

JEA/JACSA Educational Conference 2019

Friday 12 July 2019

Several weeks ago I was praying and reflecting in preparation for the annual reflection day of the combined Xavier and Hawthorn Jesuit Communities. As part of my reflection I was somewhat surprised when I realised it was five years since I had finished as Rector of Xavier College. When I left Xavier to go to Tertianship, I could never have imagined how the last five years would have unfolded for me personally, or for Jesuit education locally or globally or for the Church in Australia.

I say this because five years ago:

- the concept of an entity called Jesuit Education Australia had not even been thought of, let alone considered. Furthermore, the early conversations in 2012 and 2013 about transforming the governance arrangements of the Jesuit schools had not translated into any concrete action. A renewed energy for this important project emerged in 2016, resulting in the governance changes that were implemented in late 2017 and 2018; a journey that continues to this day.
- In addition to this, Fr Adolfo Nicolas was the Superior General of the Jesuits and the universal apostolic preferences in place were the ones that had been articulated by Fr Kolvenbach in 2003 and had been confirmed in 2008 at GC35. In 2016 GC36 was held and Fr Arturo Sosa, a Venezuelan Jesuit, was elected as the new Superior General, and in that process of discernment there was a “rediscovery” of the gift of spiritual conversation, drawing upon the experience of Ignatius and the First Companions in Venice. The gift of spiritual conversation has been so influential and fruitful in the development of the new Universal Apostolic Preferences that were promulgated in February this year as well as our own Province Apostolic Plan that was launched a few months ago at the Province Assembly.
- The other key event for Jesuit education globally during these past five years was the Congress of Delegates for Jesuit Education from every Province and region held in Rio de Janeiro in 2017. Jennie Hickey was our representative at this global gathering of Jesuit education. As we know, the delegates at the Congress committed every Jesuit school in the world, including our Companion schools, to the 13 actions articulated in the Rio Action Statement. One of the specific objectives of our days here in Adelaide has been an engagement with Rio Action number 3 as we seek to “find ways in which Ignatian Spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises can be actively adapted to the school setting so that students learn the habit of stillness and the practice of discernment”.

I appreciate that this is a rather long introduction, however the context of these last 5 years has been instrumental in providing the framework for the ministry of Jesuit education in our Province for the next 5-10 years. My task is to try and articulate for all of us how the pieces of the puzzle – the role of JEA, the new UAP’s, the 5 priorities of our Province and the Rio Action Statement fit together, so as we prepare to return to our school communities, we all have a clearer sense of being part of the global mission of Jesuit education and how it continues to express itself within our mission and strategic planning including pedagogical innovations grounded in the IPP and the Ignatian formation programs for the staff, students, their parents within each of our school communities over the next 5-10 years.

Renewed Governance for a Renewed Mission

General Congregation 36 was held in Rome in 2016 during the month of October and the first two weeks of November. Its principal task was to accept the resignation of Fr Adolfo Nicolas and to elect a new Superior General. There were four delegates from the Australian Province at GC 36 – Brian McCoy, Steve Curtin, Ian Cribb and Mark Raper who attended as the President of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. After electing a new Superior General, the delegates at GC 36 prayed, reflected and discussed the different challenges and issues faced by the Society of Jesus globally. Following this, there were two decrees issued – an unusually small number. The first decree was titled “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice” with its three-fold call of reconciliation with God, with each other and with creation. This call has been a key focus for us at this conference, especially with our engagement with the Province Bookends Project as well as our commitment to sustainability. The second decree was called, “Renewed Governance for Renewed Mission”. Key aspects of this include discernment, collaboration and networking – again three aspects of our way of proceeding that have been at the core of our days together.

I would like to share with you the following quote from this second decree,

“As Pope Francis reminded us, our ‘way of proceeding’ is a process, a journey: ‘I rather like Ignatius’ way of seeing everything – except for what is absolutely essential- as constantly developing, in fieri....’. We draw profit, Pope Francis indicated, from ‘holding tensions together’: contemplation and action, faith and justice, charism and institution, community and mission. We are pilgrims. Our path involves facing the creative tensions brought about by the diversity of persons and ministries in the Society. In seeking to progress in following the Lord, the Society must constantly re-imagine and discern how our governance structures can better serve the mission entrusted to us”. GC 36 Decree 2, 28.

