

IGNATIAN PEDAGOGY AT THE SERVICE OF LAY MISSION

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Importance of the laity

All of us were born, and baptised into the Catholic Church, as lay people. Jesus the 'Eternal High Priest' was a 'layman' all his life. Ignatius of Loyola conceived and disseminated the Spiritual Exercises as a layman. Something needs to be said about this.

In my own particular personal history I recall that I spent many years as a layman thinking about my vocation to the ministerial priesthood, and if I became a Jesuit and a priest it was not to increase in status in the hierarchy of the preconciliar ecclesiastical pyramid or to rise above a supposedly lower caste, but because the Spirit of the Lord called me to offer a particular service in his Church, just as important as others (neither more, nor less).

The primitive Church, until the year 96, made no division between priests and laity. It was Clement of Rome who introduced this analogical language, inspired by the Old Testament concept, which has lasted until today. However, the concept presented to us by the Second Vatican Council of the Church as 'People of God', in its Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, seeks to return to the sources, to recover the original sense, and take a different view of the role of the laity in the Church, a point corroborated also in its Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and in the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

This conciliar 'view' or perspective has been taken up again by the popes from John XXIII to Benedict XVI, in

very different documents of their magisterium, when they recognise that this is the time of the laity and that their role within the ecclesial community is irreplaceable. The Society of Jesus also, in its General Congregations, has given them a singular importance, especially the last, General Congregation 34, in its Decree 13.

In a few words, the idea is that laypeople are not second-class Christians with respect to the clergy, as was held for centuries. On the contrary, they are of vital importance. The body of Christ, as also the body of the Society, recognises the unity in diversity of charisms and gifts, ministries and missions. In the end, in this body we carry out different functions, but, as baptised, we all share as 'prophets, priests and kings' in the unique and true Priest, Prophet and King who is Christ. The Society wants to say to those of us who are not properly 'laymen' that it is our task to collaborate with them in their 'mission of sanctifying the world' as the Council itself asked.²

The 'Copernican Revolution', a whole challenge

The language used by Fathers General Arrupe and Kolvenbach to refer to the laity in our works has also evolved: from 'employees' to 'collaborators' and then to 'apostolic companions' and as far as the Decree

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13 already mentioned: 'To understand in its reality what the Congregation wanted to say on the theme, it is necessary to be very attentive to the background focus: the recognition that laypeople have their distinctive mission in the Church and that the Society is at the service of that mission.

So it is not the laity who are at the service of the Society. There is a Copernican revolution. From it is born not submission but 'cooperation with the laity in their mission (the title of the decree of the Congregation) and various forms of collaboration with one another.'²

The Church of this third millennium is the Church of the laity. For that reason 'The Society of Jesus acknowledges as a grace of our day and a hope for the future that laity 'take an active, conscious and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great moment of history.' We seek to respond to this grace by offering ourselves in service to the full realisation

of this mission of the laity, and we commit ourselves to that end by cooperating with them in their mission.’³

‘The Society of Jesus places itself at the service of this mission of the laity by offering what we are and have received: our spiritual and apostolic inheritance, our educational resources and our friendship. We offer Ignatian spirituality as a specific gift to animate the ministry of the laity. ... We offer to the laity the practical wisdom we have learned from more than four centuries of apostolic experience... Perhaps most importantly we join with them in companionship: serving together, learning from and responding to each other’s concerns and initiatives, dialoguing with one another on apostolic objectives.’⁴

In this respect Fr. General affirms: ‘I think that the fundamental contributions that the centres can make to respond to this call of the Congregation are two: the formation of the laity and accompaniment in their responsibilities, and in discernment about them...together with formation and accompaniment, support for those already exercising responsibilities and *the effective participation of laymen and women in the administration and direction of our own centres* are steps to take with respect to this challenge.’⁵

Accepting the challenge

So, then, we have a challenge on our hands. Not without reason Fr. Francisco Ivern, first President of CPAL⁶ referred to this proposition: ‘Often we think of laypeople, above all with respect to our own institutions, as ‘qualified collaborators’, still more now that we are few, or less numerous than before. We also think of how much we can give them, especially from the treasury of our Ignatian spirituality, more particularly the Spiritual Exercises. . But perhaps we are not so convinced that we can receive much from them... we do not consider them as part of ourselves, of our ‘apostolic body’... (we still have) a limited vision of the contribution that the laity can offer us and of what real collaboration with them in mission demands.’⁷

