

Seeking Integration and Wisdom: The Xavier Way

Introduction

At Xavier University we are privileged to be part of an intellectual tradition that is both Jesuit and Catholic. This tradition is not a timeless and static storehouse of abstract ideas. It is a living history of persons and communities who have discovered God in the encounter with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catholic universities are rooted in this transformative encounter and live it in different ways. The purpose of this document is to articulate what it means for us—the particular community of persons that is Xavier University today—to be a Jesuit Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts tradition.

How ought the entire University act to fulfill Xavier’s Mission with excellence and integrity?¹ What values should guide us—the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students—across every division, department, and office? Who are we? To what will we hold ourselves accountable? How do we maintain a robust Jesuit Catholic identity while also integrating all persons into our community? How do we grapple with the difficult, important issues of our times? Here we ask of ourselves collectively the same aspirational questions of identity and vocation we ask of our students. What does the Xavier Way mean today and how will we embody it in our work together?

Inspired by St. Ignatius and the Jesuit Catholic liberal arts tradition, **the Xavier Way is a dynamic spirit of critical inquiry and loving openness seeking encounter, integration, and wisdom.** All that we do at Xavier University—our teaching, our research, our service—is imbued with the conviction that faith is a vital dimension of life, that hope is a realistic stance toward the world, and that love is our ultimate purpose. As a Jesuit institution of higher learning, we contribute to the life of both the Church and society by opening spaces for reflection on the most critical questions of our times. At the frontiers of faith, reason, and culture, we help our students to ponder these questions deeply through transformative encounters both in and beyond the classroom and to integrate their learning experiences creatively, analytically, and contemplatively through eyes of love. In all that we do we seek to create and celebrate what Pope Francis has called a “culture of encounter.”

What follows is the fruit of a sustained and ongoing discernment process informed by the labors and collective wisdom of many in the Xavier community and from the worldwide Jesuit and Catholic tradition from past to present. As grateful inheritors of that tradition, we wish to articulate a way of proceeding that fosters growth and transformation in the hearts, minds, imaginations, and wills of our students and everyone invested in the Xavier community. In so doing, by the grace of God, the Xavier Way seeks no less than the healing and transformation of our society and our world.

Encounter, Integration, and Wisdom: Our Jesuit Catholic Roots

We believe that our vocation at Xavier University is to foster a holistic learning environment that is both Catholic and truly catholic, or universal, a transformative education that seeks after the divine wisdom perspective—God’s boundless mystery, inclusive of all—at every level of imagination, discourse, and practice.²

Our Jesuit Catholic identity is grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as interpreted by the Catholic tradition down through the centuries.³ In all that we are and do, Xavier University is rooted in and informed by the teachings of the Catholic Church and the richly mosaic Catholic intellectual tradition with respect to:

- the sacred character of all creation,
- the dignity of every human person
- the mutually informing relationship between faith and reason, and
- our moral responsibility to care for creation and for those suffering in the world.

At the same time, Xavier strives to be welcoming of all persons, inclusive of those who adhere to other religious traditions, humanist traditions, or no formal religious tradition at all.⁴ The desire for unity with our non-Catholic brothers and sisters is rooted in the biblical revelation of God whose love and grace embraces all persons, each created in the divine image, without exception. With Vatican II, we affirm that God’s wisdom and truth are reflected in the whole of creation. We are called to cultivate relationships of solidarity, dialogue, and peacemaking with non-Catholics and non-Christians everywhere.⁵ Such relationships cannot be realized in an ideal or purely theoretical realm of abstraction. They are forged in the world as we encounter it and in the Xavier campus culture as we create it.

