

Leadership: Born from the Jesuit Mission

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[Before I begin the formal part of my talk, let me ask you to think quietly of the names of one or two living people you would consider to be leaders. And, now please reflect on why are you thinking of that name? Think about the qualities or attributes that you would associate with being a good leader....And now I invite to share the names and ideas with one or two people who are sitting near you]

Who are our leaders?

I'm sure you are right now thinking of very interesting names. But I wonder who is thinking about their own name? I guess no one.

We live in a culture that teaches us to be modest, and modesty is a beautiful virtue. After all, Ignatius devotes an important spiritual exercise to three degrees of humility, and once he said, 'There is no doubt that God will never be wanting to us, provided that He finds in us that humility which makes us worthy of His gifts,'

But when it comes to an idea like leadership, I want to suggest that your modesty may be misplaced or mistaken, because you may have a broken or wrong idea of leadership. As a stereotype, we tend to associate leadership with being in charge of things---like presidents, generals, chief executives, and so on. We think of leaders as people who are famous, rich, or celebrities, often obsessed with honor or status, the opposite of humility. So, of course, it would be immodest to call ourselves leaders.

But the idea that leadership is only for chief executives is not the solution to any problems, in business, politics, or society. It's part of the problem, and I want to suggest that if we understand leadership correctly, the very first people you need to think about as leaders are yourselves, and I will soon explain why.

And what do good leaders do to motivate those around them?

That was the second part of our experiment, and I know that people came up with wonderful ideas, like decisiveness, vision, honor, and so on. But I wonder who was thinking about this idea, articulated by someone with wonderful leadership credentials. He said this: "You must love those you lead before you can be an effective leader."

The leader I just quoted was General Eric K. Shinseki, who until a few years ago was the highest ranking military officer in the United States. When I first heard that quote, it struck me as strange, coming from a military class that typically we associate with being tough and macho.

But maybe not out of place. Because the more I thought about, the more I suspect that a general makes wiser choices when he loves those he must place in harm's way, and I also suspect that soldiers perform better when confident that they are loved and valued by those who have the horrible responsibility of sending them to face their death.

So, who is a leader...and how are leaders leading? Well, we're *all* leading, well or poorly, all the time. And our way of leading—our claim to leadership—is not our status in a school or organization, but simply the values that we choose to role model in our life and work.

This idea that everyone is a leader is certainly against our stereotype of leadership. We don't think this way. But this is not a gimmick or something I've made up. If you look in the dictionary, you will find various definitions of leadership, but the definitions will always include this one: to point out a way, direction, or goal and to influence others toward it.

Isn't it true that everyone in this room is doing those words all the time. You are pointing out a way or a direction for your friends and neighbors by how you treat your colleagues, how hard you work, what you do with your money, whether you care only about yourself or about others also. In all these cases, you are leading: pointing out a way and having influence on others, good or bad. All of us have parents and many of you are parents: can there be any more obvious act of pointing out a way and influencing others than the leadership that you are showing with your children every day? Some of you are faculty and staff here: your role modeling will be one of the most intense experience the young adult students will see of how adult human beings ought to behave and interact in a workplace: you're pointing out a way by how you treat them, what you value, what you say, and so on. Your Jesuit colleague Fr. —now saint---alberto hurtado put it this way: "In order to teach, it is enough to know something, but to educate, once must be something. True education consists in giving oneself as a living model, an authentic lesson."

Though all of us are leading, many of us are doing so only 'subconsciously.' To realize our full leadership potential, we need to get more explicit—more purposeful—about ourselves as leaders, what kind of leaders we want to be, and how we will project that in our families, workplaces, and the other arenas in which we interact.

This whole conference is about leadership. The word leader is mentioned three times in the three sentence announcement of this conference: "the leaders of our global secondary school network will gather", you say, and one of your key focuses is "how Jesuit school educators can prepare students to become global leaders." And Fr. General put it this way, "I encourage all Jesuit secondary school networks to take advantage of this opportunity to advance the Society's commitment to form leaders who can serve both the Church and the world."

Why should you care so much about leadership?

Simply because the early 21st century presents us with incredible range of problems and opportunities, some of which this conference has highlighted: in technology, globalization, challenges to our mission and identity and so on. Great leadership is needed to cope with tumultuous change.

