Jesuits and the Educational Apostolate

The Impact of the Schools

The Jesuits opened a new era for formal education in Roman Catholicism. The Society was the first religious order to undertake systematically, as a primary and self-standing ministry, the operation of full-fledged schools for any students, lay or cleric.

Over the course of the next two centuries, the Society established its remarkable network of more than eight hundred educational institutions, primarily in Latin Europe and Latin America, but also in other parts of the world, a truly unique phenomenon in the history of education that ended with the suppression of the order in 1773. When the Jesuits were restored by Pope Pius VII in 1814, they resumed the task.

Jesuit schools greatly influenced religion and culture in many areas of the world, but the very immensity of the Jesuit educational enterprise and the complexity of the questions it raises practically preclude a comprehensive assessment.

A somewhat more tractable problem is the impact the schools had on the Society of Jesus itself. The Jesuit *Constitutions* stipulated that "the first characteristic of our Institute" was for the members to be free to travel to various parts of the world. That model now had to be further tempered by the reality of being resident schoolmasters. The tension between the continuing insistence on the necessity of mobility and the long-term commitment required by the schools would remain throughout Jesuit history.

Even in the early years the schools were comparatively large and complex institutions that required the best talent for their management and faculty. The Jesuit communities attached to them grew to considerable size. Moreover, the Jesuits became property owners on a large scale, for their schools with their classrooms, observatories, theaters, and courtyards were often huge establishments, to which were attached a Jesuit residence and church.

Perhaps the most important change the schools wrought within the Society, however, was the new kind and degree of its members' engagement with culture beyond the traditionally clerical subjects of philosophy and theology.

Jesuits taught mathematics, astronomy, physics, and other sciences, wrote on these subjects, ran observatories and laboratories, and attained renown in these fields. The schools also brought theater with them, and with theater came dance and music, so that the early misgivings about music were challenged from another direction and gradually overcome. In some places they brought training in fencing and horsemanship. The large building that Jesuit schools required led members of the Society into a new relationship with architects and architecture. The schools, though run under Jesuit auspices, were institutions of civic import that gave the Jesuits an access to civic life that their churches alone could never provide.

Thus began an engagement with secular culture, modest enough at first, that became a hallmark of the order and an integral part of its self-definition, not present at the beginning. That engagement was not occasional or incidental, but systemic. It became interwoven with the very fabric of the Jesuits' understanding of their ministry, of their "way of proceeding." Their religious mission remained basic to them, but, especially as a result of the schools, they also began to see themselves as having a cultural mission.

A basic premise of the humanist tradition in the Renaissance was that religious and moral inspiration could be found even in pagan authors. The Jesuits subscribed to that premise.

When the Jesuits first embarked on their educational venture about a decade after their founding, they could not have foreseen its impact on them. They treated the schools as if they were one more—although an especially important—ministry added to an already long list. They did not grasp that this ministry had an intrinsic dynamism that would change the organization undertaking it.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993)

Figure 1.

Here the Virgin Mary, holding the Christ Child and enthroned upon the clouds, is surrounded by four Jesuit saints. The boyish figure at the lower left, gesturing to a group of students, is St. Francis Xavier (1506-52), while the figure clothed in black vestments to the right is St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). Behind Ignatius are two young Jesuit saints wearing a white surplice: St. Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-91), who died from the plague in Rome while still a scholastic, and next to him, St. Stanislaus Kostka (1550-68), a novice who succumbed to a fever. Gonzaga and Kostka testify to the holiness of the Jesuit novitiate and study years.

The eyes of the students are set on the heavenly figures, perhaps indicating that they are considering a Jesuit vocation. The dramatic silhouetting of the Madonna and of Xavier, who receives Ignatius's gesture and then employs both hands down to the youth in a gesture of supplication before the Madonna, as well as the artist's creation of a compositional axis from the Madonna to the students suggest that the students are being urged to place themselves under the Virgin's protection, just as the young Jesuit saints Gonzaga and Kostka did.

