



## EDITORIAL

# Our Contemporary Way of Proceeding

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“Teach us your way so that it becomes our way today, so that we may come closer to the great ideal of Saint Ignatius: to be companions of Jesus, collaborators in the work of redemption.” —Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

The phrase “our way of proceeding” held deep significance for the early Jesuits. It described not only what they did but also how they lived and served. It emphasized a method for making choices aligned with their identity as Companions of Jesus. Echoing the words of Jerome Nadal, General Congregation 34 describes “our way of proceeding” as the way of Christ modeled for us by the life of Saint Ignatius, a living example of our way of proceeding.<sup>1</sup> With the way of Christ to guide them, the early Jesuits were able to maintain a consistent set of core values even in the most extreme situations.

In our profoundly interconnected world, the challenges Jesuits face today are more complex than ever. Identifying a unified approach within a global body, unbounded by geographical limits and enriched by diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, is a significant task. In response to these challenges, General Congregation 36 urges Jesuits to adopt a “contemporary way of proceeding” grounded in three key ele-

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1 General Congregation 34, Decree 26 (1995), “Conclusion: Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding,” in *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 659–64.

ments: networking, collaboration, and discernment.<sup>2</sup> Committed to these and guided by God's grace, GC 36 believes the Society of Jesus can discover the way of Christ in a globally complex world, and like Ignatius and the early Companions respond to his call more effectively.

The document *Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21st Century*, published in 2019 by the Secretariat for Pre-Secondary and Secondary Education of the Society of Jesus, discusses several critical changes that have shaped the interconnected context of contemporary Jesuit schools.<sup>3</sup> These include navigating a socio-political landscape shaped by globalization, adapting educational practices in light of technological advances, engaging students with decreasing religious affiliation, renewing commitment to the Church amidst change, and addressing developments within the Society of Jesus that influence our mission. The document acknowledges that Jesuit schools must respond to these challenges to remain relevant and effective in their contemporary mission. While these five areas represent challenges, they also offer opportunities for Jesuit schools to walk in the spirit of the early Jesuits by following Christ through networking, collaboration, and discernment.

## Networking

In his article for the 2014 edition of the Jesuit yearbook, Dani Villanueva, S.J., General Coordinator of the International Federation of Fe y Alegría, emphasized the importance of international networking within the Society of Jesus. He stressed that networking has become “a new apostolic way of proceeding enabling better collaboration on global and regional levels in the service to the universal mission [of the Society of Jesus].”<sup>4</sup> He highlighted the potential of coordinated action among Jesuit institutions worldwide, which can lead to significant advancements in the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

For almost 55 years, networking has been a key priority among Jesuit pre-secondary and secondary schools in North America. Founded in 1970, the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (JSEA) promoted the Jesuit and Ignatian identity of its schools by offering leadership and support ser-

2 See especially General Congregation 36, Decree 2 (2016), “Renewed Governance for a Renewed Mission” in *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017), 27–36.

3 The International Commission on the Apostolate on Jesuit Education (ICAJE), *Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21st Century* (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2019).

4 Daniel Villanueva, S.J., “Networking in the Society,” in *Jesuits: Yearbook of the Society of Jesus* (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2014), 96–98, at 96.

vices to them. In 2015, the JSEA was reorganized into the Jesuit Schools Network of North America (JSN), evolving into a “network of province networks.” This restructuring enabled schools to collaborate within and across province boundaries as well as within the broader conference network, “animating the educational ministry of the Society of Jesus in North America for the mission of Jesus Christ” (JSN Mission Statement).<sup>5</sup>

The value of networking extends beyond the shores of North America, reaching into the five other global regions of the Society of Jesus: Africa and Madagascar, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and South Asia. To strengthen global collaboration among them, the Society of Jesus launched the Jesuit Global Network of Schools (JGNS) in 2021. In addition to the six regional networks, the global network also includes the schools of Fe y Alegría and JRS Education. Together, the JGNS represents nearly 3,500 Jesuit-sponsored and companion pre-secondary and secondary schools across more than 80 countries, educating over 1.6 million students with the support of approximately 100,000 faculty members. The global network’s mission is to enhance their commitment to a global mission by fostering collaboration and resource-sharing among Jesuit educators and institutions worldwide.

Networking has proven to be an invaluable asset for Jesuit schools in both North America and globally. By fostering collaboration and resource-sharing, these networks enhance the educational mission of the Society of Jesus, enabling schools to support one another by identifying and working towards common goals within an interconnected context.

## **Collaboration**

The General Congregations of the Society of Jesus have highlighted the importance of collaboration in their mission. General Congregation 35 (2008) emphasized the need for Jesuits to work with diverse communities, including laypeople, religious individuals, indigenous persons, and those from different religious and spiritual backgrounds. Similarly, General Congregation 34 (1995) affirmed and encouraged collaboration with laypeople in various projects, laying the groundwork for future collaborative efforts.