Let me remind you that your predecessors, the first generation of Jesuits, also coped with incredible change. Just think, for example, in the lifetime of Frs Ignatius and Francis Xavier, the globe as Europeans knew it more than tripled in scale; Europeans encountered completely new cultures, languages, and traditions; history's first mass media revolution was getting underway as printing

presses proliferated. And, Protestant Reformers were using this new media technology to confront the Catholic Church with its most profound challenge in a millennium. Though much was changing during Ignatius's lifetime, some things were not changing at all: the overwhelming majority of the world's people were poor and had absolutely no access to secondary education, less than 1% of the population had the great blessing that everyone in this room has had: a higher education..

How did your predecessors react? As I describe their generation's leadership initiatives, I hope you will understand that I am also speaking to your generation by not so subtle analogy. The founding Jesuit generations pioneered a completely new model of schooling, making education available at a level of quality that was never before available, and with a wider access than was ever before available. They understood that no one school or country could by itself figure out every best practice, so, because they felt themselves part of a universal body with a universal mission, they freely exchanged letters with their best practices and curriculum ideas, all over the Jesuit world; they eventually codified the very best practices into a Ratio Studiorum, so that each new school wouldn't have to reinvent the wheel.

They shared resources: personnel and financial resources that were more plentiful in developed countries were transferred to the emerging economies to help jump start Jesuit mission. They used new media technologies: while Rome worried about banning books, the Jesuits worried about using media to contribute their ideas to the public discourse and to support the Catholic Church during a very difficult era. They traveled to frontiers, among the first Europeans to engage new cultures and learn new languages. Did they do everything perfectly? Of course not. For certain, from our 21st century perspective, some of their approaches would appear colonialistic and condescending to their host cultures in emerging worlds---but when judged against the mentality of their age, not against 21st century standards, most historians judge them far, far more enlightened than their contemporaries peers.

My brothers and sisters, our generation is faced with our own version of every one of these challenges, and now is our moment to be similarly enlightened, pioneering, and innovative. When the ICJSE gathers five centuries from now, in 2512, what will they say about your generation?

Let me start with the nightmare scenario: Here is what I am sure they will not say: Well, the world was globalizing rapidly in the early 21st century, and even though Jesuit schools had inherited an utterly unmatched global network, they never figured out how to use it. 21st century culture valued money and self-interested success, and their excellent schools graduated many who used their gifts effectively to achieve self-interested financial success for themselves, but only some used their gifts and talents to benefit the world's poor. 21st century became increasingly secularized, and they never figured out how to instill a vibrant faith practice among their students.

But I am confident that they will say other, very different things about you, things like this: they were worthy successors to the first generation. They figured out how to use technology to improve the education experience. They graduated students who helped the Church revitalize itself. Their graduates formed a global network to help the world eradicate poverty in our time.

I am confident they will say all these things, because you inherit a culture of Jesuit-style leadership that will help you conquer even daunting challenges. You will thrive if you can instill in every one of your students, staff, and faculty the leadership culture that your founders created, and I want to talk about three elements of that leadership culture: the gift of heroic magis, the gift of ingenuity achieved through Ignatian indifference, and the gift of love.

So first, the gift of heroic magis. Let me start with an anecdote. I just praised the extraordinary Jesuit school system, but when it was starting, frankly, the Jesuit school system must have been a mess. These guys had never run anything. How could they know how to run schools? And while it was in its infancy, one Jesuit had the boldness to write to the King of Spain and call these shambles of little schools so important that, “the well being of the whole world and all Christendom” depended on it. Sounds like a Jesuit talking, no? Yet, on the other hand, totally grounded in reality. Because in another place, writing a letter to one of his Jesuit buddies, listen to what this very same guy had to say about what it feels like to teach kids in a school all day: “It is a repulsive, annoying and burdensome thing to guide and teach and try to control a crowd of young people, who are naturally so frivolous, so restless, so talkative and so unwilling to work, that even their parents cannot keep them at home.”

