

IGNATIAN DISTANCE MINISTRY

**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
THROUGH VIRTUAL SERVICE
IMMERSIONS**





Fairfield College Preparatory School

A Jesuit, Catholic School of Excellence

CONTEXT

As the world anticipates the consequences of COVID-19 and the global lockdowns the virus necessitated, schools and service-oriented organizations are already facing virus-related ramifications. Such ramifications include the strain of remote learning on students, teachers, and administrators, diminished resources, and a growling lack of basic human interactions resulting from wide-spread isolation. As a result of the pandemic, schools have been and remained closed, service trips in secondary schools and universities have been cancelled or postponed indefinitely, and organizations rooted in mission and service are unable to support underserved populations in a way they were once able to. The irony of the situation is that in a time where direct service to others is most needed, we are required to be socially and physically distant from others. Though the pandemic has halted the efforts of thousands around the world to serve others, ministry itself does not cease; it evolves.

THE “WHY”

During this difficult time, service trips, retreats, and other meaningful student gatherings have been cancelled in the interest of preserving the health and safety of everyone involved. While it is a disappointment to many, it also forces creativity and collaboration remotely in a way that no school or organization has encountered before. With that in mind, moving service immersions to a digital platform would put students in the drivers seat to become active, globally-minded citizens from the comfort of their own homes. Students would be able to foster new relationships, embrace different cultures, educate themselves on global issues, and become deeply interconnected to the plight of underserved communities around the world while still maintaining the mandated lockdown. Virtual Ignatian service opportunities provide students with meaningful, peak experiences to share with their classmates and teachers, while also teaching leadership skills, global citizenship, and the power of ministering to others.

THE GOAL

The goal of Ignatian Distance Ministry is three-fold:

- Teach students how to be transformational leaders within the context of global citizenship on a U.S East province level, a JSN level (in partnership with the 5 provinces), and on a global level.
- Educate students on global issues and empower them to take action
- Allow for service, retreat, and community gatherings to develop and strengthen student relationships with one another through the Fairfield Prep mission.

THE PLAN

Student participation in Ignatian Distance Ministry would not be a requirement, the same way student participation in previously offered service immersions was not required; however, it is an opportunity for students to embody Ignatian spirituality in an unprecedented way while developing their potential as transformational leaders, and channeling that potential into undertaking global issues and serving others in need.

Students will be given the opportunity to participate in the Ignatian Distance Ministry program in two different capacities: IDM: Domestic Connections and IDM: Global Connections. The global IDM opportunity would be a longer, more intensive experience for the participants that connects them to international locations and organizations for service and ministry-related purposes. The domestic IDM opportunity is a modified version of the global connections opportunity, rooted in the same themes and Universal Apostolic Preferences, but executed in a shorter time frame on a local level.

Both Distance Ministry programs, like standard service immersions, would be comprised of three phases.

- **Phase 1 - Information:** Introduction to global citizenship and student leadership; overview of and introduction to various elements of the Spiritual Exercises
- **Phase 2 - Formation:** A 3-day or week-long virtual service and ministry experience
- **Phase 3-Transformation:** Post-immersion action

IDM: GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

PHASE 1 – INFORMATION AND BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

In the two weeks leading up to the virtual experience, the students would connect with the Director of Christian Service and faculty mentors for a seminar-like introduction to the experience to set the context for global citizenship as well as the Universal Apostolic Preferences. This introduction would be tiered as such: A background in universal global issues, what it means to be a transformational leader, and how the students can use the upcoming service experience to be transformational leaders in the focus country (Jamaica, Ecuador, etc.) and beyond.

- Week 1 – Global Issues, Global Citizenship, and Transformational Leadership Through the Universal Apostolic Preferences

Students participating in the immersion will begin the experience with a seminar-style introduction with the Director of Christian Service and faculty moderators.

Day 1 of week one will give a broad look at global issues different parts of the world are facing (poverty, climate change, sustainable agriculture, social and economic inequalities, etc.). From there, students will spend the next three days working on the Global Citizenship course offered through Educate Magis (see

links below for the student course and faculty course). The last day in week 1 will focus on the idea of transformational leadership and advocacy in action rooted in the UAPs.

- Week 2 – Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius

For week 2 of the information seminar, students will explore elements of the Spiritual Exercises in preparation for the upcoming “immersion” experience. On the first day of week 2, student participants and faculty moderators will spend time reflecting on God’s love for us, how humans respond (or fail to respond) to his love, and what our identity is as a son or daughter of Christ as we walk with youth toward a hope-filled future. For the next three days, students and faculty moderators will explore stories of Jesus in the gospels portraying him as a servant to the people as a foundation for their present and future service work. For the final day of week 2, students will discern the meaning of finding God in all things, and how joy and community can be used as a basis of our call to share in Christ’s mission and love for one another.