The creative tension between inclusiveness and a robust Jesuit Catholic identity, while always presenting fresh challenges, is not new. It is as old as the Catholic and Jesuit traditions themselves, which insist on the compatibility of faith and reason.⁶ It is a story that stretches back to St. Paul and St. Justin Martyr, through a rich history of men and women grappling with faith and reason through the centuries, across many lands, languages, and cultures.⁷ The labors of our forebears in “faith seeking understanding” gave rise to monasteries, mendicant religious orders, cathedral schools, and eventually universities.⁸

The Society of Jesus began at the University of Paris as Ignatius Loyola and his companions pursued a broad-based liberal arts education. At the same time, Ignatius and his companions drew their inspiration and distinctive method of discernment from the Spiritual Exercises, the fruit of Ignatius’ life of prayer.⁹ The Spiritual Exercises and the humanist model of liberal education became mutually reinforcing schools of mind, heart, and imagination. Together these two pillars frame the core of the Jesuit tradition at Xavier University.

From the earliest days, Jesuits were sent out both to share and to learn. The impulse imparted by the Spiritual Exercises to discover God’s presence “in all things,” and by liberal education to expand the mind, could not be contained in one culture or region. It pushed the early Jesuits and many after them to explore as far as their minds, hearts, and feet could take them.

Among the best examples of this twin impulse of sharing and learning comes from the encounter between Jesuits and native peoples in 17th century South America. The Jesuits introduced Baroque music to the native people of the Chiquitania region, who not only became proficient in Baroque music but also creatively adapted it.¹⁰ This encounter extended beyond respectful tolerance to become a celebration of mutual enrichment. From Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci to the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador, the Ignatian imagination foundational to a Xavier education is a creative process that engages reality at the frontiers of faith and the intersection of cultures and is transformed by it.¹¹

The creative tension between identity and difference is the spark of mutual enrichment that diversity and dialogue have always provided at Xavier University.¹² The Xavier Way is deepened and enlarged by embracing creative tension—by encountering new and interesting places, people, and problems. We affirm with Fr. Howard Gray, S.J. a vision of Jesuit and Catholic identity that centers “on a process of inquiry and a search for discovery [more] than a program of indoctrination and imposition.”¹³

The dynamics of encounter and integration inform our understanding of wisdom. Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman describes wisdom as “the clear, calm, accurate vision, and comprehension of the whole course, the whole work of God”; it “implies a connected view of the old with the new; an insight into the bearing and influence of each part upon every other; without which there is no whole, and could be no centre.”¹⁴ But we know that our vision of reality is always limited, that we are not God. History reverberates with the darker side of encounter in which “indoctrination and imposition” were the assumed models of cross-cultural contact. Jesuit and Catholic history is replete with examples of the Christian faith being used to justify slavery, anti-Semitism, and all manner of mistrust and discrimination against whole classes of peoples.

The pursuit of wisdom implies a willingness to navigate these ambiguities and tensions, including the errors and sinfulness of our own history, toward a more integrated, holistic, and loving grasp of truth and the good news of God’s boundless love and mystery. Indeed the integrity of a Catholic university education depends on the kind of rigorous self-reflection which engages the full measure of our past as it reverberates into the present. In this we have nothing to fear and everything to gain. Historically the great richness and beauty of the Catholic tradition resides in its capacity to critically examine, purify, and renew itself. The Catholic and Jesuit University is where the seeds for such renewal are often planted.

This brings us to an examination of our present context. What is the shape of the world as our Xavier students encounter it today? And what are the distinctive gifts that Xavier University brings to bear in response to the signs of our times?

Engaging a Complex World: Our Challenges

Jesuit Superior General Fr. Adolfo Nicolas has described our world as “a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing.”¹⁵ The challenges are vast and intensified by the “explosion of worldwide interdependence” that is globalization. The social, political, economic, environmental, and ecclesial challenges of our times are not hidden from our students while they attend our Jesuit Catholic university. Xavier students live in the real world and feel deeply both its promise and its malaise.