This Jesuit has given us a wonderful model of heroism: on the one hand, we must deal with reality. What is a problem, we say is problem. We are fully aware of the day to day headaches of running a school, from broken plumbing to too much bureaucracy to too little money . But on the other hand, we manage to hang onto our vision: this is what we can accomplish when we do this well together. Christians could understand this as an ‘incarnational’ model of heroism, in other words, we are imitating Jesus, who shows up in a messy, complicated world, sees it as it is, yet remains committed to his vision of how human beings can live and treat one another.

We’ve grown accustomed to associating heroism with extraordinary acts like saving persons trapped in burning buildings or saving comrades in battle. This Jesuit vision is instead proposing that heroism is less about the opportunity at hand—because most of us can’t control the opportunities that life will present us: we may never have the chance to save someone in distress—than it is about the *response* to the opportunity at hand, which we can *always* control. The teacher has no guarantee that he or she will make a profound, life-altering impact in a child’s life: his or her heroism is manifest in the commitment to live and work as if he or she *might* make such a difference.

Above all, heroic magis means a deep sense of purpose greater than self. There is an anecdote about President Kennedy who visited NASA in the mid-60s, met a gentleman sweeping the floors and to be polite asked him what his job was. He supposedly replied, ‘sir, I’m putting a man on the moon.’ Well, we are here in the United States, where our big cultural trait is to look out for number 1: each person worries about himself and no one else.

But everyone here knows that that the teams that perform best are teams where people have the opposite instinct. If I can use some American slang, they “get over themselves” and appreciate this is not all about me, about being the literature teacher, the rector, the librarian. Rather, our team succeeds when we see ourselves as participating in a mission that is worthy of our time and energy, and we invest some of our energy, talent, and ego in this. In fact, in magis thinking, we realize that the mission is not only our school, but something broader and bigger: what is for God’s greater glory here? Where does the magis lead me in terms of the lives of my students, the needs of our community, the needs of our brothers and sisters on the other end of the world. How can we make this network of Jesuit schools function together to do what Fr. General suggested in his letter, now I quote: “By gathering as a *global* body of Jesuit secondary schools for the first time we can begin to establish ways of collectively preparing our students and communities to address the “joys and hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the people of the present age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted”

Once individuals begin thinking of themselves in this way, they have begun to lead: they are seeing themselves as helping to role model and achieve a vision larger than themselves, not merely as doing a job. This spirit of *magis* is what inspired Jesuits, even in very small responsibilities of running small schools or parishes, to understand their work in the most extraordinary terms, “We are working to lay the foundations of houses which will last as long as the world endures,” said one. Imagine if every one of our teachers in every one of our schools felt this way about his or her work.

The first challenge is to instill this spirit of *magis*, but the next challenge is then to actually get results, which requires the spirit of ingenuity, which comes from Ignatian indifference, that is, we are open to ingenuity when we are free from any inner resistance that can hold us back from undertaking even ambitious projects in God’s service. Any one of us here could within thirty seconds easily conceive a dozen different things that our network could do: our students from different countries could teach each other languages online, multinational student groups could study global issues together, create international prayer circles, create an online fundraising site for our students and alumni raise money for Jesuit projects supporting the poor, sponsor a world day of service, jointly create and distribute lesson plans for important Jesuit related topics, invite all Jesuit alumni living in our city (not just our own graduates) to periodic lectures curricula for key topics or days of recollection, and dozens more ideas that will come up. And for each excellent idea that comes up, someone will immediately be able to think of 20 reasons why we cannot do it: we did something like that before, maybe it will fail, we only undertake initiatives that we thought of ourselves, we won’t be in charge, we always did things in a different way in the past, blah blah blah.

This is not the spirit of Ignatian indifference. We have schools here named for Frs. Ricci, Xavier, Claver, de Nobili, de Smet. If these men had listened to such thinking, they would never have attempted the remarkable things for which we honor them with our school name.

Rather, their standard was the *magis*: *is this a smart idea that will serve God’s greater glory?* If so, then we banish attachment to our own ego, status, our own particular school, province, or country, to our fears of failure or looking foolish; we make ourselves free, internally free, to think ingeniously of “how we can” instead of “why we cannot”

Our ability to make ourselves free in this way—not to worry about our own ego, status, or even about clinging to our own possessions or money or our own school’s endowment—our ability to make ourselves free and generous to pursue the *magis*, comes from the third aspect of Jesuit leadership culture, that we do not evaluate things with the eyes of the world, which tells us to gather and cling to our own power and advantages, Rather, we look through the eyes of love, we have received many gifts, and we our response, as in the contemplation to attain love, is that we want to give these gifts back.

Ignatius told his colleagues that ‘love ought to manifest itself in deeds, not words.’ And that begins of course with our students, including, perhaps especially the ones who are underprivileged, poor, out of place, annoying, and otherwise behind the pack. Listen to how Fr. Nadal, of the first generation of Jesuits put it, describing the Jesuit mission as, “..the care of those souls for whom either there is nobody to care or, if somebody ought to care, the care is negligent. This is the reason for the founding of the Society. This is its strength. This is its dignity in the Church.”

Everyone knows that children learn and perform more productively when they are raised, taught, and mentored by families and teachers and coaches who value them as important and dignified, who set high standards, who create environments of love rather than fear. Why have we somehow

convinced ourselves that our adult needs, the needs of the staff, are so different? The best teams I've been on have thrived precisely because there was trust, mutual support, real respect for each other's talents, real interest in helping others succeed, and a willingness to hold each other accountable to high standards so that each of us might realize our fullest personal and team potential.

We ought to reflect on the very notion of the word 'Company.' I would note that the formal name the Jesuit founders chose for their company was, in their native Spanish, *Compañía de Jesus*, company of Jesus. The word Jesuit was coined later as a kind of nickname. And the way they understood 'company' is not what we would typically understand today. Although nowadays the meaning of the word company has been almost completely hijacked by commercial enterprise, recall that the Latin roots of the word are *cum panis*, 'together' and 'bread', in other words, a company was the group of people with whom you might 'break bread'...in the 16th century a 'company' would more often refer to a religious group, a military troop, or even a group of friends. These early Jesuits clearly saw themselves as companions first of Jesus, but then also of each other, and that this companionship would energize their efforts. The Jesuit *compania* is offering us the challenge of getting our own *companias* back to this root concept: groups characterized by mutual support that energizes team members.

Maybe it was easier for the earlier generation of Jesuit schools to feel this sense of "compania" with each other all over the world. Most all of the schools were directly run by the Jesuit provincials; most all of the teachers were Jesuits. Today many of you work in separately incorporated institutions and the great majority of the faculty and staff are lay people: the great challenge for this conference: can we create a sense of *compania* across the world that is effective, not merely that we all respect the same tradition and say the same slogans, like "cura personalis" and "men and women for others," but that we manage to work together in meaningful ways against the challenges of the age.

I have spoken about leadership using mostly secular language, but Jesuit-style leadership, is, of course, fundamentally spiritual, grounded in Jesus. If God's spirit is not the inspiration, you will never be heroic, ingenious, or loving enough in the ways I describe. *We need to understand the very idea of leadership as deeply religious. Yes, our religious language uses words like vocation or disciple, and these words have a connotation of "following." The word vocation means to call, and if I call you, you follow me. But our religious language also uses word like apostle and mission, and these words have exactly the opposite meaning: to send. If I send you, you are out in front, you are on mission, you are leading.*

The first Jesuits embraced the motto of: *ite inflammate omnia*—go and set the world aflame—for magis, because they themselves had been set aflame. They were ingenious and free because they had found the pearl of great price, and they knew that status, greed, ego, meant nothing in comparison to this pearl. And they were loving because they had experienced Jesus' love for them.

They attained these gifts through the deep self awareness that comes in the spiritual exercises, and by reminding themselves every single day of their lives of these things through the examen. And I am sure that your Jesuit style leadership will only take root if you are finding ways to instill students and staff with these same values: through retreat experiences, exercises in everyday life, daily practices like the examen, and in other such exercises.

In my last five minutes, let me leave you with three challenges: Be Christ, Be accountable, and Be innovators.

