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Regency: Scholastics Centered on Serving Others

by *George Kearney*

“**T**he scholastics were wonderful to deal with. They knew what needed to be done and they did it, but they were friendly, human, and as a group, generally happy,”

Fr. Jim Stoeger, SJ, says of the young Jesuits assigned to St. Xavier High School in the early 60s when he was a student there. St. X’s many scholastics were full of energy, and fully utilized at the school where they taught classes

and ran many of the extracurricular and athletic programs.

Scholastics, i.e., Jesuits with first but not final vows who are still in formation, are one of many threads linking the modern Society of Jesus and these schools with their history and Jesuit heritage. Regency, the three year period during which Jesuits in formation are assigned to work in an apostolate, is likewise a tradition stretching back, in one form

or another, to the days of Ignatius and the early Society. The aim of regency, according to a letter from Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, to all major superiors is “to deepen the spiritual integration and the human maturation of the Jesuit in all its aspects through serious and responsible commitment to apostolic activity.”

Unlike the novitiate and the First Studies program, when the young Jesuit’s energy and attention is directed largely inward towards his own development and academic studies, the regency period calls the Jesuit to work with and for others. And throughout the history of the Society, the scholastics have done a tremendous amount of work.

Many Jesuit schools were built and opened with the help of Jesuit scholastics, young men just a few years removed from high school or college themselves. They served in the schools, usually for three-year terms, as teachers, disciplinarians, football coaches, debate coaches, librarians, cafeteria monitors, and even cafeteria workers. Clad in black cassocks, these early scholastics were, in many ways, the heart of the school, moving it forward and keeping it moving with their seemingly boundless energy. For the most part they were young, and they shared the students’ enthusiasm both for fun and activities.

They were also Jesuits, however, and had chosen very clearly to devote their lives to serving God through their service to others. In the fresh (and sometimes stern) faces of the scholastics, students found human beings, friends, leaders, and role models. The scholastics taught them algebra and Latin and history, but they also taught them how they, as teenagers, could live generously and serve others in their daily lives.

Mike Harmon, a 1959 graduate of St. X and chief council for the city of Cincinnati, recalls the scholastics at St. X being an integral part of his education. “I looked up to them. They were role models for us. They were bright and intelligent, and they were dedicated to making the world a better place.” Harmon adds that the Jesuits charged him with a desire to help mankind, and to teach, which he did before beginning law school.

Today regency remains a crucial piece of the formation process, during which the



scholastic must, according to Fr. Kolvenbach, “serve as well as he can... and show himself able not to be centered on his own needs and preferences.” The focus of regency is apostolic service, and Jesuits today are engaged in arduous service, though the days of scholastics coaching most of a school’s sports teams are probably over. Today, Jesuit high schools are lucky if they have a single scholastic, but the role of today’s scholastic is just as important, if not more so, as the role past generations of scholastics played in Jesuit schools.

This year all eight of the Chicago Province Jesuits in the regency stage of formation are working in province high schools. Charlie Rodriguez and Bill Murphy began their regency at St. Xavier, Andrew Wawrzyn and Peter Nguyen started at St. Ignatius, while four others are continuing their period of regency:

“What has to be developed and put to the proof during regency is his capacity to give, and to give himself, despite occasional encounters with difficulty and even frustration,” says Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach about scholastics like Joe Koshay, who are engaged in their regencies. Joe, shown above, teaches religion at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory.

STAGES OF JESUIT FORMATION

Novitiate: Two years introduction to all things Jesuit: prayer, studies, and apostolic work followed by first vows.

Jesuit First Studies Program: Three year program of study in philosophy, theology, and an academic major.

Regency: Three year period during which Jesuit is assigned to work in a Jesuit apostolate and live in a Jesuit community.

Theology: Three-four year course of theological study

Ordination

Editor’s note: The elements of formation are slightly different for Jesuit brothers.

Kent Beausoleil at Loyola Academy, Mike Conley at Cristo Rey, Joe Koshay at Brebeuf, and Mike O'Grady at St. Xavier.

The efforts of these young Jesuits are critical to maintaining the Jesuit identity and Ignatian character of the schools in which they work. Rachael Dalsing, a junior at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory, explains how Joe Koshay, Brebeuf's only scholastic, has done that during her first two years of high school.

Rachael, who is involved in STRAP, a community service club at the school, traveled to Appalachia with Joe and a number of other students for a service trip this summer. "I would describe Mr. Koshay as inspirational. I know that sounds over the top," Rachael quips, "but he is. I've never once seen him angry or heard him make a negative comment about someone else."

On the last day of their trip, Joe, Rachael,

and the other students labored to finish the demolition of an old brick and concrete chimney. "It was extremely hot and the job went well over the time it was supposed to" Rachael recalls. "The girls and I broke the chimney apart with sledge hammers, swept the pieces together, and placed them in the buckets. Mr. Koshay carried the extremely heavy buckets down the ladder and to the dumping area. He was obviously doing much more work than we were, but he never once stopped or complained. It astonished me and helped me get through the rest of the job."

This year, the energy and enthusiasm of Joe and his seven counterparts who are engaged in their respective regencies will continue to carry on the Jesuit tradition in the province high schools, brick by brick, class by class, and student by student. ■



Chicago Province Jesuits engaged in the regency stage of formation this year include: (back row) Mike Conley, SJ, Bill Murphy, SJ, Andrew Wawrzyn, SJ, and Kent Beausoleil, SJ, (front row) Charlie Rodrigues, SJ, Peter Nguyen, SJ, and Joe Koshay, SJ. Not pictured: Mike O'Grady, SJ. The seven scholastics are on the campus of Loyola University Chicago, next to a statue of St. Ignatius.