



CALLINGS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT VOCATIONS

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Jesuit formation — journeys within the journey to priesthood

By Daniel Hendrickson, SJ

After almost a decade with the Jesuits, I have a keen desire to figure out what's happened in my life. As a Jesuit that kind of question is the prayer of each day. It is the query of the Ignatian Examen and seeking to find God in all things. But a tenth year calls for something more comprehensive.

When I entered the Society of Jesus, a Jesuit guest-speaker encouraged my classmates and me to recognize the personal journeys that led each of us to the novitiate. But he wanted us to do so as if reading scripture — a text of Good News ultimately loaded with the stuff of dumb questions and great insights, mistakes and triumphs, the daily ordinary, and, perhaps, a miracle or two. It was

a great tool to creatively name God's presence in my life through people, experiences, and most importantly, desires within that bespoke God's call to me to be a Jesuit.

As I settle into a first semester of theology studies in Berkeley, California, there's a whole new book to page through now. While the text of my regency was written over three years at Creighton University in Omaha, the most recent chapter springs from a summer transitional experience and chronicles a recent trip to the Kohima Region of India, a geographical area of the Society of Jesus that extends throughout the seven states of the remote Northeast.

A former student from an ethics class I taught a few semesters ago asked me to describe the trip in a word. With surprising quickness, pungent was the first word to come to mind, followed in another moment or two by enchanting, extraneous, ancient, and enduring. But the latter ones don't convey the kind of impact India has upon the most basic of sense-perceptions and a soul's depth alike. The smells alone are powerful.

This was my second trip to India. Several years ago I made a journey with undergraduate students to work with Mother Teresa's outfit in Calcutta the year she died. My experiences left me with many memories and a persistent low-grade fever that prompted me to see a medical specialist in New York City shortly after I returned. Concerned about my condition, he asked about my recent travels. "Calcutta," I replied, adding "three weeks." →



DANIEL HENDRICKSON, SJ STANDS OUTSIDE MOTHER TERESA'S FIRST AND FAVORITE HOME FOR THE DESTITUTE AND DYING, NIRMAL HRIDAY (MEANING PURE HEART) IN THE KALIGHAT AREA OF CALCUTTA. DANIEL SPENT TIME VOLUNTEERING AT THE HOME DURING HIS FIRST TRIP TO INDIA. HIS SECOND JOURNEY LAST SUMMER WAS IN A REMOTE AREA OF THE COUNTRY REFERRED TO BY JESUITS AS THE KOHIMA REGION.

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He missed the three weeks part and was suddenly someplace else. “Ah . . . I was there 25 years ago. I can still smell Calcutta.” His fleeting change of disposition and the savoring reflection that accompanied it were impressive. In that instant, I too could smell Calcutta, although it had only been 10 days since my return. Calcutta messed with me far more wonderfully than the bacterial infection I brought back in 1998. It showed me the range of human life from the spiritual and mystical to suffering of the rawest kind. I was eager to return, and now can say the same of India’s remote northeast backyard where – in this year of Mother Teresa’s beatification – I experienced Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland. For me, their strange fragrances were even more powerful and added to the pungent bouquets that yield the scents of life in India.

They are the ripeness and rot of fruit markets, the piercing sweetness of flowers sold at Hindu temples, the overpowering aroma of tea from sprawling, once-British estates, and the stinging scent of a densely populated humanity. Or even of a humanity sparsely-spread and tribal throughout the northeastern wilderness! Add to the mix a general and generous dose of daily heat and swift, sudden rages of rain in summer months which leave India sun-baked and monsoon-soaked all at once.

My recent pilgrimage was designed with two components. The first offered a sweeping tour of Jesuit schools and parishes that now dot the map of the Northeast, where Jesuits have labored for over a generation to understand the people and their culture. From the start they found a richness of human life expressed in song, dance, and decor all tribally specific.

But where the Jesuits found dignity, they also discovered a lack of basic education which relegates tea-pickers to a world no larger than the tea-estate.

Accompanied with that deficiency is a scarcity of social services which should provide clean water, consistent nutrition, and simple medicines.