The Beginning of the Educational Apostolate

By 1547 the Society of Jesus had several hundred members, many of them with a humanistic secondary education and many of them located in Italy. Those who had been trained outside Italy, especially in Paris, realized they had learned some pedagogical principles virtually unknown in Italy that allowed students to make rapid progress. This was the so-called *modus Parisiensis*, "Parisian method," that the Jesuits imported into Italy and then elsewhere as their network of schools grew. Most of the elements of the method have persisted in schools up to this day to the point where we cannot imagine education without students being divided into classes, for instance, with progress from one class to a higher one in a graduated system.

One particularly important aspect of the Parisian method was the principle that the best way to acquire skill in writing and speaking was not simply to read good authors but to learn actively by composing speeches and delivering them in the classroom and elsewhere. Even more important was the application of this principle to drama. It was not enough to read Terence and other great dramatists of ancient Rome: the plays needed to be produced with students acting in them; such productions would perforce entail singing and dancing, skills that in any case were indispensable for the gentleman.

The stage was thus set for the Jesuits to enter the world of formal education. They had the proper background. They also had pedagogical techniques and principles of proven effectiveness that were unknown in most of the localities in which they would establish themselves. Once it became recognized that the Jesuits had a great deal to offer, they were in demand.

The Jesuits' schools, moreover, though funded in different ways by different benefactors of the Society, became civic institutions of the first magnitude, and they gave the Jesuits a kind of entrée into civic life that operating churches alone could never have provided. The self-sacrificing virtue extolled by Cicero and the other ancients was, after all, fundamentally civic virtue, service to the commonweal. The schools aroused expectations for the cultural life of the city, to which the Jesuits felt obliged to respond and which in time they took for granted. The schools gave the Jesuits an engagement with general culture and the arts utterly different from that of any religious order up to that time. In most towns and smaller cities the Jesuit schools, with their theaters and other public programs, became the major cultural institution of the locality.

In subtle fashion the schools thus imbued the Society with a cultural mission. For the Jesuits their religious mission of course remained primary, but this other mission in fact became part of their self-definition. The Jesuits never fully articulated this mission for themselves, however, and indeed such a mission might seem difficult to reconcile with the Formula. Yet it must be noted that the revised version of the Formula, 1550, concluded its list of activities proper to the Society with the all-inclusive phrase "and to perform whatever other works of charity are expedient for the common good." The common good—a philosophical not a biblical concept—seems to betray a societal concern that goes beyond sacristy and pulpit and that launches the Jesuits into waters normally not sailed in a corporate way by a religious order.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The Jesuits and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005)

Founding schools was a natural move for the Jesuits. To be entrusted with the education of others was an opportunity to work for the common good; to ennoble students by educating them and imparting values to them regardless of their social status or ability to pay was a work of mercy.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J., *Company Magazine*, 1994

The Modus Parisiensis Model

To Jerome Nadal's (1507-80) credit, he adapted to the Society's purposes at Messina, and there implemented the modus parisiensis that early Jesuits thought so far superior to the modus italicus. In Paris the faculty was then dominant in the university; in Italy, the student body. Lectures were held in university affiliated colleges in Paris; in Italy, in the university itself. Paris had effective student supervision; Italy allowed students great freedom. A carefully determined curriculum bound professor and student alike in Paris, with frequent professorial lectures followed by appropriate student exercises. Distinct groups were designated, and students enrolled by academic discipline. Each class had its proper professor and syllabus. Students were promoted only after careful examination. Students and instructors were close: the professor could monitor a student's progress. The Society prized these features of the modus parisiensis above what the modus italicus offered. Young persons progressed better and faster in the Parisian system.

—Frederick A. Homann, S.J., *Church, Culture and Curriculum: Theology and Mathematics in the Jesuit Ratio Studiorum* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 1999)

◀ Figure 2.
Peter Paul Rubens,
Ignatius Presents the Students of the Collegio Germanico to Pope Julius III.
Ink on paper, c. 1603.
Sketch for folio 64 of the *Vita beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris*
(Rome, 1609).

