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IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY: South Asia

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

“To make the best choice in sending persons to one place or another while having the greater service of God and the more universal good before one’s eyes as the guiding norm, it would appear that in the ample vineyard of the Lord one ought to select, other things being equal (and this should be understood in everything that follows), that part of the vineyard which has greater need.” (Const. 622).



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About the cover:

This painting by Fr. Roy Thottam SJ depicts the Ignatian vision at La Storta. At the centre God, the Father, places Ignatius and the SJ, with Christ carrying the Cross. The two hands of the Father indicate blessings and protection (right) and caring and love (left). The clouds symbolize the dynamic movement - God is labouring in all things and at all times. Jesus with his loving gaze receives (is favourable to) Ignatius and all his followers who will be part of His company (Companions of Jesus). The call to be contemplatives in action is indicated by the different colours. The bluish colour indicates contemplation and the yellowish indicates action. The Dove and the Angels signify the divine atmosphere.

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IGNATIAN LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

José María Guibert, SJ

Introduction

In this article I would like to present some reflections about Ignatian leadership in the context of human resource management. The framework of these reflections will be the challenges faced by institutions of the Society of Jesus, although a great deal of what is said here is applicable to other organizations and systems.

In the first part of this article I present the context for this reflection: the challenges related to leadership as they are faced by the Society of Jesus in today's world. Secondly we shall present some characteristics which could be denominated as typically Ignatian when we speak of leadership. Finally the article will speak of some applications related to the management of human resources.

1. Discernment and response to new apostolic necessities:

During the nearly five centuries of its existence, the Society of Jesus has responded to various challenges faced by it – both from

the Church and society at large. The works related to spiritual ministries, education, social work, intellectual work have been adapted and modernized by the Jesuits as the centuries progressed and circumstances kept changing. This brings us to the question: What is the definition of the new context today? I would like to present three areas which are important to the context which envelops the Society of Jesus today.

1.1 Need to respond to global challenges

St. Ignatius constantly defined his mission or the meaning of his life in the *Autobiography* as a call to 'help souls'. This personal journey led to the formation of a group of friends in the Lord leading to the Society of Jesus – a Society which continues to actively consider and formulate challenges for itself. If there is anything which characterizes the texts of the present day Society of Jesus, it is the explicit consideration of global challenges which embrace the whole of humanity.

This happens because we continuously repeat the contemplation of the Incarnation as explained in the Spiritual Exercises which states, "Contemplate... how the three Divine Persons gazed on the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people; and how, seeing that they were all going down into hell, they decide in their eternity that the Second Person should become a human being, in order to save the human race." (SE 102) or because we return and acknowledge that "there is nothing truly human which does not find an echo in the heart of the Christians." (Gaudium et Spes, n.1, 1965)

The challenges we face today are the lack of justice, dignity, equality or freedom. The world has improved in some areas, but we still have problems and great needs such as: reconciliation with creation, environmental concerns, support for migrants, forced displacement; religious fundamentalism, interreligious conflicts;

inequality, lack of equity in incomes and economic injustices, poverty; increasing militarism, terrorism, violence; racism and lack of harmonious living, ethnicity, classes and casteism; erosion of democracy and corruption; danger of compromising on minority rights and marginalized groups; denial of basic rights such as access to food, housing, health, education, employment, etc.

In addition to these various contexts we find the manifestation of atheism and extreme secularization, which negate the experience and reflection of those who believe. This makes it difficult for the growth of faith, a sacramental life or a sense of belonging to an ecclesial community. Added to this, problems of sexual abuse or poor economic planning as well as other perversions of clericalism and divisions which are ideological, theological and ecclesiological in nature lead to the Church's credibility being diminished.

The various problems that we face make us aware that the problems of the world are connected among themselves. We also realize that the challenges are so great and complex that we cannot search for individual solutions. In a world which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) we have an example of the universal awareness of the need to work together in the 17 Objectives of Sustainable Development defined by the United Nations in 2015 as "Agenda 2030".

1.2 The Need to Renovate the Forms of Governance

The second element of our present context is a growing awareness within the Society of Jesus that its governance needs to pay attention once again to past global challenges. The last few General Congregations of the Society of Jesus have highlighted leadership and governance as priorities for renovation: "Governance at the service of the universal mission" (GC 35, 2008), "a renewed governance for a renewed mission" (GC 36, 2016).