More keenly than their parents’ generation, our students are aware of the world’s interconnectedness and of the costs incurred by an unsustainable pursuit of the “American way of life”: the costs to the masses of poor persons across the globe; the costs to non-human life and the environment; and the costs to their human and religious spirit. They measure these costs against the values and fears of a consumer culture in which they are deeply embedded, a culture in which human beings themselves, in the words of Pope Francis, “are considered as consumer goods which can be used and thrown away.”¹⁶ They long for friendship and healthy, loving relationships but find few role models and little support in the ubiquitous media culture for such aspirations. They long to serve yet are often discouraged from civic engagement by a sharply polarized political, religious, and socioeconomic landscape. In a world where our daily practices and habits are so profoundly shaped by new technologies which give access to so much information with such great ease, there is a risk of no longer cultivating the discipline or even feeling the need “to think critically or write accurately or come to one’s own careful conclusions.”¹⁷ When the interior world of so many, especially the young, is shaped by these new technologies, relationships also risk becoming superficial; indeed, “one’s vision, one’s perception of reality, one’s desiring can also remain shallow.”¹⁸

More ominously, when faced with these challenges some seek easy answers devoid of dialogue or take refuge in various forms of “fundamentalism, fanaticism, ideology, and all those escapes from thinking that cause suffering for so many.”¹⁹ Others try to shut out unpleasantness or resist genuine encounter through various forms of escape, whether in alcohol use and the hookup culture or an overreliance on social media.

We agree with Fr. Nicolas. One of the greatest challenges facing a Jesuit liberal arts education in our times is the “globalization of superficiality,” the result of habits and processes in which “people lose the ability to engage with reality; that is a process of dehumanization that may be gradual and silent, but very real.”²⁰

Our Mission and Method

We at Xavier University seek a different path. We offer an education in the Jesuit Catholic intellectual tradition that cultivates depth of thought and imagination and seeks the transformation of human society in the way of love, justice, and wisdom. In all of our capacities at the university, the Xavier Mission Statement guides our actions:

Xavier is a Jesuit Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts tradition. Our mission is to educate each student intellectually, morally, and spiritually. We create learning opportunities through rigorous academic and professional programs integrated with co-curricular engagement. In an inclusive environment of open and free inquiry, we prepare students for a world that is increasingly diverse, complex and interdependent. Driven by our commitment to the common good and to the education of the whole person, the Xavier community challenges and supports students as they cultivate lives of reflection, compassion and informed action.

As we carry out our mission, each in his/her various responsibilities, we are supported by the gifts of our Ignatian heritage:

Mission invites us to understand the history and importance of our Jesuit heritage and Ignatian spirituality. Mission focuses on the centrality of academic excellence, grounded in a Catholic faith tradition.

Reflection invites us to pause and consider the world around us and our place within it.

Discernment invites us to be open to God's spirit as we consider our feelings and rational thought in order to make decisions and take action that will contribute good to our lives and the world around us.

Solidarity and Kinship invites us to walk alongside and learn from our companions, both local and afar, as we journey through life.

Service Rooted in Justice and Love invites us to invest our lives into the well-being of our neighbors, particularly those who suffer injustice.²¹

Just as they guided Ignatius and his companions, these gifts of our Ignatian heritage offer guideposts for carrying out our educational mission, and for seeking integration and wisdom. Much more than simply the delivery of content, they embody a method, a way of proceeding that aims to foster growth and transformation. But they do not provide easy answers. Indeed, they help us to better grasp just how difficult today's challenges really are.

Creative Tensions

As we seek to live out our mission—in our classrooms, in our offices, in our relations with the rest of the world—we often find ourselves in disagreement about how best to embody our identity as a Jesuit Catholic university. As noted above, to embrace our mission with vigor and integrity entails certain tensions. In fact, our university functions best when these tensions are alive and felt. They ought not to be conceived as obstacles but as opportunities for growth in our pursuit of the ends to which we are called.

In what follows the gifts of our Ignatian heritage provide our guideposts and our confidence for examining five tensions that arise regularly at Xavier. Our aim is not to provide a static reconciliation of these impulses, but to underscore the dynamic and enriching processes they bring to the university. We embrace these tensions because they generate creative engagement, stimulate conversation, and promote habits of substantive individual and collective inquiry. They foster, as Fr. Gray notes, “a mutual regard for one another precisely as a privileged place where the divine and the human meet.”²² We believe that the honest, open engagement with these creative tensions at Xavier will foster a culture of encounter, integration, and wisdom. The responses and questions that follow each tension can guide us in our commitment to the Xavier Way.

