

Address to AJCU & JCUSA

Let me begin by expressing my thanks for the opportunity to be with you today. I am especially grateful for the sacrifice of time and energy you have made to be here in Chicago to meet with me and the other leaders of Jesuit higher education who are gathered here today.

In fact, thankfulness is one of the important contexts of my remarks this morning. The apostolic impact of your institutions, individually and corporately is broad and vast. The economic impact in each of the cities where you are located is phenomenal yet seldom recognized. Your institutions help form public opinion in countless ways. They form young people in virtue as well as in learning. Your schools serve the local Church in your region by preparing future teachers who will communicate the Faith to the next generation. In fact, as Pope Benedict acknowledged when he spoke to leaders of Catholic higher education at Catholic University in April 2008, as Father Kolvenbach stressed on numerous occasions, and as I tried to say in Mexico City, the Church and the Society of Jesus are heavily dependent on your work and the work of your institutions. I know that your joint lobbying efforts have had an impact on legislation regarding immigration reform and the underserved in the United States as you have taken advantage of the large number of graduates of Jesuit colleges and universities who now serve the US Congress. There is so much more to thank you for, but let me mention my special thanks for the dedication of time, talent, and treasure that you give as members of boards of directors.

My goal today is to present some overall thoughts about exercising spiritual and heroic leadership, some more specific thoughts about what a leader does at an American Jesuit Catholic college or university at this point in history, and a consideration of the prerequisites for good decision-making. I will close with some particular questions for you to study as the decision-makers at the schools that have been entrusted to you in your capacities as the leaders of Jesuit higher education in the USA.

I. On Spiritual Leadership

I want to begin by talking about spiritual leadership because it is a crucial dimension of the service that everyone gathered here today is called to exercise. This kind of leadership is not relegated to a special clerical or religious caste. The vast literature about leadership that is available today recognizes a fundamentally spiritual dimension to being an effective leader, even if authors avoid the word *spiritual*. Even if this were not the case, there can be no doubt that leaders at professedly religious institutions like the colleges and universities you represent and lead must exercise spiritual leadership.

First, all leaders in the apostolic context of a Jesuit institution must reinforce and motivate their members and communities in the values and attitudes that are based in the Sacred Scriptures of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this sense, leadership at a Jesuit institution is about **evangelization** because Jesuit institutions only exist because of the particular, scripturally based faith perspective that led to their establishment and foundation. Thus, the primary function of leadership is the reinforcement and animation of these perennially relevant attitudes and values: God loves the world, God dwells among us, God empowers us to make the world worthy of God's children.

Second, there's the basic concept of understanding authority as **service**. Pope Benedict's renunciation has been, they say in Rome, the last and perhaps greatest lesson of the great teacher Josef Ratzinger, showing how the Pope is in service of the church, and not the other way around. The Pope is not the ultimate figure, the ultimate figure is Christ, and when Benedict saw he could not serve the Church well any longer, he retired, because the Church is much more important than the Pope. The lesson for us to keep in mind is that the authority exercised at Jesuit, Catholic institution is always a form of service and nothing else.

In fact, Pope Francis said some very important things about service that apply to all Jesuit institutions when he visited the Jesuit Refugee Service soup kitchen in Rome last month:

To serve means to welcome the person who arrives with attentive care; it means bending over those in need and reach out for them, without calculation, without fear, with tenderness and understanding, as Jesus bent down to wash the feet of the Apostles. To serve means to work alongside the most needy, first of all to establish with them human relationships of closeness and solidarity links....To serve means to recognize and uphold the claims of justice and hope, to seek together the concrete paths to human liberation.¹

And third, in the understanding of St. Ignatius, the principal function of a leader is to help the members of a community grow to become the living presence of God in the world. In the Ignatian concept of service there is always the very important fact that growth leads to transformation. If there is no **transformation**, the process has failed. The ultimate objective is an individual's transformation, and, through individuals, the transformation of society. But this transformation takes place through a process of growth. There are no instantaneous transformations, even though sometimes we are attracted to the idea of sudden, painless, effortless change. We like to imagine that St. Paul was struck from his horse and immediately became an effective apostle. But in the Acts of the Apostles, there is no horse; and after his conversion Paul went to Arabia for three years of intense prayer and study before he eventually journeyed to Jerusalem to test if what he understood was in line with the apostles, etc. Transformation is long process that involves much hard work.

II. Heroic Leadership

You are already familiar with a book published a few years ago by Christopher Lowney that has struck a chord, because it has flattered us by talking of Jesuit leadership as heroic leadership². The title sounds great, especially to Jesuits. He organized his points around self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism, but I want to focus on three points that I believe are most important for leaders at Jesuit institutions today.