1. Be Christ: Fr. Steve Duffy, now dead, taught me in freshmen year and taught at my high school for over fifty years. He was a great role model to me. About thirty years after he taught me, I learned the secret to his effectiveness when he wrote this essay about teaching in the year he was retiring: "I see myself radiating Christ to my students at all times. . . . I do this by my concern and love and respect for them. . . . I do it by being friendly in my dealings with them . . . [I think of Jesus] traveling with his companions, being with them 24 hours a day, and always having an effect on them by the way he dealt with them." Remember the definition of leadership I shared: point out a way, influence others. Duffy understood what that was all about. If we can get thousands of teachers thinking and working that way, we will certainly succeed.
2. Be accountable: Are you holding yourself accountable to your highest aspirations: every one of your websites very prominently features the idea that you are in the business of "developing men and women for others," as Fr. Arrupe first articulated it, "Today our prime educational objective must be to form men [and women] for others; men [and women] who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ...men [and women] who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors; men [and women] completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce." And, more recently, Fr. Kolvenbach said this, "the real measure of our schools lies in who our students become." Well, who are your students becoming? How successful are you at forming these men and women for others? Most Jesuit high schools in the United States knows exactly what percentage of the graduating class of 1985, for example, donated money to the school this year; I am not aware of any Jesuit school in the world that knows what percentage of the class of 1985 are men and women for others. Of course it is hard to measure, but the only way to transform idealistic aspirations into reality is to hold yourself accountable to them. Start by imagining and discussing among yourself what you expect a 40 year old man or woman for others to look like, perhaps even ask us alumni for our opinions, survey us. I suspect you would be pleasantly surprised by the answers; but you will never know how successful you are until you hold yourself accountable.
3. Be innovators:

Two Stanford researchers once observed that highly successful companies were characterized by the ability to "Preserve the Core and stimulate progress." As leaders of Jesuit schools, that is part of your job. Preserve the core: maintain those essentials that define us, that are so fundamental to who we are that they can never change. As for everything else: stimulate progress: what could be better, what should we try. Be open to taking prudent risks. Will you fail sometimes? Of course you will. *I often tell corporations what they can learn from the Jesuit tradition, so let me respectfully mention one thing that parts of the Jesuit world can learn from corporations: greater risk openness and tolerance for mistakes. Of course we can never tolerate lapses from our principles, and we can never take risks that might endanger the precious students entrusted to us. But when great ideas come up that might benefit our network, our students, or those who are poor and suffering, how can we cannot take a risk of trying them, especially if the only risk of failing is will be to*

bruise our own ego a little bit and perhaps lose a little time and money, a small expense against the potential payoff. At least 25 institutions here are named for St. Francis Xavier and every one of your schools invites students to imitate this great Jesuit saint, a man who willingly changed everything, where he lived, how he worked, the languages he spoke: just think how much personal risk this guy took. A tidal wave of change is washing over the world, and now is not the time for us to hang back, a little afraid and unsure. Now is the time to honor this great saint, and other heroes like Ricci, de Nobili, Hurtado, the founder of Hogar de Cristo, Fr. Velaz, the founder of Fe y Alegria and others, by risking the innovations that will sustain our network and its heroic magis for the coming next five centuries.

Before I finish, I want to say something else to you. If you are a plastic surgeon, a shoe shine person, or fix computers, the impact of your work is often visible immediately, and people thank you. But when you teach, your real impact is often realized decades later, and we very rarely return to say thank you. I know that your work is sometimes difficult, uncertain, and lonely, so I just want you to know that we are grateful, even though we don't come around to say it. I have nothing that God didn't give me, and much of what he gave me came through my parents first, and my teachers second.

I hope that you heard in my comments a strong belief that the brand you all inherit is incredibly rich, incredibly powerful, and incredibly relevant to the modern age. I see so many unique strengths in the Jesuit brand, and so many of them fit in so well with crises facing American society in the 21st century. This is your moment. Every pundit that I know of, whether speaking of business, the church, political or civic life, talks about the need for greater leadership. But though we all agree on the need, we can't articulate adequate solutions, in part because we're stuck with this broken idea of leadership that has only to do with status, position in a hierarchical chart, money, or power. Well, those in this room can teach society by the way we do business a unique, principled, and workable model of leadership for the 21st century, based on the notion that everyone leads when role modeling values like those that I've outlined. I asked at the outset the we each think of the names of two or three living leaders, and I hope by now you think of your own name first when I say we need more competent, smart, virtuous people who can role model a way of leading for those who are on our teams, in our companies, and in our communities, by the way we live and work, how we treat our families and work colleagues and clients.