

Some Distinctive Features of Jesuit Higher Education Today

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Abstract

The nation's Catholic colleges and universities are recommitting themselves to making their founding visions come alive in increasingly effective and innovative ways. This article describes the Jesuit tradition of higher education, discussing its origins and how it is reflected in the reality and practice of Jesuit higher education today. This is done with great respect and appreciation for the other distinctive, but complementary traditions which contribute to the richness of contemporary Catholic higher education. Eight characteristics are cited as creating a certain style. These features are deeply rooted in Catholic tradition and express that tradition in a particular way. Many of the features described have their resonances in the traditions and practices of other orders and congregations because all share that same fundamental Catholic tradition. Each is trying to create something that has never existed: an identity forged with diverse colleagues, in a pluralistic, postmodern university setting, while facing the challenges of a globalizing world.

Introduction

Of the many dynamics operating in contemporary Catholic higher education, one of the more interesting and encouraging is the rediscovery of and recommitment to their founding vision by the nation's Catholic colleges and universities. Institutions are proudly touting their founding orders, such as Franciscan, Dominican, Holy Cross, Benedictine, Mercy, Vincentian, Spiritan, Lasallian, and Jesuit traditions, and making founding visions come alive in increasingly effective and innovative ways.

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When there were many more priests, nuns, and brothers on campus, a community's religious identity was assumed to permeate the campus, but today, with fewer collars and habits in evidence, that identity has to be nourished and fostered in an intentional manner. The shrinking numbers of members of the sponsoring groups have created an urgent need to find ever more effective ways of sharing a particular identity and mission with campus partners.

Mission statements and promotional materials, such as brochures, websites, videos, and campus banners, celebrate what is distinctive about a particular tradition. Most importantly, however, the tradition is being shared with trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students through orientation and ongoing educational and experiential programs. The challenge is to show how the sponsoring identity creates a special educational experience by influencing both the curriculum and the entire campus culture. Some colleges and universities are responding to the challenge better than others.¹

For those who see tensions between the sponsoring identity and an institution's Catholic identity, it is important to emphasize that the sponsoring group is first and foremost Catholic, but Catholic in a particular way or style characteristic of the religious order or congregation and lived within a particular history and culture. Moreover, that particular style of being Catholic can seem more attractive and welcoming than being more generically Catholic.²

The purpose of this article is to describe one of these traditions: the Jesuit tradition of Catholic higher education. While promoting great respect and appreciation for the other distinctive but complementary traditions which contribute to the richness of contemporary Catholic higher education, this article will discuss the Jesuit tradition's origins, and indicate how the tradition is reflected in the reality and practice of Jesuit higher education today.

¹ Some observers are pessimistic about the efficacy of these efforts. See e.g., James Burtchaeall, *The Dying of the Light: the Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998); Melanie M. Morey, and John J. Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a more hopeful view, see Scott Appleby, "Lifting the Siege: The Promise of Catholic Higher Education in Church and Society," *Origins* 37 (February, 2008), and Charles Currie, S.J., "Are We Still Jesuit? Catholic?" *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 34 (Fall, 2008).

² See for example, David O'Brien, "Jesuit Si, Catholic...Not So Sure," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 6 (Fall, 1994).

Institutions describe themselves as “Catholic in the Franciscan tradition,” or “Dominican and Catholic,” or “Benedictine Catholic.” Then, these institutions suggest various ways in which the two descriptors are closely related one to the other, e.g., by indicating how the vision of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* for Catholic colleges and universities is being implemented on that campus, by celebrating the Catholic intellectual and social traditions in the regular curriculum or through Catholic Studies programs, and by promoting Catholic culture on campus.

