

SOCIETY OF JESUS



OREGON PROVINCE

3 December 2006
Feast of St Francis Xavier
First Sunday of Advent

**RE: Promulgation of the Province
Document on Sustainable
Development**

To the Jesuit and Lay Companions of the
Society of Jesus, Oregon Province

Dear Companions in Mission: Peace of Christ

On this feast of St. Francis Xavier---patron of the Oregon Province---and as we begin this holy season of hope, I want to share with you all some important apostolic initiatives which have emerged from the Twinning Agreement between the Provinces of Colombia and Oregon. This Agreement, which itself is a sign of hope we associate with Advent, has already given birth to numerous moments of grace and solidarity; in visitations and conversation, in planning and exchanges, the mission of the Society of Jesus in the Oregon Province and our mission in Colombia have grown closer and been inspired by one another.

Perhaps nowhere is this inspiration as evident as in the work of the Task Force on Sustainable Development, which was formed over a year ago in response to similar work being done in Colombia. In early June of this year this task force, comprised of 12 people from diverse ministries and areas of the Province, successfully completed three projects that will help us take the next steps in deepening our apostolic ties to Colombia, and more than that, in fulfilling our mission of *“a faith that does justice through dialogue and engagement with culture.”* I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Stephen Freedman, the Task Force Chair; to Fr. William Watson, S.J., my Assistant for Colombia; and each member of this task force for the diligence and commitment they displayed in carrying out these projects on our behalf.

With this letter then, I officially promulgate the document: **Regional Sustainable Development: A Plan of Action.** Furthermore, I submit—with my full support—the recommendations given to the Province regarding ways to advance our relationship with the Province of Colombia regionally, nationally, and internationally. I would ask each of you—as individuals and in the apostolic communities with which you labor—to consider seriously how you might help implement both these recommendations and the timely direction offered by the *Regional Sustainable Development* document. To help in these considerations, allow me to offer a word on each of these initiatives.

REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Jesuits of Colombia are reorganizing their social apostolates to more effectively address the challenging social and economic issues facing their country. They have embarked upon a multi-year initiative to develop interdisciplinary projects organized around sustainable development to help stabilize peace and economic prosperity in the countryside of Colombia. Also, the Jesuit universities of Colombia are being brought into this work for a more integral collaboration of the social and educational apostolates.

The Twinning Agreement asks the Oregon Province to define Sustainable Development for our region and to engage in a project(s) that can provide an international companion to the work of the Colombian Jesuits. My challenge to the Task Force was to see this request of the Colombian Jesuits in light of the *Criteria for our Choice of Ministries* that was defined by the *Paths to the Northwest* document in the mid 1980's and in light of the direction of the Society since that time. This they have done, producing a work beyond what I had hoped.

The Task Force's work is detailed in the attached document: *Regional Sustainable Development: A Plan of Action*. This document is timely in many ways, calling as it does for a responsible approach to our shared ministry as stewards of the earth and companions of all women and men. I encourage you to read it carefully, perhaps referencing, as well, the recently begun website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, dedicated to issues of global warming and sustainable development.

I make two specific requests of Jesuit and lay partners—especially those involved in the ministries of the Oregon Province—in light of *Regional Sustainable Development: A Plan of Action*:

- First, I ask each ministry and community to discuss—between now and the end of March—the topic of regional sustainable development and in particular to engage the recommendations the Task Force makes to the Province. It is my hope that the Directors of each Jesuit work, as well as the local Superiors, will assist in gathering groups interested in this conversation.
- Second, I ask you to collate your responses and forward them to Dr. Dennis Horn, Dean of Gonzaga's Engineering School (horn@gonzaga.edu) or Fr. Bill Watson, S.J., Assistant for Colombia (wwatson@nwjesuits.org). I have asked Dr. Horn and Fr. Watson to do the preliminary work for a new committee to help us identify the most promising ideas for a project(s) on Regional Sustainable Development. It is my hope that this committee might be formed by the end of the academic year.

REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

The role of the Oregon Province in promoting the relationship with Colombia goes on in many directions—some of which are broadly understood, and some of which may not be. To clarify some of our initiatives and encourage others I would note:

- While his primary work for the Province will be as Associate Director of Development, I want to confirm Bill Watson's continuing role as Special Assistant for Colombia. The passion and gifts released by Bill across the Province have helped make our Twinning grow, and though it is gaining a momentum of its own, I believe Bill will continue to be a vital source of connection and coordination. Beyond his Province role, however, Bill will also continue his work with Fr. Jim Stormes at the Jesuit Conference in advancing the relationship with Colombia nationally and internationally. I am also requesting that Bill find potential links with Colombia and our Twinning Agreement with Zambia/Malawi.
- Likewise, Ms. Cindy Reopelle recently named as Assistant for Jesuit-Lay Partnership and continuing Assistant for Secondary Education, did invaluable work on the Province Task Force. With the Secondary School Commission and others with whom she works, Cindy continues—and will continue—to look for opportunities of exchange and relationship in the ministries of the Oregon and Colombian provinces.
- Fr. Pat Conroy will formalize plans in conjunction with his counterpart in Colombia, Fr. Jose Ricardo Alvarez, to create opportunities for Jesuits in formation, regency, and first placements after ordinations to work in each other's provinces. Already, the novices have gone to Colombia and numerous scholastics are exploring possible international connections. In making Colombian regents and recently ordained priests welcome, every ministry assists in this growing international dimension of formation.
- Fr. Paul Janowiak, Socius to the Provincial and Chair of the Province's Higher Education Commission, went with the leadership of our two universities to Colombia several weeks ago. Paul, working with leaders in each university, will continue to support the efforts of both Gonzaga and Seattle University in their search for collaborative projects with the Javeriana universities in Bogotá and Cali.
- Finally, Ms. Joyceann Hagen, Assistant for Pastoral and Social Ministries, has accompanied members of almost all the parishes of the Province to Colombia and is working to assist in the creation of effective links, programs, and initiatives that can help advance international perspectives in the social/pastoral area with our companions in Colombia

I am grateful to each member of the Province staff, who has served this initiative toward Colombia so well during my time as Provincial. Their work, done in collaboration with numerous Jesuit and lay partners in every apostolic area, and supported by the focused and

effective work of the Task Force, is putting in place a foundation upon which new initiatives and a more universal sense of our Jesuit mission is possible.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention the benefactors, whose generous support has allowed the Province to engage this important area at a time of great fiscal restraint. Especially to be thanked are Mr. Tim Busch of Orange County and Mr. Jim Mallahan of Seattle, whose generosity has made most of the exchanges between the Provinces possible. Only by the commitment of our friends, who share in our mission through the gifts they have been given by God—whether talent, time treasure, or (in all cases we hope) prayer—can we hope to move forward, *for the greater glory of God*. I am grateful to all.

CONCLUSION

The convergence between the First Sunday of Advent and the Feast of St. Francis Xavier provides the perfect occasion for promulgating this new document on Sustainable Development and deepening the Colombia/Oregon Twinning Agreement. Both the season of Advent and the Feast of Francis Xavier raise our eyes to see the new horizons of faith and justice to which both the Church and the Society invite us. Let us listen with new ears to the Prophet Jeremiah from the reading for the first Sunday of Advent. Perhaps we can see the coming of the Son of Justice in our mutual sharing and collaboration with our sisters and brothers in Colombia.

*The days are coming, says the LORD,
When I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.
In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot;
He shall do what is right and just in the land.
In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;
This is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."*

-Jeremiah 33:14-16-

Yours in the Lord,



John D. Whitney, S.J.
Provincial