This reflection is an invitation to give a new importance to some of the classical dimensions of Jesuit governance structures which have been organized from the perspective of mission. It is necessary that they are now conceived from the perspective of universality (renewing the supra-national character of the Society's governance because the institutions and provinces are not isolated entities); they need to be agile, modern and flexible. This is in fact keeping with our tradition which highlights the necessity to attend to needs "according to persons, times and places" (Const. 64)

There is a greater awareness of the universal mission and search for the greater good (Const. 615). For this there is need to redefine the various levels of governance (subsidiarity), networking and collaboration in order to arrive at new forms of efficiently sharing material and human resources.

The new challenges require new forms of governance. The Society has pointed out that these new forms of governance be able to express 'the Ignatian values and way of proceeding'. In effect we need to progress in clarifying "how to exercise governance in a manner which continues to be genuinely Ignatian" (GC 35, D.5/1). We need to see how to integrate "Ignatian values" and "our way of proceeding" and how this affects our life and work.

Concretely, the 35th GC explicitly considered working on the question related to Ignatian leadership. Later GC 36 included and integrated elements such as apostolic planning, discernment in common, collaboration and networking. There has been a search for new processes of discernment, decision making and allocation of resources.

There are consistent attempts to creatively achieve a goal. Every time there are more experiences of fraternal discernment regarding apostolic priorities, periodical meetings, personal

accompaniment, solidarity, availability, encouragement, shared wisdom, etc. We can mention new challenges which include collegiality, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. Among various new structures, networks and commissions it is good to remember that what is apostolic has a personal dimension – it is not merely ideological or theological. The 35th GC wanted to remind us that Ignatian governance is ‘personal, spiritual and apostolic’.

In this context we can see that during these years, leadership of an institution, especially in the case of Jesuit institutions requires that they are aligned to the plans of apostolic sectors, the projects of the province which in turn are in harmony with the universal apostolic preferences of the Order. On the other hand, those who offer leadership in taking forward these plans of sectors or provinces need to understand the realities of institutions and persons. They should avoid plans which are good on paper or are merely exercises which fall prey to a perfectionism which is impossible to attain.

We also have experiences of growth and learning in the following areas: programs of ongoing formation, shared research, new challenges related to *cura apostolica* for superiors and directors, empowering responsible persons at different levels; new ways of taking decisions and discernments; rethinking the chain of command, subsidiarity and delegation of authority; rethinking the understanding of centralization, going beyond national frontiers; unlearn individual styles of functioning; go beyond merely technical existence and apply Ignatian principals while taking decisions; paying attention to different points of view and ideologies in order to foment social transformation and searching for ways by which we look at the world from the perspective of the poor and marginalized.

1.3 Need to renew Ignatian leadership through collaboration

In the last three decades we have witnessed an increase in the number of lay collaborators who are deeply committed to the mission of the Society: “Collaboration in mission has resulted in various blessings for the apostolate and the Society of Jesus” (GC 35, D.6/15). This is not to say that collaborators did not exist earlier, because from the very beginning of the Society of Jesus there have always been collaborators.

Until a short time ago, Ignatian leadership was pre-eminently Jesuitic with most Ignatian leaders being Jesuits or religious who belonged to different religious congregations. However this has changed and today the scenario is different. Men and women collaborate with Jesuits in the mission of the Society of Jesus in various tasks, even in the task of leadership. Many persons who are not Jesuits are animating and inspiring Jesuit works and in this way assuming in new ways a shared mission.

Till recently, the Jesuits who shared a process of formation (novitiate, life in common, study of the *Constitutions*, practice of the *Spiritual Exercises*) lived many a times a way of life which was instinctive or intuitive as against a more deliberate way of proceeding. They also had a similar vocabulary which included a specific style of leadership. (Broscombe)

In the case of persons who are lay Ignatian leaders, their approximation of the charism is less structured. It is no longer sufficient to have certain unplanned ‘osmosis’. Rather we need other structures. There are now various formation courses, the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* and sharing of the mission and values, etc. At times they are technically more competent in organizing resources. However, we must also at the onset point out that it is not always clear what the Society expects of them when they are asked to be collaborators in the *Missio Dei*

by being offered leadership in Jesuit institutions. The Society needs to clarify about what it wants of the non-Jesuits in its works. On their part, lay persons have an occasion to reflect upon their identity and vocation as collaborators in a greater mission.

This has taken place due to the precarious reality within the Society of Jesus as far as number of vocations are concerned. At the same time it is part of the explicit invitation made to persons inviting them towards a participation in leadership tasks, in accordance with the emphasis placed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The lack of Jesuits leads to a new way of understanding the mission and its leadership. Shared leadership is a new style of exercising authority; and it is part of a new identity and way of realizing the mission. It is an opportunity so that God's activity continues.

