Welcome Back!

Welcome back to a new academic year. It is exciting to look forward to the “unexpected” that lies ahead. Each year brings its new graces and challenges. In a sense, this is nothing new; it’s the pattern of life. But it can be fun.

Early last year I did a couple of Moments for Mission on the Mass of the Holy Spirit and the Pilgrimage. (They can be found on the mission webpage, if you are interested.) This year I’d like to combine these themes, particularly apt, I think, at the beginning of the year.

Father Arrupe, the former Jesuit General Superior, used to say that we make our paths by walking them. This theme is very much in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola who frequently referred to himself as a “pilgrim”. We make our paths by walking them, which means we don’t exactly know what lies ahead for us. But we know the academic year will have a beginning, a middle, and an end. What circuitous paths will bring us from the beginning to the end we’ve yet to discover. We won’t really know until we get there. So this is where the Mass of the Holy Spirit comes in.

St. Ignatius spent the rest of his life after his conversion “discerning” how the Spirit wanted to guide the Society of Jesus in its commitment to serve the greatest needs. This is as true about the Jesuits today as it was in his time. And it is as true about Gonzaga University as it was for St. Ignatius deciding whether or not to invest his men in the work of staffing schools or to assure that they be always available to sail to parts of the new world as missionaries at the behest of the Pope. In the end he saw education as an equally important way to have a great effect for good in society – and the rest, as they say, is history (along circuitous paths).