1. Specialization and Integration

Tension: The 50-year movement toward enrollment growth, democratization, and increased specialization in higher education raises crucial questions for U.S. Jesuit universities. Will our liberal arts institutions “simply merge with mainstream American academe,” thereby losing our distinctiveness and *raison d’être*, or will we have the creativity and courage to own our differences? Will we “foster the integration of knowledge—or will specialization reign alone”? Will we “relate learning to the Transcendent, to God—or will spiritual experience be allowed to disappear from consideration” across the curriculum?²³ “What more do we need to do,” Fr. Nicolas asks, with some urgency, “to ensure that we are not simply populating the world with bright and skilled superficialities?”²⁴

Response: We affirm that the liberal arts remain integral to the university’s Mission and the Jesuit, humanist core curriculum, not in spite of but precisely because of the present environment. The transcendent questions posed by the liberal arts must be integrated within every discipline at the university. Not content merely to further those skills that will aid students in their quest to earn a living, a Jesuit education seeks to ensure that students’ lives will be, ultimately, truly worth living. At the same time, we value and support specialization and professionalization—not for their own sake, but to the extent that they prepare our students to meet today’s challenges with disciplinary expertise, creativity, and imagination.

Therefore, we pursue knowledge integration through an ongoing evaluation of our cross curricular core, and through programming designed to build community across disciplines, including Manresa training for new faculty and staff and the Ignatian Mentoring Program, both sponsored by the Center for Mission and Identity, as well as Faculty Learning Communities, sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence. Initiatives from these and other offices succeed at placing colleagues from diverse specializations and activities in conversation with each other. In addition, we promote research and professional development opportunities for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff.

Do I model for our students the integration of professional skills with critical thinking and care for the common good?

How often do I have a conversation with staff and faculty outside of my division?

How do I ensure that my students integrate questions of meaning and transcendent value addressed by the core with the course I teach?

Do I encourage students to become holistic, critical thinkers?

2. The Center and the Frontier

Tension: Along with its sister Jesuit Catholic institutions, Xavier University is “required to host and moderate open and vigorous debate on contested questions.”²⁵ Many of today’s challenges involve topics that are as sensitive and controversial as they are important. How do we engage with them in a way that is respectful, open, and honest?

Response: Following the direction of Fr. Nicolas, Superior General of the Jesuits, and the decrees of General Congregation 35, we seek to work at the “frontiers” of our culture and society, opening spaces for reflection on the most critical questions of our times.²⁶ We believe that by bringing in speakers with diverse perspectives, hosting performances with challenging topics, and engaging students with texts that might raise more questions than they answer, the university serves a crucial role in public society and Church.

Therefore, we are willing to engage multiple perspectives on important issues, no matter how sensitive, in public dialogues that are deeply informed by the Catholic tradition.²⁷ We require student groups to articulate goals and objectives of functions they wish to sponsor, making clear the benefits of the dialogue that they seek to encourage with such events. Whether in the classroom or in public university events, we expect faculty, staff, and departments to help students be thoughtful and intentional in cultivating truly ‘catholic’ and integrative approach to such dialogues, making room for a breadth and depth of perspectives, inclusive of present Catholic teaching on the matter at hand – even if not especially, where those teachings are the subject of much conscientious debate and even dissent. Again, from a Catholic perspective of profound respect for the dignity of the well-formed moral conscience, we have nothing to fear and everything to gain by encouraging such dialogue in a spirit of mutual learning and transformation.²⁸

Human sexuality is a particularly complex, necessary, and urgent topic for reflection to the extent that we take seriously both the diversity of our campus community and the belief that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God, inclusive of our identities as sexual beings. We respond by making room for and learning from “the real tensions felt by various members of the university community on these matters.”²⁹

Furthermore, in the tradition of the biblical prophets, and following those on the leading edge of peacemaking—Archbishop Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran martyrs, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Sister Dorothy Stang, S.N.D. de N.—we value the willingness to take unpopular positions in the interest of truth, justice, and compassion. Especially regarding questions of violence and oppression and their link to economic and environmental concerns, we are willing to speak out in a prophetic way and support our

colleagues who do so while remaining respectful and civil. In an increasingly globalized and militarized world, this public engagement remains an urgent need.

