



+ October 17, 2019

Rev. William M. Watson, S.J., D. Min.  
President/Founder  
Sacred Story Institute  
1401 E. Jefferson, Suite 405  
Seattle, WA 98122

Dear Fr. Watson:

On the day I accepted the mantle of leadership as Archbishop of Seattle, you sent me a letter to ask my permission to continue to support the work of Sacred Story Institute in our Archdiocese and to become SSI's new Ecclesiastical Advisor. I agreed wholeheartedly to both of your requests. And there is a reason for my quick response.

Archbishop Sartain, my predecessor, and Bishop Mueggenborg, his auxiliary, had both told me of the great work you have been doing for the past seven years in building Ignatian formation programs for youth, young adults and adults.

Ignatian Spirituality is one of the great treasures of the Church in meeting head-on the challenges the Church faces in the Third Millennium for preaching the Gospel in the context of our faith. I am pleased that our Seattle Archdiocese has been a willing and fruitful partner in developing many of those programs. Your programs are both highly innovative and yet faithful to the teachings and traditions of Church. In an age of polarization, you are creating formation and conversion resources that are non-ideological but highly effective.

Founding your various programs on the Ignatian Examen in conjunction with a strong renewal of the practice of sacramental reconciliation is a formula for success that goes back to the earliest years of the Society of Jesus. Let me offer a bit of history:

Throughout its centuries of service to the Church, the Society of Jesus has created various structures to implement its foundational spiritual practices which have provided means of moving men and women closer to God's will. In 1563 a Jesuit by the name of Jean Leunis formed a group of young men and instilled in them the importance of establishing the daily Ignatian Examination of Conscience as an important means towards spiritual growth. We mark the 456th anniversary of the founding of this great work of the Jesuits in its SODALITY movement. The formation programs Sacred Story Institute has developed are a dynamic modern incarnation of this early Ignatian formation methodology rooted in the Society's rich history of evangelization.

What you are creating is what is needed for today. And as I look at the work that needs to be accomplished in our own Archdiocese, I see SSI's presence in Seattle as a God-send. What you are doing is yet another example of how the Society of Jesus continues to provide a sound

structure for implementing the Examination of Conscience and frequent Sacramental Confession into the hearts of men and women so that they may move ever closer to the heart of Christ. Only a daily opening to Christ by priests and laity alike can move the Church closer to the new evangelization that St. John Paul II called for so many years ago.

Fr. Bill, I pray for your continued success. I also look forward to working with you and SSI on initiatives that will help both the local Church here in our Archdiocese, across the country and in the other countries where your formation programs are beginning to take hold. I think here specifically the translation of your main adult program *Forty Weeks* into Mandarin by the Jesuit publishing house in Taiwan. You are picking up where Matteo Ricci left off.

St. Paul VI delivered a message to Jesuits at your 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation in words that are even more relevant today: *Your Society is, we say, the test of the vitality of the Church throughout the centuries; it is perhaps one of the most meaningful crucibles in which are encountered the difficulties, the temptations, the efforts, the perpetuity and the successes of the whole Church.*

You are building the formation tools that we in Church leadership have always relied on the Society of Jesus to accomplish. And I said previously, in ways that are non-ideological but highly innovative and effective. Thank You.

Please share this letter of endorsement with other priests and bishops in our region and around the country. I want them to know that we are grateful for your presence in our Archdiocese of Seattle and stand by you as you help to Set the World on Fire for Christ.

In the Heart of Christ,



Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL  
Archbishop of Seattle