PHASE 2 – STUDENT FORMATION AND ENCOUNTERING THE SACRED

Once the introductory training has been completed, students will embark on a 7-day virtual service experience rooted in Fairfield Prep’s mission/ ministry as well as Ignatian spirituality and the Universal Apostolic Preferences. Students will spend time each day learning the history, culture, and current conditions of the country within the context of the UAP’s, praying with one another through mass and a daily examen, and reflecting on meaningful experiences both individually and as a group. Each day of the experience will be based on a designated Universal Apostolic Preference, where the context will be given for each one by a faculty moderator before the day’s events commence, including “What is God’s dream for us? And “What is he asking of us?” in relation to each day’s theme. Below is a sample schedule of phase 2 events that could be modified and applied to any digital service immersion:

Sample Immersion Schedule - Guayaquil, Ecuador

Day 1 – Caring for our Common Home

- Students will hear from speakers regarding the environment, landscape, and cultural implications of the Guayaquil, Ecuador community. For the duration of day 1, students will be hearing from both program directors and current volunteers from Rostro de Cristo as they discuss their firsthand experience with the physical geography of Guayaquil, and what students can do to help take care of their community, and also what the students can “bring home with them” to help take care of their own

community in the states. Themes of personal responsibility, recycling, ecological justice, and creating a sustainable future for all of God's children would be reinforced. In between scheduled activities of the day, there will be opportunities for reflection both individually and in a group setting.

Day 2 – *Walking with the Excluded*

- Students will continue with their immersion experience by virtually interacting with individuals who have encountered the plight and the suffering of those who are living in Guayaquil; discussing the variety of social and economic injustices and inequalities these people face compared to those in other parts of the country, as well as reconciling with the estranged, the alienated, and the marginalized in some way. In small-group breakout sessions, students will explore how they can work to unite for and with those who are “separated” and promote reconciliation within not only the community of Guayaquil, but also their community back home.

Day 3 – *Journeying with the Youth*

- For day 3 of the virtual immersion, students would be hearing from individuals who have experience with specifically the youth of Guayaquil, Ecuador. Themes of promoting safe environments for children and young people, and adapting elements of the Spiritual Exercises in ways that allow children to deepen their relationship with God and his graces will be explored, and the students will be given opportunity for discourse and reflection. They will also be hearing about (and brainstorming ways) helping young people reach their God-given potential in situations where they may not have access to the necessary resources for doing so, specifically, education. In a reflective setting, students will be discussing what this means for the young people of Guayaquil, but also, how they can apply what they've learned to their interactions with their peers at Fairfield Prep.

Day 4 – *Showing the way with God*

- As a way to bring together each of the major themes and ideas explored in the first half of the immersion experience, students will hear from speakers and do research regarding action steps for moving forward. The participants will be exploring and discerning the impact of complex choices made in social, cultural, and economic spheres, and creating sustainable environments of inclusion and solidarity in Guayaquil and beyond. This day in particular would be largely student-centered, giving them opportunities to work together discussing, and exploring resources, to draft a preliminary action plan to be implemented (individually,

institutionally, or communally) based on one of the themes addressed by the speakers or a specific UAP.

Days 5 and 6 – *Sharing and Networking*

- Faculty moderators will share their thoughts on advocacy work, and will present to the students some ideas about getting started. Students will share their preliminary action plans with the large group and discuss their ideas for implementation, and also revising their plans based on student and moderator feedback.

Day 7 – *Reflection and Take-aways*

- The last day of the Ignatian Distance Ministry experience will be dedicated to a prayer service and reflections based on student and moderator take-aways, impactful encounters throughout the experience, and “meaningful moments.” As a group, the overarching questions “Where was God in this experience?” and “How can we be Christ for our neighbors?” will be explored and applied to the student-generated action plans as they decide how to implement their approach to advocacy work in the Guayaquil community and beyond.

PHASE 3 – TRANSFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE IN ACTION

In the three weeks following the virtual service immersion, students will be meeting regularly as a group with the Director of Christian Service and faculty mentors to identify the primary needs of the country, and how students can use what they learned from their experiences to help address the issues and inequalities as a team based on their preconceived action plans. This could result in some type of school-wide collection, donations, etc., or something done on an individual, province-wide, or global level.

IDM: DOMESTIC CONNECTIONS

PHASE 1 – INFORMATION AND BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

In the week leading up to the modified virtual experience rooted in local community issues and their need for student service work, the student participants would connect with the Director of Christian Service and faculty moderators for a shortened seminar-like introduction to the themes and experiences they are about to encounter. This introduction would be tiered as such: an introduction to the Universal Apostolic Preferences as well as the socio-economic discrepancies of local communities that will be

explored during the program through speakers and organizations that will be presenting to participants.

PHASE 2 – STUDENT FORMATION AND ENCOUNTERING THE SACRED

Once the introductory training has been completed, students will begin a 3-day virtual service experience rooted in Fairfield Prep’s mission and ministry as well as Ignatian spirituality and the Universal Apostolic Preferences. Students will spend time each day learning the history, culture, and challenges (racial, socio-economic, etc.) the local community faces daily through guest speakers and representatives from organizations serving the local underserved population. Students will also be given opportunities for group and individual reflection, prayer time, and physical service dedicated to one of the organizations they heard from. Below is a sample schedule of phase 2 events that could be modified and applied to any small-scale and locally-based service immersion:

SAMPLE DOMESTIC IMMERSION SCHEDULE

Day 1 – Introduction, Ice Breakers, and Context

- Beginning in the late afternoon or evening of day 1, the immersion will start with an introductory recap of the experience by one of the facilitators that provides additional, general context for what the participants will be encountering over the next two days. This evening will also provide opportunities for ice breakers to begin the formation of student relationships with one another as well as designated prayer and reflection time.