There is a 21st century human need for sewage-systems and electricity that could make life a little cleaner, more comfortable, and surely healthier.

So where the Jesuits found both wealth and poverty, they shared the Gospel to bolster the

“Drums beat. Voices sang. Feet danced. And we all drank tea. It was hospitality and welcome of the grandest kind from some of India’s poorest.”

former and eradicate the latter. And for a month I traveled the expanse of the region finding the same dynamic in mountain villages and sprawling

lowland settlements.

Endowed with the wealth of tribal blessings, ceremony, and song, I was divested of other things that seem essential in our culture.

Part two of the pilgrimage landed me with Jesuits in the usually peaceful North Cachar Hills of Assam where recent land disputes surfaced as an isolated, intense, medieval kind of violence. Hmar tribals and their Dimasa neighbors burned each other’s villages in the darkness of night, making off with rice surpluses and chickens.

I became the fourth member of a Jesuit community that was running five schools and was encouraged not to walk the highway “at too great of intervals.” For a full month I lived and worked in the Good Shepherd Boarding School of Gunjung, still under construction and already filled beyond capacity. Mornings I sang the “Oom Pah, Oom Pah” song with first-graders and conducted study halls for upperclassmen in the evenings, a far cry from teaching philosophy at Creighton! In between the morning songs and evening homework, I shuttled from one bamboo classroom to the next hearing stories or telling my own. While the first segment of the pilgrimage was broad and diverse, this was focused and routine.

Throughout the entire journey, a kind of freedom and the desire for more were present. During the first part in Mornai, while visiting a tea estate, I



DANIEL HENDRICKSON, SJ (above – rear row far right) STANDS OUTSIDE A TEMPORARY SCHOOL BUILDING NEAR GUNJUNG, ASSAM. ALSO PICTURED HERE WITH SCHOOL STAFF AND TOWN LEADERSHIP WHO DONATED THE LAND FOR THE SCHOOL ARE **FR. TOM DOYLE, SJ** (second from left) AND **ANDY JASPERS, SJ** (third from left). THE FOURTH MEMBER OF THEIR GROUP WAS **CHRIS COLLINS, SJ** (front row far right), WHO IS ALSO SEEN (right) BLESSING A MOTHER AND HER INFANT AFTER A MASS CONCELEBRATED WITH KOHIMA JESUITS.



received a gift. Here, as was the case almost everywhere, tribal people received us as dignitaries, washing our hands and feet and adorning us with flowers. Drums beat. Voices sang. Feet danced. And we all drank tea. It was hospitality and welcome of the grandest kind from some of India’s poorest. Then came the gift. As the Jesuits and I bid thanks and farewell, a village elder approached with something stain-wrapped. It was a book. The Santal tribesman



FR. TOM DOYLE, SJ (left) BAPTIZES AN INFANT AT AN OUTLYING MISSION NEAR BALIPARA, ASSAM AS PART OF A CELEBRATION AT WHICH 200 CHILDREN WERE CONFIRMED AND BAPTIZED. VILLAGERS YOUNG AND OLD (below) ARE SOME OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO WELCOMED THE FOUR PROVINCE JESUITS DURING THEIR TRIP.



gave me his tattered, torn copy of *A Santal Theology of Liberation* by Manuel V. Raj. It was a powerful symbol of the entire reception, for just moments ago the people of the village had said “we need you.” What they needed were more Jesuits. Or people who can do what the Jesuits are doing. They

wanted more of the Gospel message, its brand of human dignity and compassion in the midst of daily life. And they also wanted more schools. They wanted a better future for themselves and their children with opportunities for a better life in and beyond the tea gardens. They knew that the Gospel message and reading and writing were the first steps of exodus from an age-old captivity of impoverishment and the oppressions that come with it.

At the boarding school all was magnified by the enthusiasm of the children. They sang and were playfully unreserved. They laughed and learned with eager attentiveness and unassuming affection, doing so in the midst of their poverty. Many had malaria and, in that month, one died. Others tried unsuccessfully to avoid amoebic-dysentery. Two were sent back to their villages with mumps. They plowed through their homework without adequate light. The obstacles were real, but the children prevailed as best as they could. They exposed a freedom of their own, showing me, the foreign visitor, their lives, sharing what they like and how they love.

