

Ignatian Associates of the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus

Statement of Identity

[1] Ignatian Associates are lay Catholic women and men—single and married. We are apostolic people connected in prayer and work, drawn to the poor and vulnerable as we experience the healing presence of Christ. We are formed by the Spiritual Exercises, rooted in Ignatian Spirituality, and connected with the mission of the Society of Jesus. Gratefully we are responding to our experience of God's constant healing and love.

[2] After a formal period of formation, we commit to Promises of Simplicity of Life, Fidelity to the Gospel and to our Associate and Jesuit Companions, and Apostolic Availability. To grow as promised people, we gather regularly within our local communities as well as meet periodically with the entire membership to share the fruits of our prayer, to encourage one another in our ministries, and to support each other in living out our Promises.

Statement of Values

[3] As Ignatian Associates, we have identified seven core values that shape us. The following Statement of Values reflects our belief of who we are and how we function.

Apostolic Life

[4] Ignatian Associates are apostolic in that we work toward building the Reign of God. Desiring to enrich who we are as “called and sent people,” we promise Apostolic Availability. Centered in Ignatian Spirituality, we strive to live a faith that gives witness to Christ's Word and work in the world, a faith that evangelizes culture, promotes justice, and exercises a preferential love for the

poor and outcast in our society and throughout the world.

[5] First and foremost, Ignatian Associates strengthen and deepen holy and existing commitments regarding baptism, marriage, family, community, and work. This also encompasses parenting children and developing our families to see God in all things while respecting each and every human being as a gift of God.

[6] In addition, we have been committed, and some of us missioned, to individual and community apostolic projects that promote the Reign of God in the universal mission we share with the Society of Jesus, and indeed, with the entire Church. Time, talent, treasure, and prayerful discernment about human needs and how these might be addressed determine how individual and communal projects are shaped.

[7] Community apostolic projects bring members together in a special way through a common focus on apostolic work in prayer. Though active participation in individual Associate communities varies according to the circumstances of a project and makeup of a specific community, all Associate members prayerfully support their communal projects.

Relationship with The Jesuits

[8] The Ignatian Associates include lay women and men inspired by the gift of Ignatian Spirituality and the mission of the Society of Jesus, which guide our individual and community lay apostolic ministries. We value being lay companions who walk with members of the Society of Jesus in our efforts to live the Gospel through our daily lives. We are grateful for the spiritual and financial support offered by the Wisconsin Province, and we wish to acknowledge

the graced history of the development of the Ignatian Associates. The Ignatian Associates emerged from and continue to exist out of an ongoing desire to connect lay people more deeply to the mission of the Society of Jesus. We were invited in 1991 by the Provincial to begin an experiment in “lay-Jesuit bonding,” and we are supported by the Society as it works to implement Decree 13 from General Congregation 34. In seeking to live in an Ignatian manner, we offer mutual support to each other and our Jesuit companions as we endeavor to find God in all things and live for the greater glory of God.

Family Life

[9] Family life, understood in the broad context of married and single life and encompassing all ages, is a core value for all Ignatian Associates as we attempt to live it to the fullest. A faithful commitment to our primary relationships indeed becomes a foundational expression of our Promise of Apostolic Availability.

[10] As we support each other in fulfilling our family life commitments and participate in family gatherings, such as sacramental celebrations or seasonal events, we strengthen our Ignatian Associate communities and give witness to all around us.

[11] We grow in the fulfillment of this core value through formation and, most particularly, through sharing our family life stories as experienced in all forms and at intergenerational stages.

Community Life

[12] We are apostolic and prayerful in our focus. As a community, the Ignatian Associates grow in faith and love through commitment to regular prayer,

spiritual direction, retreats, the Eucharist, reflection, and the daily examen of consciousness. We nurture the awareness of God's abiding love.