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises, in their most varied forms, has contributed like no other to the ability of Jesuits and laypeople to be in tune with one another, using a common language, and we resonate together with this spirituality which we call Ignatian, and which is now the patrimony not only of the Society of Jesus but of the whole Church. In our Colombian province for the last 25 years we have taken up as an authentic challenge

the wide diffusion of this experience of Individually Guided Spiritual Exercises, the Colloquium on the ministry of teaching and explicit formation in Ignatian thinking, seeking more and more for our laypeople to assume important roles in our institutions.

The goodness of the Exercises has been such that there are laypeople who have assimilated this Ignatian charism deeply, perhaps even more so than some of our Jesuits. Hence a question put to us a little while ago is perhaps not gratuitous: 'How Ignatian are we Jesuits?' Fr. Kolvenbach in Caracas had already made this distinction: to be a Jesuit refers exclusively to the formal juridical bond with the Society of Jesus, while to be Ignatian refers to the experience of a spirituality on the part of any human being who vibrates with the charism which the Spirit of God gave to Ignatius and which is shared today with everyone.

But let us come to practical terms: if this 21st century is the century of the laity, it is necessary to re-plan the fields in which we Jesuits ought to commit our human, spiritual and economic resources, which will imply also thinking again about the significance of each one of 'our' works. 'With particular humility we shall have to re-dimension the scale of our apostolate, and in many cases reduce our specific forms of service',⁸ so that each one may carry out the mission which is proper to him. It is precisely on this point that collaboration with the laity in their mission makes complete sense.

Our educational centres, for example, have ceased to be carried on primarily by Jesuits, and come to be directed by a reduced number of Jesuits supported by a large group of laypeople, who are in fact the ones who carry out the day-to-day work of our institutions, so that they are the ones who make it possible for the educational project of the Society of Jesus to be a reality in the classroom.

If this is obvious, we must try to empower the Church of the laity, as Decree13, already mentioned, affirms: 'we must increasingly shift the focus of our attention from the exercise of our own direct ministry to the strengthening of laity in their mission. To do so will require of us an ability to draw out their gifts and to animate and inspire them. Our willingness to accept this challenge will depend on the strength of our Jesuit companionship and on a renewal of our response to the call of Christ to serve his mission.'⁹

'The emerging "Church of the Laity" will also have an impact on our own Jesuit apostolic works... When we speak of "our apostolates" we will mean something different by "our". It will signify a genuine Ignatian

partnership of laity and Jesuits, each of us acting according to our proper vocation. Lay persons will rightly take on a greater role of responsibility and leadership within these works.’¹⁰

This is the state of affairs, ‘given the importance of the lay vocation, which the Church and the Society recognise, it is a challenge to work as apostolic companions, Jesuits and lay people, in the common educational mission.’¹¹

However, at the moment of handing over the direction of a work to our lay apostolic companions, the fears that are in fact aroused are not simply imaginary. The cultural change which we intend has taken, is taking, and will take time to resolve associated questions and factors such as:

- o Credibility: will it be lost, when the Society no longer has direct control?
- o Ignatian identity: do our laypeople really have it?
- o Autonomy: can they have as much as a Jesuit director, or will they be second-class directors?
- o Authority: will it be associated with service or with power and prestige?
- o Leadership: is it a ‘conditio sine qua non’ in the profile?
- o Enrolment: will the number of students fall even lower when the Society withdraws from direct control?

For all that, these reasonable anxieties ought not to be an obstacle to hold up an irreversible, important and necessary process. It is true that there are laypeople as qualified as ourselves, or more qualified. It is also true that we are talking about making empowerment or authorization in our institutions real, and it is a truth no less important that we can trust laypeople, and believe in the fruit of what we have sown over these years, given their formation and the assimilation of our spirituality.

Contributions of Ignatian pedagogy to the service of lay mission.

