the continued support and assistance of the Society. Sponsorship for SEEL has four components: 1) the sharing of authority through clearly defined governance responsibilities; 2) the perpetuation of the *Spiritual Exercises* through continued formation of the ministry and its directors; 3) creation of viable linkage structures for effective communications; 4) a commitment to evaluation of the ministry by the Society. Last year the agreement was finalized.

□ St Francis Xavier parish in Montana is a very different story. Unlike Seattle, where there is a Jesuit university as well as other Jesuit institutions, there are few resources in Montana for ongoing formation and support. [Montana has a landmass the size of Japan's and a population less than one percent of Japan's.] In 1993, while making a tour of the province with the provincial we met with the Pastoral Council at St Francis. Three of the women on the council responded to the provincial's question, "What can the province do to support your ministries?" by saying that they wanted the *Spiritual Exercises*. I said, "Oh, we can do that!" Then I went home to figure out how to do "that." In the fall of 1993 we asked one of the Jesuits on the parish staff to identify a group of parish leaders and guide them

through several months of Fr Mark Link's *Challenge 2000* program. We used that process to help people get accustomed to a daily routine of prayer and to faith-sharing, and also to begin to familiarize them with ignatian movements and the language of the Exercises. The week after Easter the following spring, a Jesuit from Portland and I lead a group of fourteen in an eight-day retreat.

Of that group, twelve decided they would do the SEEL retreat. That summer, several young Jesuits worked with them to develop their skills as spiritual directors and their knowledge of the Exercises. The next year they began to direct the retreat with the mentoring and encouragement of two Jesuits. Although people come from all over the diocese for the retreat, it is sponsored by and funded by St Francis Xavier parish. So this Montana SEEL is a ministry of the parish. This is a wonderful example of a group of committed lay people who have a profound love of the Exercises. They have developed a solid training program. These men and women give their time and talent freely, giving one-on-one supervision, gathering annually for an intensive workshop, and participating in all formation experiences offered by the province and by the national office of Jesuit Retreat and Renewal Ministries.

□ One of the finest examples we have of collaboration by Jesuit institutions is the SEEL group in Spokane, Washington. Its board of directors represents Gonzaga University, Gonzaga Preparatory School, St. Aloysius Parish, the Jesuit Community, and the Oregon Province. These institutions pay for a director of SEEL, who administrates the program and coordinates the retreats. She also trains and mentors new directors and maintains communication between the various institutions.

□ There are other SEEL groups Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. Each of the groups has a slightly different governance and funding structure, but all use the same basic format. The retreatant meets with a spiritual director weekly or bi-weekly and all retreatants and directors gather for a morning or evening once a month. The retreat day includes points for prayer and reflection on a movement or meditation of the Exercises, faith-sharing in small groups and a closing ritual or liturgy. Each group has also developed good training programs, a mentoring and supervision system, and ongoing formation for directors.

Because of my experience and my passion about the importance of the Spiritual Exercises, I have been able to help develop the various projects and programs in my role as provincial assistant. I have also been blessed with two provincials who encouraged me and lay leadership across the province to give the time and energy to this work.

One of the outcomes of people's involvement in the *Spiritual Exercises* and in working in Jesuit apostolates has been a desire for partnership.

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They want an ongoing relationship, in part based on friendship and the desire to somehow stay connected. Some are interested in being engaged with the Society on mission. They have been called into the mission of Jesus as an outcome of praying the *Spiritual Exercises*. The focus of our journey together must be mission.

Partnership must be, at its foundation, apostolic and spiritual. I think Christian Life Community is the ideal model; communities of prayer, reflection, and discernment that lead to mission action. I do not think that in the Oregon Province we have given enough attention to how CLC can be a model for apostolic partnership. I think we continue to ask what we are able to sustain. How are we going to be in partnership in the future?

There have been many experiments during the past several years across the U.S. and in other parts of the world regarding a closer bonding of lay persons with the Society. These have generally been based in mission, on our work together. We must continue prayerful reflection and conversation about what that might look like. We cannot develop structures that give the status of "Jesuit associate" or "Partner" that do not include the call to live out of a spirit of generosity. We laypersons must, with our Jesuit colleagues, develop structures that take into account lay people's gifts and desire to live out of an Ignatian paradigm and honor who we are as lay people. Fr. Louis Sintas, S.J. wrote in this review [#96]: "We have to keep distinguishing Jesuit and ignatian. For our collaborators can well become true Ignatian; Jesuits, they will never be." A colleague

once described lay peoples' relationship to Jesuits as we lay people being in-laws. We're not born into the family; but we have a closer relationship than just friendship.

The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus and the congregations' documents belong to the Society. Certainly, though the congregations' documents can inform our conversations. We as lay people who want to be associated with the Society must develop our own way of proceeding, recognizing that whatever form that takes it will be rooted in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius and in mission.