How can my office or department foster respectful, open conversations on important and controversial questions?

What do we as a department or in our work with students – and what might we do better – to ensure that our deliberations and programming of public events, especially on sensitive or controversial matters, are “deeply informed by the Catholic tradition”?

3. Diversity and Identity

Tension: The demographics of our world, and therefore our students, staff, and faculty are changing. In an increasingly diverse environment Xavier University’s commitment to advancing the Catholic doctrinal tradition sometimes comes into tension with its commitment to shared governance, equal-opportunity employment, and a desire to “welcome and incorporate people of diverse religious traditions and no faith tradition.”³⁰ As well, there are acute tensions surrounding racial and gender diversity in the Xavier community reflecting broader contemporary and historically entrenched divides in American society and in the US Catholic Church.³¹ How do we welcome these diverse populations and cultivate new ways of being in authentic solidarity?

Response: At Xavier we affirm that “diversity” is not a pretext for remaining in one’s comfort zone, safe within one’s unexamined assumptions. For us diversity means that all are welcome to the table and all must prepare to be challenged and transformed by the encounter with one another. We respond by opening contemplative spaces for genuine dialogue and critical inquiry across differences in our classrooms and work environments.

Therefore, as a Jesuit Catholic institution seeking integration and wisdom, we speak honestly and courageously about human difference. Defining diversity broadly is only a first step. We encourage our students and the university at all levels to engage in critical and meaningful dialogue about human difference. We strive to create environments that allow us to explore not only the nature of our identities, but also the social and structural implications of privilege, power, and social political order in the United States and the wider world.

In addition, we maintain ongoing vigilance to ensure that Xavier remains a hospitable work environment for all in matters of hiring, promotion, and benefits. We foster a community of respect in which students and employees feel welcome.³² This includes the understanding that community members may retain mutually exclusive claims to truth, yet remain valued as full members of the university community.

Furthermore, in accordance with the document “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society,” we support explicit teaching on the essential equality of women and men, liberation movements opposing the marginalization and exploitation of women, attention to violence against women, and the genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision-making at all levels.³³

Additionally, we provide open and mutually respectful civic spaces for interreligious dialogue and public deliberation, as well as ritual spaces for the observances of prayer for multiple faith traditions. Multiple centers and programs contribute to an ethos of inclusivity that positions Xavier well for supporting leading efforts in interreligious collaboration, reconciliation, and peacemaking.³⁴

How can I model for our students dialogue and growth from my encounter with a diverse range of people?

How can my office or department ensure that the university remains a hospitable work environment for all?

4. Catholic Identity and Dialogue

Tension: The Roman Catholic tradition is a global and richly catholic tradition, characterized by the convergence of multiple cultural, theological, philosophical, mystical, and prophetic perspectives. Many are disheartened by deep polarization in the Church over longstanding cultural and theological divides. At times, it is difficult to maintain a cohesive Catholic identity among these diverse perspectives.³⁵

Response: We believe that a vibrant Catholic religious identity is fostered through experiences of the cultural and theological diversity within Catholicism itself as well as through deep personal engagement with perennial questions across the whole range of human experience and global religious traditions. The core requirements in theology and philosophy introduce students of every background to the breadth of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition, and engage our Catholic students in a rigorous exploration of their faith and spirituality. We affirm with the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola that one of the most important aims of a Jesuit education is “to praise, reverence, and serve God.”

Therefore, we welcome all Catholics inclusive of a range of interpretations and ways of living out their Catholic faith, as well as those who are less familiar with Church tenets or unsure of their faith commitments. In the spirit of *cura personalis*, St. Ignatius’s call to care for the whole person, we aspire to care for everyone, wherever they may be in their faith journey.

