



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
SUBJ: Moment for Mission
DATE: August 27, 2013

Welcome!

The Mission Office, Frs. Jim Voiss and Frank Case and Shanea Giroux, warmly welcome back our many familiar colleagues and extend a special welcome to those just joining the Gonzaga community. We hope to be able to serve you in one way or the other this year.

A wonderful summer morphs into a lovely autumn. And I can't help thinking about Pope Francis' impressive witness to the world. His Brazilian visit truly inspired me.

Speaking of Francis, one of my Jesuit companions, when asked what it meant for him that the Pope is a Jesuit, said, "Now there won't be any confusion about us Jesuits being Catholics." (In fact someone asked me at the time of his election whether he would have to convert to Catholicism.)

Indeed we Jesuits are Catholics, but as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out during our 35th General Congregation, our role within the Church is to take the message of the gospel to the frontiers. This has been our vocation within the Church from our earliest days when Xavier, Ricci, DeNobili and others set out for the mission lands of Asia, Africa, and the new world. In carrying that message we have had to put it in words, signs and images that are appropriate for the cultures we visit. And we have to do so in ways that respect the good that we encounter in those cultures. As the early Jesuits here in the Northwest said, we "graft" the Christian message onto the already existing sacred traditions of the people we hope to serve.

The mission lands today are no longer only on foreign shores. The cultures to which we want to bring the gospel message are right here, even within our very beings, affecting how we view the world, ourselves, and others. What better role, then, for a Jesuit university than to engage contemporary culture in a respectful dialog of transparent trust!

Fr. Nicolás, our Jesuit Fr. General, says that the Catholic university is where the Church engages in dialog with culture. It's an exciting, and at times challenging, mission for us here

at Gonzaga, one deeply true to our Jesuit tradition, but open to creative adaptation to the cultures we encounter.