All this deals with options which are theological and ecclesiological (how can we be Church) rather than efficiency and pragmatism (how to achieve greater fruits and how our institutions can survive). The spirit of collaboration has resulted in this new and important concept.

The same happens when we think of collaboration with persons of other faiths: it opens a new way of understanding mission. Something analogous takes place through cooperation with other groups of civil society: there is a search for new forms in order to unite forces between Jesuits, other ecclesiastical units, other organizations and public administration. Collaboration is our way of proceeding in order to respond to the challenges which are constantly more universal and common. We lose certain autonomy, certain exclusivity, but gain in terms of permeating and influencing in a new way the society and culture we live in.

2. Uniting Ignatian values and Leadership:

Leadership is an area of learning which is a growing field of study. It is valued for its functionality of direction – a functionality which is more relevant with each passing day. There are various tools which help sharpen the different abilities related to this area and all of them are significant: this could include personal abilities (styles of leadership, emotional intelligence, etc.), it could include social and interpersonal abilities (accompanying and coaching, listening, dealing with conflicts, communicative abilities, selection of personnel, etc.) or they could be strategic abilities (planning, management of change, etc.). Leadership understood in a generic form is a discipline that is growing as a subject matter of research. Ignatian leadership can and should take advantage of what the management of organizations, psychology and even neuro-science has to offer. However, we also need to keep in mind that there are specific aspects of these disciplines and practices which these fields (though very valuable in themselves) cannot offer much in enhancing the understanding of Ignatian leadership.

Human values and personal qualities are admirable and need to be safeguarded. However the coherence within the Ignatian style is more than this. One needs to know how to distinguish these administrative tasks as well as the management of resources from the task of leadership or the tasks of the 'spirit'. This needs to be done without devaluing them or comparing one with the other. This needs to be done without making distinctions which discredit any one: for example those who engage in work which is hidden are dedicated to 'material' works and hence have lower value as against those who work in areas which are more prominent, creative, innovative or charismatic as being dedicated to work which is more 'spiritual' and seen as something more superior. Technical and professional abilities can be acquired and cultivated, but a specific orientation to one of them is the distinctive characteristic and can truly be called Ignatian.

Ignatius and the first companions read the signs of the times and responded meaningfully to it. Today we are called to do the same. In the area of management of persons and institutions there are certain Ignatian principles which can be of help. In the subsequent paragraphs that follow we shall try to re-discover some values from the Ignatian sources and tradition which can enlighten us today in the task of leadership.

2.1 *Jesus as a model*

Jesus is a model of servant leadership. He was a person with a discerning vision, an exemplary model and led by example. He constituted a team with himself and invested a great deal of energy in empowering them. Jesus criticized other models of leadership which focused on the power of law and money. He was concerned about the weak and marginalized. It was not a leadership of ordering and dictating, rather a leadership oriented towards a mission of reconciliation.

Jesus continued the prophetic tradition. He was aware of his times and responded to his context by drawing upon the memory of the past and having a futuristic vision. His leadership was not undertaken with individualistic ends, but in solidarity with his own people and by assuming the social and religious realities that defined the life of the people.

We consider ourselves and feel that we are servants of the mission of Christ and search for ways of working with Him “in the reestablishment of our relationship with God, with others and the whole of creation” (GC 35, D.3/18). We want to love as He loved (Jn. 13,34). We desire to be the light of world (Mt. 5,14). The source of our leadership is the life of Christ, our relationship with Him.

2.2 *Way of proceeding*

In the Jesuit tradition there is a unique way of proceeding in matters of governance and leadership which takes care of elements such as unity of governance and subsidiarity. The attention to persons in their personal and vocational development (*cura personalis*) as well as care regarding the apostolic works or integration in institutions (*cura apostolica*) are tasks which need to be well aligned. Uniting the divine and human, the universal with the particular or concrete, the ideal and the real takes actual form (becomes incarnate) among the Jesuits by means of the bond of obedience. We need to know how to translate this experience to the world of the laity with other bonds – many times through the means of labour contracts.

In our style of leadership we desire that persons should never become mere instruments. We believe that God works through persons and hence we foster accompaniment and friendship. A person who is a leader needs to take care of the union of souls (Const. 666). The ‘office of consoler’ of the disciple (SE 224) is a profound means to consider an important characteristic of the mission, which consists in discovering God in reality, in persons, in the present and laboring for all.