[13] Coming together gives us support to discern freely how the gifts of our lives are calling us to participate in God's ongoing creation. This encourages us to live out our Promises. We create and participate actively in the Ignatian Associate community through communal prayer, faith sharing, apostolic works, community decisions, social gatherings, and family activities. We assist each other in discerning important ministerial and vocational decisions through consultation and prayer. Our communities support our apostolic and collaborative work with the Jesuits and value hospitality and relationships with local and distant Associate and Jesuit communities. We review with each other and our spiritual directors our commitment to God through the Ignatian Associate community.

Membership

[14] As Ignatian Associates, we desire to expand our membership and grow as apostolic, faith communities. Invited to membership are Catholic adults who desire to love and serve God as a primary purpose of one's life in a communal context, in association with the Jesuits. Members possess the freedom to commit themselves to being a person for others. Members have gifts and talents for collaborative service. Zeal, open-mindedness, and a generous nature are other qualities that characterize their lives. Members possess an ability or potential to live in cross-cultural contexts and are open to formation and other learning experiences.

[15] The screening process for beginning formation takes place in the local community and utilizes:

- a letter of intent from the candidate;
- three letters of reference, including ideally one from a Jesuit, another from a spiritual director (if the candidate has one) or from an Ignatian Associate (if the Ignatian Associate is the person from whom

the candidate learned about the Ignatian Associates);

- interviews with at least two Ignatian Associates and one Jesuit companion; and
- a behavioral assessment by a trained Promised Associate or professional.

[16] Because we engage in a serious commitment of time as well as spiritual and emotional resources, the norm for married candidates is for the couple to be invited to formation and admitted to Promises together. After formation, the term of membership is one to three years, as expressed in the length of one's Promises.

Formation

[17] The purpose of formation is to draw us into the life of Christ and bring us true freedom to serve others. Each Ignatian Associate commits to this lifelong growth process.

[18] Initial formation is a two-year process. It includes the Retreat in Daily Life and a study of the history, mission, and philosophy of the Jesuits and the Ignatian Associates. Formation deepens prayer, faith sharing, and reflection on apostolic activity as well as developing group intimacy and trust. In addition, formation emphasizes the Catholic Church's teachings on social justice and the call to lay leadership and service. The study and discernment of the Promises of Simplicity of Life, Fidelity, and Apostolic Availability are integral. Hands-on apostolic experiences and prayerful reflection on the same are critical to Ignatian Associate formation.

[19] Formators are "Promised" Associates and Jesuits who have a background in Ignatian Spirituality/theology and interpersonal and group dynamics. They serve as companions/mentors to Associates in formation.

[20] Local communities will provide Promised Associates with ongoing formation opportunities including, but not limited to, retreats and theological reflection on apostolic activities and the Spiritual Exercises.

Leadership

[21] Ignatian Associate leadership is an expression of service and an extension of the Promises. The leadership of each local community consists of two local leaders who serve for two-year overlapping terms. Leaders are promised members selected by local communal discernment. They are aware of the multiplicity of talents in the community and able to tap those gifts for communal benefit. An Associate leader is willing and able to accept the various roles required for the spiritual health and livelihood of the community.

[22] Together, the Associate leaders from each community form a leadership group called the *Conservi* (literally, "Fellow Servants"). *Conservi* cultivate the vision of Associate identity. In consultation with Ignatian Associates and Jesuits, they invite applicants to formation, invite candidates to make the Promises, select the formators, and form a point of contact with the public and the Jesuits.

[23] Ignatian Associates have a coordinator who works for and reports to the *Conservi* on the daily activities of the communities. This person provides necessary support to the *Conservi* and individual Associates as well as a link between Associates and the Provincial and his staff. The coordinator has an essential and valued role in fostering inter-communal relationship.

[24] Local leaders provide weekly community organization and planning to foster an environment that nurtures living out the Promises. They communicate the content of *Conservi* meetings to the local community. Local leadership responsibilities include pastoral and personal support by assisting members in their personal discernment of apostolic ministries and offering annual conversations with individual members relative to a review of community life and participation in it.

[25] All members of the Ignatian Associates are called to leadership responsibilities, which include accepting tasks coordinated or delegated by the local leaders.