



USA West Province
Provincial Office
P.O. Box 86010
Portland, OR 97286-0010

503. 226 6977
Jesuitswest.org

January 10, 2024

Dear Directors of Works and Province Staff,

In these early days of the new year, I find myself coming back to Pope Francis' beautiful New Year's Eve message, in which he encouraged all of us to cultivate gratitude and hope by following the example of the Blessed Mother. He said that we, like Mary, should be "pilgrims of hope."

For more than a year now, a diverse group of people from Jesuits West — women and men, Jesuits and collaborators from a wide range of province ministries — have been on a pilgrimage. We have been walking together, pilgrims of hope, listening to the Spirit with open hearts.

In my last letter (December 14, 2023), I provided you with our apostolic planning vision statement, which was confirmed by Jesuit Superior General Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, on November 28, 2023. The vision statement, which is repeated below for your easy reference, is not only the product of many hours of spiritual conversations and discernment, but also, I believe, a tangible response to an invitation from the Holy Spirit.

As a follow-up to my December letter, I am writing today to provide you with an apostolic planning update and other province news. While I promise not to flood your inbox, we are at a point in the process where there will be more to say, and I want to make sure that everyone is aware of our progress.

I. Apostolic Planning Update

Our Apostolic Planning Implementation Committee is meeting for the first time virtually on January 16, to be followed by an in-person meeting in Portland in mid-March. As a reminder, the committee is chaired by Tom Smolich, SJ, with committee members San Mai, SJ; Erin Luby; Dominic Chai, SJ; and Tracey Primrose.

As the Implementation Committee begins its work, so does John Guyol, SJ. I have charged John with the important task of helping the province set up a discernment process to consider and reimagine the way Jesuits serve Native people in our province. Such a discernment would be grounded in consultation and spiritual conversations with Jesuit and Native stakeholders who will consider how Jesuits in the West might meet the needs of Native people in the years to come.

John, who was ordained in 2021, is currently working on an MBA in Sustainable Solutions at Presidio Graduate School at the University of Redlands. Prior to joining the Society, he served Native people as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana, and after ordination, John returned to Montana, where he served at St. Francis Xavier Church in Missoula, Montana, and at St. Ignatius Mission on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In the late 17th century, Fr. Eusebio Kino, SJ, began his ministry in the Southwest at the invitation of Native people. A century and a half later, Fr. Pierre-Jean De Smet, SJ, answered a similar call in the Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest, one that is still being fulfilled today by the three full-time and three part-time Jesuits who comprise our Rocky Mountain Mission. I am grateful that our apostolic planning process has provided us with an opportunity to discern the future of this ministry that is so much a part of our history.

Discernment in Common – Mark Your Calendar, June 2025

Vision Statement: To be a community of Jesuits and apostolic partners that fully embraces discernment in common as we seek to respond to God's call.

Our apostolic planning vision statement describes who we are (community, partners), what we hope to do (respond to God's call), and how we will do it (discernment in common).

As I reflect on the past year, I think about how our June 2023 gathering at Loyola Marymount University brought those three concepts to life. For me, it was one of the most joyful and consoling moments of 2023.

I am happy to announce that we are planning to gather again as a community of Jesuits and partners in ministry in June of 2025. While it is still a bit early for details, I wanted to make you aware that we are looking forward to being together as the Jesuits West family in about 17 months. I will send additional information in the coming months.

II. Additional Updates

St. Leo & Sacred Heart Parishes – Tacoma, Washington

A year ago, the Archdiocese of Seattle announced a strategic pastoral planning process to re-envision parish structures throughout western Washington. As a part of this process, our Tacoma parishes are being grouped with neighboring parishes into new, larger parish families. In late September, I announced to both the St. Leo and Sacred Heart communities that effective July 1, 2024, the Jesuits would not name a pastor for these new parish families in Tacoma, and that it was possible that one of the parochial vicars at St. Leo would be a Jesuit. Today, I write to let you know that I will not be naming an associate pastor for either of the new parish families. Moving forward, the Archdiocese of Seattle will provide the clergy to serve these newly configured parish communities.

This decision was not easily made. The province has served at Sacred Heart since 2018, and at St. Leo for over 100 years. Both parishes have served the urban poor and new immigrant communities. St. Leo has welcomed women and laity into leadership, supported the Native American community, and promoted the Spiritual Exercises. I believe the charism of both parishes is embedded in the DNA of these communities. Both Tacoma communities will now discern with neighboring parishes how to move forward, enriched by all those who have served at these parishes throughout the years.

Blessed Sacrament Parish – Hollywood, California

Last weekend, I informed the Blessed Sacrament community that I had made the difficult decision to return this parish to the care of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, effective July 1, 2024.

I realize this decision will elicit a range of emotions. The Jesuits have served at Blessed Sacrament for more than a century, accompanying the people of Hollywood through decades of change. Today, Blessed Sacrament is a richly diverse community known for its vibrant young adult program and for the welcome it provides to LGBTQ+ parishioners and others seeking a spiritual home. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is, at this time, better equipped than we are to meet the needs of this multicultural, bilingual community.

The St. Leo, Sacred Heart and Blessed Sacrament decisions followed months of consultation and prayer and reflect a reality we cannot ignore: The province is impacted by the same challenges around priest resources that many dioceses and other religious orders are experiencing, which makes our apostolic planning process even more important. While these decisions have not been easy, I know that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Archdiocese of Seattle are well prepared to serve the needs of these local communities.

I apologize for another long letter, but I also want to be as transparent as I can about where the province is at this time. Moving forward, I expect that my updates will be briefer. I am grateful to all of you and send my prayers for a blessed and hope-filled new year.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean Carroll, S.J.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean Carroll, S.J.

Provincial