Over the years, many “distinctive” features have tended to blend together, with copious borrowing (friendly plagiarism?) going on. For example, a review of websites and campus publications finds that almost every Catholic institution pursues excellence, commits to personal concern for students, fosters faith development, and educates for leadership and service. Our review of institutional mission statements of the twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities reveals that over twenty of those campuses cite all of the following as descriptors: Jesuit Catholic, academic excellence, service, educating the whole person, educating for justice, and a sense of community. Our random sample of mission statements of other Catholic colleges and universities reveals similar descriptors, but a lower percentage of the institutions use them. Yet, even with the many similarities within Jesuit institutions, a degree of distinctiveness persists as one gets more acquainted with different campuses through visits and by talking with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Origins of Jesuit Education

The Second Vatican Council encouraged religious orders and congregations to rediscover the spirit of their founder and the founding experience itself as a way of reinvigorating and refocusing their present work.³ Jesuits have done this by revisiting the life and work of St. Ignatius and the characteristics of the early Society of Jesus. An explosion of helpful studies and literature has since developed. The work of George Ganss,⁴

³ Pope Paul VI, *Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life* (Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1965), sec.2.

⁴ George Ganss, S.J., *St. Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University: A Study in the History of Catholic Education* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1954).

John O'Malley,⁵ John Padberg,⁶ Howard Gray,⁷ and Michael Buckley⁸ has probed the roots of Jesuit education and challenged Jesuits and their partners to a more vigorous and faithful expression of Jesuit values today. George Traub has prepared two helpful collections of writings by these and other authors.⁹

O'Malley¹⁰ emphasizes that St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, did not begin with a grand master plan for educational institutions even though he and the first ten Jesuits could be considered “university people” who had studied together at the University of Paris, arguably the best university of the time. The original goal was simple and open-ended: “to help souls” wherever and whenever that might be possible.^{10a} There was no thought of being tied down by institutional commitments. Within a few years of the founding of the Society of Jesus, however, it was becoming obvious that one of the best ways to help others was to provide them with a good education. With this in mind, the first Jesuit school was opened in Messina, Sicily, in 1548.^{10b}

By the time of Ignatius's death in 1556, thirty-five schools had been started. A few were universities, but most were similar to our present-day high schools. By the time of the suppression of the Society in 1773, there were more than 800 schools around the world. Later, during the restoration of the Society in the early nineteenth century, a major part of the re-establishment included the task of restoring schools.

O'Malley points out that, from the beginning, Ignatius and his companions advocated and exemplified a learned ministry.¹¹ The schools inserted Jesuits into secular culture and civic responsibility to a degree unknown to earlier orders. Four hundred and fifty years later, this

⁵ John O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁶ See Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., ed., *Spirit, Style Story: Essays Honoring John W. Padberg, S.J.* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002).

⁷ See for example, Howard Gray, S.J., “The Experience of St. Ignatius Loyola,” in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

⁸ Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections on a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007).

⁹ George Traub, S.J., ed., *A Jesuit Education Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008); George Traub, S.J., ed., *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008).

¹⁰ O'Malley, “The Schools,” in *The First Jesuits*, chap. 6.

^{10a} *Ibid.*

^{10b} *Ibid.*

¹¹ O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, p. 374.

insertion takes contemporary form in Decree Four of the Society's Thirty-Fourth General Congregation in 1995:

It is part of our Jesuit tradition to be involved in the transformation of every human culture, as human beings begin to reshape their patterns of social relations, their cultural inheritance, their intellectual projects, their critical perspectives on religion, truth, and morality, their whole scientific and technological understanding of themselves and the world in which we live. We commit ourselves to accompany people, in different contexts, as they and their culture make difficult transitions.¹²

A number of basic documents have influenced Jesuits in education from the very beginning and continue to influence their work today. The spirituality that forms and motivates Jesuits and their institutions flows from the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*,¹³ which stresses God's working in all things and in each and every person. Hence, discerning how God is present in specific situations and responding generously in those situations are of the utmost importance. Part IV of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*¹⁴ details what Ignatius expected of the Society's colleges and universities and reflects the Parisian method of education with its commitment to what we would today call the liberal arts, active learning, and ordered progression of courses. As John O'Malley points out,

The Jesuits wanted to preserve the best of two educational ideals, the intellectual rigor and professionalism of the scholastic system and the more personalist, societal and even practical goals of the humanists.¹⁵

Jesuit education was founded on the Renaissance and humanist tradition, to which Ignatius and his followers added the greater breadth and firmer practicality one finds in the *Exercises*: all creation is good; all learning is good; and everything in the world can help us find and serve God and one another.

After about fifty years of working in education, Jesuits codified that experience in the *Ratio Studiorum*, which first appeared in 1599 as a

¹² *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995) Decree Four, no. 25.

