



## Office of the Vice President for Mission

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TO: The Gonzaga Community  
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux  
SUBJ: Moment for Mission  
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### **The Pilgrimage**

The practice of pilgrimage has a long tradition, at least in some religions. Abram set forth from Ur in ancient Mesopotamia following the call of the Lord. The Muslims have their traditional *hajj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca. Many Catholics undertake the famous pilgrimage from San Sebastian to Santiago de Compostela. And our Gonzaga community makes its annual pilgrimage to Cataldo Mission.

We know what a pilgrimage is in the literal and time constrained sense of the journey from point A to point B, but equally important is the spiritual and long term component of the pilgrimage. In his Autobiography St. Ignatius of Loyola constantly referred to himself as “the pilgrim”. After his conversion and a long year of prayer and reflection at Manresa, he set out to follow the Lord’s lead wherever it would take him. His pilgrimage was a literal one of point A to point B, but also a lifelong spiritual journey. His time at Manresa had schooled him in the discernment of spirits, including the discernment of how the Holy Spirit was working in his heart and in his life. This experience of Ignatius has carried down over the years with greater or lesser degrees of fidelity on the part of his brother Jesuits. This spirit of discernment is an ideal to which we are called; and as we know only too well, ideals can remain elusive for us humans, while at the same time giving us a sense of direction and purpose.

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1965 to 1983, used to say that we Jesuits and our works “make our paths by walking them”. I believe that this attitude lies behind what has come to be called “creative fidelity”. In the final analysis we rely on God’s Spirit to keep us true to our basic beliefs (fidelity) while guiding us in the proclamation of these beliefs in a wide range of cultures and historical eras (creativity). Pope Benedict XVI spoke to this in his Allocution to the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation in 2008 when he urged us to go to the frontiers, bringing the message of the gospel to cultures around the world, doing so with language and images that make sense to those cultures. In calling us to this “mission” the Pope referred to the examples of pilgrims Matteo Ricci, Robert de Nobili, and the Paraguayan

Reductions – all well-known examples of very creative missionary work from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Not surprisingly, Gonzaga University's pilgrimage sits squarely in the middle of the missionary tradition that has marked the Society of Jesus. It lies behind our Mission Statement. Our frontiers are both local and global, but in the end they are the very cultures in which we and our graduates will live and move. We are on a real and wonderful pilgrimage. In our dialogue with cultures we are indeed "making our paths by walking them".