We offer many opportunities and contemplative spaces for the encounter with God’s loving and silent presence to give meaning, shape, and guidance to our lives. This includes rich liturgies, retreat experiences, and opportunities for reflection both on weekends and during the week for our students to become true contemplative leaders in action. Our beautifully maintained campus with its diversity of trees, and flowers, and the presence of sacred art, inspires reflection and prayer.

We affirm the importance of fostering goodwill and mutual understanding between Xavier University and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Xavier and its President maintain regular communication and dialogue with the Archbishop of Cincinnati as well as the Jesuit Provincial. We aspire to build upon our positive relationships with the Catholic parishes, elementary schools, and high schools in the region.

We foster lay formation and collaboration with the Society of Jesus through strong programs in Mission and Identity such as the Ignatian Mentoring Program and AFMIX: Assuring the Future Mission and Identity of Xavier. At the same time, we continue to rely on “the corporate investment of the Society of Jesus” and seek to “maintain and augment a strong Jesuit presence” on campus.³⁶ We look to the Society’s leadership structures to help ensure that the Xavier Way remains rooted firmly in the Ignatian spirit and the liberal arts tradition of Jesuit education.

Finally, we aspire to foster the examination of all the world’s great religious traditions in such a way that students, staff, and faculty come to know and live more deeply and authentically their own faith commitments and respect those of others. Indeed it is the exploration of ultimate questions that unites the Xavier community across traditions, and comprises a crucial part of the university’s contribution to the common good in church and society.³⁷

How do I understand the meaning of “Catholic” and “Jesuit”? Am I open to understanding the variety of interpretations of the Catholic tradition?

5. Achievement and Service

Tension: For some 40 years the Society of Jesus and Jesuits worldwide have called us to cultivate in our teaching and university life “the service of a faith that does justice.”³⁸ Because Xavier attracts students, staff, and faculty with aspirations for great personal achievement, and due to multiplying demands on our time, there is always a risk of forgetting the Society’s commitment to serve the poor and the marginalized of society, beyond the elite, and to “be a resource to the wider human community.” While service learning is a crucial component in our commitment to our “preferential option for the poor,” it is also the case that institutional, financial, and human resources are always at risk of being diverted elsewhere. To paraphrase Fr. Nicolas, we risk failing to give our students *experiences of a depth of engagement with reality that will open their eyes and transform their hearts.*

Response: We believe that faith, knowledge, and service are not three independent aspects of education. Rather they form a triad in which each part is intrinsically related to the others. We affirm that community-based service at local, regional, and global levels is integral to the learning experience and central to Xavier’s mission. We affirm that experiences of encounter and solidarity with the poor as well as careful structural analysis of poverty and other forms of social evil and systemic injustice are not add-ons but integral to the Jesuit mission that seeks both personal and social transformation.³⁹

Therefore, while acknowledging the fiscal challenges presented by our outstanding service learning and immersion programs, we support the work of these multiple institutional resources. These resources, and future ones yet to be imagined, are essential to the strength of our Jesuit Catholic identity.⁴⁰

How can I integrate service into my classes and work such that it enhances education?

Do I see service as integral to, or antithetical to, my aspirations for personal achievement?

The Xavier Way: Celebrating a Culture of Encounter

A range of social, economic, and ecclesial realities have brought Xavier University to a pivotal moment in our history where we face crucial questions. As we respond to the challenges and opportunities of our times, the Xavier Way must not be merely a slogan invoked in such a way as to obscure or side-step the very real tensions we experience day to day in our various responsibilities and relationships within the University community and that historically characterize the Jesuit educational apostolate. The Xavier Way finds its source and inspiration not from the secular or commercial marketplace of norms and ideals—e.g., “the bottom line,” or “return on investment”—but from a distinctively Ignatian way of engaging and responding to reality. The transcendent end, or *telos*, of a Jesuit education, the aspirations that beckon our work, cannot ultimately be quantified.

Clarity about our identity and mission moving forward is crucial as the Society of Jesus increasingly depends on the laity to “assist in leadership roles that will preserve the identity and mission of the institution as Jesuit.” One of the great strengths of our formational programs is their *inclusiveness* and *catholicity*: they are open to administration, faculty of all faith traditions and no faith tradition. Once again our unity within our diversity is our strength. Inspired by St. Ignatius, the Xavier Way is a dynamic spirit of critical inquiry and loving openness seeking encounter, integration, and wisdom in all that we do together.

