

DR. EDWARD PECK

Forming Ignatian Partners

by Paul Kruse

“Jesuit education is the education of the whole person. It’s an integration of the head, heart, and hands in service of justice from a perspective of faith,” says Dr. Edward J. Peck, founding executive director of the Ignatian Colleagues Program (ICP). “An Ignatian partner is a professional, non-Jesuit man or woman who intentionally engages and advances this mission.”

Ed works full-time living these words, sharing in the mission of the Jesuits. In June 2008 he began his role as the first head of the ICP. “I have been consistently impressed with Ed Peck,” says Fr. Michael J. Graham, SJ, president of Xavier University. “His deep knowledge of and commitment to Ignatian spirituality is inspiring and makes him a wonderful leader as the ICP begins its work.”

The program began as a movement among the 12 Jesuit Heartland-Delta colleges and universities that collaborate within the Midwest and South-Central regions of the United States. Under the direction of visionary colleagues Stephanie Russell (Marquette University), Thomas Reynolds (Regis University), and Fr. Gregory F. Lucey, SJ (Spring Hill College), the ICP quickly grew into a national project. “It came out of the perceived need for more intentional, integrated formation for those people who want to partner with Jesuits in higher education,” says Ed. “Some people have said that a program like this comes because we’re looking toward a day and age when fewer Jesuits are available for ministry in higher education. While that may practically have given birth to this program,” he goes on, “I think it’s more the case that we’ve always needed a greater number of people involved with and advancing the mission of Jesuit higher education.”

The ICP itself is an 18-month program of professional development and formation for administrators working in Jesuit higher education. The first cohort consists of 47 participants from 23 different Jesuit institutions, including two administrators from Loyola Press in Chicago. They are due to finish in June 2010. The second cohort of approximately 50 people from 26 Jesuit institutions begins in August 2009.

Ed first encountered the mission of the Jesuits while studying at St. John’s Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts, from 1989–1993. There he had an Ignatian spiritual director who introduced him to a Jesuit way of proceeding. After earning masters degrees in Divinity and Theology, Ed chose to go on to Loyola University Chicago to earn a doctorate in Christian Ethics. At Loyola he became actively

involved with campus ministry, where he encountered many Jesuits who shaped his own journey and spirituality. Among these were Frs. John Haughey, SJ, and Josef “Joep” van Beeck, SJ, both of whom served as mentors and friends. After earning his PhD in 1997, Ed married before going on to teach at Neumann College in Aston, Pennsylvania. He continues to balance his active intellectual and professional pursuits with a rich family life. He and his wife

Sarah are currently the parents of three children under the age of six.

In 2002 he came to John Carroll University, where he got to know Fr. Howard J. Gray, SJ, who set him on a course that led him to the ICP. “He knew that I wanted to get involved in mission and identity work. And he recognized in me a real deep love for Ignatian spirituality,” says Ed of Fr. Gray. “He welcomed me into this work by giving me projects that allowed me to articulate what I was learning about Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit identity.”

Now as executive director of the ICP, Ed passes on this love of Ignatian spirituality, which he identifies as “an autobiographical and multidimensional way of being in the world, wherein we recognize the pattern of God in our own lives.” He sees the work of the ICP and Jesuit institutions as passing on this message, not just in forming lay people, but in the whole community. “In the documents of Vatican II, there are two related invitations that are worth considering. First, there’s the call to the laity to share their expertise. Second, there’s the call to the Jesuits and to all religious to retrieve the roots of their spirituality,” says Ed. “An important dimension of Ignatian spirituality involves Jesuits sharing their spirituality and partnering with others as they engage in the work of helping souls. The Spiritual Exercises emerged out of Ignatius’s experience as a lay person and some of his earliest work was with lay people, as he and his companions were forming the Society.”

It is this collaborative work between Jesuits and their companions in higher education that Ed feels is a vital contribution of the Society to the Church and the world. “Jesuit institutions of higher learning play an important role in fostering ongoing critical conversations about frontiers from a perspective of faith,” he says. “They provide exceptional educational opportunities that develop students’ heads, hearts, and hands and enable them to be leaders in the work of promoting a faith that does justice,” says Ed. “We are called to be the thinking Church on the frontiers.” ■



Dr. Edward J. Peck talks with Fr. Gerald J. Sabo, SJ, at an event at John Carroll University. Fr. Sabo is the rector of the Jesuit community at John Carroll.