The first important quality coincides with all I've read about leadership. As you know, it is an area that has produced much literature. Where they all agree, and Lowney as well, is that with good leadership there must be an understanding of the of the end result: a **vision**. Without vision there is no leader. I can say that in my visits to the Society, when I encounter a Province in disorder – and yes they exist – the leadership always lacks vision. When there is a vision, there is focus, there are objectives and direction; the end and the means are in right relationship with each other and energy is not lost in useless activity. There is a famous Latin phrase attributed to St. Ignatius, *Non coarctari a maximo, contineri autem a minimo, divinum est. (Not to be encompassed by the greatest, but to let oneself be encompassed by the smallest: That is divine.)* In terms of the Society of Jesus, the vision must be broad, global, and in accordance with the Gospel. For Ignatian institutions there is nothing, however big it might be, that can limit the apostolic imagination of a leader. We can see this attitude in the courage with which some of the great missionaries in Jesuit history who went out facing an entire continent – in times with no airplanes, internet, nothing – and were capable of becoming these audacious and imaginative missionaries. They had a broad vision well beyond their knowledge of their own limited capacities. Even those in poor health knew how to carry out a creative vision and eventually move across the continent because their concrete steps were all ordered to the great vision they had in mind. José Anchieta, traveled on the back of a mule throughout Brazil as far as Peru and Bolivia, because he was led by his ideals and vision.

¹ Pope Francis, visit to Centro Astalli of the Jesuit Refugee Service, Rome, 11 September 2013.

² Lowney, Chris. *Heroic Leadership*. Loyola Press, 2005.

A second element is that of *magis*, a Latin word that means *more* but not so much in terms of quantity as in terms of quality. You'll find a helpful expression of the idea in some biographies of St. Stanislaus Kostka, (*Ad majora natus sum, I was born for greater things*). Knowledge that we were made for more, to be better and better, to reach beyond what is to what might be has given many followers of Ignatius the confidence to face, without fear, situations that would break down the boundaries of a person or group. A few weeks ago I heard a story about an experiment done during the Korean War. Those in charge took prisoners of war, put them in a camp, and systematically gave them bad news – the death of a relative, a bombing, a lost battle, an illness – all bad news. When the war ended and the prisoners were told they could go home, they then realized that there were no fences, railings, dogs, guards, barbed-wire in their camp. And not one of them had escaped. The fear had stopped their imagination and the possibility of escaping. This is the effect of fear. Not one of them wanted, at the end of the war, to return home. They were frozen. *Magis* is possible only if there is no fear, and therefore it's part of a leadership where instead of fear, there is confidence. Confidence that in spite of everything, we can continue forward, undertake difficult work, speak with the atheist, or speak – now – of borders, an image that has resonated well with all of the Society of Jesus. Because the border speaks directly to overcoming fear. To go to the most difficult situations, this is only possible when there is no fear. And this helps us see why, in the New Testament, when Jesus appears, especially in the stories of the resurrection, the fundamental message is “Do not be afraid”.

And finally, a third element that is not in Lowney's book but which is very important. Good leadership has to be always open to **evaluation**, studying outcomes, continued assessment. Why is that not in the book? Because the author is very kind and only wanted to put in good things about the Jesuits. He came to Manila when I was there and gave a lecture, speaking of factors that he considered part of the heroic leadership of the Society and didn't say anything negative. Then a Filipino Jesuit raised his hand during the question time and said, “You haven't said anything negative. Is that because there is nothing negative in our leadership?” The author began to backpedal, change the subject and tried to escape, but the Filipino came back and said, “You haven't responded to my question. Is there nothing we can learn about leadership?” Then, Lowney answered, “Well, since you insist, there are two things. One is that the Jesuits, as with all clergy, are resistant to review.” Priests can be a little like Charlie Brown in the cartoons. There's one that I really like where he is playing baseball, it's raining and they are losing, as always, and Charlie Brown says, “How is it possible that we lose when we have such good intentions?”