¹³ David L. Fleming, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978).

¹⁴ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

¹⁵ O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, pp. 215ff.

collection of curricular, administrative, and pedagogical principles that continued to guide Jesuit education into the twentieth century.¹⁶ Today, many of the principles of the *Ratio* are still operative and appear in discussions of “Ignatian Pedagogy,” with its paradigm of experience, reflection, and action.¹⁷

It is important to emphasize that Jesuit (or Ignatian)¹⁸ identity is not the result of some carefully prescribed blueprint; rather, it is a spirit traceable to the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius and to Part IV of the *Constitutions*, which Ignatius wrote for the Society of Jesus. The person behind both documents was a naturally magnanimous, generous, expansive leader made even more so by his religious experience, which, incidentally, included the inspiration he received from the great deeds of St. Francis and St. Dominic and the spiritual direction he gained from a Benedictine monk.

With foundational documents and more than 460 years of history, education in the Jesuit or Ignatian tradition at its best has remained committed to excellence, to expansive and critical thinking, to competent and compassionate ethical concern, to creative and artistic expression, and to generous and practical action—indeed to the fullest development of one’s human potential called forth by God’s action and love. Such an agenda is fully compatible with—and indeed can bring about the best of—a college and university in any age.

Other traditions pursue similar ambitious goals, and as noted earlier, there has been much learning and borrowing over the years, which has mutually benefited all concerned.

Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, then Superior General of the Jesuits, linked the past and present in a 2001 address to presidents/rectors of Jesuit universities assembled from around the world on the topic, “The Jesuit University in the Light of the Ignatian Charism.”¹⁹ He reflected on how running schools was not part of Ignatius’ original plan for the

¹⁶ Vincent Duminuco, S.J., *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives, 2000* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Allan P. Farrell, S.J., *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education: Development and Scope of the Ratio Studiorum* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1938).

¹⁷ See for example Sharon J. Korth, “Precis of Ignatian Pedagogy: a Practical Approach,” in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, ed. George Traub (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008).

¹⁸ It is common today to speak of both “Jesuit” and “Ignatian” identity, sometimes interchangeably, and sometimes with “Ignatian” used to emphasize the inclusion of the partners of Jesuits in a common enterprise.

¹⁹ Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Jesuit University in the Light of the Ignatian Charism.” (lecture, Rome, 2001).

Society of Jesus, but soon became the major ministry of the Society in a quest for “the greater glory and service of God our Lord and the universal good,”^{19a} with an eagerness to be available apostolically to assume any ministry that would serve that greater glory and universal good.

Using this historical background of Jesuit ministry as context, Kolvenbach then compared the four reasons for Jesuit involvement in higher education given by the sixteenth century Jesuit, Diego Ledesma, with goals for Jesuit universities today, demonstrating a remarkable continuity. Ledesma’s four reasons (in rather baroque style) were:

- To give students advantages for practical living
- To contribute to the right government of public affairs
- To give ornament, splendor and perfection to the rational nature of humanity
- To be a bulwark of religion, and to guide man surely and easily to the achievement of his last end.

Kolvenbach compares these reasons with those found in a recent U.S. Jesuit college brochure:

- Jesuit education is eminently practical, focused on providing students with the knowledge and skills to excel in whatever field they choose.
- Jesuit education is not merely practical, but concerns itself also with questions of values, with educating men and women to be good citizens and good leaders, concerned with the common good and able to use their education for the service of faith and promotion of justice.
- Jesuit education celebrates the full range of human intellectual power and achievement, confidently affirming reason, not as antithetical to faith, but as its necessary complement.
- Jesuit education places all that it does firmly within a Christian understanding of the human person as a creature of God whose ultimate destiny is beyond the human.^{19b}

With this background, we are in a position to focus a bit more deeply on distinctive features we find in contemporary Jesuit education, bearing in mind the caveats about “distinctiveness” noted above.

Being Jesuit Today

Just about every Jesuit or Jesuit institution has a favorite way of expressing what it means to be “Jesuit” today. These approaches to and

^{19a} Ibid.