Having agreed, then, with the importance of laypeople in the life of the Church and of the Society, and accepted the challenge presented by General Congregation 34, we seek here to reply to the question above.

What specific contribution does Ignatian pedagogy make to the mission of the laity?

I am not going to enter into the debate about whether it is possible to speak of 'Ignatian pedagogy' or whether it is better to speak of 'Jesuit pedagogy'; to me it does not make sense to separate them, since to me it is valid to speak of both.

It is true that Master Ignatius was never a teacher. And it is true that Ignatius never imagined that in the future we should speak in terms of '*Ignatian pedagogy*'. However, without proposing it explicitly, he has left us a rich pedagogy, that is, a road for our pilgrimage together along the path of our apostolates.

The Spiritual Exercises, the Constitutions of the Society, his Spiritual Diary and also his numerous Letters are a true and inspirational pedagogical monument which allows us to speak of an Ignatian way of educating. All these writings are the source which inspires what today we call Ignatian pedagogy. And the form in which we have assimilated it and understood it as well as putting it into practice, has shown abundantly for some five centuries that it is coherent and produces results.

Jesuit pedagogy, for its part, is a derivation from Ignatian pedagogy, which it considers to be its source, but it enriches itself eclectically with other theories and currents, and adapts itself to times, places and persons. Jesuit pedagogy was born with the Ratio Studiorum (1599) and continues up to our own time with the document 'Characteristics of Jesuit Education' (1986) and the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (1993).

It is worth saying, also, that I understand 'Ignatian pedagogy' to be broader than 'Jesuit pedagogy'. Let me explain myself: Ignatian pedagogy may be understood and adopted without the need to work in an educational institution. Furthermore, it seems to me that it was an ambiguity, a mistake, to exhaust the expression 'Ignatian pedagogy' in the document 'Ignatian Pedagogy', a practical plan. It is much more than that, according to what we have said before.

Let us say that very clear traces of what we have later taken as typical features of our pedagogy appear in the autograph Ignatian texts. Here I shall barely hint at them, without attempting to be exhaustive, convinced that it may be helpful for many lay apostolic companions.

1. *Care of the person.* Ignatius, in his Autobiography, feels himself carried by the Lord's hand, 'in the same way as a schoolmaster treats a

child, teaching him...'¹² We might say that there is a Master par excellence: the Lord. This is how it is: the relationship of dialogue, interpersonal and close, between the disciple and his master is the pillar of our pedagogy. This is the 'cura personalis', or personal accompaniment. It is not possible to be a passive, dumb witness; conversation, search for mutual growth, and respect for each one's rhythm, are necessary. In this sense the person is the centre of educative, evangelising task, and for that reason we speak of a personalised pedagogy, active and always constructive. Here is the heart of Ignatian humanism.

2. *Evangelizing significance.* The confessional character of our works means that we consider them as real apostolic instruments, that is, for evangelization. It is a matter in the first instance of seeking human development. To the extent to which the person really is a person, he is able to fulfil himself and consequently be happy, which is to say what God wills for every human being.

3. *Discernment.* Keeping clear what is the end sought and what are the means which will help in attaining the objective. It is necessary to 'seek and find' God's will, which is the meaning of one's own life, 'where I am going, and to what', and this is achieved through discernment. To find one's way in life, discover one's own vocation and carry it out, is definitive.

4. *Flexibility.* Knowing how to adapt oneself to 'times, places and persons' refers to the character of flexibility and openness which should be maintained. It speaks also of the need to be contextualised in concrete reality, and incarnated in it.

5. *Balance.* Always looking for a connection between theory and practice, and seeking to overcome the dichotomy between human realities which are apparently polarised: poverty and means, freedom and obedience, among others.

6. *Sense of the body.* It is a matter of having a systemic and corporate vision which will promote the integration and articulation of what we do, working in a team and building of authentic communities where unity is lived in diversity.

7. *Integral formation of the human being,* 'virtue and letters', 'knowledge and virtue', because it is necessary to develop all the dimensions of the person in harmony.

8. *Quality.* 'Non multa sed multum', not many things, but those that are deep and fundamental. 'It is not much knowledge which fills and satisfies...but sensing and tasting.' Quality rather than quantity!

