

Summary

O'Malley, John W. "Ignatius of Loyola" (c.1491–1556)." In *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History*, 99-116. Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2013.

CHAPTER 7. IGNATIUS'S SPECIAL "WAY OF PROCEEDING"

This chapter explores the originality of **Ignatius of Loyola's spirituality and leadership style**, which often broke with traditional models of medieval sainthood. While contemporaries, such as Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, described him as a typical saint of the time (pious, austere, and focused on discipline), the author argues that such portrayals overlooked what made Ignatius distinctive and especially relevant for modern times. That is, his **"special way of proceeding"¹** combined spiritual depth with practicality, moderation, and a worldly orientation that served the **common good**.

Main Ideas:

1. Moving Beyond the traditional Image of a Saint

- **Conventional sainthood (medieval model)** emphasised detachment from the world, severe austerities, and mystical prayer.
- Luís Gonçalves da Câmara's notes (*Remembering Iñigo*) portrayed Ignatius in this way, but overlooked what made him distinctive.
- **Ignatius's originality**: rather than rejecting the world, he engaged with it. His sanctity was "worldly" in the best sense—he integrated spirituality with effective organisation, leadership, and public action.

2. Public Relations and Fundraising: The Pragmatic Side of Holiness

- Ignatius encouraged Jesuits to share not only religious results but also **scientific, cultural, and geographical information** in letters.
- These reports were circulated to **attract interest and support**, counter misinformation, and strengthen the reputation of the Society of Jesus.
- Ignatius personally sought benefactors, planned ambitious building projects, and **validated the role of fundraising in sustaining the mission**.

3. Moderation and Care for Health

- Early in his conversion, Ignatius practised extreme penances. Over time, he came to see these as counterproductive. Therefore, unlike saints who practised harsh austerities, **Ignatius promoted balance and well-being**.
- In the Jesuit Constitutions² St. Ignatius insisted on moderation in food, rest, and prayer. He required institutions to provide medical care for students and

¹ A Jesuit expression meaning the characteristic spiritual, educational, and organisational approach developed by Ignatius of Loyola and his companions. It reflects their balance of prayer, discernment, and practical action in the service of others.

² Constitutions: The foundational governing text of the Jesuits, mainly written by Ignatius, combining spiritual principles with practical guidelines for community life, education, and mission.

faculty, **showing a concern for human well-being that was unusual in his time.**

4. Humanistic Education and the Common Good

- Jesuit schools emphasised classical humanist learning³, not only theology, believing Greek and Roman texts conveyed moral lessons compatible with Christianity.
- Education was viewed as a means to cultivate both virtuous Christians and capable civic leaders. The goal was to form not just priests, but also **civic leaders, administrators, and professionals** who would serve the common good.
- For instance, the letter of Juan Alfonso de Polanco, SJ, 1551, described education as enabling works of social assistance (hospitals, orphanages) and promoting the welfare of families.

5. St. Ignatius' "Way of Proceeding"

- Ignatius offered a **new model of holiness**, one that is not a retreat from the world, but rather active engagement in it. A model of sanctity rooted in spiritual discernment, balance, and social engagement.
- His **"way of proceeding"** meant a practical spirituality combining deep faith with organisational effectiveness. The author states that Ignatius's uniqueness lay in showing that holiness and institutional leadership are compatible.
- This originality enriched Catholic tradition by showing that holiness can be lived in different, contextually relevant forms.

Mind Map:

Traditional Image of Saints (Medieval Model)



Ignatius's Break with Tradition

- **Public Relations & Fundraising:** promoted the Society's image, wrote letters highlighting both spiritual and worldly matters, and sought benefactors for schools and churches.
- **Moderation & Care for the Body:** moved away from extreme penances, emphasised health, balance, and reasonable discipline.
- **Adoption of Humanistic Education:** prioritised classical learning (Greek and Roman texts), forming not only priests but also civic leaders and administrators.



³ Humanistic Education: A Renaissance approach centred on classical literature, philosophy, and rhetoric, believed to form not only eloquence but also morally valuable character for both religious and civic leadership.

Outcome: A New Model of Sanctity

- Practical holiness rooted in engagement with society.
- Education and institutions serving the **common good**.
- A distinctive Jesuit **way of proceeding** that blended spirituality, humanism, and institutional leadership.

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