^{19b} Ibid.

formulations of what makes Jesuit education distinctive overlap and complement one another. The closing decree of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, “Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding,”²⁰ seems especially helpful in bringing the different threads together. The “Characteristics” listed are:

1. A Deep Personal Love for Jesus Christ
2. Being Contemplative in Action or Finding God in All Things
3. An Apostolic Body in the Church
4. In Solidarity with Those Most in Need
5. In Partnership with Others
6. Called to Learned Ministry
7. Men Sent, Always Available for New Missions
8. Ever Searching for the *Magis*

1. A Deep Personal Love for Christ

Ignatius based his life not on abstract principles, but on the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. This personal relationship is meant to influence all Jesuits and what they do, including the work of their universities. As expressed in the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation, “Fundamental for the life and mission of every Jesuit is an *experience* that places him[,] quite simply, with Christ at the heart of world.”²¹

Of course, this fundamental relationship with Christ is the birth-right of every Christian and is the foundational reality of every tradition within Catholic higher education. But just as the four evangelists reflect somewhat different, but complementary, experiences of Christ, so too did Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, Mother McAuley and other religious founders reflect different but complementary experiences which they handed down to their followers.

A Christ-centered worldview is indeed compatible with university life. The Incarnation gives new meaning to all things human or capable of becoming so. Christ is the model for the development of the fullest human potential in response to God’s initiative and for the responsible freedom we seek to develop in our students. He is *the* “person for others” that Jesuit students hope to become. Understanding and reverencing

²⁰ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*. nos. 535-563.

²¹ *Documents of the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), no. 21.

the person of Christ also leads to a reverence for every human person, the basis for all good teaching and for the close faculty-student relationships that characterize Jesuit education at its best.

In today's pluralistic world, emphasizing how a Christ-centered identity can be fostered in practical ways in an institution that will and should be inclusive and deeply respectful of cultural and religious diversity is critical. Diversity provided by other faith experiences can enrich a basic core identity, as it has throughout the history of the Church. Strong campus ministry programs on Jesuit campuses today offer liturgical, faith development, and other programs to foster the life of Christ in Catholic students, while also offering a range of ecumenical and interreligious programs to nourish the faith life of other students.

2. Contemplative in Action: Seeking and Finding God in All Things

Different religious traditions seek and find God in various ways. For the Christian, belief in the Incarnation is fundamental. A characteristic insight of Ignatius was to seek and find God in all things, not just in the traditionally religious and sacred. In Ignatian spirituality, God is much part of our history and is constantly active in our lives, in the lives of others, and in every aspect of creation.

“Finding God in all things” is an expression of the Catholic sacramental vision, which sees people, events, and creation itself as capable of revealing God. With Ignatius, this expansive insight translates into an appreciation of the radical goodness of people and things and a careful respect for the integrity of human means. It leads to a magnanimous, affirming worldview. This has been the spirit of Matteo Ricci, comfortable as the court mathematician in China; of Gerard Manley Hopkins, viewing the grandeur of creation with the eye and pen of a poet; of Teilhard de Chardin, living and working within a *Divine Milieu*; of Jesuit astronomers searching the heavens at the Vatican Observatory; of the Jesuit martyrs in El Salvador finding God in the poor and powerless; and of today's faculty and students on our campuses, excited about their many new frontiers of discovery.

Confident that God can be found in all things, universities in the Ignatian tradition are comfortable in questioning, exploring, valuing, and structuring an expansive worldview—all within an affirming and hope-filled perspective.

One important corollary to seeking and finding God in all things is Ignatius' great emphasis on discernment, i.e., continually listening,

responding, and adapting as we engage in a constant interplay between experience, reflection, decision, and action. Discernment is a way of effective decision-making in the context of a God active in our individual and institutional lives. This discernment is linked with ethical reasoning as we seek to find where and how God is present in this or that situation. Discernment is also part of the adaptability that has characterized education in the Ignatian tradition.

Today's followers of Ignatius see institutions responding to new opportunities and new needs, thereby remaining open to continuing renewal and development. This is an important survival skill today in the midst of uncertainty, rapid change, and constant challenge. Finding God in all things makes for women and men of expansive, holistic vision, who are discerners of what is or can be good in every person, event, and reality of our lives, thus forming an ideal community within which to live, learn, and work.

