



Australian Jesuit Province Mission 2015

Brothers and Companions in our Province ministries,

After being Provincial now for twelve months, I believe it is time I attempted to shape and describe something of what I see is at the heart of our common and shared mission. In doing so, I do not wish to suggest that the following be set firmly in concrete or be seen to narrow interpret our mission for the coming years. What it does try to do is to set in place a narrative around our mission that I see the Province needing at this time, accepting and praying that such a narrative will need to change, grow and deepen in the coming years.

Province Vision: Luke 4: 18-19

The key foundation of Mission of our Australian Province for some years has been based on this quotation from Luke's gospel:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

This foundation remains critical. It links our mission with Jesus and with our desire to be servants of his mission. All we do and hope to be comes and grows as a response to that call of Christ and his mission.

As servants of Christ's mission we are invited to assist him as he sets right our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation. (GC 35 Decree 3 #18)

We are also companions of Jesus as we seek, as did Ignatius, to be with him in his mission and, only with grace, in the carrying of his cross.

'When Ignatius was confirmed in his mission at La Storta, the Eternal Father said to Christ, "I want you to take this man as your servant:" it was at the will of the Father that Jesus Christ, carrying his Cross as a standard of victory, took Ignatius as servant of his mission, to labour with him under that same Cross until his work is accomplished.' (GC 34 Decree 2 #25)

This journey with Christ comes at a time in our Province where it is not hard to see and experience a painful cross of our mission at present: that the Jesuits of the Province are aging and declining in numbers, with few vocations, coupled with a history of sexual abuse involving both lay companions and Jesuits, some of whom have been dismissed. We have also seen the closure of our theologate, a major step for any Province. There are other examples.

We recognise the great demands of our world and our limited capacity to respond. We know we will have to reduce our institutional commitments while keeping an open eye and heart to new calls and ministries within Australia and beyond.

The call to mission with Christ invites a new depth and trust in our relationship with Him. This is a time when our own personal journeys in mission are invited to grow: a call to each of us for greater **spiritual freedom** and availability, a call to all our communities and works to develop that capacity for **spiritual conversation** that linked and bonded the First Companions of Ignatius. It is an invitation for all our Province works to grow in **spiritual imagination and creativity** as each person and ministry listens and responds to the needs of our time.

Some practical examples:

- ❖ I have asked those in our spirituality ministries to consider offering new forms of annual retreats – ways to invite Jesuits and lay to engage in a wide variety of locations, themes and focus for annual eight day retreats. While a retreat done alone, whether with a director or not, can bring rich blessings, there are greater advantages for ourselves and our common mission when we set time aside to gather and pray together.
- ❖ The quality of our personal lives is linked to the quality of our lives in the various communities of which we are apart. GC 35 took a step beyond the usual formulation of ‘community for mission’ to challenge Jesuits to look at ‘community as mission’. A similar point can be made of the various communities of those working together in a particular ministry in the Province – that our way of working together can itself be a witness. I encourage communities and ministries to consider those occasions – days, nights, weekends – when deeper conversations between us can occur and our shared mission is deepened.
- ❖ There is an enormous amount of creative talent in our Province – such as in music, publications, teaching, new ways of engaging with the poor, preaching etc. We need to find new expressions of this creativity, such as our use of social media and how to tap into synergies in those places where ministries are co-located. We need to find new images and expressions of our shared mission in Christ.

Three Foundations of Mission

‘Structures of governance should be streamlined, modernized, and made more flexible where possible.’ (GC 35 Decree 5 #2)

At this time in our Province history, I am suggesting there are three important foundations for our mission today. Some may prefer to use other metaphors but I have chosen the image of ‘foundation’ deliberately as these values provide key supports for our shared table of service of mission as proposed by Luke 4. To the extent we value and strengthen each of these foundations, our service of mission will be strong and visible to others as well as ourselves.

These foundations are:

- ❖ ***Ignatian Spirituality***,
- ❖ ***Solidarity between Jesuit and Lay***
- ❖ ***Mission with the Poor***.