Like the Santal people and countless others of the tea-estates, they dreamed wildly for their villages, their families, and themselves for the ways a Gospel message of God’s empowering love and a basic education would help. Freedom

'Six Weeks' program offers in-depth look at Jesuit life

For young men thinking about becoming a Jesuit, the annual "Six Weeks a Jesuit" program is proving to be an effective tool for discerning whether God might be calling them to be a priest or Brother in the Society of Jesus.

Held concurrently in Milwaukee and Chicago every summer, the popular program is designed to give men a true sense for what Jesuit life is all about by living in a Jesuit Community and working in a Jesuit-related ministry.

FOR
INFORMATION
ON THE NEXT
'SIX WEEKS'
EVENT, SEE
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"It's more than a simple introduction to who the Jesuits are," says Fr. Warren

Sazama, Wisconsin Province vocation director. "Candidates get a real taste of Jesuit life by experiencing it firsthand for six weeks of the summer."

Participants in the summer 2003 echo Fr. Sazama's sentiments.

"It gave me a feeling of what Jesuit life is like, and not just for a weekend, but for a long period of time. One gets to know the community and if this is the life for him based on what the Spirit is telling him," says Mike, one of three candidates who spent their time in Milwaukee. "It helped allay some of the fears I had going in and has made me much more confident about my decision to enter the Society."



NOT ALL OF THE TIME DURING THE SIX WEEKS A JESUIT PROGRAM IS DEVOTED TO WORK. FOUR OF THE PARTICIPANTS PREPARE FOR A RELAXING BOAT RIDE AT THE LAKE FIVE JESUIT VILLA NEAR MILWAUKEE.

The experience also provided insight into Jesuit community life. "Just being around so many Jesuits and being able to call each one of them a friend means so much to me and makes me confident that I am making the correct choice," he says.

Ed, another Milwaukee participant, says, "The program afforded me the opportunity to experience real Jesuit work and community in addition to prayer and Ignatian Spirituality."

Mike and Ed both lived at the Marquette University Jesuit Community along with another participant. All three worked at Marquette University High School's inner-city college prep program in the morning and other urban ministries in the afternoon. In all, eight candidates participated in the program. Four stayed at Loyola University Jesuit Community in Chicago. The other stayed at a smaller Chicago Jesuit Community. The five candidates in Chicago worked summer school programs similar to Marquette High's.

The candidates came from the Chicago, Maryland, New York, Upper Canada, and Wisconsin Jesuit Provinces. Fr. Dave Godleski, SJ, the Chicago Province vocation director, conducted the program along with Fr. Sazama. The schedule included three weekend retreats at the beginning, middle, and end and weekly evening gatherings. Four of the evening gatherings involved all eight candidates having Mass, dinner, and a presentation at a Jesuit Community in

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FR. DAVID GODLESKI, SJ, CHICAGO PROVINCE VOCATIONS DIRECTOR (fourth from left) AND FR. WARREN SAZAMA, SJ, WISCONSIN PROVINCE VOCATIONS DIRECTOR (far right) GATHER WITH ALL EIGHT PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2003 SIX WEEKS A JESUIT PROGRAM.

Why do religious vow poverty, chastity, and obedience?

Fr. Warren Sazama, SJ

DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONS – WISCONSIN PROVINCE



The evangelical vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are the heart of religious life. They motivate religious with a desire to imitate the example of Jesus who was poor, obedient, and chaste during his time on earth.

From what we see in the Gospels, Jesus lived his life here on earth as a celibate who did not marry or have his own children. He also lived a simple life of poverty with few earthly possessions. Moreover, He lived in complete, humble, selfless obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father and the mission given to him by his Father. Religious try to emulate the spirit and example of Christ's life in their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The vows help us be like Christ because they:

- Free us for service.
- Move us to dependence on God as our Spouse.
- Enable us to live in authentic Christian community.
- Are prophetic.

