

Marek Inglot SJ

ORCID: 0000-0002-4504-5638
Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome

***Ad quascumque provincias nos
mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur.***
**The *ad gentes* Missions and the Origins
of the Society of Jesus**

**Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere
voluerint, exsequi teneamur. Misje *ad gentes*
i początki Towarzystwa Jezusowego**

Abstract

This article examines the origins of the Society of Jesus in the context of its early missionary orientation, as articulated in the Formula of the Institute (1540) and subsequently developed in the Constitutions. It argues that the defining characteristics of the Jesuit order – availability, mobility, and universal mission – were already present in the foundational vision of Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions. The study traces the emergence of a global apostolic project grounded in obedience to the papacy and readiness to be sent *ad quascumque provincias*. Particular attention is given to the development of the *ad gentes* missions as a central dimension of Jesuit identity, as well as to the institutional transformations – especially the establishment of colleges – that shaped the Society’s activity in the early modern world. By situating these processes within the broader historical and theological framework of the sixteenth century, the article

highlights the dynamic interplay between missionary expansion, educational structures, and the evolving self-understanding of the Jesuits as both a teaching and a missionary order.

Keywords: Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola, Jesuit missions, *ad gentes* missions, early modern Catholicism, Jesuit education, missionary identity.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje początki Towarzystwa Jezusowego w kontekście jego wczesnej orientacji misyjnej, wyrażonej w Formule Instituti (1540) i rozwiniętej następnie w Konstytucjach. Autor dowodzi, że zasadnicze cechy zakonu jezuickiego – dyspozycyjność, mobilność oraz uniwersalny charakter misji – były już obecne w pierwotnej wizji Ignacego Loyoli i jego pierwszych towarzyszy. Studium ukazuje wyłanianie się globalnego projektu apostołskiego, opartego na posłuszeństwie wobec papieża oraz gotowości do bycia posłanym *ad quascumque provincias*. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono rozwojowi misji *ad gentes* jako centralnego wymiaru tożsamości jezuitów, a także przemianom instytucjonalnym – zwłaszcza powstawaniu kolegiów – które ukształtowały działalność Towarzystwa w epoce wczesnonowoczesnej. Umieszczając te procesy w szerszym kontekście historycznym i teologicznym XVI wieku, artykuł ukazuje dynamiczne współoddziaływanie ekspansji misyjnej, struktur edukacyjnych oraz ewoluującego rozumienia własnej tożsamości jezuitów jako zakonu zarówno nauczającego, jak i misyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: Towarzystwo Jezusowe, Ignacy Loyola, misje jezuickie, misje *ad gentes*, katolicyzm wczesnonowoczesny, edukacja jezuicka, tożsamość misyjna.

The first part of the title of this article derives from the *Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus*,¹ approved and confirmed by Pope Paul III in the Apostolic Letter *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*,

1 *Les Constitutions de la Compagnie de Jésus annotées par la 34e Congrégation Générale et Normes Complémentaires approuvées par la même Congrégation (= C)* (Paris, 1997), 5–18 (official text: *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu a Congregationi Generali XXXIV annotatae et Normae Complementariae ab eadem Congregatione approbatae* [Romae: apud Curiam Praepositi Generalis Societatis Iesu, 1995], 3–16). English translation follows: *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

dated 27 September 1540,² whereby the Society of Jesus received papal approval.³ By this pontifical act, the foundation of Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions became a religious order. Nevertheless, the Society of Jesus was not an order in the traditional sense: the Holy See approved and confirmed a radically new form of life, that is, an apostolic body which – in order to attain its purpose – adopted a manner of life unknown to the religious traditions common to other religious orders. And this purpose was the greater service of God, for the greater glory of God. By the will of its founders – the first companions all bearing the title of co-founders – this new order bound itself in a very special manner to the Apostolic See through a vow of particular obedience to the Holy Father in all matters pertaining to mission (*circa missiones*). The men who formed the Society of Jesus (“Whoever wishes to serve [...] in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus” [F I, 1]). They were soon called “Jesuits”, though the term was initially understood in a pejorative sense. In the course of time, however, they themselves appropriated this designation, even though in the official documents of the Society the term appears only in 1975.⁴

The words of the *Formula of the Institute* express the obedience of the Jesuits and their readiness to carry out whatever the Supreme Pontiff may command “with regard to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith” (F II, 3). Moreover, the text expresses the universality of the Society: the Jesuits are ready to go anywhere in the world in order to realise this ideal. Taken in their entirety, the Formula states:

2 *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, vol. I (Florentiae: Ex Typographia a Ss. Conceptione, 1886–1891), 1–5.