Here are some comments non each with practical examples.

Ignatian Spirituality is the particular way in which we in the Province seek to express the life and depth of our mission in Christ. It does not seek to replace the centrality of Christ or his gospel but to deepen our faith in and life with him. *Ignatian Spirituality* is for Jesuit and lay and should be visible in how it influences meetings, decisions, strategies and planning. It is something to be shared and deepened with others.

Some practical examples:

- ❖ All staff in our ministries need to receive ongoing formation in *Ignatian Spirituality* appropriate to their role. Province induction programs are provided, and these will need to be supplemented by ministry-based programs which seek to strengthen the deeply Ignatian identity of our ministries.
- ❖ Our ministries should provide budget support for staff who wish to undertake the bi-annual Province retreat or other Ignatian experiences.
- ❖ Jesuits and lay should be able to move across our different Province ministries and still feel at home in the different Ignatian expressions they find.

Solidarity between Jesuit and Lay seeks to move beyond the concept of collaboration into forging a stronger identity and complementarity of roles between Jesuits and Lay in all our ministries. The grace of this relationship, particularly in our Australian Province, has been noted and commended by Fr General and others. This grace, not without its costs and challenges, would seem to offer a particular contribution of our Province to the wider Society of Jesus and to the Australian Church at this time.

Some practical examples:

- ❖ While Jesuits express their Ignatian identity in very particular ways (especially in a life of religious vows in community life), Lay people express their identity in their own particular ways (especially in family life and engagement in the world). These similarities and differences invite open and courageous conversations between Jesuits and Lay to understand the similarities and support the differences of each.
- ❖ While Jesuits do not seek financial rewards for ministry, Lay people rightly seek fair and equitable payment for their employment in our works and ministries. Establishing a fair and equitable framework across the Province needs careful planning, consultation and consideration.
- ❖ As Jesuits can be asked to move across different Province ministries, a sign of growth in our Province is when Lay people can choose to do this also.

Mission with the Poor seeks to deepen our love for those who are poor in imitation of Christ's preferential love for them. We share in Christ's mission when we bring 'good news' to the poor but also when we have friends who are poor. This journey involves a 'faith that promotes justice', one that seeks reconciliation with creation (a JCAP priority) but also a faith that seeks to express itself in the concrete realities of the poor today within our Australian borders and beyond them. How are we 'friends with the poor'? Our spirituality encourages boldness of vision and risk of engagement if we are to be serious about our mission with the poor.

Some practical examples:

- ❖ Everyone, Jesuit and Lay, needs to ask of themselves: 'Who are my friends who are poor?' How do I express my love for the poor in my life?
- ❖ Where are our deepening relationships with Jesuit Mission, Jesuit Social Services, Jesuit Refugee Service, those in need within and beyond our borders?
- ❖ How do we express our relationship with our First Australians and refugee Australians, those who continue to carry the legacy of our history of racism and exclusion?

Province Governance

The Consult

‘The Provincial should invite other collaborators to his consultations, Jesuits and non-Jesuits’
(Guidelines for Provincials #31)

The **Province Consult** meets once a month. It serves me, as Provincial, and our Province mission in guiding decisions around both the care of Jesuits and strategic planning for our mission. It is made up of Jesuits who have been appointed by Fr General. I also invites other Jesuits and lay people as consultants as needed for particular deliberations.

The Consult generally meets once a month. Time is spent on *cura personalis* (the care of Jesuits within the Province), on major mission decisions about which I seek advice, and on strategic vision and planning. The Consult also meets with the Chairs/Heads of Ministries when they meet regionally or nationally, and also with Jesuit Superiors when they gather.

A key element in this Consult is the ongoing challenge to develop and review a strategic plan for the Province. This can only occur when Province governance structures are more clear and established and where the Consult can listen to a range of voices who wish to share their vision of the Province for the future.

The Service of Province Ministries Delegates for Mission

Over many years now, the Delegate system has proven to be an important element of our governance. By delegating authority to others responsible for particular areas of our mission, the Province’s mission is allowed to develop and the principle of subsidiarity to function. It seems important at this stage of our history to strengthen this system with some restructuring, as noted below, as well as clearer delegations of authority and a strong Advisory group for each delegate. Depending on need, the Delegate may have an Assistant, who would be available part-time. Each Delegate would meet with the Provincial regularly, at least once a month, and be a member of the Province Ministries’ Commission.

In terms of areas of responsibility I am suggesting some re-structuring of the Delegates. The Delegate for Jesuit Formation will remain as is (see below under Service of *Cura Personalis* of Jesuits). At present we have two full-time ministry delegates, each covering more than one area, and one part-time. It seems important at this stage of our history to strengthen this system by having full-time Delegates for Mission for these areas: **Education**; **Social & Pastoral**; and **Ignatian Formation**.

Education: Since the early beginnings of our Province education has been an important dimension of our Province mission. We offer a range of educational experiences from primary schools (Redfern Jarjum College and Parish schools), to schools with both primary (and sometime pre-primary) and secondary levels (St Ignatius Athelstone, St Ignatius Riverview, St Aloysius and Xavier College), to tertiary involvements (Newman College and those engaged in the Intellectual Apostolate). We are also engaged in Young Adult Ministry with strong links to our schools (Cardoner and the Youth Engagement Project, for example). We offer support to Ignatian partner schools.

Hence, we will have a Delegate (Jesuit or lay), full-time, responsible for our educational ministries, supported by an Advisory Group.

Social and Pastoral: The outreach of our mission to supporting parish life began at Sevenhill and continues there as well as in eight other parishes, as well as some Jesuits serving in non-Jesuit parishes. In addition there are Jesuit Social Services, Jesuit Refugee Service and some involvement in Indigenous ministry that serve the poor and marginalised in our country and beyond. Moreover, Jesuit Mission expresses a particular aspect of Luke 4: the desire to share resources within and beyond Australia and to those most in need.

We seek to move across human borders that isolate and reduce humanity in order to create and live in a more just world. The link between our Social and Pastoral ministries is important: it seeks to intentionally remove tendencies for ‘silos’ in all our works but also provide a more supporting and cohesive base of imagination and collaboration, particularly where ministries share location in a particular place or major city.

Hence, there will be a Delegate, who may be Jesuit or lay: full time, responsible for Jesuit parishes, Jesuit Social Services, Jesuit Mission, Jesuit Refugee Service and Jesuit Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ministry, supported by an Advisory Group.

Ignatian Formation: The contribution of Ignatian spirituality continues to grow within our Province and within the universal Society. In Australia we have five Centres of Ignatian Spirituality (CIS), Sentir, the ministry of the First Spiritual Exercises (FSE), Peter Canisius House, the Ignis programs offering Ignatian formation to all those who work in our ministries, as well as ministry-based formation programs. As well as its publications for a wider audience (*Eureka St* and *Australian Catholics*), Jesuit Communications provides Ignatian Formation resources, especially through *Madonna*, *Daily Prayer Online*, and *Province Express*, as well as helping communication between all our Ignatian ministries. We need to live, deepen and express our Ignatian charism.

Hence, we will have a Delegate, Jesuit or lay person: full time, responsible for the Centres of Ignatian Spirituality, Peter Canisius House, implementing Ignatian formation for staff and Boards/Councils of all our ministries, working closely with the Delegate for Formation and with Jesuit Communications. Supported by an Advisory Group.

Note: No governance system will be perfect. This one has many advantages, particularly supporting coordination and communication across and within ministries, but it also risks reinforcing an institutional and ‘silo’ approach to mission. Hence the importance of the Ministries Commission to which we now turn.

Ministries Commission

‘He should set up Province Commissions ...or any others that may prove useful ...
He should make it clear that these commissions have a merely advisory function.’
(Guidelines for Provincials #33)

The three Delegates for Mission, together with the Provincial, Socius and the Chief of Mission Operations, form the ***Province Ministries Commission*** which would meet at least four times a year and draw in other consultants as needed.

