

***Cura Personalis*: Some Ignatian Inspirations**

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Abstract

Cura personalis is an expression of recent vintage, but the three meanings most commonly given to it have deep roots in the spirituality and lived experience of St. Ignatius. An awareness of the latter can shed light upon the organic unity of Ignatian spirituality as a whole and help to regulate proper usage of the term.

Introduction

In the sphere of Jesuit education in the United States, the values of *cura personalis* and *magis* have special significance and share much in common. The origins of both terms are obscure. They are defined in different ways and applied in a variety of contexts. They are considered emblematic of Jesuit education. And both have enjoyed a meteoric rise in usage in the last two decades.

Yet there is one key difference. Whereas *magis* is sometimes invoked, with the best of intentions, in ways that are somewhat adverse to St. Ignatius Loyola's stated values, the meanings currently given to *cura personalis* are, on the whole, quite consistent with his characteristic emphases. When these are joined to an accurate understanding of *magis* as "the more universal good," we find that they complement each other well.¹

Three definitions are typically given to *cura personalis* in the mission documents and promotional materials produced by Jesuit schools and Jesuit provinces in the United States. The first is holistic education that attends to the spiritual and moral dimensions of a person in addition to his or her intellectual development. Second, *cura personalis* denotes an education that is respectful of the unique needs and identity of each student. Finally, it can signify the duty of administrators and Jesuit superiors to show solicitude for individuals working in their institutions, in contradistinction to *cura apostolica*, which signifies their duty to show

solicitude for the good of the institutions as a whole.²

The purpose of the present essay is not to elaborate upon relevant applications of those three meanings for Jesuit colleges and universities today, a topic that has been treated in numerous books and essays already. Rather, I shall provide a brief history of the term *cura personalis*, and point to some early Jesuit sources that can enrich our understanding of it. In the process, some potential misapplications of the term will also come to light.

History of the Term

The Latin expression *cura personalis* was not used by Ignatius and early Jesuits. Its earliest usage appears to come from Fr. Wladimir Ledóchowski, Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1915 to 1942. In 1934, he sent a "New Instruction" to Jesuits in the United States regarding important characteristics of Jesuit education.³ It was intended to give clarity and direction to Jesuits who were disagreeing fervidly about how to adapt to the academic needs of Roman Catholics after the Great War.⁴ Ledóchowski's twofold emphasis was academic excellence and greater cooperation between Jesuit colleges and universities at the national level.

Under the sub-heading "The Spirit behind Our Plan of Studies" (*Iuxta Spiritum Rationis Studiorum*), Ledóchowski affirmed that the ultimate end of Jesuit education is to help students know and love God more deeply. As means to that end, he listed a solid grounding

in Catholic doctrine and Scholastic philosophy,⁵ and an approach to education that looks beyond intellectual learning to the development of the faculties of the “whole person” (*totus homo*). Ledóchowski added as a bullet-point:

Personalis alumnorum cura, qua Nostri, praeter doctrinam et exemplum in scholis praestitum, singulos consilio et exhortatione dirigere et adiuuare satagant.

*The personal care of students, by which [Jesuits], beyond the teaching and example provided in the classes, endeavor to direct and help individuals by means of [good] counsel and exhortation.*⁶

Ledóchowski did not appear to be citing *cura personalis* as if it were a set-phrase already familiar to Jesuits. But here the foundation was laid, however unknowingly on his part, for its future connections to holistic education and individualized attention.

In October of 1972, Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe was preparing to visit (then) St. Peter's College in Jersey City for its centennial celebrations.⁷ One of his aides asked the Vice-President for College Relations, Fr. Laurence J. McGinley, to prepare a homily that Arrupe could give at Sunday Mass. Students, faculty, alumni and benefactors would be in attendance. McGinley crafted a five-page text that is still preserved in the archives of the university. Near the end it reads:

On my part, if I may leave [Jesuit educators] with a personal parting word, it is that you stress three things: first, a belief, a confidence in the abiding importance of what you are doing; second, a shared and practical and deep appreciation of the unique educational heritage which is yours; and finally, what Jesuits 400 years ago called “*cura personalis*,” the concern, care, attention, even love of the teacher for each

student – in an atmosphere [*sic*] of deep personal trust.⁸

McGinley's assertion that early Jesuits invoked the term *cura personalis* is highly doubtful, as no evidence of that has been found. It is probable, however, that McGinley was familiar with the “Instruction” of Ledóchowski, which had been reissued with emendations when McGinley was president of Fordham University.⁹ Perhaps McGinley was drawing from it, consciously or not, when he wrote Arrupe's homily.¹⁰

McGinley might have been extrapolating from the fact that other “curas” do have deep roots in Catholic history. *Cura animarum* (care of souls) was a medieval term to denote the juridical responsibility of a bishop or priest for all the persons, or “souls,” living in the region to which he was assigned.¹¹ Ignatius invoked it several times in the Jesuit Constitutions. Since Jesuits were meant to be mobile, going rapidly to wherever the needs of the church were greatest, they were not supposed to undertake the obligation of a formal *cura animarum* in any one location, which would have presupposed a stationary, long-term commitment.¹²

An even older term is *cura bonorum* (care of goods). Originally it was used in Roman law to denote the distribution of a debtor's goods to creditors.¹³ In later centuries, it was used by Catholic religious communities to denote the gratitude and care that they should show for material items in their residences and schools, such as furniture, books, dishes, and artwork that typically had been donated to them by benefactors.¹⁴

As noted earlier, *cura apostolica* (care of the work) has gained traction in the Society of Jesus in the last fifty years to denote the care that Jesuit provincials should demonstrate for the good of Jesuit works as a whole.¹⁵ In this context, it appears in two decrees of General Congregation 35.¹⁶

In 1986, *cura personalis* received prominent exposure in a document entitled “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education,”

published by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education.¹⁷ In a passage that reads as if it might have been drawn from Ledóchowski's "Instruction," we find:

Teachers and administrators, both Jesuit and lay, are more than academic guides. They are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student.... They are ready to listen to their cares and concerns about the meaning of life, to share their joys and sorrows, to help them with personal growth and interpersonal relationships.... They try to live in a way that offers an example to the students, and they are willing to share their own life experiences. "*Cura personalis*" (concern for the individual person) remains a basic characteristic of Jesuit education.¹⁸

Nonetheless, another decade was required for *cura personalis* to gain momentum. In 1992, Dr. Eileen L. Poiani of (then) St. Peter's College made a brief reference to it in an essay for *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*.¹⁹ And at least as early as 1999, the University of Scranton was citing it in brochures for prospective students. But these appear to have been prescient exceptions. In the 1980s and 1990s, for the most part, it still does not appear where one would expect to find it, in writings on essential characteristics of Jesuit education.²⁰

The first decade of the twenty-first century marked a significant increase in usage. Dominic J. Balestra, philosophy professor at Fordham University and member of the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education, addressed the cultivation of *cura personalis* within the complexities of university politics in a 2003 essay in *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*.²¹

In 2007, Superior General Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, made *cura personalis* the subject of an opening speech to an international workshop on Ignatian spirituality.²² The theme of the workshop was "Spiritual Accompaniment in the Ignatian Tradition." Kolvenbach defined *cura personalis* in two senses: not only "a constitutive element in Jesuit education and formation," but also in a more fundamental or primordial sense, "a characteristic of spiritual accompaniment."²³

By the latter, Kolvenbach principally had in mind the proper relationship between retreatants making the Spiritual Exercises and their spiritual directors. Considerable trust and respect on both sides are necessary. Directors can bring their wisdom to bear only if their retreatants are transparent about intimate thoughts, feelings, temptations and desires.²⁴ At the same time, directors should not be too directive. They need to trust that God is the principal Actor in the retreat, and that He will act decisively and with a knowledge of the retreatants that far surpasses what retreatants know of their own selves. Consequently, directors should beware of lecturing retreatants, or insisting that they make certain choices, or presuming that retreatants will draw certain insights or conclusions from certain meditations.²⁵

As already noted, in 2008 the Jesuit Fathers of General Congregation 35 made two references to *cura personalis* in Decree Five, "Governance at the Service of Universal Mission." There they juxtaposed it with *cura apostolica* as two basic principles behind "unity of governance" in the Society.²⁶

In 2011, a flurry of references to *cura personalis* appeared in eleven essays in *Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education*. The expression had finally found its stride. There it was cited as an argument for university leadership being shared between administration, trustees and faculty,²⁷ for more women administrators,²⁸ for more resources for adjunct faculty,²⁹ for more support for LGBTQ students,³⁰ and for more professional development of faculty.³¹ Dr. Diane Dreher of Santa Clara University

invoked it—as we shall see, in a way that would have pleased Ignatius—to argue for the formation of “countercultures” on Jesuit campuses where hyperactivity and overextension are replaced with creative leisure and careful discernment between competing goods.³²

Ignatian Inspirations for *Cura Personalis*

Care of Faculty and Staff: “Discrete Charity”

When university personnel speak of *cura personalis* they typically have in mind the care given to students. They might be surprised to learn that, for Ignatius, the term would have applied first and foremost to the care given to faculty and staff.

Some historical context is needed here. Prior to Ignatius, religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church took one of two basic forms. The first was monasticism, that is, monks and nuns dedicated to silence, prayer, and asceticism while enclosed behind the walls of a monastery. In the Middle Ages this form of religious life was considered the safest and surest way to obtain holiness and to save one’s soul. It dominated Christian ideas about spirituality all the way from the fourth century to the sixteenth.

In the thirteenth century, a new form of religious life arose: mendicant orders. Similar to monastics, mendicants lived and prayed together in communities, but unlike monastics, they left home several times a day to do spiritual and corporal works of mercy in nearby towns. Though their lifestyle was quite different from monastics, the traditional partiality for silence and long prayer meant that they still considered their residences to be the principal locus of their spiritual growth and a respite from the temptations of the outside world. The two most prominent mendicant orders are the Order of Friars Minor, also known as “Franciscans” and the Order of Preachers, or “Dominicans.”

Three hundred years later, Ignatius Loyola conceived a novel idea of religious life for Jesuits, one so novel, in fact, that many of his

contemporaries refused to recognize them as a legitimate order! They were to be dedicated to work in “the world,” moving freely and rapidly to wherever the needs of the church were greatest. They were not to call one place their permanent home, nor interrupt their workday to return home and pray in common. As for personal prayer, Ignatius instructed Jesuits not to spend more than an hour a day in prayer, in addition to Mass.

The new emphasis presented Ignatius with unprecedented challenges. One was a danger of exhaustion and burnout in his men. Another was the need to put the right men in the right jobs. If a Jesuit failed in his mission, especially one that was high profile, not only would the work suffer, but also the man himself, in that he might experience shame, lost confidence, or even doubts about his vocation. And of course, if superiors repeatedly assigned unqualified men, the reputation of the Society would suffer.

Another challenge was the fact that, in Ignatius’s day, the idea that one might collapse from exhaustion in the service of God was widely perceived as a romantic ideal. To some extent, it was a holdover from ancient monastic spirituality. When the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire meant that dying for the faith was no longer a possibility, many Christians began to consider as fully possible a “white martyrdom” of ascetic self-denial as the best substitute for witnessing the faith.³³ Eight centuries later, medieval saints like Elizabeth of Hungary, who died at age 24, Catherine of Siena, at age 33, and Anthony of Padua, at 36, were still being praised, at least implicitly, for having succumbed to their incessant labors.

Still another challenge was that medieval Christians were by no means as self-confident about their salvation as Christians often seem today. If presently we stress the mercy of God, medieval Christians tended to emphasize His justice.³⁴ For that reason, those who wished to assure their salvation generally took one of two tacks: they worked themselves too hard, since their priority was not really the long-term good of the work

itself but their own heroic sanctity, or in fact the opposite, they were wary of charitable works, since these meant less time for prayer and more ways to be distracted.