Our spirituality which is adaptive and with a tradition of dialogue with the world constantly takes us to the frontiers with the spirit of constant improvement (the magis) – going beyond the known and existing reality; overcoming a challenge when one reaches it and then progressing further. In this way we respond to the invitation to discover new horizons in order to better serve the mandate of faith and justice. The spirit of the magis (SE, 23) leads us to discern our apostolic priorities and search for means to make these priorities more effective.

2.3 Leaders with values

- Persons with a Spiritual Life

The first characteristic that appears in the list that Ignatius expects of a person who becomes a leader of the Jesuits is his friendship with God; “closely united with God our Lord and familiarity in prayer and all its operations” (Const. 723). If the Society of Jesus understands itself as the work of God, one needs to be capable of ‘managing’ this religious intuition, live in an enlightened manner, actualize it and make it part of one’s own life. The management of these internal operations and personal options is the first requisite.

If one is a person of prayer, if one is a contemplative in action, if one sees in the other the image of God (Const. 250), if one practices discernment and seeks to personally follow the internal movements of the Spirit; only then will it be possible to share and help other persons and entities (groups, institutions, etc.) to walk on this particular path. The union with God, allows God who is the source of all good, obtain through the leader the same grace for all those who belong to the body/institution.

- Discerning Persons

Discernment is more than strategic planning. One seeks to find the presence of sin or grace or the call of God. One seeks to know the Lord and follow Him more closely (Pope Francis) by continually seeking that which is good. Discernment is a constant search for that which is good wherein one is motivated by charity (*discreta caritas*) (Const. 582). It stimulates change and innovation and constantly leads to the question about what one ought to do (*quid agendum*), (Auto. 50). Discernment unites the mind and heart. We use our intelligence to know where the heart is centred. It is thus an operative wisdom which manifests itself in prudence

(Const. 729). Thus the centering on a spirit which is practical results in love being manifested more in works than in words (SE 230). This in turn leads to a fruitfulness which goes beyond mere theory or only contemplation.

In keeping with the signs of the times, we find ourselves called to depth through deliberation and discernment in common. This implies spiritual conversation; having trust and confidence, overcoming the insecurity of sharing one’s weaknesses, self image and being judged; knowing the perspectives of one another; allowing change; being open to experiences and judgements of others. This is spiritual openness, whereby we see the consolations of each person and the means by which God gives joy and light to each person.

This process needs time, prayer and a method. It requires persons with great understanding and judgment for discerning and advising, persons who are intelligent, cultured and prudent. They are persons for whom discernment is part of their personal lives. Such persons are able to contemplate the work of God in the world (SE 23; 236). They can unite their personal efforts with the divine plan and can enter into a dialectic between tradition as revealed in Jesus with the contemporary situations in order to interpret and evaluate the will of God in today’s world. In this way they discover and continually redefine the *magis*. (SE 149)

- Humble persons

Love leads to a lifestyle which entails having humility as an important value. In the meditation of the ‘two standards’ (SE 136-147) we have two paths which are opposed to each – though they do not always appear contrary. The first path of riches, honor and pride could at times seem reasonable, at least the first two (riches and honor). We always need human means/materials as well as certain legitimacy/credibility when referring of a quality work

which has been well done. However, Ignatius points out that it could have subtle deceptions in the form of pride. A person could end up focusing on oneself or one's success while putting aside other ends which are more noble and rooted in genuine solidarity. This is why the alternative path of poverty, reproaches/insults and humility with Christ poor and humble is proposed as the way of true life. Ignatian leadership makes us aware that the true path one is called to tread is one of humility.

This ultimately makes us become more authentic. When Ignatius describes the characteristics for one who is to be the General of the Society of Jesus, one of the characteristics he indicates is that the person should be a person for others: "be a person whose example in all the virtues will be a help to the other members of the Society." (Const. 725). Being exemplary is a virtue that is demanded more and more from our leaders. In the history of the Society of Jesus, it has always been a very important characteristic of the person who has been the leader. This does not mean that the person has to be an expert, but needs to be a reference, with genuine 'charity and humility' (Const. 282). One will thus be friendly towards God and one's companions.

In order to be such a person it is necessary to have interior freedom. An important characteristic is in knowing one's own passions and being capable of dealing with it in a manner dignified, without self deceptions and with freedom (Const. 726). In the Spiritual Exercises an exercitant seeks this interior freedom, from the very first paragraphs which speak of 'making oneself indifferent' (SE 23). Despite encountering some disordered or sinful affection within one's life, one learns not to lose hope but on the contrary to persevere in service by the grace of God. One searches in love, a continual personal renovation by learning to know oneself: or be they one's prejudices, insecurities, resistances; be they strengths and capacities. Knowing oneself will allow one to combine

cordiality with efficiency, kindness with severity, magnanimity with strength of spirit and constancy.

