



CHAPTER I:

# IGNATIUS, THE JESUITS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

ADDRESS TO NEW FACULTY, 2012

Stephen A. Privett, S.J.

I have been asked to speak to you about the mission of the University of San Francisco as a Jesuit Catholic university in today's globalized world.

#### CLARIFICATION/DISCLAIMER

"Jesuit" and "Catholic" modify the noun "University." The substance of our mission is determined first and foremost by our being a university. "Jesuit" and "Catholic" modify or specify how we are going to be a university. As a university, we do what every university does. Our mission is to discover, communicate, and apply knowledge through scholarship, creative expression, teaching/learning and service to our profession. Those aspects of our mission are non-negotiable and shared with every other university. I will presume a familiarity on your part with the nature of a university.

"Jesuit Catholic," however, does say

something about how we fulfill our mission of discovering, communicating and applying knowledge. No one should ever be allowed to get away with the argument that "Jesuit Catholic" somehow dilutes or compromises the values and/or goals of this university; they amplify and expand them. Ours is a "higher standard" than that of many other universities, to borrow a phrase from the late Dean Brackley, S.J., former trustee of the University of San Francisco. Academic excellence is the beginning, not the ultimate end, of USF's Jesuit education. One must ask the question, "academic excellence for what?" Certainly not simply to improve rankings in U.S. News and World Report; in that instance the end is prestige and the means is academic quality. Prestige/status do not necessarily equal quality. In the Jesuit tradition, academic excellence is part of a larger view of education that looks to the full, integral development

of the human person. Academic rigor is a *sine qua non* because a knowledgeable and well-honed intellect is so central to our realizing our full human potential. Ignorance and sloppy thinking diminish our humanity rather than enlarge it. It is pretty simple: smart is better than stupid; intelligence beats ignorance every time.

In my thinking, our Jesuit tradition is not a straitjacket that constrains or narrows the educational enterprise. On the contrary, I understand the Jesuit tradition to be broad and inclusive, “catholic” as in “universal” and “all-embracing,” and not simply in the sense of reflecting the particular faith tradition from which we come. “Academic excellence” is crucial for our students to reach their full intellectual/human potential and for the University to make intelligent and effective contributions to society and/or the various disciplines. But this is still not enough, because a human person is more than a mind and intellect.

#### HISTORICAL NOTES

The Jesuit order sharply contrasted with other religious orders of the Catholic church, which were traditionally established to do a particular work: monastic orders to pray and work together, mendicant orders to beg for the poor, some to provide shelter for persons on pilgrimage, others to care for the sick and dying. Jesuits were founded to do whatever promotes “the greater glory of God and the common good.” This is just short of worthless as a mission statement. What could not be construed as promoting “the glory of God” and/or “the common good?”

Using that very broad criteria, it is illustrative that Jesuits almost immediately

and quite serendipitously found themselves running schools. This involvement led to the insight that schools were proving themselves to be apt instruments for promoting “the glory of God and the common good.” In one instance, a Jesuit wrote to Ignatius Loyola, the founder and first superior of the order, complaining that schools were inappropriate work for priests because it took them away from prayer and liturgy and common life together. Ignatius wrote back affirming the importance of education, declaring that “by means of its schools Jesuits aim to pour into society educated individuals in numbers large enough to leaven it for good.” We are about engaging the world, not running from it. For Ignatius then, and for us now, the overarching purpose of education was to shape persons who would improve society, i.e., motivated individuals with the intelligence, grace and skills to positively affect society. Academic excellence was the starting point in developing intelligent and effective agents who could leaven society for good. In the words of one Jesuit educator: we aim to educate people with the brains to make a difference and the hearts to want to do so.

A pithy summary of USF’s mission is “educating leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world for all.” We want to be a “socially responsible learning community of high quality and academic rigor.” Our core values include pursuit of “a common good that transcends the interests of particular individuals or groups” and a belief that “no individual or group may rightly prosper at the expense of others.”

The classic theological maxim is *gloria dei, homo vivens* – the glory of God is the fully alive human person. The religious perspective here is that education serves a

God whose glory is human beings reaching their full potential. God is not some ethereal being above the clouds, but the spark at the core of our humanity: that insatiable hunger and fundamental human drive for knowledge, love, beauty, goodness. Whatever ignites that spark or satisfies that hunger is of God, whether we name it as such or not. In this perspective, education for Jesuits

*Our commitment is to  
“the full, integral development  
of each person.”*

and other persons of faith – not for everyone, but for us – is an inherently religious enterprise, insofar as it calls people to that radical integrity which is so central to reaching our full human potential. Thus, USF’s mission looks to students succeeding as “persons” as well as “professionals” and focuses on “values and sensitivities,” not just knowledge and skills. Learning is viewed as a “humanizing, social activity... not a competitive exercise.” Our commitment is to “the full, integral development of each person.”