3. An Apostolic Body in the Church

From the beginning, Ignatius and his followers put themselves at the service of the Church and specifically at the service of the Pope, to whom they take a special vow to respond to any mission he might give them.²² One of the most interesting dynamics of the recent General Congregation was the warm exchange with Pope Benedict XVI. The Pope challenged Jesuits to “discover new horizons and to reach new social, cultural and religious frontiers,” sending them to “those physical and spiritual places which others do not reach or have difficulty in reaching.” In the Pope's words:

In its history, the Society of Jesus has lived extraordinary experiences of proclamation and encounter between the Gospel and world cultures—it suffices to think of Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto de Nobili in India or of the ‘Reductions’ in Latin America. And you are rightly proud of them. I feel it is my duty today to urge you to set out once again in the tracks of your predecessors with the same courage and intelligence, but also with an equally profound motivation of faith and enthusiasm to serve the Lord and His Church.²³

The Congregation responded enthusiastically:

²² *Documents of the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, no. 117.

²³ Benedict XVI, Address to the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, no. 5.

The Successor of Peter told us of the confidence he has in us; for our part, we sincerely want to respond to him, as an apostolic body, with the same warmth and same affection he has shown us, and to affirm in a resolute way our specific availability to the 'Vicar of Christ on earth.'²⁴

The Congregation noted that this fidelity demands serious and rigorous research in theology and in dialogue with the contemporary world, cultures, and religions, echoing *Ex corde Ecclesiae* with its challenge to Catholic universities to engage in serious dialogue with culture.²⁵

4. *Solidarity with Those Most in Need*

Traceable to Jesus' and Ignatius' own concern for the poor and disenfranchised, Jesuits and Jesuit institutions have been challenged, especially since the midseventies, to make faith inseparable from concern for justice and for a preferential option for the poor. In 1989, the linkage became real on the campus of the University of Central America in El Salvador, where six Jesuits and their two coworkers were gunned down by the Salvadoran military precisely because they were committed to bringing justice to the people of El Salvador.

Ignacio Ellacuria, the university rector and the main target of the assassins, wanted to make the University of Central America a "different kind of university," one committed to the "national reality of poverty and oppression," and to being a voice for the voiceless and power for the powerless.^{25a} Every Jesuit university has been influenced by what happened in El Salvador.

The Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus expressed the challenge as follows:

Today, whatever our ministry, we Jesuits enter into solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless, in order to enable their participation in the processes that shape the society in which we all live and work. They in turn teach us about our own poverty as no document can.²⁶

²⁴ *Documents of the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, no. 8.

²⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae: On Catholic Universities* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990), no 43.

^{25a} Ignacio Ellacuria, "Is a Different Kind of University Possible?" in John Hassett and Hugh Lacey, eds., *Towards a Society That Serves its People* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 177, 182.

²⁶ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, Decree Twenty-six, no. 548.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1975 commitment to a faith that does justice, Fr. Kolvenbach, who succeeded Fr. Arrupe as superior general of the Jesuits, updated the Jesuit commitment in a moving address at Santa Clara University that has led to a dramatically increased commitment to justice.²⁷

Kolvenbach expanded the notion of educating the “whole person” to “educat[ing] the whole person of solidarity for the real world,” with that solidarity being learned through “contact” rather than through “concepts.” “Students ... must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively.”

He also described a challenging role for the faculty whose mission is “...tirelessly to pursue the truth and to form each student into a whole person of solidarity who will take responsibility for the real world.”^{27a} Moreover, with regard to faculty research in a socially conscious university Fr. Kolvenbach wrote:

The faculty’s (research) ... not only obeys the canons of each discipline, but ultimately embraces human reality in order to help make the world a more fitting place for six billion of us to inhabit. I want to affirm that university knowledge is valuable for its own sake and at the same time is knowledge that must ask itself, ‘For whom? For what?’

Paraphrasing Ignacio Ellacuria, it is the nature of every university to be a social force, and it is the calling of every Jesuit university to take conscious responsibility for being a force for faith and justice. Every Jesuit academy of higher learning is called to live in a social reality...and to live for that social reality, to shed university intelligence upon it and to use university influence to transform it.²⁸

Jesuit campuses today have Faith-Justice or Peace and Justice programs and centers to help not only students, but also faculty, administrators, and trustees learn the difference between “concept” and “contact” and engage the “gritty reality” of the “real world of solidarity.” National and international immersion experiences are increasingly common. Jesuit campuses have moved significantly beyond the relatively simple

²⁷ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education,” in George W. Traub, S.J., ed., *A Jesuit Education Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 144-62.