All of us here have the lived experience of holding together some, if not all, of the tensions articulated by Pope Francis. It is one of the strengths of an Ignatian approach to mission, and especially education. We also know that we live in a time and in a society where a number of recent Royal Commissions, including the 5 year Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse, have highlighted significant failures in leadership as well as governance. Moreover, there is an increased focus on risk and compliance across all civil entities, including Church entities, within Australia. Within our own context, the days of a Provincial, assisted by a single person as his Delegate in a particular area, having direct responsibility and oversight of the diversity of Jesuit ministries within Australia, especially the complex sector of education, is no longer feasible nor desirable. One of the key insights and recommendations of the Royal Commission was the urgent need for the laity to be more directly involved in the governance of Church entities. It was within this context that the renewed energy in 2016 and 2017 for a modernisation of the governance arrangements for Jesuit education within Australia unfolded – a response by our Province to re-imagine and discern new governance structures so that the mission entrusted to us could be better served.

In discerning the movement to separately incorporate the Jesuit schools, the decision was also made to establish a separately incorporated entity Jesuit Education Australia (JEA) to have strategic and governance oversight of Jesuit education within the Australian Province. There are 5 Board directors of JEA – 3 Jesuits – Rob Davoren,

Bill Uren and myself and 2 lay people- Danielle Cronin – who is the Director of Education Policy at CSNSW and Don Pasquariello who is a partner at Deloitte and has significant experience in educational finance having been involved as a consultant with Mercy Education and a former member of the Finance and Audit Committee of Xavier College in Melbourne. The day to day operations of JEA are undertaken by two people - Jennie Hickey as our Executive Officer and myself as the Executive Chair.

From a governance relationship, JEA is the sole member of each of the incorporated entities that conduct the 5 Jesuit schools and over the next 12 months it will become the Province entity that will enter into updated Memorandums of Understanding for the 6 Jesuit Companion schools. In establishing JEA, the Province articulated its purpose/ its mission in the following ways:

In Rule 3 of the JEA Constitution

- Advance, and provide leadership in, Catholic education in the Jesuit tradition;
- Ensure, support and facilitate communication and collaboration between the Colleges, Companion schools and other entities that operate to advance Catholic education in the Jesuit tradition as specified by the Provincial;
- Ensure that the Colleges and Companion schools give authentic witness to the Ignatian vision and Jesuit mission of education

In the JEA Charter – Preamble and Rule 1

- Overseeing the implementation of and ongoing adherence to the governing policies and procedures of the Province, and the International Commission for Jesuit Education;
- Articulating the identity of Jesuit education and ensuring that the Colleges demonstrate their commitment to this identity through their structure and processes and promotion of the doctrine, rites and practices of the Catholic Church;
- Ensuring that networking across education ministries occur both nationally and internationally;
- Developing and resourcing a continuous program of induction and formation for College directors and leadership teams;
- Ensuring ongoing formation occurs across all education entities with the Province.

In the governing documents of the newly incorporated Jesuit schools there are a number of specific reserved powers to JEA and the Provincial with respect to appointment of a College Principal and Board Directors as well as the approval of annual budgets and College Strategic plans. There is also Schedule 2 in each Constitution which codifies the various permissions needed under the Society's Instruction on the Administration of Goods. There is also the Province's Schedule of Delegations for the Education Ministry.

For many of you, hopefully these governance changes will have had little impact upon your day to day role within your school. This is because a significant aspect of this new governance architecture is the importance of the principle of subsidiarity, articulated in the JEA Constitution and Charter, ensuring JEA's focus on its governance and strategic function with minimal interference in the operations and day

to day management of the Colleges which belong at the local level of leadership, delegated from the local governing boards to the Principals and Rectors. There will be times when the Provincial mandates all Jesuit ministries to follow Province wide policies such as the Province Code of Conduct and a number of other policies that will be rolled out in the next 12 months, which will be drafted to facilitate, where appropriate, autonomy and flexibility with respect to the associated operational procedures within the local context.

