

“The Idea of the Catholic University in the 21st Century”

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ABSTRACT:

Intellectual Virtue in Ignatian Education

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Intellectual virtue plays a prominent role in many Catholic educational traditions, but its significance is often not fully appreciated in the context of Catholic higher education. In this paper, I examine how intellectual virtue can shed new light on the distinctive mission of one well-known Catholic educational tradition—namely, the Ignatian tradition. The paper has two primary objectives. First, I argue that the concepts and vocabulary of *eudaimonia* (or human flourishing) and intellectual virtue can help to clarify some of the most important themes and emphases of the Ignatian educational tradition. These themes and emphases include attention to experience, vocational discernment, *magis*, humane learning and development of the whole person, evangelism, service and justice, and *eloquentia perfecta*. Second, I argue that this virtue-theoretic way of understanding the Ignatian educational heritage can also help us to appreciate how the distinctive charism of the Society of Jesus informs the aims of Jesuit education. I do this by offering a brief comparison of the virtues emphasized in Jesuit contexts with those emphasized in Catholic institutions sponsored by other orders, especially the Benedictines. Although the paper focuses on illuminating the Ignatian tradition, it also provides a more general model or “recipe” for understanding the distinctive features of any Christian educational tradition in terms of intellectual virtue. The paper reflects my own disciplinary expertise in philosophy, while also drawing on resources from intellectual history and theology. Because it’s ultimately aimed at anyone with an interest in Christian higher education, I’ve made an effort to keep it as non-technical as possible.