9. *Contemplation in action.* To 'find God in all things and all things in Him' is to be capable of valuing the beauty of creation; persons and things in all their perfection. It is nuclear in the experience of our spirituality.

10. *Magis.* Given our reality as human beings, to accept with a sense of realism that it is limited, fragile, weak, fallible, but that it is not condemned to stay there, rather to go further, by way of continual improvement. Ignatius was a man always searching, 'man of great desires' who did not satisfy himself with a little. Mediocrity had no place in his thinking. This is the 'magis' the greater glory of God. We should say today, the path of continual improvement in the direction of excellence. Evaluation and the Examen are the concrete and valuable helps for 'measuring' how our quality-process is getting on.

11. *Minus.* Even when there are excellent results, when there is success in what we do, the 'minus', humility. It is not personal 'vainglory' which counts, it is 'the greater glory of God'.

12. *Freedom.* To be free and to become aware of the precious gift of freedom and the way it is to be used with autonomy and responsibility.

13. *Ordered affections.* We are not solely reason, understanding, ideas. We are also feelings, heart, affections, and these have to be educated and ordered.

14. *Service.* Reaching these objectives is not a personal and egoistic objective; it has to be done in community and for its service, especially of the poorest and weakest. From this emerges being for others and with others.

15. *Use of methods.* Reading beforehand, repetition, application of the senses, exercise of the imagination are, among others, pedagogical tools which have not lost their relevance and validity.

As for 'Jesuit pedagogy', the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, or IPP, as it has been called, is, without being properly speaking a method, our manner of proceeding in education. But 'education' must be understood in a wider sense. It is not always working as a teacher: educate the father of a family, educate the manager of an office or a business, educate a footballer, an artist – that is, education is done through many different ministries or functions. Hence our apostolic lay companions may be enriched by our pedagogy, the one that we call Ignatian and the one we call Jesuit.

So, before coming to a close, it will be necessary to make a summary and direct presentation of the Practical Plan of our Pedagogy or IPP, with the aim of visualising through its five phases the implications that it may

have for our own lives. These 'phases', although sequential and mutually related, are not rigid steps or watertight compartments.

1. The *Context*: situating the person in his real life, his town, his business, his college or university, his parish, faced with the social-economic-political-religious and cultural situation in which he is immersed. This recalls the Ignatian 'composition of place.'

It is a duty to know the world which surrounds us: persons, family, cultures and subcultures and the realities they bring with them (social, religious, political, economic), media of social communication, art, music, and other manifestations which have an impact on us and affect our lives.

2. The *Experience* seeks to move the whole person (mind, heart and will) directly or indirectly, with the helps that may be necessary, looking always to make an impact. This puts us in touch with Ignatius' 'feel and taste'.

Thus everything must be integrated, the affective dimension and the cognitive, for if inner feelings are not in unison with intellectual knowledge, what we learn will not move us to action. *The human experience may be:*

a) Direct: that is, through interpersonal relations such as conversations or debates, discoveries in a laboratory, fieldwork, practical experience of social service, activities in a pedagogical project, or other similar experiences.

b) Indirect: Since direct experience is not always possible, learning is often done through indirect experiences like reading a book or a newspaper or listening to a lecture, by means of simulations or representations, using audiovisual material, through the internet, radio, television etc.

3. The *Reflection* will be similar to the Ignatian 'reflecting so as to draw profit' and discernment. It is to see the reason, the 'why' of things, an invitation 'not to swallow whole', to understand things, to weigh them up, seeing the pros and cons, to have an 'insight, properly speaking, to know the reason for what has been experienced, so as to come to make a value-judgment which commits us and makes us decide to act.

It is the serious, pondered reconsideration of a determined theme, experience, idea, proposal or spontaneous reaction, in order to capture its deeper significance. For this reason, the reflection is the process through which the meaning of the experience is brought to the surface. In the reflection process we distinguish two fundamental operations: understanding and judging.