Ignatius broke with these traditional attitudes. He made the work that Jesuits were doing as much an end in itself, if not more so, than Jesuits' own quest for sanctity and salvation.³⁵ At the risk of putting too fine a point on it, the new priority for Jesuits was to do the mission, to do it well, and to do as many as reasonably possible over the course of a lifetime.

Consequently, from the time a man entered the Society, he was expected to be mindful of his health and energy levels. Ignatius wrote in the Jesuit Constitutions,

[D]ue consideration and prudent care should be employed toward preserving in their vocation those who are being kept and tested in the houses or colleges, and toward enabling them to make progress, both in spirit and in virtues along the path of the divine service, in such a manner that there is also proper care for the health and bodily strength necessary to labor in the Lord's vineyard.³⁶

What did this include specifically? Ignatius continually reminded Jesuits that they were not to work themselves to death, nor to pray, nor fast, nor practice mortifications for so long that they were left weakened for the missions to which they had been assigned. A letter that Fr. Juan Polanco (Ignatius's secretary) wrote to a Jesuit is typical of many:

Warn Father Leonard (and consider the same as said to yourself) not to overwork himself, even out of genuine charity, to the point where he appears to be neglecting his bodily health. Even though situations sometimes occur where an extra exertion is unavoidable, he should

nevertheless not deprive himself of sleep by spending the night in prayer or staying up much of the night, as those close to him report to us he is doing. What holds for sleep applies also to diet and whatever else is needed, as I have said, for the preservation of health. Moderation has staying power; what puts excessive strain on the body cannot last.

Understand, then, that Father General's mind on this matter is that, in whatever spiritual, academic, or even bodily exertions you undertake, *your charity should be guided by the rule of discretion; that you should safeguard the health of your own body in order to aid your neighbors' souls*; and that in this matter each of you should look out for the other, indeed, for both of you.³⁷

Regular vacations were also important. Ignatius went so far as to suggest that each college have a modest villa outside the city where Jesuits could go for quiet and rest. Fr. John O'Malley, a Jesuit historian, wryly observed,

A villa! A "house in the country"! St. Charles Borromeo, a younger (and much wealthier) contemporary of Ignatius, never would have indulged his disciples with such a luxury. The purchase [of a villa] flew in the face of the traditional otherworldliness of the saints. It also flew in the face of their traditionally harsh treatment of their bodies. (Borromeo was merciless with his.)³⁸

In 1556, only eleven days before his death, Ignatius corrected a young Jesuit who was omitting needed recreation in the name of self-denial.

[One should not act on desires that lead to sin.] But there is another kind of repressing one's

sensuality, when you feel a desire for some recreation or anything else that is lawful and entirely without sin, but out of a desire of mortification or love of the cross you deny yourself what you long for. This second sort of repression is not appropriate for everyone, nor at all times. In fact, there are times when in order to sustain one's strength over the long haul in God's service, it is more meritorious to take some honest recreation for the senses than to repress them.³⁹

Obviously, Ignatius did not want Jesuits going to the other extreme of self-indulgence. Nor did he deny the necessity of asceticism. The Jesuit vocation was to be an ardent love for God expressed in a simple lifestyle and generous service. To preserve and increase these, regular prayer and appropriate self-denial were always going to be essential. In short, it was a matter of Jesuits using their reason, guided by their prayer, to discern what was legitimate and what was not. "Yours should be a rational service," wrote Ignatius to Jesuits in Portugal.⁴⁰

"Rational service," or "discreet charity" (*caritas discreta*), went hand-in-hand with the *magis*, meaning the more universal good. Ignatius wanted Jesuits to make the greatest impact possible on God's people over the course of a lifetime. This required them to pace themselves and to think in terms of the long haul. Ignatius continued in his letter to the Portuguese Jesuits:

Without this moderation, good turns into evil and virtue into vice; and numerous bad consequences ensue, contrary to the intentions of the one proceeding in this way.

The first is that it makes a person unable *to serve God over the long haul*. If a horse is exhausted in the early stages of a trip, it usually does not complete the journey; instead it

ends up making others have to care for it.

Second, gains made too hastily in this way *usually do not last*. . . .

Third, there is disregard of the danger of overloaded the vessel; for while it is dangerous to sail a vessel empty [i.e., to fail to practice prayer and asceticism], since it will be tossed about by temptations, it is even more dangerous to *load it so heavily that it sinks* [i.e., a Jesuit burns out and abandons his vocation].

Fourth, in crucifying the old man, the new man is sometimes crucified as well and becomes too weak to practice the virtues. St. Bernard tells us that this excess causes four losses: "The body loses power, the spirit devotion, the neighbor good example, and God honor."⁴¹

Understood thusly, the relevance of *cura personalis* for Jesuit educators today should be clear. Some basic points are:

- As a general rule, teachers are already passionate and generous persons, many of whom elect to work for lesser pay in Jesuit institutions because of the mission. Like Jesuits, the greater danger is not that they will be lax, but that they will overwork.
- Teachers should not be told that "never resting content" or "doing more" is emblematic of the Jesuit mission. For Ignatius, it was always a matter of *what* Jesuits were doing, not *how much* they were doing, which is why discernment was so important.
- *Cura personalis* is a reminder to faculty and staff that legitimate rest and recreation do not

diminish the harvest they reap, but rather increase it.

- Faculty and staff can find it difficult to say “no” to students, even when teary-eyed, last-minute requests for help would mean interrupting planned vacation time. The ability to say “no” requires a clear sense of purpose and firm resolution, and frequent reassurance from Jesuits and administrators that it is not (usually!) indicative of lack of commitment, but the opposite.
- When possible, Jesuits and administrators should provide for spiritual development of faculty and staff: spiritual retreats, educational workshops, invitations to participate in conferences and national activities (such as the Ignatian Colleagues Program), or conversations in the Jesuit residence.
- University personnel can be reluctant to use their allotted “personal time off” hours for such purposes. To that end, administrators might consider offering annual paid “mission leave” totaling two or three days.⁴²

Care of Administrators: “The Ignatian Presupposition”

“We administrators are not liked. We are not popular.” So remarked Thomas Cromwell to Richard Rich in *A Man for All Seasons*. The playwright Robert Bolt had depicted Cromwell, rightly or not, as a shrewd, seasoned bureaucrat whose loyalty to his king only served to make him obtuse to the higher values of his colleague, Sir Thomas More.

