

April 2014

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Recommended Citation

Boroughs, Philip L. S.J. (2014) "Shared Values, Creative Vision: A President Responds," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 45, Article 14.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol45/iss1/14>

Shared Values, Creative Vision: A President Responds

By Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

The recent meeting of AJCU presidents, board chairs, provincials, representative rectors, and Fr. Adolfo Nicolás at Loyola University Chicago was significant for its context, content, and consequences.

This meeting was the first time that the board chairs of the 28 schools of the AJCU had met together, and their presence along with Father General's visit significantly energized our gathering. The assembly made very clear that when the presidents and board chairs convene the majority of the leadership of Jesuit institutions is now in the hands of the laity. It is also made clear that we have a long way to go before there is greater gender and racial diversity among our leader-

ship. I appreciated having my board chair, Kevin Condron, with me so that power of the experience and the wisdom of the general were being heard and later could be shared by more than one person upon returning to Holy Cross. We have subsequently decided that the focus of our September board meeting will center on our Catholic and Jesuit identity. I was also pleased to meet Kip Condron, Kevin's brother and board chair of the University of Scranton. Kevin and Kip are the first brothers to serve simultaneously as board chairs of a Jesuit college and university.

While the provincials and Father General met separately during the first session, the higher education



participants were led through a guided meditation and group reflection based on the Spiritual Exercises, a new experience for many but one that was well received. We soon understood its relevance as Father Nicolás's presentation emphasized our respective calls to be spiritual and heroic leaders. Given the uncertain context of higher education today and our difficult financial realities, the rapidly diminishing number of Jesuits on our campuses and the growing number of lay presidents, as well as the pending mergers of our United States provinces, I suspect that many of us were initially surprised that Father General began by talking about spiritual leadership rather than the practical implications of the realities we face.

By the time Father Nicholas ended his presentation, however, and challenged us to discern our future as institutions, and as soon to

be reorganized provinces, his intent was evident. Making the difficult decisions needed to ensure that Jesuit higher education in the United States continues to be viable and transformative will require ongoing discernment based on detachment, indifference, and freedom. These prerequisites cannot be assumed but, he implied, will come only as the result of a more rigorous appropriation of Ignatian spirituality. In our highly individualized culture, where even Jesuit institutions are used to competing among themselves for students, resources, and rankings, Father General seemed to suggest that our future existence as the AJCU will depend on how committed we are to being a more intentional community of shared values and creative vision willing to face difficult realities together.

Father Nicolás ended his presentation with a simple and humble request of our board chairs. He asked them to share with our provincials and presidents how their recruitment of employees could help us in the recruitment of Jesuit vocations. Not only is the future of our Jesuit colleges and universities dependent on our lay/Jesuit collaboration; but apparently so is the future of the Society of Jesus itself. ■

Philip L. Boroughs, S.J., has been president of the College of the Holy Cross since January 2012; before that he was vice president for mission and ministry at Georgetown. He has served on the boards of the University of San Francisco and of the College of the Holy Cross.



John Lewis, chair of the University of Detroit Mercy board of trustees, Dr. Antoine M. Garibaldi, president of the University of Detroit Mercy, Fr. Timothy Kesicki, S.J., provincial of the Chicago-Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus, and Father Nicolás. Photo courtesy of the AJCU.