Just as Christ's celibacy, poverty, and obedience freed him for a life of service, availability, and total self-giving, the vows of religious are meant to do the same.

In not having a spouse and children, the religious man or woman is freed to give himself or herself in complete service of others without being restricted by family ties and obligations. This gives the religious the emotional and physical availability to be there for others wherever and whenever they are most needed. The vow of poverty liberates the religious woman or man to

serve freely, motivated solely by the service of Christ and the greatest need rather than material concerns. The vow of obedience frees the religious to go wherever he or she is missioned in the service of Christ's mission with the trust that this is what God wants him or her to do in God's service.

Just as Christ's celibacy, poverty, and obedience during his earthly life gave him a complete dependence on God as his "Abba, Father," not having a spouse, family, possessions of one's own, and the ability to call one's own shots lead the religious to total dependence on and trust in God as the Center and Source of his or her life. This reliance is captured by Peter's statement to Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Humanly speaking, it is tempting to rely on our riches, spouse, family, independence, and self-will for our identity, security, and comfort in life. In freely giving these things up for the sake of the Kingdom of God, we are ultimately left with only God to rely on. Thus, if we live our religious vows authentically, God becomes more and more the center and model of our lives. We hopefully become, by the grace of God, more and more like Christ. We can all think of holy religious women and men who are very God-centered, Christ-like women and men for others, and loving people of faith. I can think of several outstanding examples. Mother Theresa of Calcutta might be the best known modern example.

While we rely ultimately on God alone, we still humanly need people with whom to share our lives. Sharing our possessions in common, not marrying and becoming parents, and vowing obedience to the mission of our religious community as expressed in the directions of our superior bring us together to live in community. As a vowed religious I rely on my Jesuit community for my material needs, sense of belonging and companionship, and mission.

I can't live a self-reliant lifestyle if I'm true to

my vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. I'm compelled to live in community with my brother Jesuits as well as with colleagues in ministry and other men and women friends. I'm compelled to rely on God and people rather than on material things or my independent self – as our American individualism can easily seduce us to do. The ultimate expression of living in community happens when we gather around the Table of the Lord in the Eucharist with my Jesuit Community, those with and to whom I minister, and other brothers and sisters in the Lord.

That intelligent, gifted, healthy men and women with options freely give up spouse, family, sex, riches, and independence for Christ's sake is sometimes judged as foolish by the values of the dominant culture. Our secular western culture tells us that happiness is gained through status, power, riches, domination, control, independence, and sexual and other sensual gratification.

Our Christian tradition, on the other hand, speaks to the non-material richness possible in life as a religious without all the so-called "necessities" of life. It is this possibility I speak of when I say religious life is prophetic. To freely give all this up speaks eloquently of a transcendent reality that can give a deep peace, joy, and satisfaction that the material world cannot hope to give. It dramatically points to something more than the material world can even dream of. It subtly says that maybe the world of the senses with its seductions is not all there is and not the most important reality.

So, lived well, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience lead the religious woman or man to live a joyful, Christ-like life. Through his or her vows the religious hopefully grows in love, faith, trust, service, self-giving, union with God, and community with others. An authentic vowed life thus gives the lie to the empty promises of the selfish, individualistic values of our dominant culture. **E**

offered by the Gospel; freedom dreamed in their hearts.

This chapter has a lot more to say, but part of it clearly tells a story of freedom. In the Northeast it was the heart's freedom of cultural expression and hospitality as well as the heart's need for fuller liberation. The readings of daily Mass throughout the pilgrimage cycled through the Book of Exodus. It tells its own story of freedom, too, and is explicit about God's command for it. And when I analyze my decade as a Jesuit, I suspect I'll see evidence of freedom.

The training we get as Jesuits, a long formation program of prayer, study, and ministry ultimately cultivates an interior life that wants to keep responding to God freely. With God's grace we learn about self, life, and how to find God in all

things, a process that both stretches us uncomfortably and unfolds on its own all too easily.

