



Facing New Frontiers in Faith

WE ARE CALLED TO BE MEN AND WOMEN WITHOUT BORDERS

by Edward W. Schmidt, SJ

Somewhere—I don't remember where—I found an old map. Just about any old map will catch my attention, but this one more so. It shows the upper Midwest in about 1680. This was the wild land of the famous Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette. Giving witness to the fact that early explorers and missionaries did include such Jesuits, it notes St. Ignace in Michigan, still there, of course, and St. Francis-Xavier, today's Green Bay, Wisconsin.

There is also a curious mission at what is today's Niles, Michigan, just north of South Bend; this mission was founded and served by the famous Jesuit missionary Claude Allouez. Jesuits made these marks and more on the map of the Great Lakes region.

My map does not have any state lines drawn on it—too early for that. And it was much too early to draw the lines, the border lines of the future Jesuit provinces of Chicago, Detroit, and Wisconsin. The riv-

ers and the lakes are the work of millennia of nature's forces of freeze and thaw, wet and dry, daytime heat and nighttime chill. The later lines are the work of our organization and efficiency, how best to manage our resources, how best to serve our task. In between, we built the forts and the missions and the villages that grew into today's cities. In between, we put our names on the landscape. In between, we pushed out to new frontiers in service of new missions.

Today, Marquette would hardly recognize the frontier he knew. The land lies quilted and claimed with field upon field, and town upon town. The quiet river that carried him onto the waters of Lake Michigan now flows the other way down a glowing canyon of steel and concrete. We live in a time when the land has been named and used. Borders have been drawn everywhere we turn. They mark off property, ownership, my home, my car, my town. It is difficult to see how we are called to the frontiers in this environment. It seemed so clear for Allouez and Marquette. Where are the frontiers now?

I am drawn back to the map, a painting of the frontier. It is a land before borders. All that remains to mark the way are names: Allouez, Marquette, Xavier. Maybe the frontier is less a location and more a process, a growth. Like the slow work of nature's forces, the frontier never leaves us. It is always in the background under our feet. It is without borders or clear lines, where my property and my concerns fade into the untamed wilderness. It is a state where we can hear the whisper of God, and all that marks the way are the names of those who were there before.

Maybe this is what it means to be called to the frontiers in the Jesuit partnership. We are called to be men and women without borders, to give freely of ourselves where the need is greatest, no matter where or when. There are, however, no illusions. The frontier is a frightening place. There are dangers in borderless territory. The rules are not set and there are inevitably hardships. And so we look to the names that are written on the map. They are the examples we follow into the frontier. They are our guides. ■



Fr. Edward W. Schmidt, SJ, is the provincial of the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus.

Service & Ignatian Spirituality

For Young Adults (20's & 30's)

Service Trip

Pontotoc, Mississippi, June 13–20



Join Charis Ministries in returning to Mississippi to work with the Pontotoc County Habitat for Humanity chapter. The trip will involve building homes, community, and hopefully a few muscles.

For more information, contact Mary Ellen at maryellen@charisministries.org or 773.508.3237.

Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House

"Come to the Quiet" retreat July 17–19

Experience the power of silence and prayer. Enjoy the beauty of nature. Encounter God in a new place. The summer "Come to the Quiet" retreat is an opportunity to pause and step away from the demands of everyday life and make room for quiet, reflective space and time for conversation with God. The retreat begins on Friday evening with dinner and concludes with lunch on Sunday afternoon at Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Illinois.

For more information, contact Mary Ellen at maryellen@charisministries.org or 773.508.3237.

For Adults 50 and Over

Ignatian Volunteer Corps

Information sessions for prospective volunteers



The Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) provides men and women age 50 and over the opportunity to serve the needs of people who are poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition.

Chicago

June 10, 2:30–4pm

Holy Family Parish, Hospitality Room
1080 W. Roosevelt Rd., Chicago, Illinois

For more information, contact George Sullivan at gsullivan@ivcusa.org or 773-975-6871.

Cincinnati

June 16, 1pm

1826 Baltimore Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

For more information, contact Sam Schloemer at sschloemer@ivcusa.org or 513-608-5551.