In Pope Francis, a Jesuit himself, we find considerable encouragement and living confirmation of these values and aspirations. In an address to a community of Jesuits in Rome, the Pope emphasized three words that should guide Jesuit ministries everywhere: *dialogue*, *discernment*, and *frontiers*.

“Your main task is not to build walls,” explains Francis, “but to build bridges which establish dialogue with all peoples, even those who do not share the Christian faith.” Dialogue seeks to build a “culture of encounter” and mutual discernment, not because it is fashionable or politically correct but because of who God is: “God is at work in the life of every person and every culture: the Spirit blows where He wills. Try to find out what God has done, and how He will continue his work. Study, sensitivity, and experience are needed to seek God in all things, in every field of knowledge, art, science, and political, social, and economic life. But it is also important to keep the mind and heart open, and to avoid the spiritual illness of referring everything according to oneself.” Finally, the Pope urges his fellow Jesuits, echoing Benedict XVI before him, “Your right place is at the frontiers. This is where Jesuits belong.... Please, be men at the frontiers, with a trust and ability that comes from God. Do not fall into the temptation to domesticate frontiers.”⁴¹

To be a university committed to dialogue, discernment, and exploration at the frontiers of the academy, church, and society is not easy. The Xavier Way can embrace with trust the complexities and ambiguities of human life and indeed the complexities of university life at every level. It bears a radical hope, flowing from the Catholic sacramental imagination, that the messiness and brokenness of the human condition is nevertheless sacred and bears within it the divine image. Inspired and sustained by this hope, we are confident of growing in our Jesuit Catholic identity through numerous tensions, even where such growth is sometimes difficult to see.

Our students face a world charged with immeasurable beauty and wonder, but also a world of rapid change marked by vast inequalities, environmental degradation, systemic violence, and cultural displacement. Against the temptation to self-concern and “to domesticate frontiers,” the Xavier Way is committed to the education of the whole person, challenging ourselves and our students to discover God’s presence and promises of hope in all things. From the Board of Trustees to faculty, staff, and students across every division, department, and office, each one of us is challenged to reflect upon the light of God’s boundless love and the call for justice, to discover one’s authentic gifts, and to share these gifts in an environment of mutual respect and common mission. Seeking to embody and immerse our students in the intellectual, imaginative, and spiritual depths of the Jesuit Catholic tradition, the Xavier Way cultivates the interior life while pressing us toward loving engagement in the world, with a faith that seeks solidarity and justice with and for all of God’s people.

¹ [Xavier University Mission Statement](#).

² By “Catholic” we refer to Xavier’s affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church. The word “catholic” here means “universal” and derives from the Greek *katholikos*.

See Pope John Paul II, [Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#) (*On Catholic Universities*), 1990.

⁴ Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities pamphlet, [Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Self-Evaluation Instrument](#) [SCJCU], 24.

⁵ [Vatican II](#) was the international Church council of 1962-65, convened by Pope John XXIII, that initiated a process of significant reforms of the Church and its vision of its mission in the modern world. Much like Ignatian spirituality the Council’s sacramental vision of the world and the dignity of the human person is built on the mystery of the incarnation (see, e.g. GS 22).

⁶ Pope John Paul II, [Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#) (*On Catholic Universities*), 1990, par. 17.

⁷ St. Justin Martyr is arguably the first Christian to integrate Greek philosophy into his dialogue about Christianity. He is also patron saint of philosophers.

⁸ “Faith seeking understanding” is the classic definition of theology attributed to St. Anselm of Canterbury (11th c.).

⁹ The [Spiritual Exercises](#) of Ignatius Loyola.