Administrators at Jesuit schools are not immune from similar evaluations from faculty and students. When they make unpopular decisions to reduce numbers of employees, or deny funding, or close departments, they are often accused, publicly or in whispered corridors, of being paternalistic, or near-sighted, or hypocritical about the mission.

Such reactions were prominent at Jesuit schools after the economic crash of 2008. Shortly after one university announced the termination and voluntary early-retirement of dozens of employees, white crosses were found planted in the grass of the quadrangle, with an accusatory question on each: “How Ought We To Live?” Such denunciations of administrators, no matter how motivated by genuine sympathy for others, are unworthy of Jesuit institutions, and a violation of the very Ignatian principles that are claimed to be at stake.

As evidence of this, we need only look to Ignatius. After his conversion in 1521, he had dreamed of nothing else but serving God’s people with great, romantic deeds. But then his fellow Jesuits elected him, against his strong protestations, as their first Superior General. For the last sixteen years of his life, the zealous *caballero* sat behind a desk, assigning *other* men to great adventures, responding to a flood of requests for schools and funds, explaining himself to friends and benefactors whom he had to disappoint, and placating angry parents whose sons had entered the Society against their will.

One might suppose that Ignatius never would have been accused of failing the Jesuit mission and yet, once he became an administrator, that is exactly what happened. Fr. Nicholas Bobadilla, a co-founder of the Society, came to resent the saint’s style of governance. He grew especially angry when he thought that Ignatius was shutting him out of a greater leadership role in the Society. He sniped to the pope that Ignatius was a “tyrant” and “corrupted by flattery.”⁴³ On another occasion, Ignatius wrote to Bobadilla in Germany, advising him on matters of diplomacy. Bobadilla responded with the classic jab that, after all, *he* was the one laboring in the fields, “while others sat comfortably in their garden or kitchen in Rome.”⁴⁴

On another occasion, Ignatius reassigned Fr. Andrea Galvanello, a Jesuit deeply loved by the citizens of Morbegno, Italy.⁴⁵ Ignatius’s

motive was to place him in other towns where he could make a greater impact.

Understandably, the citizens were upset, especially since good preachers were hard to find. They insisted that Galvanello be allowed to stay, and even threatened Ignatius with bringing in a Protestant minister to replace him if Ignatius refused. But the Superior General stood his ground, and thereby proved that saintly people making hard decisions for thoughtful reasons is no guarantee of protection against the condemnation of others.

Denunciations of administrators can be especially hurtful due to the nature of their work. Many, perhaps most, do not receive the same regular expressions of gratitude from students as do the faculty, nor the same clear signs of success in having changed lives. When administrators do their jobs well, they cannot count on praise, but when they are perceived to err, they can be assured of criticism.

Moreover, administrators are formally tasked with juggling *cura apostolica* and *cura personalis*. They thus become easy targets for those who have the freedom to focus on more particular goods. And it must be admitted that faculty and staff who are brilliant in their fields are often naïve in matters of business and finance, making the injustices they perceive seem all the more inexcusable.

In 1552, Fr. Manuel Godinho, treasurer of the Jesuit college in Coimbra, Portugal, was responsible for handling finances and responding to lawsuits. He found the work tedious and hard on his prayer, and he longed for a more gratifying mission. So he wrote to Ignatius in Rome, asking for a transfer. (One wonders whether Godinho was aware of the irony of his request, since Ignatius had much greater reason to stare out the window than he.) Ignatius responded,

Although responsibility for temporal business may appear and be somewhat distracting, I have no doubt that your holy intention and your directing everything you

do to God's glory makes it spiritual and highly pleasing to his infinite goodness. For when distractions are accepted for his greater service and in conformity with his divine will as interpreted to you by obedience [to your Jesuit superior], they can be not only equivalent to the union and recollection of constant contemplation, but even more acceptable to him, since they proceed from a more vehement and stronger charity....⁴⁶

Ignatius then made an important distinction.

If, however, looking only to the greater glory of God our Lord, you still think before God that this responsibility is unsuitable for you, confer with your superiors there, and they will do what is proper; and I will not fail to aid you from here, as one who holds you deep within my soul.⁴⁷

Ignatius packed much into these paragraphs. If Godinho believed, objectively considered, that someone else could do the work better than he, then a transfer was legitimate. But if it were simply a matter of Godinho doubting the ability of his work to bring him closer to God, or regretting the dryness of his work, then he should know that,

- As an administrator, Godinho is serving a greater good, insofar as his labors are dedicated to the welfare of the school as a whole.
- If Godinho's "holy intention" is precisely to serve the greater good, and if he directs his thoughts and actions toward that end, then his job is an especially powerful means to grow in sanctity.⁴⁸
- Ignatius acknowledged that administrative work can be dry. But since it is always easy to immerse oneself in a work with many consolations, Godinho's

willingness to forego these for the sake of a greater good speaks to his greater love for God and for others.

- By “union” and “constant contemplation,” Ignatius was referring to the traditional idea that, through prolonged and undistracted prayer (such as that practiced by monks), one can arrive at a profound awareness of God’s immediate presence. Godinho believed that his work made contemplation impossible. But Ignatius wanted Godinho and all Jesuits to understand that they could attain contemplation precisely *through* their work.

In theory, of course, administrators can fall short of the mission. But fallen human nature, being what it is, there can be a tendency to apply this interpretation to every unwelcome decision and hard truth handed down from above.⁴⁹ For example, decisions made contrary to the wishes of faculty and staff are not the same as decisions made without the consultation of faculty and staff, a distinction that often gets muddled when emotions run high. The latter might be a failure of *cura personalis*. The former is not.

