

WHAT GREAT LOVE!



**AN IGNATIAN FRAMEWORK
FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
INCLUSION, AND BELONGING**



An Ignatian Framework for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!*

And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1

Dear Members of the Jesuit Schools Network:

An important part of my onboarding process in the spring of 2021 was a series of listening sessions that I held with school leaders. My goal in the sessions was to elicit those challenges and opportunities they were facing, and to understand how we at JSN could support them. As we know, that was a period of unrest and uncertainty as our society confronted the murder of George Floyd and the racial awakening that emerged from it. In my conversations with presidents and principals, I heard their deep commitment to promoting DEIB efforts, through an authentically Catholic and Jesuit response to the crisis. I also heard they needed help.

The creation of this “*Ignatian Framework for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging*” is an attempt to respond to the requests of our school leaders for tools and resources that can help them better respond to the needs of their school communities. It is one of our Strategic Plan’s “promotion of justice” initiatives that advance the Catholic identity and Jesuit mission of JSN schools. This project involved many colleagues who both researched and wrote a theologically sound and mission-based rationale for DEIB efforts in Jesuit secondary and presecondary schools. It incorporates scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, Ignatian vision and values, and the tradition of Jesuit education into a concise mission statement for the work of DEIB in our schools.

I am grateful to Catharine Steffens, JSN Director of Global Partnerships and Initiatives, for coordinating the project, and to Marianne Gallagher, Special Advisor for Ignatian Projects for the Society of Jesus, Rome, for providing its theological and historic foundations. The project also benefited from the wisdom and experience of several DEIB practitioners from our schools, the names of whom are listed at the end of this document. It also benefitted from the feedback we received from Presidents and Board Chairs gathered in Chicago earlier this semester. This collaborative work is a testament to the value of a network of schools that listens to the needs of its members and responds from within its own wisdom and experience, consistent with and in support of its Catholic identity and Jesuit mission.

In his Encyclical, “*Fratelli Tutti*,” Pope Francis invites us to promote a “culture of encounter.” He states, “To speak of a ‘culture of encounter’ means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, and planning a project that includes everyone.” It is my hope that this Ignatian Framework for DEIB may help us better encounter one another, and thus better serve the young women and men God has given us.

Rev. Robert E. Reiser, S.J.
Executive Director, Jesuit Schools Network

INTRODUCTION

To speak of a “culture of encounter” means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone.¹

It is through the lens of “encounter” that we embrace and promote the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging² in our Jesuit schools. The people we encounter each day are diverse windows through which the living God enters our lives. With open hands we help, with open minds we listen, with open hearts we welcome. Through our graced encounter with others, we inch closer to being the persons God intended us to be. We long for the welcome and embrace that God offers each of us, and we are committed to building that beloved community wherever we are and with whomever we are.

We are confirmed in our commitment to the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging through our prayerful reflection on the story of God’s people Israel, the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit that form the Body of Christ, the teaching of the Catholic Church, the history of Jesuit education, the documents of the Society of Jesus, and the documents of Jesuit education.

IMAGO DEI³

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness. So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God, he created them.”⁴

The Book of Genesis reminds us that each human person is created in the image and likeness of God and is therefore deserving of dignity and respect. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms this when it states, “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a human person.”⁵ A Jesuit school’s commitment to the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is grounded in this central tenet of our faith.

¹ *Fratelli Tutti*, no.216.

² For a glossary of DEIB terms please visit <https://www.jesuitswestcore.org/key-terms>. B–belonging ties everything together and can even go to a personal level, where organizations and people ensure psychological safety of everyone and creating a climate where people can be themselves.

³ This document uses the Christian/Catholic image of *Imago Dei* as its foundation. Another Christian/Catholic image that could be helpful is the *Body of Christ*, St. Paul’s image of the Church that calls us to understand ourselves as one human family.

⁴ Genesis 1:26–27

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 357.



THE INCARNATION

“The hand that assumed clay to make our flesh deigned to assume a body for our salvation. That the Creator is in the creature and God is in the flesh brings dignity to man without dishonor to the One who made him.”⁶

In the mystery of the Incarnation, God showers God’s dignity on the human person. God takes on human flesh and dwells among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius asks the retreatant to contemplate this great mystery, “It is as if I can hear the Divine Persons saying, ‘Let us work the redemption of the whole human race; let us respond to the groaning of all creation’.”⁷ Jesus invites each of us to join him in a mission of encounter and inclusion that acknowledges and affirms the dignity of every human person.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?⁸

In his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, Jesus acknowledges and embraces the dignity of everyone he encountered, especially those who were different than he. This includes Samaritans, the Syrophoenician woman, even the Romans who persecuted him. Like the disciples who listened to the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus commissions us to be that neighbor who reaches beyond differences, to “go and do likewise.”⁹

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.¹⁰

In the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples were propelled into a ministry that transcended difference. The people assembled were from every nation under heaven, and yet they understood the disciples in their native tongue. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples overcame the fear that huddled them in the Upper Room. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other tongues, and the diverse community understood. In this gift of understanding, the Spirit affirms the value of every unique self, represented in the diversity of languages and cultures.