3 The Formula of the Institute is to the Jesuits what the Rule is for other religious orders. The Formula of 1540 (= F I) was somewhat revised in the light of experience in 1550 (= F II), and incorporated into a second Apostolic Letter, *Exposcit debitum*, issued by Pope Julius III on 21 July 1550, to confirm the Society.

The official Latin text states: “Et quamvis Evangelio doceamur, et fide orthodoxa cognoscamus, ac firmiter profiteamur omnes Christi fideles Romano Pontifici, tamquam Capiti ac Iesu Christi Vicario, subesse; (...) summopere conducere iudicavimus, singulos nos, ultra illud comune vinculum, speciali voto adstringi, ita ut, quidquid modernus et alii Romani Pontifices pro tempore existentes iusserint, ad profectum animarum et fidei propagationem pertinens, et ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, sine ulla tergiversatione aut excusatione, illico, quantum in nobis fuerit, exsequi teneamur; sive miserint nos ad Turcas, sive ad quoscumque alios infideles, etiam in partibus, quas Indias vocant, existentes, sive ad quoscumque haereticos, seu schismaticos, seu quosvis fideles” [our emphasis – M. I.] (F I, 3).

4 Feliciano Delgado, *Jesuita*, in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana* (= DEI), ed. José García de Castro Valdés (Bilbao–Santander: Mensajero–Sal Terrae, 2007), 1077–1080.

All the members should know not only when they first make their profession, but daily, as long as they live, that this entire Society, and each one individually are campaigning for God under faithful obedience to His Holiness [the pope] and to the other Roman Pontiffs, who will succeed him. And although the Gospel teaches us, we know from orthodox faith and firmly profess that all the faithful in Christ are subject to the Roman Pontiff as to their head and the vicar of Jesus Christ, still, for the greater humility of our Society and the perfect mortification of each one of us and the abnegation of our own wills, we have judged that it is of the greatest profit to us to go beyond the ordinary obligations and bind ourselves by a special vow, so that whatever the present Roman Pontiff and others to come will wish to command us with regard to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith, or wherever he may be pleased to send us to any regions whatsoever, we will obey at once, without subterfuge or excuse, as far as in us lies. We pledge to do this whether he sends us among the Turks or to other infidels, even to the land they call India, or to any heretics or schismatics, or to any of the faithful (F II, 3).⁵

This ideal was later be taken up and translated into concrete norms and institutional provisions in the Seventh Part of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*.⁶ The Constitutions were elaborated by Ignatius over several year, until his death in 1556, and were approved by the First General Congregation in 1558.⁷ This Part deals with “what the members need to observe” when they labor in *vineam Christi* (nos. 603–654)]. Its first chapter, entitled “Missions from the Supreme Pontiff” treats of

what the members of the Society need to observe in regard to their neighbor (which is end eminently characteristic of our Institute)⁸, when they are

5 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*, 7.

6 Brian O’Leary, *Sent into the Lord’s Vineyard: Explorations in the Jesuit Constitutions* (Oxford: Way Books, 2012).

7 The 34th General Congregation of 1995 approved and promulgated the entire set of the “Complementary Norms of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus” (= CN), drawn largely from the Decrees of previous General Congregations that have not been abrogated or modified. They retain their proper value as explanations, guidelines, or sources of inspiration. Arranged in parallel with the structure of the Constitutions, they are intended to encourage and promote an ever more perfect observance of the Constitutions and of the whole Institute of the Society. By the will of the 34th General Congregation, they are and will always be published in one and the same volume together with the “Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus” and the “Constitutions of the Society of Jesus”, in the form annotated by the 34th General Congregation. See: *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*

8 By the term “Institute of the Society of Jesus” one means either the Jesuits’ distinctive way of life and action, or the written documents that present it in an official and legitimate form. Among these documents, some are formal laws, while others inspire

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

dispersed throughout Christ's vinyard to labor in that part of it and in that work which have been entrusted to them.