Jesuit education’s commitment to promoting the full development of the person is not solely informed by theological convictions; it is further rooted in the educational reforms of the Renaissance, which were quite controversial but normative for the first Jesuit schools. The great literature of Rome and Greece comprised the texts that our students studied. This was shocking to the establishment of the time. These texts, at the time, were regarded as “pagan” in much the same way that contemporary creationists view teaching evolution or

moralistic fundamentalists see *The Vagina Monologues*. It is a fact that most Jesuits well into the 20th century were more steeped in Cicero, Virgil and Marcus Aurelius than the Bible. As the pagan poet Terrence put it, *nil humanum alienum est a me*, or “no human endeavor is foreign to me/us.” Jesuit education embraces the finest expressions of the human spirit, no matter their source or cultural context. We are eager, not afraid, to acknowledge the “truth” of so-called “pagan” texts. USF embraces “diversity of perspectives as an essential component of quality education.” We understand “faith and reason as complementary resources in the search for truth and authentic human development” and USF welcomes “persons of all faiths or no religious beliefs as fully contributing partners.”

#### USF’S MISSION TODAY

We should never lose sight of the fact that the goal of a humanistic education—I prefer humanizing—is a human being. “Human being” does not just name entities like you and me. “Human being” describes a way of being in the world. There are human, less human and even inhumane ways to be in the world today. The world is not an abstraction. Today’s globalized world is not the closed provincial world of the 16th century. We know far more about our world than they did about theirs. In real time, we see starvation in Somalia, a brutal war in Syria, cholera in Haiti, flooding in Manila, religious strife in India and poverty in California’s Central Valley. Such knowledge entails responsibility. As our alumnus and MacArthur genius grant recipient Joe Marshal says, “the more you know, the more you owe.”



Realize that if today's world were reduced to a village of 100 people, 80 people in the village would live in poverty, seven would own a computer, the six of us from the United States would control 60% of all the village's resources, and one – only one – person would have a college education. This is the global context in which USF is situated; we do not educate in a vacuum. This is the “real world” we hope our students will change. I would argue that finding a way to live humanly in this world where 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and one child dies every 20 seconds for that reason is a serious moral question, for any university and even more so for USF as a Jesuit Catholic university. To not address that question or to pretend that this question does not concern us is to tragically erode our development – and theirs – into fully human beings. It is to be inhumanly in the world as it is. The human way of being in this world is in solidarity with those most in need, not in denial of their and our common humanity. The poet John Donne got it right:

*“No man is an island, entire of itself...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”*

We cannot achieve our humanity while others are denied theirs. Their diminishment is ours as well. Ignacio Ellacuria, the martyred rector of the Jesuit University in El Salvador, used to ask, “Do the poor live as they do because we live as we do?” The least human way of being in the world is at the expense of others.

USF commits itself to educating students from a global perspective—from how the world is for the majority of its inhabitants. Our global focus comes from the heart of our “common good” tradition and the realization of how we—not just “I” but “we,” all of us together—achieve our humanity, become fully alive and thereby “glorify God” and realize the common good. To engage the harsh realities of our world is an invitation to open hearts and minds to persons and issues that otherwise would not make it into our consciousness, class-

*What would it mean for USF to be in genuine solidarity with those most in need?*

rooms and research.

USF requires a service learning course of every undergraduate. This is not a volunteer experience, but a learning experience. It is here that students confront the nitty-gritty reality of our harshly unjust world in an informed and disciplined manner. Through service learning of all kinds and what we call immersion experiences, students let the inhumane and unjust aspects of our world into their lives. We believe so strongly in the transformative power of these experiences that the Leadership Team and Trustees have had such experiences—this summer, six days in California's Central Valley, a region ranked among the poorest in the country—and we make them available to faculty. The axiom here is that we are more likely to act ourselves into new ways of thinking than think ourselves into new ways of acting.

I believe that direct contact is necessary but not sufficient for promoting that human solidarity which is the hallmark of our humanity in today's world. It is not just about sending students off to Africa for three weeks. Such experiences, on their own, may leave students feeling confused, guilty and disoriented. To move beyond this, we must show them how the tools of rigorous scientific inquiry can enable them to understand and respond intelligently/effectively to the complex reality of the humancondition. Such an education aims to fire their imaginations and hone their intellects. It builds upon experiences of direct contact in ways that motivate them to discover where their best gifts and talents may intersect with the world's needs to open up career possibilities.

Part of this process must help students see that notions like “social justice” and “common good” demand intellectual scrutiny. The best minds have long debated not only the meaning of these concepts, but also the means to secure them; we should do no less. We must give students more than direct experiences that make them want to work for justice; we must further engage them with an intellectual tradition that is rich and diverse enough to help them appreciate the complexities and ambiguities of this work.

Here is the key point: As a university, we cannot hope to develop this type of sophisticated solidarity in our students if we as an institution do not first develop and live it ourselves. *Nemo dat quod non habet*: we cannot give what we do not have. What would it mean for USF to be in genuine solidarity with those most in need? You know that Spanish can change any noun into an adverb, hence, *universidad/*

*universidad* becomes the adverb with the suffix, *mente*; thus, *universitariamente* or *universitarily*. As a university — not a soup kitchen, a parish, an interest group or a political faction — but as a university, what does genuine solidarity with those most in need look like? We are asking a hard question here and have no illusions about definitively answering it any time soon.