⁶ From a sermon by Saint Peter Chrysologus, bishop; (Sermon 148: PL 52, 596–598).

⁷ “The Contemplation on the Incarnation,” *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola*.

⁸ John 4:9

⁹ Luke 10:37

¹⁰ Acts of the Apostles 2:4



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ.¹¹

The rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching serves as a tool for identifying, analyzing, and acting in ways that can transform social sin into social reconciliation and justice. From Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* to Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* to Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, to John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* to Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* to Francis' *Fratelli Tutti*, the Church addresses the violations of human dignity that are embedded in the structures of modern society and espouses that the common good necessary for human flourishing can only be attained and sustained when these structures are identified, opposed, and transformed. The protection, promotion, and respect of our human dignity is the core of Catholic Social Teaching.

In 2005, the Catholic Bishops of the United States developed the document, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," which "highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition." Included in these are "life & dignity of the human person, call to family, community, and participation, rights and responsibilities, option for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, solidarity, and care for God's creation."

JESUIT EDUCATIONAL MISSION

Diversity and difference are gifts to be celebrated to create an inclusive society. God is the loving creator of all things, and in God we find our commonality and solidarity.¹²

Then

The earliest schools were exhorted to accept and support *ogni sorte di persone* (every type of person), and this included those students outside the Catholic community. In Prague, for example, Lutheran students were admitted into Jesuit schools and were not required to recite the Litany of Saints. Similarly, the wishes of Hussite parents to not have their sons catechized were honored.¹³ This inclusive approach is not meant to absolve the harsh reality of exclusion and discrimination in parts of Jesuit educational history, but to indicate that we have and can embrace meaningful differences.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2422.

¹² *Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21st Century*, p. 236.

¹³ John O'Malley, SJ, *The First Jesuits*, pgs.211, 207.

Now

Our rich tradition of Jesuit education calls us to meet students and colleagues deemed “other” by our society with the most generous exercise of *cura personalis*. The following documents have been issued recently by the Society of Jesus to guide contemporary Jesuit schools in this pursuit:

“The school program includes anti-racism/anti-bias training for board, faculty and staff, and students. All school personnel work to eradicate barriers between and among people such as misogyny, homophobia, and gender and socio-economic stereotyping and discrimination.” (*Our Way of Proceeding*, Domain 5: 13.2)

“Jesuit schools should teach about the dignity of women, who are full and equal partners in all endeavors. The schools must actively combat racism in all its forms. The schools must teach and create a climate where all God’s children, regardless of their sexual orientation, are welcome. Grounded in the principle of *cura personalis*, the care of the individual, the school must value the dignity and worth of each of its members.” (*A Living Tradition*, Global Identifier 9, 259–262)

“To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.” (UAP 02).

“Young people aspire instead to diversity that corresponds to the exercise of true freedom and opens creative spaces that contribute to the emergence of a humane, intercultural society.” (UAP 03, 44)

ONE SINGLE CURA

The end of this Society is to devote itself with God’s grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members’ own souls, but also with that ‘same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbors.¹⁴

CURA PERSONALIS

The unique insight of Ignatian spirituality which holds that the Creator deals directly with the creature, and the creature directly with the Creator is the foundation upon which Jesuits base their more characteristic themes. The Jesuit concept of *cura personalis*, which translates as “care of the whole person,” suggests attention to the needs of individuals, distinct respect for unique circumstances and concerns, and an appropriate appreciation for singular gifts and insights.

¹⁴ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, 3.

CURA APOSTOLICA

To ensure that no members of our communities remain on the periphery of our school cultures, the schools should also take to heart the imperative of *cura apostolica* or care for the work and commitments of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit concept of *cura apostolica* requires an institution's commitment to promote the larger Jesuit work in which the institution participates. In other words, the work is bigger than any one institution.

ONE CURA

Superior General Arturo Sosa, S.J., writes that *cura personalis* in tandem with *cura apostolica* is really “one single cura,” that is, care for the mission.¹⁵ The work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging engages in one cura because it cares both for the dignity of the individual and for the apostolate. It strives to create the conditions that allow individuals deemed “other” and often excluded by virtue of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, learning differences, or physical ability differences to belong and to flourish in Jesuit schools. A school – an “apostolate” – with the vibrant and robust work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is better positioned for all its members to participate and to grow in a culture of encounter in which we are “persons with and for others.”

We gratefully acknowledge the following colleagues who contributed to the development of this document.

¹⁵ Arturo Sosa, S.J., *Letter to the Whole Society*. 3/25/2020, Paragraph 5.

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