PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE IN A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

St. Ignatius offered five principles that continue to shape how we envision and construct dialogue at a Jesuit university in the 21st century.

- **Be slow to speak.** In difficult conversations, especially when we feel hurt or angry, it may be tempting to react out of frustration, but we gain greater understanding of others and of the conversation if we are present with kindness and consideration before we share our own perspective.

- **Listen attentively.** Being fully present to others as whole persons allows us to understand their meaning, leanings and wishes. Genuine dialogue is predicated on sincere openness and lowering our defenses. Sometimes we may need to expand or alter our perceptions in order to understand what is being communicated.

- **Seek the truth in what others are saying.** None of us is the keeper of truth, and dialogue provides an opportunity to learn. Every difficult conversation holds the potential to expand our understanding about the topic, about others and about ourselves, but only if we are open to this teaching, to finding truths in unexpected places and to finding common ground.

- **Disagree humbly, respectfully and thoughtfully.** St. Ignatius advised listening closely to all sides in order to hear beyond our own biases and being humble even when we are certain. This principle does not mean that we avoid disagreement, but rather it invites us to inquiry, reflection, curiosity and a commitment to assuming goodwill in others.

- **Allow the dialogue the time it needs.** Resolution is not always readily apparent or feasible, and some conversations provide more questions before they provide answers.

JESUIT VALUES

**Contemplatives in Action.** Although we are thoughtful and philosophical, we do not merely think about social problems. We take action to address them. Developing the habit of reflection centers and strengthens our spiritual lives and guides our actions.

**Cura Personalis.** This Latin phrase means “care for the person.” This value focuses on concern and care for the personal development of the whole person, implying a dedication to human dignity and care for the mind, body and spirit.

**Finding God in All Things.** This phrase may best sum up Ignatian Spirituality. It invites a person to search for and find God in every circumstance of life; God is present everywhere and can be found in all of creation.

**Magis.** This Latin words translates as “the more” and embodies discerning the best choice in a given situation to better glorify or serve God. Magis does NOT mean always doing or giving “more” to the point of exhaustion. Rather, magis describes the value of striving for the better, striving for excellence.

**Persons for and with Others.** This value embodies a spirit of giving, being of service to those in need and standing alongside those who are marginalized. We are encouraged to pursue justice in solidarity with all persons.

**Presupposition.** Rather than condemning outright what someone shares, we should try to interpret what they have said in a favorable way, inquire what they meant and offer corrections with love and humility.

**Unity of Mind and Heart.** Our hearts and minds are not divided; they are congruent when the whole person is educated and engaged.

*Adapted from Rockhurst University, Sharon Browning of Just Listening for the Common Good and SJU Faith Justice Institute*
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for you to be here today?

2. In our divided and wounded world, which Jesuit principles and values are influencing you the most right now? And how so?

3. How do we talk with our family and friends – especially when we disagree – about what matters to us?

4. What is a step, rooted in the Jesuit values, you can enact in response to divisions in society?