Saint Ignatius declares:

[...] whether they have been sent to some places or others by either the supreme vicar of Christ our Lord or the superiors of the Society, who for them are similarly in the place of his Divine Majesty; or whether they themselves choose where and in what work they will labor, having been commissioned to travel to any place where they judge that greater service of God and the good of souls will follow; or whether they carry on their labor not by traveling but by residing steadily and continually in certain places where much fruit of glory and service to God is expected. And to treat the missions from His Holiness first as being most important, it should be observed that the vow which the Society made to obey him as the supreme vicar of Christ without any excuse meant that the members were to go to any place where he judges it expedient to send them for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, whether among the faithful or unbelievers. The Society did not mean the vow for a particular place, but rather for being dispersed to various regions and places throughout the world, wishing to make the best choice in this matter by having the sovereign pontiff make the distribution of its members (C. 603).⁹

Even if the initial intentions of Ignatius and his companions did not coincide entirely with those articulated in the *Formula of the Institute* – as will be shown below – availability and universality were, and continue to be, defining characteristics of the Jesuits.

The new foundation was the work of a converted Basque nobleman, Íñigo de Loyola (born in 1491), and his companions: Pierre Favre, Francisco de Xavier, Nicolás Bobadilla, Simão Rodrigues, and Diego Laínez

or shed light on Ignatian spirituality, the Jesuit manner of proceeding, or refer to the sound traditions of the Society (NC, 7–23).

- 9 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*, 276. See also: “The intention of the fourth vow pertaining to the pope was not for a particular place but for having the members dispersed throughout the various parts of the world. For those who first united to form the Society were from different provinces and realms and did not know into which regions they were to go, whether among the faithful or the unbelievers; and therefore, to avoid erring in the path of the Lord, they made the promise or vow in order that His Holiness might distribute them for the greater glory of God, in conformity with their intention to travel throughout the world and, when they could not find the desired spiritual fruit in one place, to pass on to another and another, ever seeking the greater glory of God our Lord and the greater aid of souls” (C. 605), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*, 276–277.

and Alfonso Salmerón, the latter two likewise from Castile.¹⁰ They gathered around Íñigo in Paris, where he pursued his studies from 1528 to 1534. His various experiences, beginning with his conversion in 1521, strengthened his conviction that a more solid intellectual formation was necessary. Consequently, he first undertook preparatory studies in Latin at Barcelona (from mid-February 1524), and then pursued higher studies at Alcalá de Henares and Salamanca. In February 1528, at the age of thirty-seven, he arrived in Paris. In 1529, he enrolled in the Faculty of Arts (*artes liberales*) and Latinized his name as “Ignatius.” A few years later, in Italy, he would use the name Ignatius of Loyola in all official documents, while continuing to retain the name Íñigo in private.¹¹

The companions, moved by a common ideal – namely, that of serving “our Lord” – soon formed a group of “friends in the Lord.” Their desire was to go to the Holy Land and there, following the example of Jesus Christ, to preach the Gospel while living in absolute poverty. This desire they expressed in the form of a vow professed on 15 August 1534 in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady (also known as the *Sanctum Martyrium*) on the hill of Montmartre in Paris. In addition to the vows of chastity and poverty, they made a vow “to journey to Jerusalem”. Quite soon – still in Paris – several others joined the original seven companions, namely Paschase Broët, Jean Codure, and Claude Jay. They associated themselves with the first group by likewise taking part in the second renewal of the Montmartre vows on 15 August 1536. These ten companions formed the group of co-founders of the Society of Jesus.¹²