A priest tends to confuse his good intentions with the result. And when evaluation is discussed he always says, “Is it that I'm not doing well?” Then it becomes personal and is difficult to evaluate. Yet evaluation is normal in any institution, business and for any objective. To learn to integrate evaluation into our leadership is extremely important. The second thing that Lowney said, is that we have to apply numbers to this. This is hard for us priests, because we believe that in the Gospel everything is spiritual so to quantify things and say that a certain percentage of the people don't like my homilies doesn't sit well with us. My homilies reach 30%, which is okay, but there are 60-70% that don't like them. We don't like this, quantification bothers us. “God works in hearts,” we say, and we put it in the hands of God or the Holy Spirit, and we don't want to quantify or carry out a concrete evaluation that can help us improve our service. This is something fairly general. I experimented with it in meetings with local superiors in Japan, I've experimented with it in other sites as well and it seems that it's cross-cultural. The cleric is not a good subject for evaluation. He feels threatened. But that does not mean that we should avoid evaluation based in quantitative measures. I am not talking about the reductionism of those who want to base everything on a business model that only looks at the bottom line and at quantitative analysis. There needs to be balance between the quantitative and the qualitative. We need both.

III. Prerequisites for Making Decisions as Leaders of Jesuit Institutions

Let me now say a few things about how leaders like those I have just described—that is, leaders like you—engage in decision-making. I am sure that many of you are familiar with terms like “spiritual discernment” and with “seeking God’s will,” but I want to avoid using that kind of language that can seem far from our usual experience. In fact, saying something like, “We are going to seek God’s will together,” can make most people think we have lost our minds or that imagine that we are going to imitate Moses by heading off on a forty year sojourn in a desert somewhere. What I really want to describe is a process that St. Ignatius organized so that decisions would be less subject to human whim and impulse; unhampered by human bias, partisanship, and prejudice; more open to freedom; deeply rooted in the experience of dying to what is passing an ephemeral so as to enjoy greater life. Thus, I would say that seeking God’s will is a process of asking ourselves what we really want, what is most important to us, what we desire most fundamentally, the pearl of great price hidden in the field that we will give everything to possess. Frankly, this is a process that is never complete because our desires are always getting more profound and deep as we move through time; nevertheless, the journey is important because it helps us remain true to the task of identifying what is most fundamentally important and therefore true.

Let me say that leaders who make good decisions can only do so when four prerequisites are present: community of shared values, freedom, generosity and If they are going to make good decisions, leaders need to make sure that these conditions are healthy and part of the background.

The first prerequisite is the existence of a **community committed to shared values**. God’s will is found in a group of people, not inside my head or individual consciousness. Whether it is the Church, a religious congregation, or an apostolic work; whether it is a board of directors, a faculty, or group of students, the community is a crucial ingredient. You need to have community to be able to discern. For discernment to be true, you must have a true community. Decision-makers need to be surrounded by people who provide input, who give advice, who suggest alternatives, are able to see an issue from different perspectives. A single person cannot articulate and determine what is most important for an institution; a community of committed colleagues who work together is necessary. The people in this community should not all think alike because wherever everyone easily agrees it usually means that not everyone is thinking. But the members of the community need to have the same fundamental values and perspectives, because if we don’t have the same values, we can’t arrive at the same objectives.

You are all blessed to share the terms American, Catholic, Jesuit, and Institutions of Higher Learning, but I imagine it would not take long to realize how many different understandings there are for these key terms. Being an **American**, for example, is based on the pledge to embrace the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty,³ but liberty and equality frequently conflict with each other and both can be threatened by a popular majority. Not everything that wraps itself in an American flag is worthy of the great ideals of your nation, so having discussions about what it means to be an American institution, especially in these days of globalization, is important for you. **Catholic** is another important word that is used in all kinds of different ways these days. How a Jesuit President might understand the meaning of *Catholic* might differ greatly from the understanding of his

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Philip Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1980), 31–32, 56–57.

local Ordinary. **Jesuit** is another word that gets all kinds of interpretations. Just think about that story that has been going around since last February. When one of the people in St. Peter's Square heard that a Jesuit had been elected Pope, he was supposed to have said, "I thought the Pope had to be a Catholic." Jesuit means all kinds of different things to people. Phrases like "men and women for and with others," *cura personalis*, and "Finding God in All Things" are really nice, and they say something about the reality of what it means to be a Jesuit school, but words like *spiritual indifference* and *detachment* need to be part of the real understanding of what it means to be Jesuit-educated. We don't want to settle for a shallow understanding of what it means to be a Jesuit institution. Airing, discussing, probing our many different values and perspectives is a process that ultimately leads to greater understanding and appreciation of one another. It also results in a more profound and helpful appropriation of the fundamental values that the institutions were established to protect and promote. It's the way to form a community of shared values.