^{27a} Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 156, 159.

idea of volunteerism and community service to an increasingly global pursuit of justice and solidarity.

5. *Partnership with Others*

The history of the past forty years in Catholic higher education is a success story of lay leadership at all levels. The Second Vatican Council gave new emphasis and importance to that leadership.²⁹ Before the Council, laity were to cooperate in the apostolate of the hierarchy. The Council, however, insisted that lay women and men had their own charisma and mission in the Church.^{29a}

Reading the life of Ignatius, one is impressed with the extent to which he developed what today we call Jesuit-lay partnerships. Very importantly, he developed the *Spiritual Exercises* as a layperson, and often gave the Exercises to lay women and men.

More than 400 years later, this partnership with the laity continued within the Jesuit tradition. The Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Jesuits spoke of the “Church of the Laity” in the twenty-first century, with the laity’s active, constructive, and responsible role a “grace of our day” and the “hope for the future.”³⁰

Jesuits were challenged to facilitate the role of the laity. They were described as “men for and with others,” and were called to have an attitude and readiness to cooperate, to listen, and to learn from others. The Thirty-Fifth General Congregation in 2008, in its Decree Six, “Collaboration at the heart of mission,” stressed even further the importance of partnership and collaboration by Jesuits and also expanded its scope:

We are humbled and grateful that so many—inspired as we have been by the vocation of Ignatius and the tradition of the Society—have chosen both to work with us and to share our sense of mission and our passion to reach out to the men and women of our broken but lovable world. We are enriched by members of our own faith, but also by people from other religious traditions, those women and men of good will from all nations and cultures, with whom we labor in seeking a more just world.³¹

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1965).

^{29a} Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 27-44.

³⁰ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, Decree Thirteen*, no. 331.

³¹ *Documents of the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, no. 186.

Jesuits and Jesuit universities today take seriously their obligation to share the tradition of the Society with their collaborators, e.g., through the AJCU Leadership Development Seminar, the Ignatian Colleagues Program, and numerous on-campus programs, but especially through experiences of the *Spiritual Exercises*,³² many of which are led by lay women and men themselves.

6. Called to Learned Ministry

Ignatius quickly saw the need for learning if he was to achieve his goal of “helping souls.” The earliest Formula for the Institute noted that, “This Institute requires men who are thoroughly humble and prudent in Christ as well as conspicuous in the integrity of Christian life and learning.”³³ The intellectual apostolate has been a consistent, defining characteristic of the Society of Jesus since its beginning, and the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation updated this commitment:

In the context of the complex challenges and opportunities of our contemporary world, this ministry requires all the learning and intelligence, imagination and ingenuity, solid studies and rigorous analysis we can muster.³⁴

Most recently, the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation called once again for:

...a strengthening and renewal of the intellectual apostolate as a privileged means for the Society to respond adequately to the important intellectual contribution to which the Church calls us.³⁵

Obviously, Jesuit colleges and universities are a primary locus for this intellectual contribution. The pursuit of academic excellence remains the consistent claim of every Jesuit college and university today.

³² Jennifer Haworth and Megan Barry, “Making Critical Connections: Identity and Mission Officers Tell What Works,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 34 (Fall 2008), 26-29.

³³ Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus, in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), no. 9.

³⁴ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, no. 554.

³⁵ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, no. 82.

7. Men Sent, Always Available for New Missions

As noted above, Jesuit education was founded on the Renaissance and humanist tradition with its personalist, societal and even practical goals, as distinct from the more closed model of the scholastic tradition. In opting for the Christian humanist alternative, Jesuits contributed to the shaping of a new society. Fr. Kolvenbach pointed out that, today, our new society is being shaped by globalization:

Likewise, Jesuit higher education is called upon in our day to give creative responses to the changing times. Ignatius would be fascinated by the phenomenon of globalization, with its incredible opportunities and threats, and would not run from the challenges it involves. To the universities corresponds an indispensable role in the critical analysis of globalization, with its positive and negative connotations, to orient the thought and the action of society. In Ignatian language, it is a matter of an authentic process of discernment, in order to discover what is coming from the good spirit and what is coming from the bad.