Day 2 – Information-gathering

- The second day begins with group prayer time in anticipation of the day’s experiences. There will be a tightly scheduled programming of speakers from local organizations, churches, and schools to give the students first-hand accounts of inequities and inequality in the area, the needs of the underserved, and why it’s necessary and important to minister to this particular population through whatever ministry they represent. There will also be scheduled time for individual and group reflection in between sessions, as well as opportunities to reflect as a whole group at the end of the day about what was learned, what consolations came up, what desolations were felt, and what the participants hope for the next day.

Day 3 – Service and Experience in Action

- Though the presence of COVID-19 makes it difficult to be physically present for Christian Service and community outreach, day three of the domestic experience will give students the opportunity to visit these organizations (masked and socially distant) to experience their needs and their ministries firsthand. The day will begin with a whole-group virtual prayer service. From there, the students will be released to complete 2-3 hours of service work in small teams pre-assigned by the group leader(s). Upon the completion of their volunteer efforts, the whole group will come back together to share their takeaways from the experience.

PHASE 3 – TRANSFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE IN ACTION

In the week following the domestic virtual service immersion, students will be completing an individual reflective piece of their choosing that demonstrates not only their takeaways from the experience overall, but what they learned in regards to social issues and how they plan to contribute to the local underserved community in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION OF IGNATIAN DISTANCE MINISTRY

In order to maximize the impact of both versions of the Ignatian Distance Ministry program, this proposed remote service can be implemented in two capacities: school-wide and network-wide.

- **School Level:** At the school level, Ignatian Distance Ministry can be used to bring together students from different grades for a shared, meaningful service experience either domestically or internationally that allows them to grow in their leadership skills, further develop their worldview, and take action to address global problems. The Christian Service Director will apply the aforementioned framework to fit previously established service immersions and the organizations they serve.
- **Network Level:** At the network level, the scope of Ignatian Distance Ministry can be broadened to include partnerships between multiple Jesuit schools, both international and domestic. If this model were to be implemented on a network level, schools could pair up with one another and share in the service immersion experience together. The framework itself would be maintained, with the key difference being the added layer of student exposure and collaboration, thus creating a deeper impact, a heightened cultural awareness, and a chance to foster relationships within the global Jesuit community.

RESOURCES

In order for Distance Ministry opportunities to be successful, the following resources are essential:

- Access to Google Tour-Maker
- Partnerships with mission organizations such as Rostro de Cristo and Mustard Seed Communities
- Willing faculty mentor participants
- Links to digital programs that help foster leadership and set a context for Ignatian spirituality.

ONLINE PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY MENTORS

1. Educate Magis introduction to global citizenship: <https://www.educatemaqis.org/global-citizenship-an-ignatian-perspective/>
2. Educate Magis global citizenship course for Teachers: <https://www.educatemaqis.org/course/global-citizenship-introduction-jesuit-educators/>
3. Educate Magis Global Citizenship for Students:
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/blogs/global-citizenship-course-for-students/>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/blogs/15-aphorisms-i-wish-i-knew-at-15-ignatian-rules-of-thumb/#>
4. Educate Magis context for Ignatian Spirituality:
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/blogs/15-aphorisms-i-wish-i-knew-at-15-ignatian-rules-of-thumb/#>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/resources/ignatian-spirituality/>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/mission-and-identity-in-jesuit-schools/universal-apostolic-preferences/>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/videos/introduction-to-spiritual-conversation-by-fr-john-dardis-s-j/>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/documents/spiritual-conversation/>
5. Educate Magis faculty formation:
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/resources/staff-formation/>
 - <https://www.educatemaqis.org/documents/identity-ignatian-leadership-ignatian-teacher-formation/>

BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

- It allows for a more academic and “critical thinking” approach to service rather than solely a faith-based one, thus providing a well-rounded experience for all students involved.
- Topics in the introductory seminars could be easily tied to the classroom curriculum of various subjects in ways they haven't before.
- Students would be able to immerse themselves in global service from a safe distance.

- Students would grow their current world view and become justice-minded, forward thinkers from the comfort and safety of their own homes.
- Leadership skills taught during this experience could transcend the week-long immersion and translate into other areas of student learning and activities.
- Students would be creatively using technology with the guidance of faculty supervisors to network globally with communities in need.
- It has the potential to integrate students from all 4 grades rather than reserving the opportunity for upperclassmen.
- Most importantly, It would prove to students that the idea of serving others is, in fact, multifaceted, and that there is no one way to minister to the under-resourced and the under-served.