- *Understanding*: This is to discover the meaning of the experience, that is, to establish the relations between data gained by seeing, hearing, touching, smelling etc. It is the spark (eureka) which lights up what was presented in shadows in the sensory perception. It is what allows the subject to conceptualize, formulate a hypothesis, conjecture, elaborate theories, give definitions

- *Judging*: This is to give a value-judgment, to verify the correspondence between what has been heard and what has been experienced, between the hypothesis formulated and the data presented by the senses. Collective reflection enables reinforcement and challenge and encourages reconsideration, allowing greater security in the action which is about to be taken and the opportunity to grow in community.

4. The *Action*, the 'quid agendum' (what is to be done) is the key, but as the popular adage says 'works are loves and not good reasons', or, in Ignatius' words from the fourth week, 'love ought to be manifested more in deeds than in words'. It is about going on from decision to actions, to working in conformity with what is thought.

Reflection and action are united indissolubly in a human life which is committed. Action without disinterested service of others is not worthy of the name 'commitment.'

5. *Evaluation*, finally, must be integral, not solely cognitive, quality not quantity: 'Non multa, sed multum', since 'it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies...' In the manner of the Ignatian 'examen', it is to see the good decisions and the mistakes, in order always to seek the better, to function in the dynamic of the 'magis', not to be satisfied with mediocrity.

By 'evaluation' is understood the revision of the whole of the process experienced and followed throughout each step of the paradigm, in order to verify and consider to what extent it has been carried out faithfully and efficiently and, on the other side, to what degree the objectives sought have

been achieved, in terms of change and transformation, personal, institutional and social.

What is not evaluated does not improve. Evaluation teaches us to look for results, that things may be done effectively, and excellence always sought. It teaches us to do things correctly and thoroughly from the beginning.

An attempt at conclusions

- The 21st century is the century of the laity. Their action from the Church towards the world is to be seen with hope: laypeople from the Church in the heart of the world, laypeople from the world in the heart of the Church.

- Our lay apostolic companions have their distinctive mission in the Church, and the Society of Jesus wishes to place itself at the service of this mission.

- The Society's works are apostolic instruments with an evangelising purpose, and within them we have roles suitable for either Jesuits or laypeople to carry out. Laypeople can perfectly well be directors of them.

- We need to know how to read the 'signs of the times', so as to be attentive to what God wants of the Society in its relations with laypeople. I do not doubt that General Congregation 35, which has already been called, will take steps forward in this respect.

- Ignatian spirituality is a meeting-point between Jesuits and laypeople, and also a point of departure towards a great project in the service of the Church and for the Greater Glory of God

- Inherent in the texts of St. Ignatius of Loyola there is a charism which has become a spirituality. From this rich spirituality which we call Ignatian it is possible to derive a rich and very relevant pedagogy for mission and the apostolic ministries which we carry out.

- Ignatian pedagogy is not to be confused with Jesuit pedagogy. Although they are intimately related, the concept of Ignatian pedagogy in itself may not be confused with, still less exhausted by certain writings used by Jesuits who work in the educational apostolate.

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- Ignatian pedagogy, then, speaks to us in a way of proceeding in daily life which may be valid and very useful for our lay companions, with practical and specific tools, deeply rooted in our spirituality and oriented to describe our apostolic mission.

¹ Cf. GC 31, d.13, n.1:

² From the allocution of Fr. General in Saragoza, 10 September 1995: 'Seventh proposal: Take service to the laity's mission in the Church very seriously

³ Cf. GC34,d.13, n.1

⁴ Cf. GC34,d.13, n.7

⁵ Fr.General in Saragoza. The italics are Fr. Kolvenbach's own.

⁶ CPAL: Conferencia de Provinciales Jesuita de America Latina. (Conference of Latin American Jesuit Provincials)

⁷ Editorial by Fr. Francisco Ivern, President of CPAL, in the virtual bulletin of July 2002, www.cpalsj.org

⁸ Alberto Múnera, SJ, in 'Collaboration with the laity in their mission', Ejes temáticos del Proyecto Apostólico de la Provincia de Colombia, pp.71-72

⁹ D.13, n.19

¹⁰ D 13, n.20

¹¹ Challenge 2 in the "Direcccionamiento Estrategico of ACODESI" – Strategic Planning Document of the network of Jesuit colleges in Colombia.

¹² Autobiography, 27