Collaboration among regional networks of Jesuit schools has a long tradition. The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Edu-

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5 Jesuit Schools Network, “The mission of the Jesuit Schools Network of North America (JSN) is to animate the educational ministry of the Society of Jesus in Canada, the United States, Belize, and Micronesia in service of the Catholic Church by strengthening Jesuit pre-secondary and secondary schools for the mission of Jesus Christ,” accessed March 18, 2025, <https://jesuitschoolsnetwork.org/about/mission-and-initiatives/>.

cation (ICAJE), comprised of the delegates of the six global networks, has been in existence since 1980. For almost a half-century, ICAJE members have played a crucial role in shaping contemporary Jesuit education by collaboratively working together. An example of their collaborative work includes the development of key documents such as *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986), *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (1993),<sup>6</sup> and *Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21st Century* (2019).<sup>7</sup>

Most recently, ICAJE delegates enhanced global collaboration through the activities of the JGNS, particularly via a nine-year cycle of colloquia, seminars, and congresses designed to foster collaboration and discernment among Jesuit schools. Colloquia, such as the International Colloquium on Jesuit Secondary Education (ICJSE) in Boston (2012) and JESEDU-Global, held virtually in 2021, focus on scholarly exchange and best practices among a large group of global colleagues. Seminars, like the International Seminar on Ignatian Pedagogy and Spirituality (SIPEI) in Manresa (2015) and JESEDU-Jogja (2024), emphasize interactive learning and deep discussions on focused topics among a selected group of participants from each region. Congresses, such as JESEDU-Rio (2018) and the upcoming JESEDU-Montréal (2027), facilitate decision-making, strategic planning, and goal setting among the global education delegates (PASE). The cycle of gatherings ensures collaboration among Jesuit schools, helping them address global challenges and fulfill their mission.

### Discernment

This past summer, more than 100 delegates from 37 countries gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for II JESEDU-Jogja 2024, the second international seminar, to reflect on the important issue of “Educating for Faith in the 21st Century.” In his introductory address, Fr. General Arturo Sosa, S.J., emphasized the increasing diversity of faith experiences in the world and within Jesuit apostolates. He encouraged Jesuit schools “to become apostolic bridges between this beautiful and God-given diversity and our faith.” He reaffirmed the apostolic potential of Jesuit schools and stressed the need for them to be places that promote encounters with others and with God within multi-confessional and secularizing contexts.

In response to Fr. Sosa’s charge, Jogja participants entered into a five-day experience of discernment, reflecting on the vital role Jesuit education plays in educating for faith. In addition to keynote speakers and plenary

6 Both of these can be found in José Mesa, S.J., ed., *Ignatian Pedagogy: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Jesuit Education from St. Ignatius to Today* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017).

7 ICAJE, *Jesuit Schools*.

discussions, participants engaged in prayer, reflection, and spiritual conversation, discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit within the assembled body. The seminar concluded with the sharing of a Vision Statement:

Jesuit schools *intentionally* educate for faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by *accompanying* their students in discovering and deepening their core *identity*—their resilient faith—that emerges out of an *encounter* with God through an *encounter* with Jesus Christ that is supported by and celebrated within a *community of faith* and guided by *adult formators* adept in Ignatian spirituality, our Catholic tradition, and the life of Jesus Christ, in *dialogue* with other religions and secular society, and implemented according to the local *context and culture*.

For the Jogja participants, the Vision Statement is a compilation of graces that consistently emerged from the group over five days of intentional speaking and deep listening in Yogyakarta. The graces, highlighted in bold type within the Vision Statement above, began as single words and phrases, spoken and shared repeatedly through the insights, hopes, concerns, and questions of the participants—from keynote presenters, colleague responders, discernment groups, and informal conversations over coffee. Once identified, these common graces were woven into a Vision Statement through the deep listening of ICAJE delegates. The introduction to the Vision Statement captures it best: “During the days of discussion and prayer, several common graces emerged from within the JESSEDU-Jogja participants, who now joyfully share a vision forged by those graces.”

With the Vision Statement in hand, members of the JGNS have returned home to implement the global vision by developing action steps in response to the local culture and context. In this way, the Vision Statement becomes a “glocal” document, one that lives global values locally. In North America, JSN will approach its 2025 Colloquium on Jesuit Education through the lens of the JESSEDU-Jogja Vision Statement, adding a North American “flavor” to its local integration. Guided by Christ, we hope the fruits of this “contemporary way of proceeding” will slowly begin to shine forth in Jesuit schools—from Winnipeg to Belize City, Chuuk to Manhattan—just as it did for Saint Ignatius and his early companions, and for the countless Jesuits and lay colleagues who have followed them. Like them, we hope to be as Fr. Arrupe encouraged us to be, “companions of Jesus, collaborators in the work of redemption.”

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