In the Northeast this freedom sang "Oom Pah" with first-graders; it cried for a malaria-defeated seventh-grader; it lost patience with municipal injustices; and it rejoiced at monsoons. And it also said yes to God, again.

For me, a recent discovery of God in a remote place about as far away as I could travel wasn't so hard. India is pungent and so too, in India, is grace. **f**



DANIEL HENDRICKSON, SJ, SHARES A MIRTHFUL MOMENT WITH THE GOOD SHEPHERD BOARDING SCHOOL STAFF NEAR GUNJUNG, ASSAM.

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Milwaukee or Chicago. The other two evenings involved faith-sharing in each group's respective cities.

"The 'Six Weeks a Jesuit' program was an amazing and encouraging

experience that has given me a lot of peace as I continue my discernment," Ed says.

The program will be held again this summer from June 18-Aug. 1. **f**

UP COMING EVENTS

FEB 13-16

DISCERNMENT RETREAT at the Jesuit Retreat House near Denver, CO. This retreat, which takes place at our retreat house in the beautiful foothills of the Rocky Mountains, is on the long Presidents' Day Weekend. It starts on Friday afternoon and ends with lunch on Monday. This is a silent, prayer retreat on which you will have daily conversations with a young Jesuit in training. The retreat will include some presentations on Jesuit life. Since this is a busy ski weekend in the Denver area, airline reservations need to be made early.

MARCH 26-28

COME AND SEE WEEKEND at the Jesuit house of studies at Loyola U. in Chicago. This weekend is for all inquirers who are interested in learning more about Jesuit life and training. You'll spend the weekend with young Jesuits in training, who will share their vocation stories and experiences of Jesuit life and formation. We'll begin with Mass at 5:00 p.m. on Friday and end with lunch on Sunday.

JUNE 18 - AUG 1

SIX WEEKS A JESUIT program in the Chicago-Milwaukee areas. This is an opportunity to live in a Jesuit community and work in a Jesuit ministry with other men considering the Jesuits. It is an excellent way to get a better feel for what it might be like to be a Jesuit.

JUNE 18-22

VOCATION DAYS at our Jesuit vacation spot on the Chain of Lakes near Waupaca, Wisconsin. These days are for younger candidates who are high school age or college underclassmen (having just finished sophomore year of college or younger). This will be a chance to get to know the Jesuits better in the relaxed atmosphere and beauty of our rustic Loyola Villa. We'll have presentations on Jesuit life by young Jesuits in training in the mornings, daily Mass, chances for small-group sharing, and plenty of time to enjoy the lakes with swimming, water skiing, canoeing, rope swing, and good Jesuit-cooked meals.

AUGUST 14

FIRST VOW CELEBRATION in St. Paul, MN. Join us for the joyful celebration of the first vows of our second year novices from our St. Paul novitiate community. It will be held at 10:00 a.m. at St. Luke's Church on Lexington and Summit Avenue. We also hope you can join us for the reception, which includes lunch, after the Vow Mass at noon on Saturday. Please let us know if you'll need overnight lodging on Friday or Saturday nights.

There is no charge for any of these events, and we are happy to help men with travel costs to and from these events if needed. Please contact Fr. Sazama, SJ.



ELEVEN CANDIDATES FROM THE WISCONSIN, MISSOURI, AND UPPER CANADA JESUIT PROVINCES JOINED THE 23 JESUIT NOVICES, THREE JESUIT VOCATION DIRECTORS, AND THE NOVITIATE STAFF FOR A WEEKEND AT OUR THREE-PROVINCE JESUIT NOVITIATE IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA IN OCTOBER. THE EVENT WILL BE HELD AGAIN THIS FALL ON A DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED.

Ongoing Vocation Discernment Groups

We have two discernment groups for men considering the Jesuits.

Milwaukee group: contact Fr. Jim Flaherty, SJ at Marquette University (414) 288.5000, james.flaherty@marquette.edu.

Omaha group: contact Fr. Dick Hauser, SJ at Creighton University (402) 280.3010, hausersj@creighton.edu.

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