



The letter reads: “These presents are to certify that the Rev. H. G. Aelen is a regularly ordained priest of the Catholic Church attached to the Diocese of Covington appointed to serve the Catholics of Paris, Bourbon Co. Ky, and those of the neighbouring counties.”

Geo. A. Carrell / Bp of Covington / Lexington Ky / August 30th 1856

What’s Your Mission?

by Fr. Edward W. Schmidt, SJ

A couple of years ago I came across an old letter, a rather terse statement in which Bishop George Carrell, SJ, the first bishop of the diocese of Covington, Kentucky, sends Fr. Herman G. Aelen, SJ, to be pastor of the Catholics in Paris, Kentucky, “Bourbon County, and those of the neighboring counties.” The ink has faded with time, but the mission lives on.

The formality of Bishop Carrell’s language has also faded with time. Older Jesuits share stories of checking the community bulletin board each June for the yearly *status* report. This was how the provincial informed the men of the province of who would be where, doing what in the following year. Typically, no interviews or lengthy

discussions preceded these moves. And just as typically, the moves were to be accomplished by August 15.

Today Jesuits engage in more robust dialogue with their provincials about where God is calling them to serve the People of God. The Spiritual Exercises make clear that dialogue and prayer are vital in understanding one’s gifts and how best to put them at the service of Jesus, who wants to spread his Father’s reign all over the world. This comes ultimately, of course, from the final Gospel scenes where Jesus sends the apostles out to make disciples of all nations.

Every Christian is called to serve, to be on mission. Discerning one’s gifts and how best to put them at Christ’s service requires

dialogue and prayer. One of St. Ignatius’s great insights is that we don’t have to stop everything or make radical changes to engage more deeply with God and God’s dream for us. Quite the contrary. By living our lives more intentionally, asking for God’s guidance, and praying even in the midst of our busiest times, we become more grounded in God. As a result, we see more clearly who we are and what we are called to do.

Following Jesus’ instructions to the disciples—those sent out—we are missioned not so much to change our course, but to make the places we go better. To make a difference. To bring healing and hope, forgiveness and love to a world in dire need.

What’s your mission? ■