The second prerequisite is **freedom**. The outcome cannot be predetermined by the one who will be responsible for the final decision. The process must be open and free. Furthermore, those who contribute to a valid decision must be free to say what is on their mind without fear of recrimination or deleterious consequence. The participants in the discerning community must be committed to doing all they can to make sure that all positive and negative dimensions of a decision as well as all its possible consequences are carefully considered. At the same time, these people must dedicate themselves in freedom to outcome of the process. I have seen, when I was Provincial, individuals who would not enter into the process of institutional discernment, for example, but later, if the vote did not favor their own plans, they would come to me to say, "As Provincial, you can't permit this." In that moment you have to tell them, "You have had your opportunity, you have had the opportunity to participate but did not want to, and now you want to use your power. This power is illegitimate". That is to say, there are methods and processes that respect the dignity of the collaborators, that respect a series of principles that have a deep meaning and that can't be overlooked. Therefore you need these two principles, those of community and liberty. And what else?

The third prerequisite is **generosity**. St. Ignatius told those interviewing potential candidates to the Society of Jesus to say that Jesuits should:

desire to suffer injuries, false accusations, and affronts, and to be held and esteemed as fools (but without their giving any occasion for this), because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, by putting on his garb and uniform, since it was for our spiritual profit that he clothed himself as he did. (*Constitutions*, 101)

What he is really talking about here is being generous, of putting all my gifts and talents at the service of God who has given everything to me. Generosity was so important and crucial to Ignatius, as we know from that prayer, "Lord, teach me to be generous, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to seek any reward other than knowing I am doing your will." Generosity is necessary if a good decision is going to be made.

Finally let me mention a fourth condition that is needed. There are others, of course, that would be good, but I will stop with four. **Selflessness** is necessary, a humble altruism that surrenders my own preferences to more important criteria, to a greater good. For Ignatius "the greatest need" always stands out. Rather than serving my particular interests or what I may be best prepared to do, I need to be selfless in pursuing what will be best for those who have the greatest need or for accomplishing a greater good. This has very practical consequences. Surrendering what I personally think is important to a bigger, more important transcendental value puts everything into proper perspective and makes it possible to make all the smaller and less important choices that go into accomplishing a great goal. We subordinate our choices to accomplishing the greater, overall good.

That's enough about the prerequisites, the conditions necessary so that good and effective leaders like you can decide how to proceed.

IV Request for Your Help

As I outlined at the beginning of this talk, I have presented a few perspectives on spiritual leadership that is concerned about evangelization, service and transformation. I have stressed that heroic leaders have a broad vision, focus on the magis, and are not afraid to evaluate their success. I mentioned that you must be part of a community of shared values and have freedom and generosity to make selfless choices.

I came here to make these points because I want to emphasize that you are the heroic and spiritual leaders of Jesuit higher education in the United States who are rightly placed to make important decisions. You are not the only leaders, and you know that, but you are the group responsible for making sure that good decisions are made. I think that in the past there might have been a mystique that some of my predecessors had all the answers so that all they had to do was write a letter to a Provincial who would write a letter to a President, who would tell everyone what was going to happen because there was an attitude that Father Knows Best. I don't think that was ever actually true, even if some people might have acted as though it were. In any case, one of my purposes today is to make sure that everyone knows that the future of Jesuit higher education in the USA is in the hands of boards of directors, and that I am very happy that is the case, because I know, looking at you, that it is in good hands indeed.

Finally, through what I say today I want to initiate a long term discussion about a topic we don't often articulate. The twenty-eight colleges and universities you represent have been in a close relationship with the Society of Jesus and its members for nearly two hundred and twenty-five years. You consider yourselves Jesuit institutions because of such things as your membership in the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, the recognition you have received from Jesuit Superiors, the presence of Jesuit communities on or near your campuses, and your on-going relationship with individual Jesuits and with the Society of Jesus in general. Perhaps without much realization on anyone's part, those defining relationships have changed a great deal over time, especially in the years that followed the Second World War and the Second Vatican Council. Nearly all the institutions have grown substantially in size, complexity, and wealth; budgetary pressures and the need for increased fundraising have become enormous; models of administration and leadership had changed dramatically; extra-curricular and co-curricular programs have grown in importance. At the same time, the role of Jesuit Superiors and that of university president have been separated; today there are AJCU Presidents who are neither Jesuit nor Catholic. One does not have to be a Jesuit or a priest or even a Catholic to be the President of a US Jesuit college or university. In fact, universities were identified early as places where lay professionals could increasingly assume leadership positions within the institutions and become their guardians in a number of important ways such as trustees. Indeed, the Church and the Society of Jesus have recognized and welcomed—perhaps rather begrudgingly at first but now with confidence and great enthusiasm—the role of the laity in many dimensions that were formerly reserved to clerics or vowed religious.

