Provincial’s Visit, February 17

Back in 1841 when Peter DeSmet and his Jesuit companions came west in response to an invitation from the Flathead Indians they embraced the invitation as a call to mission from the Lord. Their mission was to serve in the most effective manner the needs of the people, broadly understood. This led to the establishment of missions such as St. Ignatius in Montana, DeSmet in Idaho, and a number of others throughout the Inland Northwest. And, as had been the case in other Jesuit missions over the centuries, these missions often included schools, for education had become a very effective means for the implementation of the Society’s mission.

As time passed this mission of serving the people’s greatest needs grew and diversified into what now include, besides some of the old missions among the Native Americans, the Spokane-based, Jesuit-sponsored works of St. Aloysius Parish and its grade school, Gonzaga University and Gonzaga Prep, and most recently the SEEL (Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life) program. Each of these works serves the people and the community in its own particular way; and those who serve within the works serve according to their particular roles. This specialization has been necessary for the sake of effective service. But as we all know this specialization can lead to a fragmentation of our efforts, the so-called silo effect. We easily lose sight of the “big picture”, the overarching mission we have inherited from those founding missionary Jesuits back in the 19th century.

So we are invited to gather with colleagues from the other Spokane area works for an afternoon and evening of exploring with Fr. Scott Santarosa, S.J., the new Oregon Provincial, and with one another the bigger picture of our shared overarching mission to Spokane and the Inland Northwest. Just as our Jesuit forebears made choices discerned in the light of the Spirit that led to Gonzaga College, St. Aloysius Parish, and the SEEL program, we are all invited to continue that discernment of how best to serve the shifting and emerging needs of our city and region. Fr. Santarosa’s talk, looking at the “big picture” will, we hope, stir up reflections pertinent to this on-going discernment of mission.
Fr. Santarosa will speak to us in St. Aloysius Church at 3:30 on February 17. The talk will be followed at 4:30 by a Social in the Globe Room to celebrate Mardi Gras and to meet our colleagues from the other Jesuit works. Please join us!