The Ministries Commission is established to strengthen the solidarity of Province ministries in the light of our Province Mission. The Delegates would work together to ensure that all three foundations of our mission are embodied in all our ministries. The Commission would also seek to encourage our ministries to work more closely together, identify challenges and obstacles to mission, and seek creative ways to engage our common mission.

Chairs & Heads of Ministries

Once a year, there will be regional meetings of the Heads of Ministries and Chairs of Boards/Councils in each of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia together with the Provincial, the Consultors and Ministries Commission. The principal aim of such meetings is to seek closer collaboration between the various Jesuit ministries that operate within that particular State. They will generally be held on the first day of a Provincial Consult.

Service for Mission

The ministries of the Province, both the major ones and less institutional and more individual ministries, as well as Jesuit communities, are served and supported by the Province staff. Apart from the Provincial, there are the major officers – Socius, Treasurer, Chief of Mission Operations and Finance, Director of Professional Standards, and Province Secretary. There are also a range of other people, Jesuit and lay, mostly based at the Province office, who offer professional and administrative support in ways which we are currently reviewing. In the near future, it is likely that I will also appoint a *Communications Officer* to be based at the Provincial office.

I am committed, for those who work at the Provincial office, to developing a supporting team who regularly meet and review how we can best serve the needs of the Province.

Service of *Cura Personalis* of Jesuits

In relation to his brother Jesuits, the Provincial has a particular responsibility for their *cura personalis*. According to the Guidelines for Provincials, this involves personal care of the Jesuits, including oversight of their formation, personal and communal spiritual life, apostolic mission, observance of our way of proceeding, and health. To support the Provincial in these roles, there are a number of other people or groups, primarily the *Socius* and *Consultors* but also the following:

Superiors

Jesuit Superiors hold a very important leadership and pastoral role in Jesuit communities. They will meet, at least once a year, with the *Provincial, Delegate for Jesuit Formation* and members of the *Consult*. As numbers of Jesuits in the Province decreases it is important that the quality of community life continues to adapt and deepen, particularly where communities are becoming smaller and aging. Some communities will need to amalgamate.

Formation Delegate

This Jesuit is responsible for overseeing those in formation, whether here in Australia or overseas, with a care also for the ongoing formation of all Jesuits. He will also have oversight of the Vocations and Candidates programs, working closely with a full-time Vocations Promoter and the Vocations Team. He will be supported by an Advisory Group.

Manager for Jesuit Health and Wellbeing

This person, most likely a lay person, will bring the advice of a professional health expert to the health care of all our men. They would work directly with both Arrupe and Campion Houses in the care of our older men resident there, as well as those living in aged care facilities. They would also be available to offer support and advice to younger men who can also experience a range of health issues. The Manager would report to the *Socius* and also work closely with the *Delegate for Jesuit Formation*.

Conclusion

Finally, I offer these changes in structure for the governance of our mission to help the expression of mission at this time in our history. I do not see these proposed changes, or the values underlying them, as providing any final word or decision regarding how we might prioritise our mission or as preventing further strategic changes in the years ahead. We will need to continue to have open and robust conversations about our present institutional commitments. As Pope Francis reminds us in this year dedicated to Consecrated Life: 'I am counting on you to "wake up the world", since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy'. (II:2).

Above all, I believe, we need to develop a spirit of discernment that allows the gift of our Ignatian charism to deepen as we seek new and creative expressions within our Province while also embracing our growing links within our Assistancy and beyond.

I welcome comments on this document and encourage communities and ministries to discuss and support these changes that I intend to implement in the coming months. Can I also encourage, within our communities and ministries, the further holding of those deeper conversations, ones that served our First Companions so well: seeking and discerning God's presence amongst us, for the good of others.

Yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian F. McCoy S.J.". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Brian F McCoy SJ
Provincial
August 10th 2015