

St. Ignatius Loyola

This educational endeavour is informed by the spirituality and wisdom of the Jesuit founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)

Who was he?

A Basque, and the youngest of thirteen children, whose family were of minor nobility, he took to soldiering as his initial career. He was an intense man, daring and courageous, but given to vanity and glory.

As he recuperated from a severe cannonball injury to his leg, he came to see that his life was being lived for 'self', and that his deepest desires were not being fulfilled. Something was missing. with reluctance, as he lay on his sick bed he read the Life of Christ and stories about some of the saints. The energy and enthusiasm awakened him and brought about a transformation of his life. He left his former life, family and occupation to 'soldier for Christ'.



One of his insights was the discovery that we all have a unique destiny to fulfill, as co-creators with God of His Kingdom. He refined and clarified a number of ways to help people become 'free' of false attachments so as to grow in awareness of their individual destinies. These are called the Spiritual Exercises.

Some central Characteristics of these Exercises can be applied to the Jesuit educational approach. Over the course of four and a half centuries these Characteristics have underlined Jesuit Education. These Characteristics are outlined here, including their application to

education. Jesuit Schools seek to apply these Characteristics in their own place and time. In partnership with teachers, parents, students and past pupils Mission Statements have been formulated.

These Mission Statements provides the reference for strategic planning of school strikers and priorities. Accordingly, schools are developing plans for the next 5-10 years, reviewing all dimensions of school life seeking better ways of making the Characteristics 'real' for the sake of full growth for young people.

Characteristics of Jesuit Education

1. For Saint Ignatius, God is Creator and Lord. He is present in our lives "labouring for us in all things" ... in all natural and human events, in history, and most especially in the lived experience of each person. Jesuit education is a means by which all can discover their destiny in God's image and begin the journey of sanctification. It includes a religious dimension that permeates its whole schooling. God is in all things. All learning and discovery transcend the immediate and evoke wonder and questioning, as well as the ability to learn how to learn.

2. Each person is known and loved personally by God. This love invites a response, and so we begin a search for the destiny and meaning of our lives in freedom and in the company of the other believers. So Jesuit education emphasizes the uniqueness of each person and encourages a life long openness to keep growing ... in search of the will of Him who loves unconditionally.

3. We inherit sin, we commit sin, there is sin in the wrong social structures which oppress. According to Ignatius, with the help of God's grace we are engaged in an ongoing struggle to recognize and overcome the obstacles that block freedom: the effects of sin in its different shades. Jesuit Education then, encourages a realistic knowledge, love and acceptance of self. It provides a realistic knowledge of the world and its structures. it enables students to assess values; those for the Kingdom of Christ, against those which glorify self and selfishness.

4. Jesus Christ is the model of human life. Because of his total response to His father's love and will He was without fault in fulfilling his destiny. Jesus invites us under the standard of the Cross to follow him in responding to the father's love. Jesuit Education then, proposes Christ as the model for life. It provides adequate pastoral care and religious knowledge instruction. It celebrates faith in personal and community prayer, worship and service.

5. Love is not a theory. It is shown in deeds. Ignatius asks that we pay the cost of commitment to the Gospel Way by our actions. Jesuit education then prepares for active life commitment to the values of Jesus Christ. Jesuit education stresses that love of God, which does not issue in love of neighbour is a pious fraud. Our schooling wishes our pupils to be men and women for others who make all the significant decisions "from the perspective of the poor".

6. The Church is the instrument of Christ's grace and salvation through his Sacraments. Jesuit Education then, prepares students for active participation in the Church and the local community for the service of others.

7. Repeatedly Ignatius insisted on 'The Magis' - the more. His constant concern was for greater service of God through a close following of Christ. Jesuit Education pursues excellence in its work of formation and education. The highest standards in all things are to be our unceasing aspiration.

8. Ignatius formed a group of companions who with him gave themselves in service to Christ's Kingdom. A group of friends in the Lord can together be fruitful and life giving. Jesuit education relies on a spirit of co-operation, friendship and community among teaching staff, administrators, Jesuit community, governing and managerial bodies, parents, students, past pupils and benefactors. In the service of the Kingdom, team approaches are preferable to individual endeavors.

9. For Ignatius and his companions the practice of evaluating work and reviewing its "fruit" was very important, as a way of seeing whether efforts were still in accord with God's will and destiny. Jesuit education reviews itself and adapts means and methods to more effectively achieve its purposes. It seeks to promote a system of schools with common aspirations. It provides for professional training and new learning experiences for the different partners in school, especially teachers and administrators.