Jesuit Companion Schools

Over the last two years much energy and focus has been given to transforming the governance arrangements of the Jesuit Colleges. This has been necessary and important and much has been learnt through this process, and I am sure will continue to be learnt in the coming years. I would like to acknowledge and thank Jennie Hickey, and the Chairs, Principals and Rectors of the Jesuit schools for the collegial engagement that has facilitated this smooth transition. During this process myself and others have been mindful that the network of Jesuit education within Australia goes beyond the 5 Jesuit schools. Over the last two decades our network of schools has been deeply enriched through our partnership with the six Jesuit Companion schools.

The history of relationship with the Province and each school's journey of entering into formal relationship with the Society is unique, for example our relationship with John XXIII College goes back to St Louis College conducted by the Jesuits from 1938 until the early 1970's; Loyola in Mt Druitt was established by the Society on behalf of the Diocese of Parramatta in 1993 through the foundational work of Ross Jones SJ. Loyola, Mt Druitt has made a unique contribution to the life of the Province and our schools over the last 26 years. Our relationship with Loyola, Watsonia grew out of the earlier presence of a Jesuit novitiate at Watsonia from the 1930's to the 1970's, with the Society specifically making some land available for the establishment of a Catholic school on the site which began in 1980. Similarly the beginnings of the Province's relationship with Saint Ignatius College Geelong is linked with Xavier College in Melbourne, Xavier Hervey Bay's relationship came through the work of their foundation principal Kerry Swann and his love of St Francis Xavier which lead him to seek the relationship with the Province embedding the Ignatian charism within the school. And our newest relationship with Xavier Ballina grew out of the relationship and Ignatian formation undertaken by Marty Scroope, out of the Loyola Institute and more recently Canisius CIS, throughout the Lismore Diocese.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the goals of JEA this year is engaging with our Companion schools and their governing authorities around an updated MOU with JEA. One of the key features of the MOU is the importance of mutuality in our relationship. We are currently in conversation with the Diocese of Parramatta regarding the reconfiguration of Loyola, Mt Druitt. Over the next 12 months, we hope to begin similar conversations with the Principals and governing authorities of each of the Companion schools. Associated with this process, the Provincial during his speech launching the new Province Apostolic Plan, commissioned JEA to look at the sort of outreach and presence that will be possible to enable our Companion schools to continue to develop in their Ignatian identity. We are delighted that our Companion schools are recognised as part of the global network of Jesuit education with their inclusion on the Global Map of Jesuit Education as well as their membership of Educate Magis. We also hope that the 20 year dream of a 7th Companion school in Auckland, New Zealand may come to fruition in the next few years.

I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank Fr Gerry Healy for his strong commitment, encouragement and presence to the Companion schools and for the committed work of the Principals, Faith Formation Directors, Directors of Teaching and Learning and Ignatian Co-ordinators in nurturing the Ignatian identity of our Companion schools.

You may be interested to know that over the last three years at the meeting of Education Secretaries of Asia Pacific, delegates from other Provinces continue to ask me questions about our Companion schools and in particular how our network of schools work together. There are some initial thoughts in other parts of the Asia Pacific Assistency about how our model of partnership may also work in their context.

Intersection of the Province and Universal Society

I would like to suggest that there are three key aspects of the purpose, of the mission of JEA that will help facilitate the implementation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences, the Province priorities and the Rio Action Statement across the JACSA network of schools. JEA is called to ensure that:

- networking across education ministries takes place nationally and internationally;
- It is also responsible for ensuring that Province directions, including the Province Apostolic Plan, as well as the directives from the International Commission of Jesuit Education are implemented and embraced across the ministry; and
- In order for this to be achieved, JEA has a key role in formation, firstly with governing bodies and College leadership teams but in ensuring formation across the ministry that includes authentic witness to the Ignatian vision and Jesuit mission of education.

When we consider the Ignatian vision and Jesuit mission of education we know that two seminal documents are The Characteristics of Jesuit Education from 1986 and Ignatian Pedagogy from 1993. Within our current context, the UAPs, the Province Apostolic Plan and the Rio Action Statement also provide us with key directions for the next 5-10 years of Jesuit education within our Province. In launching the UAP's Fr Sosa emphasised that as part of the discernment process **“we experienced a strong call to personal, communal and institutional conversion”**. He added, **“the call is to share the life and mission of Jesus Christ”** and **“the preferences seek to unleash a process of apostolic revitalization and creativity that makes us better servants of reconciliation and justice”**. I will come back to this in a little while.