10 On the origins of the Society of Jesus, see, among others: Georg Schurhammer, *Franz Xaver. Sein Leben und seine Zeit*, vol. I: *Europa (1506–1541)* (Freiburg: Herder, 1955); André Ravier, *Ignace de Loyola fonde la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1974); Cándido de Dalmasas, *El padre maestro Ignacio: breve biografía ignaciana* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1979); Ricardo García-Villoslada, *San Ignacio de Loyola: nueva biografía* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1986), 343–467; John W. O’Malley, *Les premiers jésuites. 1540–1565* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Bellarmine, 1999; original edition: *The First Jesuits* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993]; Javier Burrieza Sánchez, *Los días de la Compañía de Jesús: un retrato histórico de sus orígenes*, “Estudios Eclesiásticos” 82 (2007): 201–234.

11 Gabriel María Verd, *De Íñigo a Ignacio. El cambio de nombre en san Ignacio de Loyola*, “Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu” (= AHSI) 60 (1991): 113–160.

12 All ten of the first companions have extensive biographical entries in the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús. Biográfico-temático* (= DHCI), eds. Charles E. O’Neill, Joaquín María Domínguez, vol. I–IV (Roma–Madrid: Institutum Historicum, 2001) and in the *DEI*. For the lives of the nine companions of Ignatius of Loyola, see also: AHSI 59 (1990): 185–344. For Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmerón, we would also like to point out: William Bangert, *Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmerón* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); Marek Inglot, “*Hosii amicus*”. *Alfons Salmerón – pierwszy jezuita w Polsce*, in *Kardynał Stanisław Hozjusz (1504–1579). Osoba, myśl, dzieło, czas*,

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

Having found themselves unable – because of a war in the Mediterranean – to realize their plan of going to the Holy Land, they transferred in 1537–1538 to Rome, where they offered themselves to the Sovereign Pontiff so that he might make use of them and send them wherever he desired. This, moreover, was the resolution envisaged at the very moment of the vows of 1534. While awaiting the definitive decision, some departed to preach in the various regions of Italy; others, by mandate of the Pope, taught at La Sapienza in Rome; and still others remained in the service of Ignatius. In 1539, the ten companions found themselves once again in Rome. From the month of March of that year until the end of June, they met at the Palazzo Delfini, the third residence of Ignatius and his companions since their arrival in the Eternal City. This meeting, known under the expression *deliberación de los primeros compañeros* (“deliberation of the first companions”), refers both to an event and to a Latin document (*Deliberatio primorum patrum*)¹³ which recounts the event. This “deliberation” was a process of communal discernment through which Ignatius of Loyola and his pilgrim companions decided to found the Society of Jesus.¹⁴ In this way, they gave a more definite form to the nature of God’s call, offering themselves at the disposal of the pope and resolving to go wherever he might choose to send them. This meeting proved decisive for the future of the group, which became a well-organized body – that is, a religious order – adopting the name “the Society of Jesus,” with one of

znaczenie, ed. Stanisław Achremczyk, Jan Guzowski, Jacek Jezierski (Olsztyn: Studio Poligrafii Komputerowej “SQL”, 2005), 63–76. And for Petri Favre: José García de Castro, *Pedro Fabro (1506–1546). Inspirador y constructor de la primera Compañía de Jesús*, “Estudios Eclesiásticos” 82 (2007): 235–276; Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, *Pedro Fabro ante la reforma protestante*, “Estudios Eclesiásticos” 82 (2007): 277–307.

13 *MHSI*, vol. 63 (*Monumenta Ignatiana*, vol. I: *Monumenta constitutionum previa*) (Romae: 1934), 1–7.