In this light, the so-called “Presupposition” of Ignatius found at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises is critical to *cura personalis*. Simply put, Ignatius counsels us to construe favorably others’ words whenever possible.⁵⁰ (By implication, this applies to their deeds as well.) This is nothing less than an act of charity, since, by doing so, we deliberately choose to presume the intelligence and goodwill of those who disappoint us. In the case of administrators, it obliges us to concede, grudgingly at times, that most of the choices they face are more complex than we would like to believe.

Care of Students: “Spiritual Conversations”

Finally we turn to *cura personalis* as “care of students,” the application of the term perhaps most common in Jesuit schools. We have seen

that “holistic education” and “respect for the individual” both have bases in authoritative Jesuit documents.

But more significantly for our purposes, both definitions have roots that extend to the very beginning of Jesuit education. The reason has to do with the Society’s traditional commitment to teaching the humanities.⁵¹ When the first universities appeared in Europe (four hundred years before the Society was founded), their general aim was the creation of knowledge and the preparation of students for professional careers in law, medicine, theology and the arts. Degrees were not required to practice in those fields, but they did grant greater prestige and command higher fees. Aristotle’s “scientific” works on logic, biology, astronomy, and so forth, were the principal texts for study. In this sense, the universities professed no explicit commitment to the moral and religious development of students, nor to the well-being of church or society as such.

Two centuries later, proponents of a humanist approach to education, inspired by the Renaissance revival of the Greco-Roman classics, and in conscious reaction to the professional schools, began to adopt a university model as well. Their emphasis was the formation of a certain kind of person, that is, a well-rounded, community-minded citizen, imbued with high ideals, who understood the duty to inspire others and to contribute to society. To that end, students studied not only technical works, but also rhetoric, history, and oratory. Textbooks included works of literature, theater, and philosophy.

As one might expect, from the moment the Jesuits built their first school in Sicily in 1548, they committed themselves enthusiastically to humanistic education, as its goals dovetailed so well with their own.⁵² They would not have phrased it thusly, but “respect for the individual” went hand-in-hand with their students’ appropriation of classic works, since appropriation, by its nature, was not possible without at least implicit attention to the particularities of students. This would have included their talents, limitations, desires, and

“disordered attachments,” as Ignatius liked to put it, meaning the interior obstacles that they encountered while in pursuit of spiritual growth. Appropriation also demanded reflection upon the particular social order in which students found themselves.

“Holistic education,” of course, was simply the humanist program to integrate the intellectual life with faith, piety, integrity, and civic-mindedness. Physical fitness was included as well. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, or “a sound mind in a sound body,” was a refrain of early Jesuit educators and of Ignatius himself.⁵³ It was coined by the Roman poet Juvenal, and the wider passage in which it is found ably captures the spirit of early Jesuit education:

You should pray for
a sound mind in a sound body;
ask for a stout heart
that has no fear of death,
and deems length of days
the least of Nature’s gifts;
that can endure any kind of toil;
that knows neither wrath nor desire,
and thinks that the woes
and hard labours of Hercules
are better than the loves
and the banquets and
the downy cushions of Sardanapalus.
What I commend to you,
you can give to yourself;
for it is assuredly through virtue that lies
the one and only path to a life of peace.⁵⁴

In the service of *cura personalis*, the writings of Ignatius and early Jesuits contain yet another gem, and one that bears numerous connections to other Jesuit values. It is the art of “spiritual conversation.”⁵⁵

Shortly after his spiritual conversion at Castle Loyola, Ignatius began to recognize that engaging people in relatively informal, spontaneous, one-on-one conversations about God, faith, and “best practices” in the spiritual life, was a powerful means to edify both them and him. Such conversations, by their nature, circled around the particular concerns and desires of Ignatius’s

interlocutors and, as a result, they could be much more effective than a sermon, lecture, or book. What is more, since they could be practiced by anyone, anywhere, Ignatius could make a conscious ministry of it without the need to be ordained a priest or to possess a theology degree (both of which were still fifteen years away).⁵⁶

Ignatius first learned the value of spiritual conversations while recuperating from his leg wounds in Castle Loyola. He had already decided to give his life to God and was anxious to begin, but was still trapped in bed. With no other means available to begin “helping souls,” he simply began to speak to relatives and friends who walked into his room of the things of God. Perhaps to his surprise, he discovered how effective it was. Looking back years later, Ignatius put it simply, “He did their souls good.”⁵⁷

A few months later, in Manresa, Ignatius made a point of seeking people reputed for holiness to ask their advice about prayer and spiritual practices. He noticed that they began to seek him out as well, not because (as Ignatius himself conceded) he knew much about spiritual things, but because they could see that he had a strong desire for God. And engaging anyone with such a desire will likely be a fruitful experience, no matter how unknowledgeable that person might be.⁵⁸

Spiritual conversations became a deliberate strategy for Ignatius. His interlocutors might have perceived them as chance encounters, but Ignatius was always listening for anything that could serve as a segue to more spiritual subjects. He described one such encounter in Venice while he was waiting for a boat to take him to Jerusalem.

One day a rich Spanish man came across him, and asked him what he was doing and where he wanted to go. And learning of his intention, he took him to eat at his house. Subsequently he had him to stay for a few days until things were ready for his departure. Since Manresa, the pilgrim now had this

custom: when he had a meal with people, he would never speak at table unless it was to reply briefly. But he would listen to what was being said, and pick up a few things from which he might take the opportunity to speak about God. And when the meal was ended, that is what he would do, and this was the reason why the good man with all his household became so fond of him that they wanted to have him as a guest, and pressed him to stay on in the house.⁵⁹

Still later, while studying theology at the University of Paris, Ignatius said that “he began to give himself more intensively to spiritual conversations than he normally did.”⁶⁰ Although he was eager to engage anyone in conversation, he kept a lookout for gifted or popular students. Should they have a conversion experience, and even better, if they could be persuaded to make the Exercises, they could reap especially great fruit for the church.⁶¹ Ignatius’s two greatest success stories were his own roommates in the dormitory: a popular track-and-field star named Francis Xavier and a pious farm boy with a gracious personality named Pierre Favre.⁶²

Here are a few dynamics of spiritual conversation that bear notable connections to other Ignatian themes.

- **Contemplation in Action.** Persons who seek opportunities for spiritual conversation are profoundly mindful of the presence of God in every person they encounter: his or her desires for love, truth, meaning, value, beauty and immortality, which God Himself implanted in order to draw people to Him. To engage any person at the level of those desires is the ultimate *cura personalis*. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, who worked for forty years as the doorkeeper of a large

Jesuit community, is a wonderful model in this regard. Though the work itself could easily be considered humble or mundane, he chose to treat everyone who knocked on the door as if he or she were Christ himself, and thereby transformed their lives and his.


- **Respect for the Individual.** Spiritual conversation by its nature gravitates toward the particular needs and concerns of the individual. For that reason, its practitioners must fight the temptation to react before they reflect. Are they listening attentively, or are they formulating a response in their minds while their interlocutors are still speaking? “Be slow to speak and ready to listen for long periods,” Ignatius advised Jesuits.⁶³
- **Adaptation or “Inculturation.”** Ignatius instructed Jesuits to adapt to their interlocutors. If one is cheerful, be cheerful; if serious and reserved, act similarly; if jocular and lighthearted, do likewise. “This is what pleases them,” he explained.⁶⁴ People are more inclined to engage in substantial conversation if they feel a kinship.
- **Ends and Means:** Socrates played dumb, but he knew exactly what he was doing. Jesus’ parables were a deliberate strategy also.⁶⁵ Practitioners of spiritual conversation always keep in mind their deliberate purpose: to bring people to God. Otherwise, conversations become self-indulgent or wander wherever chance takes them.⁶⁶

Summary

If we seek a precise meaning to *cura personalis*, no single definition can be claimed definitive. Starting with Fr. Ledóchowski’s “Instruction,”

the expression has been defined broadly and variously, and applied in different contexts. The three meanings commonly given to *cura personalis*—holistic education, care of the individual, and juxtaposed with *cura apostolica*—are all consonant with the values and practical experience of Ignatius. They also link to other Jesuit themes underpinning higher education, especially the *magis*, here understood as the more universal good. The significance of this latter point should not be overlooked. Like any time-tested approach to God, Ignatian spirituality is not an accidental assortment of discrete values—*magis, caritas discreta*, “finding God in all things,” and so forth—but a holistic, interconnected way of being in the world, interpreting it, and responding to it. To live one value is already to begin to engage the others.

For this reason, the broad scope of *cura personalis* does not mean that the term is immune to misuse. We must ask whether the application in question runs counter to other Jesuit themes, to Catholic Christian convictions in general, or to common sense. Every good parent, every good friend, every good teacher, knows that speaking painful truths in love is not a violation of *cura personalis*, no matter how much it might be perceived so by those who hear them; nor is exercising legitimate authority over others; nor is making unpopular decisions for the sake of the greater good.

St. Ignatius, the great lover of souls, in whom magnanimity and practicality found a common ally, knew all these things better than anyone. 

Notes

¹ See Barton T. Geger, S.J., “What Magis Really Means and Why It Matters,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 1, no. 2 (2012): 16-31.

² Other interpretations occasionally are proffered, such as the responsibility of Jesuits in formation to take a proactive role in the direction of their own training; or the responsibility of Jesuit superiors to promote the development of the talents of each man under his care as fully as possible. These appear relatively infrequent, and they are not found linked to the term *cura personalis* in documents of General Congregations of the Society

of Jesus, nor (insofar as I am aware) in letters or addresses from Superiors General, and thus they will not be considered here.

³ Wladimir Ledóchowski, S.J., *Instructio pro Assistentia Americae de Ordinandis Universitatibus, Collegiis ac Scholis Altis et de Praeparandis Eorundem Magistris* (“Instructions for the United States Assistancy on the Governance of Universities, Colleges and High Schools, and on the Formation of their Teachers”), *Woodstock Letters*, LXIV: no. 1 (1935), 5-16. The *Instructio* was prefaced by a letter from Fr. Ledóchowski in English, “Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics of the American Assistancy Announcing the New Instruction on Studies and Teaching,” dated August 15, 1934 (*ibid.*, 1-4).

⁴ See William P. Leahy, S.J., *Adapting to America: Catholics, Jesuits, and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 52-54; Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 182.

⁵ “Scholasticism” is a method of philosophical inquiry that originated in the early twelfth century, characterized by the use of conceptual precision and dialectical reasoning to find objective truth. Its most famous exponent was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a Dominican priest whose works were standard for the study of Catholic theology from the late 1500’s to the 1960’s.

⁶ Ledóchowski, *Instructio*, no. 8. Trans. Fr. Claude Pavur, S.J. Emphasis original.

⁷ Various websites claim an early reference to *cura personalis* in a 1951 missive from Fr. General Jean-Baptiste Janssens, S.J., to Jesuit provincials, in which it was juxtaposed with *cura apostolica*. None cite their source, and attempts to locate it were unsuccessful. The claim is possibly spurious.

⁸ University Archives, St. Peter’s University, Jersey City, New Jersey; Centennial Year Records, Accession 001-XX-0013, Box 5, “Centennial Visit of Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe, Nov. 11, 1972” file folder, p.5. Whether Arrupe actually used McGinley’s homily is unknown.

⁹ Wladimir Ledóchowski, S.J., and Jean-Baptiste Janssens, S.J., *Instructio pro assistentia Americae de ordinandis universitatibus, collegiis, ac scholis altis et de praeparandis eorundem magistris* [and] *Constitution of the Jesuit Educational Association*, (New York: Jesuit Educational Association, 1948). Fr. Janssens, S.J., was Superior General from 1946 to 1964.