Intersection of UAP's and Province Plan

Earlier in my talk I mentioned one of the graces from GC36 was the rediscovery of the gift of spiritual conversation. Throughout 2017 and 2018, a number of the Chairs, the Principals and Rectors, along with the Jesuits were involved in the consultation regarding the UAP's and the Province Apostolic Plan. The process used was that of the three rounds of spiritual conversation. The same process was used over the world by different Jesuit provinces, communities and ministries. I found this to be a wonderful experience as it enabled me and others to pray over a matter for decision and then in turn to be able to listen much more attentively, being open to the movement of the Spirit within the group rather than being ready to promote or defend a pre-determined thought, idea or position. It helped me and others grow in freedom. The other aspect

that surprised me, especially on the level of the Assistency of Asia Pacific, was a strong sense of the Spirit being present among us and how through listening attentively to each other, using both our head and heart, a consensus emerged quite naturally and much more easily than I had anticipated. If you have not had an opportunity to engage in the process of spiritual conversation when discerning an important issue, I would encourage you to consider exploring this method of discernment. Rio Action 4 asks us to engage in processes of Ignatian discernment.

For me, one of the consoling moments of this year came with the promulgation of the UAP's. One of the reasons it was so consoling related to the fact that there was and is a very clear congruency between the apostolic preferences of the universal Society of Jesus with the five priorities that emerged as part of the Province discernment over the last two years.

In promulgating the UAP's, Fr Sosa, said the following,

“A choice has been made among several possibilities, all of them good. Our desire has been to find the best way to collaborate in the Lord's mission, the best way to serve the Church at this time, the best contribution we can make with what we are and have, seeking to do what is for the greater divine service and the more universal good.”

The four UAP's are:

- A. To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;***
- B. To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;***
- C. To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; and***
- D. To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.***

These 4 UAP's were presented to Pope Francis before being promulgated and in his letter confirming these apostolic preferences, Pope Francis commented that the process used was a real discernment. He went further saying that “the first preference is crucial because it presupposes as a basic condition the Jesuit's (and I would add our partners in mission) relationship with the Lord in a personal and communal life of prayer and discernment. Without this prayerful attitude the other preferences will not bear fruit”.

These 4 UAP's provide the apostolic direction for the Society of Jesus and its ministries for the next ten years – until 2029. These 4 apostolic preferences have been carefully discerned by the universal Society of Jesus with the input of our key lay partners in mission across the world. Fr Sosa said that **“the following preferences will guide us in incarnating the mission reconciliation and justice in all the apostolic service to which we, along with others, have been sent”**.

A helpful and succinct summary of the 4 preferences has been provided by a British Jesuit, Philip Endean who said,

***“What is it to engage in the Jesuit mission today?
To seek God's will, to promote discernment, to walk with the poor, to accompany the young, to collaborate in caring for the earth, our common home”***.

When the 4 UAP's were issued, a number of Jesuits commented that there had been a change of language from apostolic priorities to apostolic preferences and wondered whether there was any difference. Many of us, myself included, overlooked the fact that the change of language from apostolic priorities to apostolic preferences had actually taken place at GC 35 in 2008 when the original 5 priorities were affirmed as preferences. Nevertheless, on Easter Sunday this year Fr Sosa wrote a further letter in which he stated that **"the preferences are orientations, not priorities. A priority is something that is regarded as more important than others; a preference is an orientation, a signpost, a call"**.

This is the invitation to each of us, to embrace the 4 UAP's as the orientations of our lives and our ministries. This invitation involves the possibility of ongoing conversion. As Pope Francis said, the first UAP is the primary one – for each of us and our ministries – **a fundamental question is how do we show the way to God? And how do we do this drawing from our experience of the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian discernment?** For us as a Province this links directly to our first priority of **nourishing our ministries through Ignatian spirituality** and it is present in a number of the Rio actions, especially Actions 1, 3, and 4. Moreover, this UAP should inform all our formation programs and our day to day practices within our schools.

Just like the UAP's, the 5 Province priorities can also be considered orientations for each of us and all the ministries within our Province. While there are a number of specific actions articulated under each Province priority, each priority should be present within every Province ministry, including our schools. One of the regular sources of consolation in my life is that the 5 Province priorities will not involve new direction in our schools, as all of you are already engaging with them. The invitation over the next 5 years is the invitation of the magis, for our existing commitment to be deepened within each of us and our school communities and JEA.