I am delighted to welcome you as contributors to this conversation, and I look forward to what you bring our students and the university community as we work together to educate the minds and hearts of those who will change the world from here.

---

STEPHEN A. PRIVETT, S.J., IS THE 27TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO.

## ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556)

Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J.

---

There have been various proposals to make a film about St. Ignatius of Loyola. I would suggest beginning the picture in 1550, a Jubilee year, with a panorama of the Roman skyline just after sunset. We would see the outline of the new St. Peter's, without its dome, but with Michelangelo's "drum" under construction. Gradually the camera zooms in on a lighted window in a small building. Gazing at the sky is a bald man in his late fifties; as the camera moves closer, we realize that he is weeping quietly, and if the actor were good enough, we would know that these are tears of joy. Looking at the stars, Ignatius is overwhelmed by the glory of God. Behind him, one can glimpse papers covered with elegant handwriting, his first draft of the *Constitutions* for his ten-year-old order, the Society of Jesus. Beside his papers is the first edition of his *Spiritual Exercises*, published in 1548.

In 1521, when he had his leg broken in battle, and then his dramatic conversion during convalescence at Loyola, he never imagined spending long years in Rome. Ignatius came from the Basque country (of northeastern Spain), and spent his youth as a courtier and only as a part-time soldier. After his conversion he thought of himself as a poor "pilgrim," a layman living on alms and offering spiritual advice to anyone who would listen. But he got into trouble with the Spanish Inquisition on account of his lack of theology, so at the age of 33, he went back to study ("to help souls"), learning Latin with small boys.

His studies continued until he was

44. By that stage, he had gathered several companions around him at the University of Paris, having led them personally through a month of guided prayer. They planned to go to Jerusalem together, but when that proved impossible, they offered their services to Pope Paul III in Rome (eventually taking a special fourth vow of obedience to the pope for missions). Thus the Jesuits were born through a series of outer accidents, and through the inner vision of this courtier turned contemplative,

*What are the better hallmarks of the Ignatian tradition?*

*Depth and practicality together.*

*Order and adaptability.*

*Contemplation and creativity.*

whose apostolic energy drove him to work both with princes and prostitutes.

Starting the film in that way would be an attempt to go beyond the misleading image of Ignatius as a severe soldier who founds an order of "shock troops" to combat the Reformation. His diary reveals another side altogether, symbolized by his weeping (which happened so often during Mass as to endanger his eyesight). The elegant writing sums up a man of courtly reverence, a quality that marked his relationship with God as Trinity. The *Constitutions*, over which he prayed for years, are unique in their

emphasis on flexibility, giving priority to frontier ministries of different kinds. They embodied a non-monastic approach to religious life and, as such, had a crucial influence on later "apostolic" religious congregations. The novelty of this approach no doubt gave Jesuits a more individualistic stamp than older religious families.

The greatest legacy of Ignatius, however, lies in his *Spiritual Exercises*, which are more a set of instructions for a retreat director than a text to be read. I remember my disappointment, as a lay university student, when I borrowed the little book from a library, only to find it seemingly as ineloquent as a driving manual. But, as for many others through the centuries, it came alive years later when I "did" the thirty-day retreat. Ignatius drew on his own spiritual adventure to offer contemplative scaffolding for a succession of graces – trust, contrition, discipleship, freedom for the service of Christ. In this way, the *Exercises* guide a retreatant through a pedagogy of prayer into "interior knowledge of the Lord."

Even though it was often interpreted in rigid ways, authentic Ignatian spirituality is marked by his typical preference for flexibility. His is a spirituality of discernment of choices, both everyday and lifelong. His advice is to find "whatever is most helpful and fruitful," and he tells the retreat director to get out of the way of God so as to allow the Creator, in his surprising words, "to deal immediately with the creature." There is a fundamental trust here that the "movements" of the Spirit are recognizable in everyone's experience.

Secular historians often speak of Jesuit colleges as another major inheritance from Ignatius. They were not part of his original

plan of a highly mobile ministry. But after 1548, when he was convinced of the importance of educational work, the schools mushroomed and evolved new ways of humanistic formation, encouraging, for instance, the writing of poetry and the staging of elaborate theatricals. Historians also stress the creative character of Jesuit missions, ranging from India to Paraguay – an outreach that started under Ignatius. But they should also mention times when Jesuits lost their roots and became inflexible and elitist.

What are the better hallmarks of the Ignatian tradition? Depth and practicality together. Order and adaptability. Contemplation and creativity. Remembering the mystic on the balcony, I think of Ignatius as outwardly controlled, inwardly emotional, and humanly a welcoming courtier. He welcomed history at a time of huge change – the outset of modernity – and he embraced change as the theater of the Spirit.

---

MICHAEL PAUL GALLAGHER, S.J., WAS A PROFESSOR OF FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY AT THE PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE WAS ALSO DEAN OF THE THEOLOGY FACULTY. GALLAGHER CURRENTLY SERVES AS RECTOR OF A JESUIT COMMUNITY FOR POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGIO BELLARMINO IN ROME. THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE TABLET IN MAY 2000.