

The Jesuit Challenge

“You are called by the Society of Jesus

to be men and women who reflect upon the reality of the world around you with all its ambiguities, opportunities and challenges,

to discern what is really happening in your life and in the lives of others,

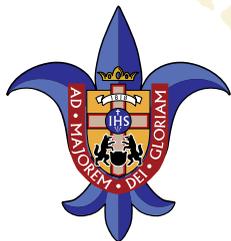
to find God there and to discover where God is calling you,

to employ criteria for significant choices that reflect Godly values rather than narrow, exclusive self-interest,

to make decisions in the light of what is truly for the greater glory of God and the service of those in need,

and then to **act** accordingly.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.
Superior General (1983-2008) of the Society of Jesus
World Congress of Jesuit Alumni
Sydney, Australia, 1997



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The Jesuit Mission of Saint Louis University



Where knowledge touches lives
Where faith inspires justice
Where service forms tomorrow's leaders

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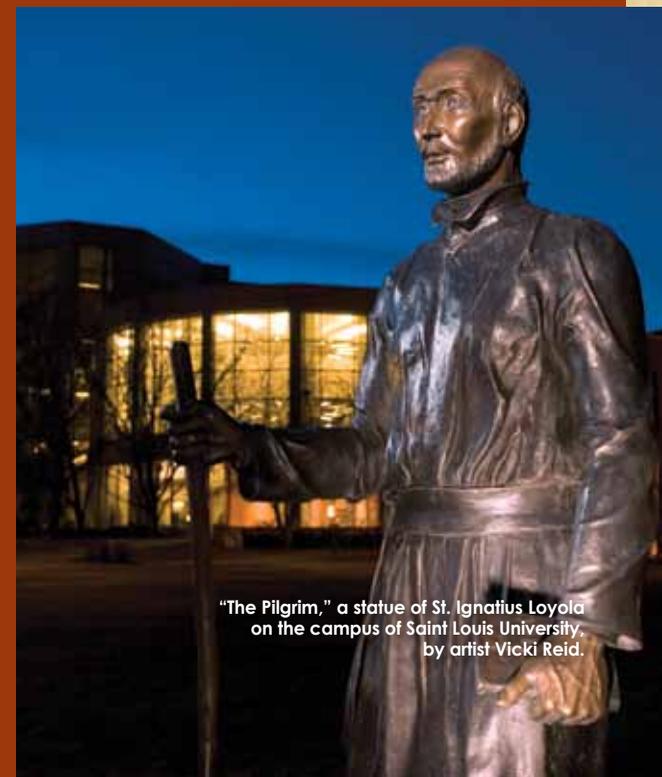
The Saint Louis University Mission

The Mission of Saint Louis University is the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity. The University seeks excellence in the fulfillment of its corporate purposes of teaching, research, health care and service to the community. It is dedicated to leadership in the continuing quest for understanding of God's creation and for the discovery, dissemination and integration of the values, knowledge and skills required to transform society in the spirit of the Gospels. As a Catholic, Jesuit university, this pursuit is motivated by the inspiration and values of the Judeo-Christian tradition and is guided by the spiritual and intellectual ideals of the Society of Jesus.

Though every Jesuit university lives out its character in its own distinctive way, each has inherited the same vision of the founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556). Ignatius' vision provides both principles of action and goals not yet completely achieved. It is a profoundly human vision, open to all, based on the biblical conviction that the world God made is good and that human beings can, in partnership with God, make it a better place for all people to live and grow.

Saint Louis University is a community filled with faith – faith in human beings and, faith in a creating and loving God. It is a community in love with the glories of the universe and the wonders of the human mind and heart. It is a community that instinctively understands what Ignatius meant when he said that we should “love God in all things.” According to Ignatius the activities of learning, research and seeking the truth are ways to encounter and praise God.

The following summary of the Ignatian vision is but an overview of the wisdom and practice of Jesuit educators gathered over 460 years and adapted to this time and place.



“The Pilgrim,” a statue of St. Ignatius Loyola on the campus of Saint Louis University, by artist Vicki Reid.

The Jesuits

The **Society of Jesus** was founded in 1540 by a Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola. This religious organization of Roman Catholic priests and brothers, whose members are known as **Jesuits**, numbers almost 19,000. They live and work in 113 countries. There are approximately 2,800 U.S. Jesuits involved in education, parishes, spirituality centers, social ministries and international works ranging from biblical studies to refugee services. Nearly 3,800 Jesuits and 128,000 of their colleagues provide education in 57 countries, including 461 secondary schools and 227 higher education institutions. In the United States, Jesuits work in 51 high schools and 28 colleges and universities. Less known but no less important is their work with at-risk students in primary schools and middle schools.

A Jesuit university is a Catholic university:

- As such it is a **learning community** where men and women of different faith traditions foster the search for meaning and the continuing dialogue between faith and culture.
- That is **Christian in inspiration** and grounded in an institutional fidelity to the Christian message as transmitted by Catholic teaching.
- **Faithful to the centuries old intellectual tradition** that asserts the intrinsic value of human reason and maintains that faith and intellect illuminate each other.
- **Pledged to academic freedom** and freedom of conscience within a framework of moral values, ethical behavior, civility and mutual respect – respect by the individual for the Catholic identity of the institution and by the institution for the freedom of conscience and religious liberty of the individual.
- **Committed to integrating faith with life**, to examining the moral and ethical implications present in each discipline and to viewing religious experience and religious questions as integral to the understanding of human existence and culture.*

* See especially: *Ex corde ecclesiae (From the Heart of the Church)* by Pope John Paul II, in *Origins*, 1990, paragraphs 5-7, 12-24, 38, 43-47.

A Jesuit university is:

- Based on St. Ignatius Loyola's vision of the fundamental goodness of the world, the belief that God can be encountered in all things, that faith and reason illuminate each other and that human activity is a creative partnership with God.
- Enriched by a diversity of ideas, cultures and religious commitments, and marked by a reverence for each individual.
- Distinguished by its teaching and research and by a humanism that cultivates the mind, develops the imagination and enlarges the spirit.
- Characterized by analytical thinking, commitment to justice and humane values, ethical decision making and effective action for the common good.
- Identified by a spirit that seeks to rise above the ordinary and reach toward endless possibilities: to excel in learning, to live more fully and generously, and to take leadership in building a better world.†

† See Documents of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, 1995, on Mission, Justice, Culture, Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and University Life.

“Our purpose in education is to form men and women for others. The Society of Jesus has always sought to imbue students with values that transcend the goals of money, fame and success. We want graduates who will be leaders concerned about society and the world in which they live. We want graduates who desire to eliminate hunger and conflict in the world. We want graduates who seek to end sexual and social discrimination and who are eager to share their faith with others.

In short, we want our graduates to be leaders-in-service. That has been the goal of Jesuit education since the 16th century. It remains so today.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.
Superior General (1983-2008) of the Society of Jesus
On the 200th anniversary of the founding of Georgetown University, 1989

As a Jesuit university, Saint Louis University:

- **Emphasizes academic excellence**, active participation in the educational process, discovery of new knowledge, practical application of theory and lifelong learning.
- **Fosters the intellectual enterprise** of freely examining different systems, traditions and beliefs as students, faculty and staff consider the question “How should we live?”
- **Challenges all** to attain the inner freedom necessary to make the difficult decisions that change for the better one's own life and the lives of others.
- **Desires to transform the world** by forming men and women who are committed to work with and serve the needs of others.