... It is not enough to denounce; it is necessary to also pronounce and propose.³⁶

Each Jesuit college and university has responded to the phenomenon of globalization with renewed efforts to internationalize the campuses through a range of curricular and cocurricular programs. The twenty-eight schools have study abroad, immersion, and exchange programs in over 100 countries.³⁷ In April 2010, an international meeting of Jesuit universities worldwide convened in Mexico City, searching for ways to increase the international collaboration that already exists.

8. Ever a Search for the Greater Good

The magnanimity of Ignatius is expressed in the Latin word, *magis*, which is found throughout his writings. The unofficial motto of the Jesuits, “For the *greater* glory of God,” is found more than one hundred times in the Constitutions.

The Thirty-Fourth General Congregation spoke directly to the *magis*:

³⁶ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “The Jesuit University in the Light of the Ignatian Charism.” Rome, 2001, nos. 29, 31.

³⁷ Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), *Education for a Globalized World: A Profile of the Internationalization of U.S. Jesuit Campuses* (Washington, DC: AJCU, 2008); *The Internationalization of U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Preliminary Analysis* (Washington, DC: AJCU, 2008).

The *magis* is not simply one among others in a list of Jesuit characteristics. It permeates them all. The entire life of Ignatius was a pilgrim search for the *magis*, the ever greater glory of God, the ever fuller service of our neighbor, the more effective apostolic means. ‘Mediocrity has no place in Ignatius’ world-view’....Jesuits are never content with the *status quo*, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to discover, [to] redefine, and [to] reach out for the *magis*. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed.³⁸

The pursuit of the *magis* grounds the continuing quest for excellence on Jesuit campuses and is the source of a restlessness always to do better, certainly appropriate for the work of a good university. This ideal of always searching for the greater good can raise expectations that may be difficult to realize. The ideal needs to be combined with another Ignatian ideal: healthy discernment.

Conclusion

The history, the documents, and the practice of Jesuit higher education have been seen to embrace a number of features which are deeply rooted in Catholic tradition and express that tradition in a particular way.

Many of the features described resonate with the traditions and practices of other orders and congregations because all share that same fundamental Catholic tradition and vision. All have shared much with one another, enriched one another, and borrowed best practices ever since Ignatius was inspired by the example of Francis and Dominic, received spiritual direction from the Benedictines, and learned the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

The distinctiveness of the different traditions does not mean uniqueness and does not make one better than the other; instead, “distinctive” alludes to the variances within the traditions that contribute to the rich diversity of contemporary Catholic higher education.

The challenge for each tradition is to remain effectively operative in the face of rapid change, multiple institutional challenges, and an increasingly diverse campus community capable of both enriching and diluting an identity. Therefore, the importance of finding more effective

³⁸ *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, Decree Twenty-six, no. 560.

and sophisticated ways of sharing and passing on that identity becomes ever more obvious.

Ignatian spirituality, a spirituality developed by a layperson for the laity, offers some special strengths for doing this; with its world-affirming emphasis on seeking God in all things, its restless and magnanimous pursuit of the *magis*, its special concern for the individual person as the focus of attention, its focus on Christ as the contagious model for our adulthood, its commitment to partnerships, and its linking faith with the pursuit of justice in a globalizing world, it resonates not only with lay colleagues, but also with life on our campuses. Because this vision will be necessary to sustain the Jesuit or Ignatian identity in our schools, it is especially encouraging to see the increasing numbers of lay colleagues participating in the *Spiritual Exercises*, from which this vision comes.

Monika Hellwig, past president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, would often point out that we are not trying to recover something that has been lost and must be retrieved.³⁹ Rather, while facing the challenges of a globalizing world, we are trying to create something that has never existed: a Jesuit, Catholic identity that combines Ignatian spirituality, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, and Catholic Social Teaching, and is forged in collaboration with diverse colleagues in a pluralistic, postmodern university setting.

Ignatius would have been up to the task. On Jesuit campuses today, Jesuits and their co-workers are challenged to keep his magnanimous vision alive.

³⁹ Cited in Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 161.