Extraordinarily fine things have happened in Jesuit higher education in the past sixty years. However, some big changes have been taking place that we usually ignore or avoid. In 1973 there were about 212 million Americans in the USA; today there are about 316 million. That means that if the number of Americans per Jesuit institution of higher learning had been kept constant, there should be 42 AJCU institutions today. During those same forty years since 1973, the number of USA Jesuits has declined from 6,616 to 2547; this means that if the total number of USA Jesuits per AJCU member had been kept constant, there should be only

11 Jesuit colleges and universities today. Our network of schools has not expanded as much as we might like, even if it has not contracted as much as we might fear. However, since the supply of Jesuits is increasingly limited while the demand for more Jesuits seems to always expand, it would seem that some changes are in order.

What might this demographic situation mean for the service we want to provide for those who suffer disadvantages like those that led to the establishment of the first US Jesuit schools? What might it mean for the warm and familial relationship that has existed between Jesuits and the US Jesuit colleges and universities for over two centuries? Even though it is obvious to all of us that the Jesuit nature and character of an institution depends on a number of factors, least of which may be the number of Jesuits who work at a school, we must still ask ourselves how much longer the two trend lines can go in opposite directions before the traditional relationship between the Society of Jesus and AJCU institutions—a relationship that has always been based in personal, one-on-one, direct, human contact—is stretched so thin that it becomes impersonal and meaningless.

So let me pose three questions about the future in terms of your heroic and spiritual leadership that I have discussed this morning:

1. **What selfless actions**—based in the freedom, generosity, and shared values as a community committed to Jesuit higher education—might God be **asking you** to lead at your particular institution?
2. **What selfless actions**—based in the freedom, generosity, and shared values as a community committed to Jesuit higher education—might God be **asking of the AJCU** as a network of schools?
3. **What selfless actions**—based in the freedom, generosity, and shared values as a community committed to Jesuit higher education—might God be **asking of the Jesuit Provincials** of the United States?

I realize that these questions may seem rather intimidating and even intimidating, especially since they come at the end of a long talk. However, the colloquy that I enjoyed last December with some leaders like you convinced me that you are capable of undertaking bold challenges and that you are ready to do whatever is necessary to serve this important ministry that serves so many individuals, so many communities, to say nothing of the Lord and his Church. I have no doubt that you are the right group to begin with consideration of these questions, for you have the talents and temperament, the head and heart, to do what needs to be done. I know that this process will be in the good hands of Fathers Sheeran, Smolich, and Kesicki, of all you Presidents, and most particularly of all you board chairs.

While I could kiddingly say that it is easy to ask the questions because I am getting on a plane Saturday, I want to emphasize that I look forward to accompanying you along the way for as long as the Lord gives me the opportunity to do so—I can think of few things more enjoyable than experiencing the fun and challenge of grappling with these questions with fine people like!

I ask that you consider these question not just as individuals, although your individual responses are important, but more fundamentally as members of boards and different communities of shared values and purpose; not as individual schools, but as members of an important network of schools, although I realize that these questions have local as well as national dimensions.

I ask these questions as the first step of a journey of a thousand miles, knowing that an answer may take years to form. Although I would hope some answers begin to emerge while

I am Superior General, I have enough sense to realize that these old bones are not going to last forever!

I ask these question knowing that it is the Lord who will show us the way if we are bold enough to ask for direction, if we are humble enough to listen to our most fundamental desires for serving the good of his people, if we are committed to being so generous that we do not count the cost or heed the wounds or seek any reward other than knowing we have given all we can to him.

As I come to the end of what I want to say this morning, I would like to ask your help in recruiting Jesuits. Although my predecessor, Father Kolvenbach, and I have both stressed the importance of vocation promotion and recruitment, local needs often make it difficult for a Provincial to even imagine assigning a man to this kind of work as a full time job. Therefore, I would appreciate the help of all the board chairs people in the room. Could you please have a serious conversation sometime with your Provincial about the kinds of resources your institution or company uses to recruit a new generation of employees? Could you talk to your President about what more could be done on campus to recruit Jesuit vocations? Could you please make some suggestions to the local Jesuit community about what they might do to make themselves better known and recognized as a viable and vital option for young men today? The Jesuits don't always listen to Superiors, even to a Superior General, but I think they will listen carefully if you call them aside.

Finally, let me return to where I began, thanking you again for all you do. Jesuit Catholic institutions of higher education would not be the important apostolic instruments they have become without you. They will not flourish in the future without your commitment and hard work. Thank you for being part of this important apostolate of the Society of Jesus.

While many more things could be said, one mustn't abuse the patience of those listening...