¹⁰ That same year, Arrupe made no mention of *cura personalis* in an address to Jesuit educators at Fordham University (“The Role of Jesuit Schools and Their Future”); nor in a 1975 address in Rome, “The Jesuit Mission in the University Apostolate,” in which he

addressed holistic education and “bonds” between Jesuits and their students and colleagues. Both addresses are reprinted in Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *Other Apostolates Today*, ed. Jerome Aixela, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1981), 43-52, 79-95. In both, Arrupe did cite the *magis*.

¹¹ See Joseph F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience (1539), Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 74-75.

¹² See George Ganss, S.J., ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), nos. 324, 325, 461, 588.

¹³ William Smith, ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (Boston: C. Little & J. Brown, 1870), p. 376, s.v. “Curator”.

¹⁴ E.g., P. Henrico Ramière, S.J., ed., “De temporali collegiorum administratione” in *Compendium Instituti Societatis Jesu* (Toulouse: 1896), 446; Dionysius Fernández Zapico, S.J., ed., *Regulae Societatis Jesu (1540-1556)*, (Rome: 1948), 571.

¹⁵ A “provincial” is superior of all the Jesuits working within an administrative region called a “province.” His duties include oversight of the well-being of each Jesuit in his province, the missioning of individual Jesuits to works within the province, and the well-being of individual works in the province.

Although the Latin *apostolatus* was used since the ancient church to denote an ecclesial office or a formal work to which Christians were dedicated, “apostolate” seems to have entered Jesuit parlance only in the twentieth century. An early example comes from the French Jesuit Arthur Vermeersch, S.J., who used *apostolat* to refer to works of the Society in *Miles Christi Jesu*, his oft-reprinted series of meditations on the Jesuit Constitutions.

¹⁶ John W. Padberg, S.J., ed., *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st - 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 772, 774.

¹⁷ Arrupe had established the commission four years earlier. The text of “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education” is reprinted in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, ed. Vincent J. Duminico, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 173-216.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁹ Eileen L. Poiani, “Persons, Programs and Systems,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 1 (1992): 9.

²⁰ For example, *cura personalis* does not appear in *Jesuit Higher Education: Essays on an American Tradition of Excellence*, ed. Rolando E. Bonachea (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1989); nor in the monograph *Jesuit Education and Jesuit Spirituality*, where

Fr. Arthur F. McGovern, S.J., dedicates two paragraphs to “a personal concern for the whole life of each student” (in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 20, no. 4, [Sept. 1988]).

²¹ Dominic L. Balestra, “Where Loyalties Lie?” in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, ed. George W. Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 94-104.

²² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “Cura Personalis,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 38 (Jan. 2007): 9-17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴ See “Spiritual Exercises no. 17,” in *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22, 25-27. See “Spiritual Exercises nos. 2, 15, 18.”

²⁶ See note 16.

²⁷ Colette Windish, “Step by Step,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41, Article 7 (2012): 12-13.

²⁸ Mary-Elaine Perry and Melissa Collins DeLeonardo, “Rising Voices: Women’s Leadership” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41 (2012): 28-29.

²⁹ Lynne C. Elkes, “An Appendage or Vital Component? Adjunct Faculty and Jesuit Principles: The Needs of a Neglected Majority,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41 (2012), 24-25.

³⁰ Wade S. Taylor and Kevin J. Mahoney, “Being Gay at a Jesuit University,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41, Article 27 (2012), 44-47. See also Kent Hickey, “At the Frontier and the Heart: Jesuit Schools,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 39 (2011), 9-12.

³¹ Editorial Board, “Excellence: Marquette University, Boston College, Scranton University, Saint Joseph’s University, Spring Hill College, Rockhurst University, Loyola Marymount University, Xavier University, University of San Francisco, Seattle University, College of the Holy Cross, Fordham University,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 39 (2011), 31.

³² Diane Dreher, “What To Do About It: Cura Personalis and the Challenge of Work-Life Balance,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41 (2012), 30-33.

³³ St. John Vianney (1786-1859), a parish priest (not a Jesuit), was called a “martyr of the confessional” for hearing confessions for eighteen hours at a stretch.

³⁴ St. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) was an early exponent of the theological opinion known as *massa damnata*, i.e., that “the masses” of people would not be saved. See *To*

Simplicianus I.2.16, *Enchiridion* 27, *City of God* XXI.12, *On Nature and Grace* IV, Epistle 166.6.16.

³⁵ This shift was not necessarily easy for early Jesuits. Ignatius once asked Fr. Diego Laínez, “Tell me, Master Laínez, what would you do if God our Lord were to propose to you this option and say, ‘If you wish to die right now, I will take you from the prison of this body and give you eternal glory; but if you wish to continue living, I give you no assurances about what will happen to you, but rather I will leave you to your fate. If you persevere in virtue until the end, I will give you your reward, but if you fall from grace, then I will judge you as I find you.’ If our Lord said this to you, and you understood that, by remaining in this life for some time you could do some great and notable service for the Divine Majesty . . . what would you choose? How would you respond?” Fr. Laínez replied, “I confess to Your Reverence that I would choose departure from this life to rejoice in God and assure my salvation and to free me from dangers in a matter of such great importance.” Ignatius replied, “Well, I certainly would not have done so. . . . I would have asked Him to let me remain alive until I had accomplished that service, putting my eyes on Him and not on me, with no fear for my own danger or security.” (Translation mine. Dionysius Fernández Zapico, S.J., and Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., eds., *Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Jesus initiis*, Rome, 1965, Vol. 4, 773-775). Ignatius’s question was probably inspired by a passage from St. Paul to the Philippians (1:22-26).

³⁶ Ganss, *Constitutions*, 153 (no. 243).

³⁷ Palmer, 334. Emphasis mine. On neither work nor asceticism to excess, see also 628, 657, 666; on a substantial, balanced diet, see 312, 626, 661; on obedience over asceticism, see 244.

