



JESUITS

USA MIDWEST PROVINCE · SUMMER 2024



Ordination 2024
Celebrating Six New Jesuit Priests

Running The Numbers

By Michael Austin

In a way, John Dewan's love of numbers has taken him across the earth and to the sun. Who would have thought that a part-time job at an insurance company just two L stops away from the Lake Shore Campus of Loyola University Chicago (LUC) could lead him on such a journey?

That freshman-year job led to full-time employment as an actuary after graduation, and from there, the innovation began. In 1985, with his wife Susan—and some help from legendary sports statistician and author Bill James—Dewan founded STATS, Inc. (formally Sports Team Analysis and Tracking Systems, Inc.). After selling that business and waiting for its non-compete clause to expire, he founded the subscription-based Baseball Info Solutions, which evolved into Sports Info Solutions.

Next came The John & Susan Dewan Foundation, which, since 2000, has served

poor and marginalized people “around the world, from Timbuktu to Kathmandu,” as he puts it. Through American charitable organizations working internationally, the foundation provides grants for education, job creation and general economic development. In the Chicago area, it offers grants for education, housing and case management, including employment training. One of the

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foundation's biggest local beneficiaries is Chicago Jesuit Academy (CJA).

“CJA is the single best education model I have ever seen in my entire life,” he says. “They work with these young boys on the



John Dewan sporting a Loyola University Chicago scarf.

West Side of Chicago, helping them get into high school and through high school, and then into college. CJA then brings them back for alumni functions. And most of the families don't pay a penny in tuition.”

Matthew Lynch, president of CJA, says the Dewans began as dedicated donors and ended up becoming incredible advocates for the school's expansion to include girls. With one of the Jesuits' Universal Apostolic Preferences in mind—care for our common home—CJA wanted the build-out to be as green as possible. This is where Dewan stepped in to help.

“John has a deep and abiding understanding of Ignatian spirituality, and he lives his life exactly the way St. Ignatius calls us to, as a contemplative in action,” Lynch says. “He thinks about big, complicated questions and acts tirelessly to enact solutions to those problems.”

Dewan became interested in solar energy during his time in the Ignatian Legacy Fellows (ILF) program. Designed for late-career and retired individuals, the program offers



Ignatian Legacy Fellows (from left) John McConnell, Jim Briggs, John Dewan, John Fontana, John Egner, Mariann McCorkle and Bill Garrett at Santa Clara University in 2019.

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A Jesuit scientist's Creighton year

By Eileen Wirth, Ph.D.

When Fr. Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu, SJ, joined the Jesuits in India in 1967, he had no interest in studying biology. But he obeyed his superior's instructions to do so.



Now, Fr. Ignacimuthu is a world-renowned entomologist and bioethicist. In 2020, a Stanford University publication listed him in the top 1 percent of biologists

worldwide. He has written more than 800 research papers and 80 books.

For the past year, Fr. Ignacimuthu has held the Anna and Don Waite Chair in Jesuit Education at Creighton University (CU).

"I wanted to spend time at a Jesuit university in the U.S. and take a break from my scientific work," he says.

Although he is known for researching the harmful effects of chemical pesticides, and studying the scientific validity of various herbal medicines, he chose a creative project, compiling the ministries performed by India's nearly 4,000 Jesuits.

The Waite Chair in Jesuit Education was established in 2011 by Donald Waite (CU '54) and his wife Anna to increase the university's Jesuit presence.



Eileen Wirth, Ph.D., is a professor emerita of journalism at Creighton University and the author of several books on Omaha-area history.

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year-long pilgrimages that include immersive travel and self-renewal using the tools of Ignatian spirituality and discernment. On one trip, Professor Richard W. Miller of Creighton University, shared Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical. Dewan never looked back.

"My interest in solar stems from an analytical approach looking at global warming," he says. "I voted Republican before that. I didn't think of global warming as a political thing. It was an information thing. It was loaded with data, and data is something I believe in. But I really saw what is happening.

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Global warming is hurting the poorest of the poor. In Maui there were two climate events that converged, drought and fire. The disaster in Libya took 5,300 lives, and that was a global warming event. One solar panel installation could prevent one future climate change event. Anything we can do to help, we should do."

In addition to spearheading the transition to solar energy at the Midwest Province offices, the Dewan Foundation plans on using the solar projects at both CJA and neighboring Christ the King Jesuit College Prep as models that can be replicated at other schools.

"Saint Ignatius, at the end of the day, was an entrepreneur," Lynch says. "John is as well."

Dewan cites the Jesuits' four Universal Apostolic Preferences, which were made so clear to him in his ILF experience, as the guiding lights of the foundation: seeing God

in all things; walking with the exploited, the refugees, the poor, the marginalized; walking with youth; and care for our common home.

"That stuck with me," he says. "It was like, 'This is my life now, this is exactly what is important in my life.' It made all the difference in the world."

There was another service trip that had a big effect on Dewan, years earlier. Shortly after graduating from LUC, he spent three months on a mission in Honduras. "It was life-changing," he said. "Seeing the joy of these people who live in poverty was just incredible to me. But the extent of the poverty was profound, so it became a goal of my life to help them get out of poverty."

Through the foundation, he has been able to do that, and somewhere along the way, he had a revelation; his father, a Ukrainian immigrant, had done the same for him. He had gone out of his way to keep his family hopeful, full of faith and safely above the threat of financial struggle.

"He worked for a corrugated box factory from the day I was born, working two shifts so he could send my sisters and me to the Catholic school by our house," Dewan says. "I now realize how important that was for us, to set us on our path, to include religion and belief in God and something that was bigger than us."

Courage and innovation have informed Dewan's working life. "I left my tremendous career as an insurance actuary and started STATS, Inc. in a bedroom in our house," he says. Decades later, he is making the world a better place. "Service for others," he says. "That's what I want to do now." ✝



Michael Austin is the managing editor of *Jesuits* magazine. He has worked with USA Midwest Jesuits since 2019.