The Jesuits became the Church's first teaching order very quickly; they were the first Catholic religious order to undertake formal education as a major ministry. Their first school was founded in Sicily in 1548.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J., *Company Magazine*, 1994

▲ Figure 3.
St. Ignatius of Loyola Teaching the Children of New Spain
Mexico (Circle of Miguel Cabrera)
Second half of the 18th century
Church of La Compañía de Jesús, Guanajuato, Mexico

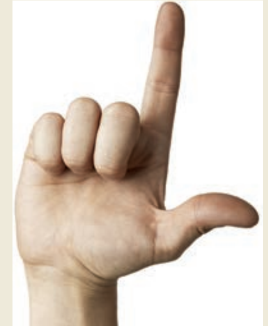
This painting is known by the title *St. Ignatius of Loyola Teaching the Children of New Spain*, owing perhaps to the attire of the children and—still more—of the women, which so closely resembles the clothing worn in Mexico in the 18th century. Although Ignatius never traveled to New Spain, this painting portrays the privileged place that the education of youth had in the apostolate of the Society of Jesus worldwide.

This scene possibly alludes to Ignatius's ministry of providing instruction in Christian doctrine for children in Rome in the city's churches and plazas. This would explain why the mothers of the children are present, and why the architecture so little resembles that of a school. In order to emphasize Loyola's educational vocation, the artist adds various original elements, such as the rod propped against the saint's cassock, rather than wielded with force, as might have been more usual at the time. Here, the saint instructs the children in doctrine with gentleness. Another original element, which adds a touch of great tenderness, is the child who stands before Ignatius and kisses his crossed fingers after having made the sign of the cross. The relaxed atmosphere prevailing among the rest of the children bespeaks a form of education based not on fear but on trust. The method is seen to bear fruit, as the children who have learned their doctrine are crowned with flower wreaths by two small angels, in recognition of their wisdom as well as their virtue. Also, the children wear badges that were customarily given to members of the Marian sodalities that the Jesuits established and maintained in their colleges.

—Joseph J. Rishel, et al, *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820* (Philadelphia Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2006)

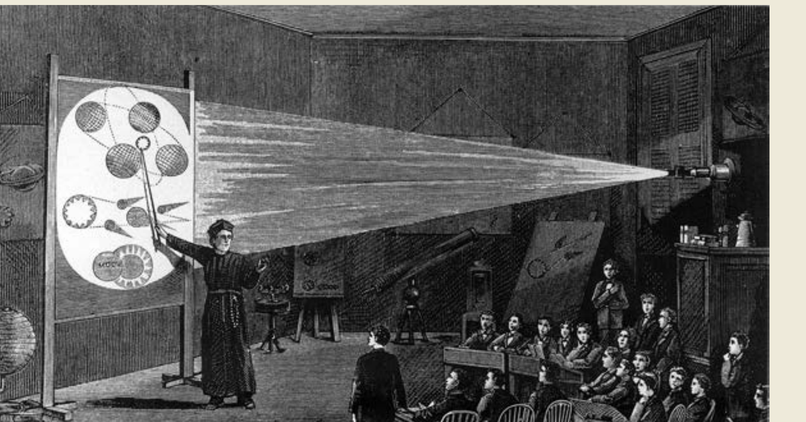
Firmly grounded in the humanistic traditions of the Renaissance, the Jesuits believed in the moral power of education for the good of the city and for its reform. "If we see to the education of youth in letters and morality, then great help for the republic will follow, for good priests, good senators, and good citizens of every class come from these efforts."

—Thomas M. Lucas, S.J.,
Landmarking: City, Church and Jesuit Urban Strategy
(Loyola Chicago Press, 1997)



The Jesuits looked for efficient ways to convey the Christian message to a wide variety of people, hoping to find some kind of universal language comprehensible to all. Early experiments with communication by gesture produced dramatic results among the deaf; in fact, American Sign Language descends directly from these early Jesuit researches. Athanasius Kircher's investigations of Egyptian hieroglyphs were motivated in part by his hope that he could invent a universal picture-writing.

—Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (University of Chicago, 2000)



Science classroom, c. 1886, Santa Clara University, California.

▲ Figure 4.
A. Kruger lithograph.
Courtesy of Santa Clara University.

After the restoration of the Society, the changed structure of the world forced the Society to adopt altered modes of action. No longer could the schools give a free education. Unlike the pre-1773 school, founded by an individual or a civic community, the post-1814 Jesuit school, most frequently without a financial sponsor because of the impoverished state of the aristocracy, established its fiscal bases in the tuition exacted from students.

—William V. Bangert, S.J., *A History of the Society of Jesus* (The Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1972)

The Role of Business Schools in Jesuit Education

The mere existence of business schools in Jesuit universities proclaims that their role in the service of faith and the promotion of justice is valued.

They are living witnesses to the belief that God is in all things and that all talents and skills can give glory to God (Decree 1: "United with Christ on Mission," 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus). Academic research is the second role that business schools have in Jesuit higher education. And research in a Jesuit university cannot be without an apostolic end. As with every element of Jesuit education, it must be in harmony with the "demands of the service of faith and the promotion of justice" (Decree 17: "Jesuits and University Life" [410]). Jesuit universities need to be engaged with society and culture at all levels. Research is an important method of engagement.

As a Jesuit who is becoming a respected researcher, I am a living witness to the belief that all talents and skills give glory to God. What is true for me as an individual is true for business schools in Jesuit universities. I also am able to have an effect on my peers and the business community. The same is true of business schools in Jesuit universities. Through their research, they engage the world by increasing knowledge and having their voices heard by their academic peers and the business community.

Teaching is the third role that business schools have in Jesuit higher education. If I take the *Contemplation to Attain Divine Love* in the *Spiritual Exercises* seriously, I must help them (business majors) find God in their lives. The only way I can do that is through what they believe to be important. If it is their business courses that they find important, it is in their business courses that they will learn to see God at work in their lives. Helping these students see God's love at work in all they do is what I find exciting and meaningful about teaching.

—Gregory N. P. Konz. S.J., *Jesuit Education 21: Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 1999)

Motto: *The Society Points the way to salvation through teaching and example. As if he creates a light from his own light, he brings it to pass that it shines nonetheless for himself when he has kindled it for another.*

▲ Figure 5.
Emblem 466. *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesu*
Ennius in Cicerio book 1 *de Officiis.*
(Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640)
Special Collections, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia.

The academic stature of Business and Economics programs in Jesuit colleges and universities has markedly improved over the past two decades. All of us can be proud of what has happened, not just because these schools bring in the revenue, but because they offer challenging programs.

During the past two decades there have also been strong efforts by both the Society and the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference to make a difference, in terms of social advocacy, on U.S. economic and general public policy. Such efforts have a long tradition, going back to the advocacy of the rights of collective bargaining by many Catholic bishops at the beginning of this century, to the founding of labor schools, as outreach education programs, by Jesuit schools in the 1930s and 1940s.

How can we give people not specific policy recommendations, "answers," the do's and don'ts of being a socially conscious Catholic, but rather a critical framework to help them sort out the "wheat" from the "chaff," as they face a continuous bombardment of ideas in their professional and personal lives?

The Church for more than a century did an impressive job of education of masses of immigrant Catholics in the United States to move up in American society. Now, at another level, the Church can help the professional-class grandchildren and great grandchildren of these immigrants to develop a more critical moral perspective in their day-to-day lives.

The time is ripe for us in Jesuit higher education to take the initiative in moving the Church and Society to a more effective role in wider society, toward more critical policy reflection and formulation.

—Paul D. McNelis, S.J., *Jesuit Education 21: Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 1999)

Motto: *The Education of Youth. Until Christ Takes Shape in you*

▲ Figure 6.
Emblem 468. *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesu*
(Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640)
Special Collections, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia.