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[Home](#)[Articles Index](#)[Audio](#)[Patron Saints  
of Education](#)[Recommended  
Reading](#)[USA Directory](#)[Contact](#)

## THE JESUIT MODEL OF EDUCATION

By Fr. Michael McMahon

This conference was given by Fr. Michael McMahon at the Summer 2004 Principals' Meeting convened at St. Mary's College and Academy (St. Mary's, Kansas) to the principals of schools in the United States and Canadian Districts of the Society of Saint Pius X.

It was a pleasure for me to prepare this presentation on Jesuit education, delving into the wealth of information which the Jesuits have given us over the last four centuries. At the 2003 Principals' Meeting we took a general approach to deal with education and the students we are trying to educate. Now we are getting into the "nuts and bolts" of education, that is, the specifics and how to apply them in our schools. Arriving at this stage, we must look to the great masters and Catholic educators who have preceded us, handing down to us their wisdom and experience. Among the greatest are the Jesuits. Amazingly, they have written on almost everything: on any topic you can imagine dealing with education, there has been a Jesuit who has written about it. So when we get into curriculum or the practical application of the Catholic philosophy of education in our schools, we are wise to acquaint ourselves with the information concerning Catholic education which the Jesuits have given us.

### Historical Background

Having reviewed the past 400 years in which they have been engaged in education, it is clear that the Jesuits have been in the very front rank, a fact universally admitted by friend and foe alike. There is a book which recalls a conference given at the end of the 19th century by the president of a prestigious non-Catholic university called *The Jesuit and Puritan Systems Compared*. It is a constant, violent attack on the Catholic Faith and the Jesuits, but even there it was admitted by the antagonist—which is why, you can imagine, back in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Jesuits were accused of being witches and magicians—that he couldn't argue the fact the Jesuits were doing something incredible, that they were teaching and educating and leading and influencing society through their education.

They have been at the very forefront of education, and one reason why it is interesting as well as important for us to look at the Jesuits is that there are many similarities between the Jesuits and the Society of Saint Pius X. Both of us were born into times of crisis. The crises have similarities and major differences, but we must agree the Orders were both born into a time of crisis. Each society was founded by a great leader in his time: St. Ignatius, one of the greatest men of the Counter-Reformation; and certainly the Archbishop, one of the greatest churchmen of the 20th century. Both spread throughout the world, concerned with the defense and eventual restoration of the Catholic Faith; both were often attacked, obviously by foes, yet even by those who should have been friends; and, we can say, neither had the specific intention to become involved in education. To specifically found an order in order to educate was not the Archbishop's idea, and that was not at all in mind of St. Ignatius at the beginning. St. Ignatius was trying to form a shock troop for the Papacy, a small, mobile, well-educated, group of men who had mobility—they were to be tied down by neither parochial nor educational duties. When the Pope needed them somewhere, they were to be sent. That was what St. Ignatius had in mind in founding the Company of Jesus. However, being a saint, he proposed and then God disposed. Again, it was the same thing with the Archbishop: he followed Divine Providence.

And what happened very quickly, even in the lifetime of St. Ignatius, was his realization that the way to defend the Faith is through education. There is an organic development, certainly with the Jesuits and also with us, of the necessity of our involvement in education. No longer are vocations coming from the places where we may have expected them in the past, due to the religious and social conditions of today. We are recognizing the fact that, in order for us to fulfill the goals of the Society, a priestly society, in other words, to have vocations —young men who are going to become religious —then we have to form them ourselves. So at this point in history and in the history of the Society we need, then, to become very serious about education and properly dealing with our schools.

In his excellent book *The Jesuits and Education*, Fr. William J. McGucken, S.J., says:

Almost against his will, St. Ignatius and his followers came to see the power of education. This would not be a cure for heresy but a preventative of it. To save southern Germany for the Church there was needed a genius like Peter Canisius, and even his heroic efforts were powerless to remedy all the ravages wrought by heresy and worldly prelates. But once you get control of the youth, train them in right principles, impart to them at the same time an education the equal or superior of any in Europe, and the whole world is saved for the Church (p.9).

Once St. Ignatius realizes that God disposes for him to get into education, he goes for it, and then you have this great educational system of the Jesuits, which will develop up until its disastrous crumbling in recent times.

Before actually getting into the objective means and aims of the Jesuit methodology, we first need to briefly become acquainted with the *Ratio Studiorum*, the Jesuit manual of education. A very good book on it is still in print, *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits* by Fr. Thomas Hughes, S.J. It is really an explanation of the Jesuits' educational system, but it is more or less a commentary on the *Ratio Studiorum*.

The Jesuits did not start out to establish secular schools, that is, to invite the enrollment of students not intending to enter their order as religious. They came to see the necessity of having such schools, however, as a logical and natural development of their purpose. Their great achievement can be measured by recalling the social conditions of the time which were exacerbated by the destruction, implosion, and corrosion of the university system. Most of the universities of the time were seedbeds of heresy. A remedy had to be found. St. Ignatius was not about to take his young men —you can see how this is echoed in the Archbishop —and send them into these universities to be trained. He realized he had to do the educating himself. The parallel with Archbishop Lefebvre is remarkable. At the beginning, what did he do? —He sent some seminarians to the University of Fribourg; then he realized that was not going to work because it was just as liberal, or only slightly less so, as anywhere else. It meant for him that God's will for the new Society of Saint Pius X was to establish its own places of education —first seminaries, then as a by-product, schools. This was a mirror of the beginning of the Jesuit educational system.

The landmark achievement of the Jesuits was to give order, hierarchy, structure, unity, and methodology to education. This is their great legacy, and learning from it is something extremely beneficial to us in the field of education.

They began founding colleges. There was a college in Goa; St. Francis Xavier

began putting people into that college and trained Jesuits to begin teaching. St. Francis Borgia did likewise in Spain. Then in 1551, St. Ignatius decided to found the Roman College. Once decided, he determined that it would be the very best in the world, a model of all models. He spared no effort nor expense to make it the greatest of all universities of his day. This was the mind-set of St. Ignatius of which, depending on our own individual character, we must share.

There was a need for a system of education, for a system of studies; therefore they put themselves to the task. They began putting together various documents, some antecedent to the *Ratio Studiorum*: the *De Studiis Societatis Jesu*, the *Ordo Studiorum*, and the *Summa Sapientiae*. Finally, in 1581, the fifth Superior General, Claudio Aquaviva, somewhat like what St. Pius X did for canon law, decided to research and combine all these documents into one manual so that anyone given it would know what the Jesuits meant by "education" —the roles of rector, prefect, and teacher; their manner of operation, etc. Aquaviva was elected in 1581; in 1584 he began his work on the *Ratio*, but it was not until 1599 that the completed *Ratio Studiorum* was published. The Jesuits were not "band-aid" guys; they were not out to simply patch things up. They set their minds to doing things correctly no matter how long it would take. They were convinced they could not proceed in any other way since this apostolate regarded the education of future generations, of their own men and teachers, and the proper erection of their schools. By no means did they neglect the "here and now," but they had a very long-term vision of their education apostolate. When, 15 years after it was begun, the *Ratio Studiorum* came out, its use was mandatory.

This document was fundamental in giving structure to the Jesuits and making their educational system, as a system, possibly the greatest in the history of the world. Its colleges, universities, and high schools spread throughout the world.

The *Ratio Studiorum* is very Ignatian. It is not a theoretical treatise on education; it is a practical code for establishing and conducting schools. It sets up the framework, gives statements of the educational aims and definitive arrangements of classes, schedules, and syllabi, with detailed attention to pedagogical methods and, critically, the formation of teachers, which Aquaviva put at the top of the list. The heart of any school is its teachers, and that has got to be at the top of the list.

In general, what is important for us is to share in the wisdom of fellow Catholics, even those of the past. For His reasons, Almighty God has disposed for us to live in these times and, as crazy as these times may be, we must be sure to benefit from the wealth of Catholic thought and action from the past. We must not re-invent the wheel. The *Ratio* and what the Jesuits have done is useful for us. The essence of their vision is very well summarized by Fr. Hughes:

There is a best way of doing everything and not least in education. In such a best way some elements are essential at all times, while others are accidental, and vary with time, place, and circumstance. The ideal system will preserve in its integrity that which is essential, and then will adapt the general principles with the closest adjustment to the particular environment (*Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits*, p.141).

I think that is very important to keep in mind that while the Jesuits had the *Ratio Studiorum* they were not slaves to it. They were lovers of the principles enshrined the *Ratio*, not slaves to its letter. In other words, they knew the principles and prudently applied them in the specific situation. I think we need to keep this in mind when we look at the Jesuits, or any other order for that matter, because our Society has the great opportunity and ability not to be shackled to a certain spirituality, order,

or way of doing things, when it comes to education. At this point in our history, we are able to learn from the Jesuits, the Salesians, the Christian Brothers, the Marists, and take what is best from each of them. Certainly, there will be underlying perennial principles in all of their systems, but also particular means of approach, methodology, class structure, curriculum, etc., that we can adapt and use ourselves.

That gives you an idea of the *Ratio*. It's difficult to find a hard copy, but Boston College has it on its web site in English.

### **Objectives**

Why did the Jesuits become involved with education? Why have we done the same? These questions are easily answered by answering the question underlying both, "*Why does any order of the Catholic Church exist?*" What does St. Ignatius write in the *Institutions*:

The end of the Society is not only to care for the salvation and perfection of their own souls with divine grace, but with the same [divine grace] seriously to devote themselves to the salvation and perfection of their neighbors. For it was especially instituted for the defense and propagation of the Faith, and the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine.

From this, the Jesuits will come to realize the need to establish schools.

The Jesuit philosophy of education is nothing more than the Catholic philosophy of education intimately and inextricably linking scholastic philosophy and the dogmatic teachings of the Church, that is, reason and religion, St. Thomas and the Magisterium. Paramount is the proper understanding of human nature as created by Almighty God and the ultimate destiny of man.

Man is not merely a citizen of this or that country; he is born to be a citizen of heaven. Therefore, in all truth, we can say that the purpose of education is a preparation for life, proximately *this* life, but ultimately *everlasting* life. That is why the Jesuits educate, why we educate. And we're here to learn the principles necessary to fulfill that end. The glory of our role as priests and our specific vocation as educators is just that; we have the opportunity to form young souls. That is something that principals and teachers need to meditate on constantly; it should be their daily concern. We are intimately involved in the formation of citizens for heaven, souls made for the Beatific Vision. And that can never be over-emphasized.

Therefore, we are not talking about intellectualism. Education is not just intellectual formation nor instruction; it is the formation of the whole man. It is interesting to note that formal religion classes in most of the Jesuit schools never were never given more than two hours a week. Instead, the Jesuits strove to have religion permeate everything. They thought it somewhat odd or superficial to make religion a course all by itself, or to devote many, many hours to it sheerly because their teachers were religious. Unlike the Jesuits, we don't have only priests or religious brothers teaching. We must make sure we staff our faculties with the right kind of teacher, not just someone who knows math or history, but a Catholic man in the state of grace and striving for sanctity so that religion permeates his class, whatever the subject. This is critical, because religion is not just a class at a certain time; religion is everything.

### **Religion is all, or religion is nothing!**

We are aware how we have to constantly fight that attitude of mediocrity called "Sunday Catholicism." What are we doing with our children? —We are educating them so that they do not become one of those "Sunday Catholics." Therefore religion has to penetrate. That is the majesty of our vocation, and what a glory it is! We all know the labor, time, and effort it takes to do what we have to do in our schools, but it is worth every minute. There can be nothing more glorious than being a teacher or being a principal, guiding teachers, guiding a whole school.

### The Ends

The ultimate end is to lead students to the knowledge and love of God. Essentially, education is ultimately apostolic. It is an apostolic mission. We instill in children a knowledge and love of Almighty God, a knowledge and love of the holy Catholic Faith, an enthusiasm for the Catholic Faith, manifest its importance: that it is the first principle, that it is not just something they do on Sunday, or something they do in religion class. It is something which is important all of the time —it *must* penetrate and permeate! The school, the education, the method, the curriculum, whatever it may be: these are means to that end, that they know, love, and serve Almighty God. We are aspiring to form Christ in each and every one of those students. What greater role is there?

The proximate educational aims are, first, to develop all the powers of the body and soul. It's the whole man that is being formed: his body, senses, memory, imagination, intellect, and will. It is developing, disciplining, and directing all the capacities of the human personality. That is the purpose of education. Here is a remarkable quote from the *Ratio Studiorum*:

The development of the student's intellectual capacity is the school's most characteristic part. However, this development will be defective and even dangerous unless it is strengthened and completed by the training of the will and the formation of the character.

If you are just shooting for intellectual knowledge and you are not strengthening the will and forming the character at the same time, not only is education defective, but it is capable of being "even dangerous," and possibly extremely so! Education prepares nature to receive and cooperate with Our Lord's grace. We are instructing the intellect, training the will, and forming the character —in other words, the whole man —based upon serious principles.

### Distinctive Means

Critical to the Jesuits and to any good school is formation of teachers and their skillful teaching. The teacher is the heart of the educational process. Obviously, the priest in charge as principal is the one giving direction. He is clearly the head; he is the one who is setting the spirit and tone for the school. However, the *teachers* are the ones with their hands on the clay doing the regular immediate formation. That's why a bad teacher lacking in either discipline or knowledge causes disasters, the worst being to extinguish the desire of students to learn and to love learning. Be vigilant! Boring teachers, unprepared teachers, warm bodies thrown into a chair because no one else is available —these are the destruction of a school, and not just the destruction of a school, but the destruction of souls entrusted to our care. We can't do that! Any talk of establishing schools means necessarily we talk about making sure we have properly trained teachers teaching our children.

### Skillful Teaching

Get your hands on and read *Teacher and Teaching* by Fr. Richard Tierney, S.J. He

says:

True education is generally the work of skillful teachers. Since the former is a pearl without price [true education], the value of the latter can scarcely be overestimated. Teaching is the art of the interesting, the inspiring (p.27).

A genuine teacher moves students to action, intellectual or physical, whatever the case may be. To have such teachers is the first means of securing a good education for a student. As the famous saying goes, "*Many teach, but few inspire.*" One cannot possibly exaggerate the need to have good inspiring teachers. We may suffer various monetary constraints which we believe disallow us from compensating a teacher in proportion to his worth, but I would say, now is the time to make every possible sacrifice to reward our teachers and attract qualified individuals. Really, if it comes down to trimming the food budget in the priory, I would say, then do it!

Let us not forget the need of adequate training. We must monitor and nurture the teachers we have. Reciprocally, they must desire our monitoring and nurturing. One way to help their development is by sending them to the annual Society Teachers' Meeting and/or the teachers' retreat after Easter. Neither we nor they can forget they are *Catholic* teachers. Evaluation and constructive criticism must be offered on a continual basis throughout the school year. Even the best teacher still needs to develop, to improve; that we provide the means for this is a major part of our administrative role as a true headmaster.

Fr. McGucken writes masterfully on the history and pedagogy of Jesuit education in *The Jesuits and Education*. He says St. Ignatius and the Company were determined, once the work of education was understood as God's will and it was decided to get involved in it, to spare neither pains nor expense in the formation of their teachers. They would do anything to make sure that the teachers were properly formed. That is something we have to reflect on, that upon skilled teaching hinges much of a school's success.

## Curriculum

A good education will be determined by the quality of the curriculum. Unfortunately, it would take months to go over the details of the curriculum, but let's discuss some basic principles. The first guiding principle is that the curriculum achieve *formation*, not just information. The curriculum is structured to develop the intellectual and moral habits, to form the character. The goal of a Catholic curriculum is not merely to be an accumulation of information to deliver to the student. This, however, is the goal of curricula in the modern, informational, technological era —that the student acquire as many facts as possible, have them crammed into his brain; then he is an intelligent man. No! —But we must be sure not to swing to the other extreme, that is, factual information is unimportant. Though it is not the main thing, not the formal cause, it is still the material of education. We need to know facts and dates, historical circumstances —these things make up the matter of education. They are not the end, but they are means to the end.

A soul is not properly formed by the mere accumulation of information. The methodology of Jesuit education was to form a man to train him to think. One of our biggest challenges is to train a young man to think, to analyze. This incapacity to think will be overcome by forming the intellectual and moral habits of a person, helping the student to penetrate into the reality of things rather than merely filling his mind with reams of facts. Knowledgeable and engaging teaching will go a long way in this battle.

The second principle regarding curriculum is that its study is to be *intensive* rather than *extensive*. We want to form, not simply inform, and the way to bring that about is by being intensive, by studying in depth a relatively small number of subjects rather than superficially studying a large number. It is studying the most important things and studying them thoroughly.

### The Classics

For the high school level, the Jesuits considered the humanities —literature, language, and history —to be the most important thing. The emphasis on these subjects, without absolutely excluding others, of course, contributed to the balanced formation of the human being, making him a fit receptacle for the grace of God. The humanities offer abiding and universal values for human formation. Why have the great classics, the great works, the great authors, been studied? —Quite simply, they provide what it takes to form a soul, to form a personality. Fr. Richard Tierney, S.J., alludes to this in his book, *Teachers and Teaching*:

What is it that has contributed most to immortalize the great classics? Surely not the name of the author, for an author shines in the light reflected from his book. Not in their diction, for diction alone is as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. What then? The great thoughts and the noble deeds that seem to make the pages palpitate life. Homer is Homer's heroes....[It] is this that flames in the mind long after the music of the language has died from the ear, and the beauty of the imagery has faded from the memory. It is this and kindred things that call to the best that is in man that educates.

Literature aims not merely at words and phrases and figures. We should look below these for the chief instrument by which we are to accomplish the end in view. We shall have praise for all that is noble, scorn for all that is base. The Trojan War will be more than a succession of battles; it will be a temporal punishment of crime. The flight of Aeneas from the burning city will be an heroic example of love and reverence for parents and those in authority. The hell of the *Aeneid* and the pool of *Phaedo* will show, first that reason unaided by revelation demands a future punishment for crime; secondly, that the Catholic dogma on this point fits in neatly with the dictates of reason and meets an instinct of nature. Then the lesson will be made actual by references to current thought and other contemporary conditions (pp. 4, 6).

By utilizing these perennial works, the Jesuits formed the soul by noble deeds and great acts; inspired their students and provided a vision for the young mind. These are abiding concepts in education and why it is so necessary to base our schools upon them. By such studies, the Jesuits fostered in their students the ability to think worthwhile thoughts and express them effectively. In order to do the same thing, we must also concentrate on the classics and humanities. Our curricula must present a body of worthwhile knowledge (not just anything and everything), foster in the student the enthusiasm to think it through and organize this knowledge in a workable form, and, finally, dispose him to express his thoughts effectively by writing or especially speaking. This is why the Jesuits based their education upon these classics. The Jesuits called it the *eloquentia perfecta*; knowing the right things, knowing them well, being able to organize them properly, and express them in the proper manner.

The succession of the curricula from the humanities to philosophy and theology is very important. Some people object that we only need to learn the catechism and read the lives of the saints. Again, that's just *not* education. We cannot restore *all* things in Christ with such a viewpoint. It is a viewpoint which opposes too extremely the viewpoint of the utilitarians who exclude from education all that will not

eventually help make money! It is condemned by history's great Catholic educators and any man with common sense. Our own North American seminary has added an introductory year of humanities studies for this very purpose. The incoming young men are deficient in this area, this vital and foundational area: we have called it the "Humanities Year." Fr. Hughes gives a brief summary, addressing those in charge of schools:

Before he can teach men, or mold teachers of men, or even conceive the first idea of legislating for the intellectual world, he must, himself, first learn. There are two fundamental lessons which he does learn, and they go to form him: one is that, among all the pursuits, the study of virtue is supreme. The other is that, supreme as virtue is, without secular learning, the highest virtue goes unarmed, and at best is profitable to oneself alone (p. 15).

God has formed human nature to work in a specific way. He gives graces to perfect that nature, not to work outside it. Education must form the whole man, body and soul, natural and supernatural.

Fr. Tierney strikes at the utilitarians while speaking of mathematics, and we live today at a time where it is unduly exalted. He speaks about the chief function of the study of math, which is to train the intellect not to jump into the dark, but to step cautiously on firm ground under a full light. Mathematics is not inspiring, mathematics is not uplifting. Mathematics is mathematics. Therefore, to have a school developed around them is incredibly utilitarian, and ultimately a malformation of our children. It flies in the face of the very best in educational history. Parents often say: "*If our child is not taking advanced mathematics, how is he going to go to college, how is he going to become an engineer?*" The answer is, if your child is properly formed at 18 years old and knows how to think, he can go to any college and tackle the subjects of his choice. This assumes we have given him the fundamentals. If someone knows algebra and knows it well, he'll have no problem going on to calculus in college. There is no reason for us to be worried about teaching calculus and advanced mathematics in our schools, unless you have a series of schools that are specifically mathematic; that, however, would be a deformation of education.

### The Jesuits and Latin

A discussion is necessary on the Jesuits and Latin because their entire school system was more or less based upon Latin, even as late as the beginning of the 20th century. A directive of the Maryland-New York Province of the Society of Jesus laments the state of Latin in the curricula and admits the adverse effect this has had on their overall success in educating. It says that a return to the way the Jesuits had always taught Latin and its "pride of place" in their schools was absolutely necessary.

Frequently, arguments are made today that we no longer need Latin because it is no longer "useful." Yet, how much is the loss of Latin and our knowledge of this great language linked to the loss of culture and sense of history, to proper classical studies, to the achievement of the traditional, classical goals in Catholic education? Fr. Camille de Rochemonteix, a renowned Jesuit historian, neatly summarizes:

Then Latin was held in honor. They did not try to form mathematicians or doctors, artists or agronomists or specialists; rather, they prided themselves on knowing, writing and speaking Latin because this knowledge was indispensable for the study of philosophy, the crown of a classical education; because it was the idiom of both the Church and

of science; because it was the language of the past in religion, literature, philosophy and theology; and because no one thought an education could be liberal without Latin.

We must remember the proximate aim of the Jesuits —trying to impart culture, making an eloquent man to be a fit and able receptacle of God's grace. The best and most appropriate means of attaining eloquence in speech, in writing —culture —was, to the Jesuit mind, comprehension of Latin —and how great was their success! They wholeheartedly and unreservedly believed this, even up to recent times. The Jesuits did not deny the title of "Latin schools." It was the core of the curriculum. Nine-tenths of everything was taught in Latin. There were some schools in which you couldn't speak in the vernacular, even outside of the classroom. The language of the school was Latin. They believed Latin to be the principle vehicle and instrument in forming the mind, and the key to opening the door to holy Mother Church and classical culture. They believed that you couldn't possibly become a cultured man, get the true classical studies and penetrate to the true mind of the Church unless you really knew Latin and were capable of speaking and writing it fluently. This was not an impossible goal; it was done. As they frequently stated, "*Greek was for the gifted student, Latin for everyone!*"

The *Ratio Studiorum* says the purpose of Latin was to teach culture. It wished Latin taught because without it, no one can attain that fine appreciation and delight in beautiful things nor be comfortable and at home with them which is the mark of the cultured mind. The *Ratio* wished the pupil to become a master of its expression and its appreciation: to find his reading in Latin books, to express his thoughts in Latin, to talk, to plan, to argue, to dream, to pray, to live in Latin. Mind training, proper formation, was a by-product of Latin teaching (*The Jesuits and Education*, pp. 163, 164).

The teaching, learning, and understanding of Latin were of singular importance and the success of their schools was inextricably linked to it.

It is interesting and important to note the manner by which they taught the hallowed language. Let us give the floor to Fr. McGucken:

The objective to Latin teaching, implicitly contained in the *Ratio*, was, as has been seen, *eloquentia* —that is, the ability to talk and write Latin....The means adopted to foster *eloquentia* was the direct method of Latin teaching.

The "direct method" consists in the avoidance, as far as possible, of the use of the vernacular as the means by which Latin is learned. Often the direct method is referred to as the natural method of language learning. We are quite fortunate today to have the *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata* series by Hans Orberg [endorsed enthusiastically by Bishop Bernard Fellay, available from Angelus Press —Ed.]. With much success we employ this method at St. Joseph's Academy [in Armada, MI]. It is also used at the Society's French seminary in Flavigny, the Brothers' Novitiate in the Philippines, in United States District's schools, and widely throughout Europe, especially in Italy. These words taken from the *Woodstock Letters* (1893) of various correspondence between American Jesuit educators are appropriate:

There can be no doubt of the possibility of having American boys speak Latin; it is a thing that has been done before, and is now being done in certain of our colleges, at least in some classes. A few, not many, of our professors object that Latin is indeed a good training for the mind, but it need not be spoken. It does not require much acquaintance with teaching to know that our course of instruction is

impossible in the higher classes, quite impossible, if Latin has not been taught to the boys earlier as a living language....The innovation of teaching Latin through the vernacular was introduced by the Port Royalists.

The traditional Jesuit method of teaching Latin was, at least until very recently, the direct method. As Fr. McGucken notes:

The direct method tradition died very slowly in the American schools. Even as late as 1910 the Schedule for the Maryland-New York Province Committee of Studies strongly recommended that Latin conversation should be "*more carefully attended to in our lower classes, as a tendency has been noted to neglect more and more the traditional practice off the Society* (pp.199,200)."

The study of language by way of active, idiomatic translations was not imposed. Such a process was almost unknown in Jesuit schools before the suppression of the Society. It was at most tolerated in the Society. It can be said to be a great hindrance to the full command of the language. That is because by this method you are learning how to translate; you are not really learning Latin.

According to the Jesuits, Latin was for everybody and necessary for normal formation. Greek was for the gifted student. Everyone was to speak and write Latin. With the "translation method," only the best, brightest, and most personally motivated get good enough at translating Latin to begin to read it. The direct method tries to get everyone to read. Not everyone will be fluent, but the majority of boys can attain a certain proficiency in Latin. Of course, it presupposes that the teacher is going to work at it first and be very good at Latin himself in order to get that knowledge —"*You can't give what you don't have.*" This method avoids the situation where almost everybody hates Latin because only the most gifted make the transition. For the Jesuits, Latin is the vehicle for forming a cultured man, the *vir eloquens*; and the way to go about it is the "direct method."

### Principles in the Classroom

The Jesuits call their teaching methodology "the mastery formula." It contains two steps. The first is self- activity —*ut excitetur ingenium* —in other words, getting the student to think. On the part of the student, active participation in the classroom is critical. The teachers are not there just to inform, to give grand speeches and sermons. They are there to make them think and help them learn —to form those souls —and that means getting them to do it on their own. That's education. It is like the mother helping her little child to take its first steps: you guide him, and your hope is that the child will walk by itself. The same truth is illustrated by a father teaching his child to ride a bicycle: the training wheels come off, dad runs alongside, and then, when the child's not looking, he takes his hand away. The child might fall, but gets back up,...Mastery of the subject and well-prepared classes are fundamental in this area, but so is making the classes interesting. The best way to kill everything is to be up there boring the class with monotonous recitation or unprepared, unimaginative lessons. We all know what *that* does to us; we've all had those teachers in the past. That is why teaching is often called the "art of the interesting."

Amidst this stimulating intellectual atmosphere, the second step of the formula kicks in, which is the mastery of progressively difficult subject matter —striking the necessary balance between comprehension and progression. Very much according to common sense, this is the methodology by which Jesuit teachers would proceed: children imbued with a true desire to learn tackling ever more challenging material. This leads to the formation of not only intellectual habits but moral ones, too. A

complete exposition is found in the Jesuit books on education. Those who teach will find it worthwhile to go to these books and see how the Jesuits lay it out. Without being able to address them thoroughly here, let me at least enumerate the important components to their teaching: pre-election (the proper preparation before studies); repetition; memory work; emulation or competition —they were always fostering healthy competition in the various domains. Fr. McGucken in *The Jesuits and Education* details these.

### **Extra-curricular Activities**

Complementing studies are extra-curricular activities. Things like plays were very important in the Jesuit system. Such activity puts the thing into real life. Having already covered the work in literature class, the students now should produce the play. With their own hands into it, the thing comes alive; they act it out, see their friends act it out; they are part of it. Each year we've produced a Shakespearean play with the boys at St. Joseph's. The interest it generates is amazing. While the play is going on, the boys who are not in a scene run to the back of the tent in order to watch the action. It is something beautiful; it is education coming to life, wonderfully complementing classroom experience. The Jesuits were very much for that, with often very elaborate theatrical departments.

Physical education also has an important role in the development of our youth. This comes from Fr. Schwickerath's book *Jesuit Education: Its History and Principles* in which he writes about physical culture and the physical education of the pupil:

Physical culture forms a most important feature in a good system of education: *mens sana in corpore sano*. Athletics, outdoor sports, and gymnastics do much for the physical health of the students. Besides, it demands and consequently helps to develop quickness of apprehension, steadiness and coolness, self-reliance, self-control, readiness to subordinate individual impulses to a command. This is all valuable for education (p. 570).

In our sports-crazed times, we must remain balanced, shifting neither to one extreme nor the other. Physical education clearly has its place in education, yet must play its proper role in the hierarchy. As always, virtue stands in the middle.

### **Personal Knowledge and Discipline**

To quote from Fr. Richard Tierney's *Teacher and Teaching*:

Teachers are more concerned with the formation of the soul, not the intellect alone, the formation of character. Maintaining close relationships is a means of inspiring the students, of forming high ideals, of teaching by example in both the spiritual and in the intellectual orders....What part is the teacher to play in forming the pupil's character? In general, he must both inculcate principles and foster the formation of habit. This requires constant activity and elaborate but definite knowledge. Mere acquaintance with certain common foibles of human nature is not sufficient. Each boy in particular must be known intimately and trained individually. Otherwise, there is much useless beating of the air (p. 106).

This is a summary of their approach. We need to know our students with more than superficial knowledge. A boarding school is a blessing to this end because there one has the opportunity to know the students in a variety of circumstances, to anticipate their reactions, how to deal with the various personalities and accordingly help them

acquire virtue. It's more difficult in a day school, certainly. You're not going to have the same opportunities, but we'll have to make the effort to arrange for them then. It means arranging for extra-curricular activities, outside-school activities; it means organizing things to get to know them. If you don't know someone, you can't affect them or properly direct them to a goal, which is, for us, to foster in the student a great love of our Lord Jesus Christ to be, as Pope Pius XI said, "*true and perfect Christians*." Our students are the "books" that we must study. If we just have a superficial knowledge of them, if we don't know whom we are dealing with, we are "*beating the air.*"

To discipline them, supervision has to be constant and judicious. Fr. Tierney goes on for three pages about "spying," how demeaning that is to the office of the teacher and ultimately counterproductive. An example of their zealous, prudent, and charitable supervision was that the Scholastics and Masters were obliged to participate in recreation with their students. If you are physically able to do that, then do it: *that's the Jesuits*. The underlying reason is clear: this is recreation, free-time, not the obligatory class-time, thus a greater influence can then be exerted.

Corporal punishment was seriously discouraged. The will needs to be won, and corporal punishment hinders that. They didn't say that they threw it out entirely, but like later Catholic educators would say, it was to be a rarity. Succeeding systems of Catholic education were merely the inheritors of the great wisdom of the ages. The key, the perennial link, is Christ-like charity —love rather than fear.

The secret of magisterial ascendancy, as Ignatius of Loyola projected, was to be found in the master's or teacher's intellectual attainment, which naturally impressed youthful minds; and also in a paternal affection, which won youthful hearts. Does anything more seem necessary to the full idea of authority (Fr. Thomas Hughes, S.J., *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits*, pp. 107, 108)?

From Fr. McGucken's book *The Jesuits and Education*, we read:

All in all, the discipline in the 17th-century Jesuit college was mild. There was, in sharp contrast with the prevailing practice of the day, very little corporal punishment. The Jesuits believed that prevention of disorder was better than *post factum* remedies, and in general they tried to win their students by love rather than by fear.

Throughout their history, that's the way the Jesuits motivated their students.

We are not Jesuits, not Salesians, nor Dominicans, etc., but we do have the opportunity to use what has been proven the most effective in the approaches of those orders of the Catholic Church which became known for education. Because we've inherited the noble task of education, we have the duty to apply the perennial principles of education. We must continue to devote ourselves to the study of education: its history, methods, the proper formation of character....This is our duty, our glory, our own path to heaven. Entrusted to our care are the future citizens of the eternal kingdom. And we must spare no expense, nor labor, nor effort or energy, to collaborate with the Lord of the vineyard and bring to full fruition this heavenly harvest!

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