- *Persons who are in solidarity with the rest of creation:*

Understanding ourselves as part of creation is something which is fomented explicitly in the encyclical *Laudato Si*. We find this same point being stressed in some sections of the Spiritual Exercises. It is not enough to administer natural resources of the world at large in an ethical manner, but to feel part of it. We therefore need a spiritual vision which is more than merely managing resources or reflecting upon it as an ethical matter (SE 60).

God sustains and accompanies us. We are not speaking of an old understand of *creatio exnihilio*, in which God created the world once and for all and set it in motion like the theory of the 'big bang', but a new understanding where God engages creation in a *creatio continua*. According to this we feel that God gives us life, love and being (SE 235-237). A leader needs to help others to feel that all of us are part of one same nature. That which unites us is much more than what can separate.

3. Challenges for human resource management

The last part of this article deals with some concrete applications in the area of human resource management. We can understand that if in these pages an attempt has been made to point out some of the challenges facing Ignatian leadership in today's world – be it from the context we find ourselves or be it from what is explicitly Ignatian, it is because we consider it a good frame of reference in order to understand the management of persons within an organization. Just as the Spiritual Exercises have been shared among various persons and adapted to various circumstances as a way of personal conversion, it is now time to go deeper by dealing with something that has a more corporate character – i.e. the

Constitutions. There is need to translate the intuitions available in the Constitutions to make it more accessible for the laity and present it in contexts which are multicultural and multi religious.

The main challenge from an Ignatian point vis-à-vis management of persons is to involve all the persons of an organization towards accepting a certain style, culture and options as indicated in the earlier paragraphs. The challenge is not only administration or management of human resources but much more. In fact even the use of the term 'human resources' may not necessarily reflect the fact that persons are the center of an institution.

According to the Ignatian understanding, an institution is not for the benefit of its collaborators or workers, but for a mission which goes beyond ourselves; transforming society in a manner which is humane, in solidarity, with justice and according to the values of the Gospel. Our end is not to take advantage of an institutions, but to ensure that the institution serves some definite ends. The institution is not a center of charity for those who work in it. At the same time it is evident that the institution needs to treat its personnel well, and not merely comply with the law in place but treat them on the basis of ethical values which ensures the development of people.

The various levels of the organization have to see the manner in which all can participate in discernment and institutional planning. For this its persons have to search for ways of personalizing the Jesuit mission. It is not enough for an institution to 'proclaim values', but also be a sign and hope of the values it desires to proclaim: a world which is just, happy, equal, where each person and each group can progress and express the fullness of its identity.

Persons and the internal structure of each Jesuit institution need to think of a common project with other Jesuit institutions. It

is an integral part of a mission which is normally planned and discerned within a Jesuit Province. The institution needs to be accompanied by the Society and by the Ignatian family. Lay persons who are more involved in the mission will find it helpful to share their role as lay persons in a Jesuit work with lay persons of other distinct works. They have new challenges and have to generate or invent new pathways.

An adequate management of persons is an invitation to persons to move from being a 'human resource' to becoming part of an 'apostolic subject'. It is an invitation to a new style of sharing and living the mission. Evidently this is done by respecting the personal options, beliefs and rights of each person. A person is invited to creatively personalize one's commitment to the mission from the distinct vocations and personal options.

Every person is responsible to see to it that the organization is sustainable over time. This refers to the organizational dimension as well as the financial part. Moreover, one has to collaborate to make the organization sustainable in aspects related to mission and identity by constantly renewing the responses which arise to the various needs. Very often the major obstacle in the process of innovation are persons themselves. It is difficult to change and due to our insecurity we are stuck to what we are and have. At the same time we are also the active principle and potentiality within an organization.

Therefore there is need to look for ways of personal growth in Ignatian spirituality, in interiority, in ways of living our commitment, and in nourishing our interior life. In the same way, in the case of persons who are leaders, it would be good to aid them in the management of stress, tensions, burnouts and overexertion. Everyone needs to generate the necessary space for dialogue. For those who are more involved in matters related to the identity of Jesuits, they need to pay special attention in

seeking moments of prayer in order to deliberate and discern in common – more importantly in the middle of works which are often very stressful. We want to see God in everything, even in our work. Fomenting the capacity of collaboration, of discernment in common and apostolic planning is a pattern of growth and leads to improvement in the Ignatian identity, thus significantly aiding and enhancing our Jesuit institutions.

Translated by Francis Pundhicherry SJ