



Fr. James S. Prehn, SJ, has served as the provincial assistant for secondary education for the Chicago and Detroit Provinces since last year. Born in Rockford, Illinois, Fr. Prehn entered the Jesuits in 1988. He earned his BA in History from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, in 1990 and went on to earn an MA in Philosophical Resources from Fordham University in 1992.

Fr. Prehn began his teaching career with his regency at Walsh Jesuit High School in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, where he taught from 1992 to 1995. He went on to earn a Masters in Divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California, in 1998. Fr. Prehn was ordained on June 12, 1999, at Gesu Church in Cleveland, Ohio. He then earned a doctorate in Education from the University of San Francisco in 2000.

Fr. Prehn returned to Walsh Jesuit to serve as teacher and assistant principal until 2002 and principal from 2002 to 2007. Beginning in 2006 he began to serve as the provincial assistant for formation in the Detroit Province. He held this role until 2008, while also serving as the Dean of Student Development for John Carroll University in Cleveland, from 2007 until he began his current service in the provincial office for the Chicago and Detroit Provinces in 2009.



Q Why is education so important to the Society of Jesus?

A Initially, St. Ignatius was not interested in operating schools, because they tied Jesuits down to a particular locale, while he wanted Jesuits to be uniquely known for their mobility. However, with the unanticipated success of the first Jesuit school in Messina in 1548, Ignatius ultimately could not resist the dozens of requests from other cities to open Jesuit schools for their children. That was the beginning of a tradition of Jesuit education that continues up to the present day.

Q In what ways are the schools of the Province “rocks” in the communities they serve?

A Some schools like the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy or Loyola Academy in Wilmette, Illinois, have been part of their communities’ histories to such a degree that it would be difficult to imagine them not being there. Many would point to the local leadership in the cities that have a Jesuit school and with some regularity we have been at least a part of their education. That is important work, and going back to St. Ignatius Loyola, the Society has valued the influence it can have by forming leaders. One can also look at some of our newer schools such as Christ the King Jesuit College Prep in Chicago or Loyola High School in Detroit and see these places begin to become strongholds in their communities. Jesuit schools become places where students and staff feel at home and part of a 462-year-old tradition.

Q What is distinctive about Jesuit education?

A Jesuits always wanted to make sure that their students were exposed to the humanities, which meant reading non-Christian, pagan writers in addition to studying Catholic theology. Historically, one criticism of Jesuit education was that their students knew Cicero as well as the Gospels. Jesuit schools also embrace the fine arts as important for the properly educated student.

In a modern context, Jesuit schools have continued to distinguish themselves among Catholic learning institutions as places of stability and innovation. For example, St. Xavier High School in

Hope Through Education

FR. JIM PREHN, SJ, TALKS ABOUT EDUCATION IN THE CHICAGO AND DETROIT PROVINCES.

Cincinnati developed senior leadership programs that link underclassmen with seniors to help negotiate the sometimes intimidating experience of freshman and sophomore years. Parents credit the program with making their sons' experiences at St. X much richer and more comfortable.

There is also the example of the Cristo Rey model schools; the first of which is Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. These schools, primarily serving urban areas in economic need, combine a first-rate college preparatory education in the Jesuit tradition with a corporate internship program. This program offers the students both real-life work experiences and the opportunity to offset the cost of their education with the money they make. Christ the King Jesuit College Prep is the newest of these Cristo Rey model high schools. It also holds the distinction of being the first Catholic high school to be opened on Chicago's West Side in 85 years (learn more on page 6).

Q What challenges do Jesuit schools face today?

A Funding is always a challenge. In order to pay the lay faculties and staff a living, just wage and to ensure that no Jesuit schools in our provinces become places that only the wealthy can afford, we must remain active in sustaining institutions that embody our values financially. More importantly, however, we hope that these same values play out in the lives of our students. We are challenged to create places where our Catholic and Jesuit identity informs students' lives both during and long after their time with us. These values are identified in the Grad at Grad values that we hope each student comes to exemplify; namely, open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice.

Q How do Jesuit schools form faculty, students, and board members?

A Schools do a variety of things to help form different stakeholders. For example, after a successful year's service, teachers are expected to attend a meeting in June called the Ignatian Themes Workshop. Some schools, such as St. Ignatius in Cleveland and Walsh Jesuit, have programs for adult faith formation that are widely attended by parents. There are times that the province will have gatherings for chairs of the boards of trustees, for example. Lastly, there are a number of national meetings and resources provided by the Jesuit Secondary Education Association for institutions in the province.

Q What does the Province Assistant for Secondary Education (or PASE) do?

A The PASE is the provincial's representative to the secondary and pre-secondary schools of the province. Each year the PASE makes an official visit to each school, where he meets with the Jesuit community's superior, administration, staff, parents, faculty, and students. He then writes a contextual report for the provincial prior to his visit to the school. In this way the PASE helps the provincial in his care for the apostolates (or schools). This is known in Latin as *cura apostolica*. A PASE might also help with Ignatian formation for new teachers or trustees. In addition, each Jesuit high school is visited once every five years by a team of peers so the province can reaffirm the school's Ignatian identity and recommend that the Province continue its sponsorship of the school as an official work of the Society. ■

JESUIT SCHOOLS Quick Facts

Over the course of its 462-year history, Jesuit education has grown from a tentative venture by the founding members of the Society to a global network built on the rock of a faith that does justice.

- The **first Jesuit School** for those outside the Society was founded in 1548 in Messina, Sicily.
- Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School is the **newest school** of the Chicago and Detroit Provinces. It was founded in 2008 and carries on the tradition of Jesuit education where the need is greatest.

- **In the sixteenth** century, Jesuit schools became some of the most prestigious centers of learning in Europe, valued for their excellence in all areas of academic and spiritual education.
- **Today** 98% of seniors graduating from Jesuit high schools in the United States go straight to college. This includes both traditional high schools and schools like those in the Cristo Rey network, which explicitly serve under-privileged communities.
- When St. Ignatius died in 1556 there were some **35 Jesuit schools** in operation across Europe.
- Currently, there are approximately **3,730 Jesuit educational institutions** throughout the world, caring for more than 2.5 million students.