³⁸ John W. O’Malley, “Ignatius’s Special Way of Proceeding,” in *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Publishing, 2013), 118. See also O’Malley, “Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491-1556),” in *ibid.*, 111-112.

³⁹ Palmer, 697.

⁴⁰ Palmer, 170. See Fr. Peter Hans-Kolvenbach, “Caritas Discreta,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 37 (2006), 9-21.

⁴¹ Palmer, 171. Emphases mine.

⁴² Regis University appears to have been the first Jesuit institution of higher education in the U.S. to offer paid mission leave, in January 2001. From July 2013 to July 2014, some 253 of Regis University’s eligible 882 faculty and staff used a total of 3,054 hours of mission leave.

Section 3.3.1. of its present “Human Resources Policy Manual” (revised 24 June 2014) reads: “Purpose. Consistent with the vision of its Jesuit founders, Regis University encourages its employees to acquaint

themselves with the University’s mission purposes, to live out its mission of leadership in the service of others, and to reflect on questions of value and meaning as well as to build community and colleagues. The purpose of this policy is to allow employees to participate voluntarily, with pay, in University sponsored retreats/reflection experiences or in approved mission-related service activities that occur during regularly scheduled work hours.”

⁴³ John W. O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 273, 308.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 333-334.

⁴⁵ Palmer, 452, 471-472.

⁴⁶ Palmer, 367.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Purity of Heart” or “Pure Intention” were common phrases in the ancient and medieval church to denote the single-mindedness that Christians should ideally possess to make the service of God the criterion for all their decisions. In the Constitutions, Ignatius wrote that Jesuit superiors, when choosing missions and men for those missions, should focus solely on “the greater service of God and the universal good,” and that this is a “thoroughly right and pure intention.” (Ganss, *Constitutions*, 271, 273; no. 618).

⁴⁹ See Robert Parmach, “Doing What’s Right: The Value of the Other Half: Qualifying *Cura Personalis*,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 41 (2012), 20-21.

⁵⁰ “That both the giver and the maker of the Spiritual Exercises may be of greater help and benefit to each other, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it. Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.” (Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 31; no. 22).

Note that Ignatius advises a good interpretation, not the best possible interpretation. It is not about being Pollyannaish, but about resisting the easy temptation to put another’s words and deeds in a negative light. Thus Ignatius writes of “every *appropriate* means” to justify a statement.

⁵¹ I am indebted to an unpublished lecture of Fr. John W. O’Malley, S.J., for much of the content of the following paragraphs on the humanistic tradition. But see also O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 200-227, 253-264; and “How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education,”

in *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden and Boston, Brill Publishing, 2010), 199-215.

⁵² In this light, promoters of Jesuit education should beware of implying that “holistic education” and “respect for the individual” are values unique to Jesuit education, or more emphasized in Jesuit schools than other schools. Ever since Socrates, good teachers have respected the particulars of students; and ever since Cicero, they have understood that formation of solid citizens requires attention to the whole person. As Fr. Anthony McGinn, S.J., has observed, claiming these things to be distinctively Jesuit is like trying to copyright the alphabet. See also Erika L. Kirby, M. Chad McBride, Sherianne Shuler, Marty J. Birkholt, Mary Ann Danielson and Donna R. Pawlowski, “The Jesuit Difference (?): Narratives of Negotiating Spiritual Values and Secular Practices,” *Communication Studies*, 57:1 (2006), 87-105.

⁵³ In 1548, Ignatius wrote to St. Francis Borgia, “Hence, when the body is jeopardized through excessive hardships, the soundest thing is to pursue these gifts through acts of the understanding and other moderate practices, so that not the soul alone will be healthy but, with a sound mind in a sound body, the whole will be more sound and more fitted to God’s greater service” (Palmer, 256).

⁵⁴ Juvenal, Satire X, nos. 356-365 in *Juvenal and Persius*, *Loeb Classical Library Series*, trans. G. G. Ramsay (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957), 219, 221. Sardanapalus was an Assyrian king famed for debauchery.

⁵⁵ See Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., *The Conversational Word of God: A Commentary on the Doctrine of St. Ignatius of Loyola concerning Spiritual Conversation, with Four Early Jesuit Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978); O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 110-114; Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “Cura Personalis,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 38 (Jan. 2007), 9-17; Javier Osuna, S.J., *Friends in the Lord*, trans. Nicholas King (London: The Way, 1974), 11-16.

⁵⁶ When a priest asked Ignatius what he and his companions preached to people, Ignatius corrected him: “We don’t preach, but we speak about things of God with certain people in an informal way, such as after a meal with some people who invite us.” (“Autobiography, no. 65,” trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* [London: Penguin Books, 1996], 44-45).

⁵⁷ Auto. no. 11 (Munitiz, 16-17).

⁵⁸ Auto. nos. 21, 22, 26 (Munitiz, 22-23, 24-25).

⁵⁹ Auto. nos. 42-43 (trans. Munitiz, 32-33).

⁶⁰ Auto. no. 77 (Munitiz, 50).

⁶¹ Through spiritual conversations and the Exercises, Ignatius managed to convince two of the most illustrious doctoral candidates at the University of Paris, Juan de Castro and Pedro Peralta, to imitate his way of life. They eventually left Ignatius due to pressure from their families and university authorities, but they both went on to dedicate their lives to the service of the church.

⁶² Auto. no. 82; see also no. 92. Not coincidentally, the original Italian in the “Autobiography” is explicit that Ignatius had been “conversing” [*conversava*] with both men. Such was the principal means by which the other First Companions were recruited, and how all of them endeavored to sustain each other in their vocations.

⁶³ Palmer, 65.

⁶⁴ Palmer, 66.

⁶⁵ See Mark 4:33-34 and Matthew 13:10-15.

⁶⁶ If taken seriously as a form of ministry, this method of engaging people will strike some as sly or opportunistic. But this is precisely why Jesuits gained a reputation for being “Jesuitical.” In the gospels, Jesus advises, “Be shrewd as serpents, and simple as doves” (Matthew 10:16; see also Luke 16:8).