¹⁰ See the film *The Mission* (1986). The establishment of the Jesuit missions in Latin America has been the source of many rich and extensive investigations. While the presence and action of the Society of Jesus in Latin America is typically viewed in a quite positive light, as with any human undertaking, these efforts too had their short comings. Moreover, given the vast extension of the Society’s education efforts, these are hardly susceptible to a single or uniform interpretation. For further reading on this rich yet complex moment in history, cfr. Enrique Dussel, *Historia de la Iglesia en America Latina* (Madrid, 1992); Jeffrey Klaiber, *Los Jesuitas en America Latina (1549-2000): 450 Anos de Incluturacion* (Lima, 2007); also see Nicholas Cushner, “Jesuits” in the *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 3:316-19; John Padberg, “Jesuits” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 3:20-24 and Barbara Ganson, *The Guarani under Spanish Rule in the Rio de la Plata* (Stanford, 2003).

¹¹ “Ignatian” comes from St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus.

¹² Roger A. Fortin, *To See Great Wonders: A History of Xavier University, 1831-2006* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2006).

¹³ Gray, “Being Catholic.”

¹⁴ [John Henry Newman’s](#) *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 287-93. Newman’s *The Idea of a University* is widely celebrated as a seminal work on the intersection of faith and reason in modern Catholicism.

¹⁵ Adolfo Nicolas, S.J., [“Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today.”](#) Mexico City, April 23, 2010, 4.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, [“Address.”](#) May 16, 2013.

¹⁷ Nicolas, “Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,”

¹⁸ Ibid, 3.

¹⁹ Nicolas, “Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” 3. See also Stephen L. Carter, “A Little Less Texting, A Little More Thinking,” in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (March 24, 2012), and “Video Games: What You’d Really Rather Not Know,” *Pediatric News* 46:3 (March 2012).

²⁰ Nicolas, “Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” 3.

²¹ [Gifts of Our Ignatian Heritage](#)

²² [“Being Catholic in a Jesuit Context.”](#) *America*, May 20, 2000.

²³ George Traub, S.J., [“Do You Speak Ignatian?”](#) 3; see also SCJCU, 7.

²⁴ Nicolas, “Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” 6.

²⁵ SCJCU, 14.

²⁶ The Society of Jesus, [“Decrees.”](#) General Congregation 35 (2008), par. 6.

²⁷ SCJCU, 12-13.

²⁸ Vatican II, [Gaudium et spes](#) no. 16; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 1783-1788

²⁹ SCJCU, 13.

³⁰ SCJCU, 24.

³¹ See Francis Cardinal George, “Dwell in My Love: A Pastoral Letter on Racism” (April 4, 2001); Bryan Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010); John Noonan, *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005); Dennis M. Doyle, et al, eds., *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, Crossroad, 2002)

³² SCJCU, 13.

³³ The Society of Jesus, [“Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society.”](#) General Congregation 34 (1995), 4.

³⁴ Pope John XXIII, [Pacem in terris](#) (1963), Pope Paul VI, [Gaudium et spes](#) (1965), Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., ["The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education"](#) (2000).

³⁵ SCJCU, 14. See the extensive interview with Pope Francis by Antonio Sparado, S.J., ["A Big Heart Open to God."](#) *America*, September 19, 2013, in which Pope Francis states, "The church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently."

³⁶ SCJCU, 21.

³⁷ Pope Paul VI, [Nostre Aetate](#) (1965).

³⁸ The Thirty-second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1975) declared: "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." Subsequent General Congregations have reaffirmed the vision of GC 32, as did Jesuit general superior Peter Hans Kolvenbach in a major address at Santa Clara University in October 2000, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in Jesuit Higher Education." See *A Jesuit Education Reader*, ed. George Traub, SJ (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 144-62.

³⁹ See Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice."

⁴⁰ See *Transforming Ourselves, Transforming the World: Justice in Jesuit Higher Education*, ed. Mary Beth Combs and Patricia Ruggiano Schmidt (New York: Fordham University, 2013).

⁴¹ ["Address of Pope Francis to the Community of Writers of La Civiltà Cattolica,"](#) June 14, 2013. See also ["A Big Heart Open to God,"](#) in which Pope Francis states, "You cannot bring home the frontier, but you have to live on the border and be audacious."

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