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Communal Reflections on the Jesuit Mission: Some More Questions We Can Talk About

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COMMUNAL REFLECTIONS *on the* JESUIT MISSION

Some More Questions We Can Talk About

Increasingly aware that today “Jesuits represent only a small numerical presence within those universities called Jesuit,” in 2002 the American Jesuit provincials published a challenging little pamphlet (10 pages) with a very big name: *Communal Reflection on the Jesuit Mission in Higher Education: A Way of Proceeding* — not so much as an answer to an impending crisis, but as a conversation starter for Jesuit and lay faculty groups.

It has the measured tone of anything written by a committee; but it spells out five hoped-for characteristics of Jesuit high education — like dedication to human dignity, creative companionship in a communi-

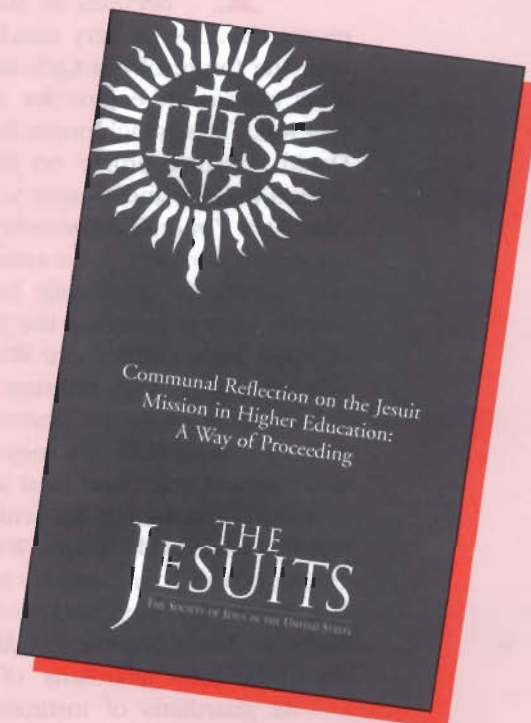
ty of dialogue and service, and care for students — and follows with some provocative questions on what we might actually do to make the “characteristics” ring true. For example: How do we reward excellence in research, teaching and service? Do we provide programs for substance abuse, “sexual confusion,” and psychological upheaval? Do our research projects have an impact on the neighboring community?

Since the purpose of the pamphlet is also the purpose of our magazine, to promote conversation, we think this issue on governance is a good time to highlight certain passages which are especially relevant to what we are talking about. **RASsj**

Inspired by this sense of reverence, the Jesuit ideal of seeking and finding God in all things presupposes this genuine regard for the mystery of the universe. It is an ideal that gives serious attention to those great and abiding questions about the meaning of life and the conduct of human affairs... that exults in the world of creative energy in literature and music, in art and theatre, in business and in the sciences.

There is a healthy professionalism that respects the differences in goals and methodologies among the various branches of knowledge and competencies. But the Jesuit educational ideal is also one that tries to find ways to transcend these boundaries in order to forge a community of scholarship and service.

Solidarity also means a commitment to change the economic, political, and social structures that enslave, dehumanize, and destroy human life and dignity. Each university must examine its own social environment, including its own commitment to justice and solidarity.



*This pamphlet is available from
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