The second and fourth UAP's – of **walking with the marginalised and caring for our common home** are linked to the second Province priority of **Heal humanity and our world**. This conference has been a living expression of our commitment to this. Rio Actions 5, 8 and 9 also give clear direction in this regard with respect to gender stereotypes and gender inequalities, with the call for our schools and regional networks to integrate justice, faith and care for the environment within the curricula of the schools. There is also the commitment "ensuring schools have a program that allows students from marginalized and poor sectors to participate in a quality education" and to ensure that schools serving the marginalised and poor reach beyond their experience to build bridges with other people and communities.

Two months ago I was asked to present on the UAP- care for our common home at the JCAP Education Secretaries meeting and we explored the importance of deeper engagement with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. within our institutional and personal lives as well as the curriculum taught within our schools. *Laudato Si* is a wonderful resource to help encourage and inform us in the ongoing conversion associated with our desire to care for our common home. It is also worth noting that in the Province Apostolic Plan, the mandate and charter of the Province's Reconciliation with Creation Advisory Group will be strengthened.

The fourth and fifth Province Priorities – of **strengthening Jesuit and lay partnership in mission** and **serving Christ through the Church within our Jesuit and Ignatian tradition** are wonderful strengths of the 11 schools within the JACSA network. The

ministry of Jesuit education within Australia flourishes because of the rich and diverse partnership of 9 Jesuits working with nearly 1200 teachers in our network. They are supported by over 500 other members of staff. There are a further 7 Jesuits and nearly 50 lay women and men who volunteer their skills and talents to serve in governance roles on JEA and our College Boards. There are also people who serve on the governing councils and boards of a number of our Companion schools. Jesuit and Ignatian education within Australia embodies partnership in mission. This partnership is lifegiving for all of us. For it to continue to flourish ongoing formation of teachers and staff within our schools, as well as for those involved in governance will be crucial especially in responding to Barb Watkins challenge yesterday to live our mission authentically from the Boardroom to the classroom and to the sporting fields.

In the preamble to our Province Plan, as a Province we acknowledged the reality of our current context as a Church as we continue to come to terms with the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sex Abuse. The preamble states that as a Province we are committed to “making the safety, protection and flourishing of the young and vulnerable our paramount concern.” One tangible expression of this is the Province’s commitment to its ministries being accredited with the Australian Childhood Foundation. I want to acknowledge and thank you for your commitment to the highest professional standards within your teaching practice and schools, ensuring that the students in our care are safe and cared for, enabling the possibility of a hope-filled future for each and every one of them. At this difficult time, Catholic schools are a sign of hope for the Church – we all know that they are privileged places of engagement with the young and their families and for many of our students, the school is the primary place where they encounter the possibility of a relationship with Jesus.

The final UAP is to **accompany young people in the creation of a hope filled future**. This clearly linked to our third Province priority of **forming the young in a faith seeking justice**. At the Province Assembly, one of the participants in my spiritual conversation group shared how energised he was with the positive crafting of this UAP and in particular, “the creation of a hope filled future”. For us as Christians, our hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, it is a Easter hope. It is a hope that inspires us to engage with each of the UAP’s and the Province priorities. It flows from the great Ignatian virtue of gratitude and the image in the Contemplation to Attain Love of God co-labouring with us.

The Rio Action Statement reminds us that we do this as citizens of the world and as part of a global network in which we all have a role to play in animating it. Ignatius and the early companions had extraordinary dreams about what may be possible for the greater glory of God, especially in parts of the world that at the time were unknown to the European experience. Now more than ever, there are global connections possible, especially through technology, that most of us could never have imagined when we were school students. I hope that the Educate Magis online platform will continue to be a tool that will help our staff and students grow in our sense of global citizenship, deepening our ability to walk with the marginalised and opening our minds and hearts to the diverse ways in which people around our world experience God.

As we go forth as pilgrims, following in the footsteps of Ignatius and the First Companions, may we be strengthened by our time together and may our desire to be companions who are committed to reconciliation and justice continue to bear fruit so that each of us may continue to embrace with loving service the mission that has been

entrusted to us, always seeking to do what is for the greater divine service and the more universal good as we praise, reverence and serve our God.

Thomas Renshaw SJ

JEA Chair