14 The founding of the Society is closely linked to the experience Ignatius had at La Storta. In November 1537, while traveling toward Rome with Pierre Favre and Diego Laínez, and being at La Storta, near the Eternal City, during prayer in the chapel, Ignatius had a powerful mystical experience: he had such a strong impression that God was placing him at Christ’s side, His Son, “that he could never doubt it”. According to Laínez, it seemed to him that he saw Christ carrying the cross upon his shoulders, and near Him the Father, who said to Him: “I want you to take this man as your servant”, and that Jesus received him, saying: “I want you to serve us”. From that moment on, Ignatius decided to call the emerging community “the Society of Jesus” because of his great devotion to that name. The experience had a profound influence on Ignatius himself and on the direction of the new religious body, which he wanted to be wholly dedicated to Jesus, bearing His name and carrying out His work. The experience at La Storta had a profound influence on the shape and fruit of these reflections (*Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (= *MHSI*), vol. 73: *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*, II (Romae, 1951), 133; Gregory Naik, *La Storta. Un lieu et une expérience*, “Jésuites. Annuaire de la Compagnie de Jésus” 47 (2007): 8–11).

their companions as its superior. On 27 September 1540, they received – as noted above – papal approval for the new foundation. On 19 April 1541, the companions unanimously elected Ignatius of Loyola as their Superior General (those absent from Rome having left or sent their votes), and on 22 April 1541 they made their religious profession at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls (Ignatius of Loyola, Paschase Broët, Jean Codure, Claude Jay, Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón). Nicolás Bobadilla, although he was in Italy at the time (on mission in Calabria), refused to come to Rome. He sent his vote in writing in favour of Ignatius, and in September 1541 he likewise made his religious profession into the hands of the Superior General, Ignatius of Loyola, in the same Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls.¹⁵

Their ideals and their decision to place themselves at the disposal of the pope soon began to take concrete shape. Even before the conclusion of the meeting in the spring of 1539, some of them were sent on pontifical missions. It fell to Paschase Broët to be the first to put this offering into practice by presenting himself to the pope for missionary service, *circa missiones*. On 19 March 1539, Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa (elected pope in 1555 under the name Paul IV), acting on an order received that same day from Paul III, commanded him in “virtute sanctae obedientiae” to proceed to Siena, though without haste and accompanied by the companion of his own choosing. He set out for Siena with Simão Rodrigues in mid-April. In June 1539, Pierre Favre and Diego Laínez were sent on a pontifical legation to Parma and Piacenza. The first companions began to disperse permanently even before the approval of the new order in 1540. Simão Rodrigues left Rome for Portugal on 5 March 1540, where he devoted himself to the establishment and organization of the Society of Jesus. In March 1540, Francis Xavier left for Lisbon in order to set out for the Indies (Asia), thereby initiating the Society of Jesus’s missions

15 Bobadilla, with his restless temperament, was the “enfant terrible” among the co-founders of the Society of Jesus, yet Ignatius put up with all his eccentricities. He also found himself at the center of a crisis between the young Society and Pope Paul IV in 1557. See: Arthur L. Fisher, *A Study in Early Jesuit Government: The Nature and Origins of the Dissent of Nicolás Bobadilla*, “Viator” 10 (1979): 397–431; Ulderico Parente, *Nicolás Bobadilla 1509–1590*, *AHSI* 59 (1990): 323–344; Mark A. Lewis, *The Rehabilitation of Nicolás Bobadilla, S.J., during the Generalate of Everard Mercurian*, in *The Mercurian Project. Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573–1580*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Rome–St. Louis: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004), 437–459.

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

ad gentes. In October 1540, at the request of Pope Paul III, Pierre Favre departed for Germany.¹⁶

Another “fruit” of the deliberation of 1539 (alongside the document *Deliberatio primorum patrum*) was, precisely, the Formula of the Institute. This document encapsulated the outcome of that meeting. Its purpose was to set down, for submission to papal approval, the essential elements of the new society they hoped to establish. At this stage, the Formula consisted of five chapters (*Quinque Capitula*), each the length of a single paragraph. It was drafted by a commission, though Ignatius played a decisive role in shaping its structure. After a few amendments, the chapters were incorporated into the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* the following year. They were intended to constitute – and still constitute today – the fundamental charter of the order. All subsequent official documents would be no more than elaborations upon them and would be required to refer back to them. For the Jesuits, the Formula is what the Rule is for other religious orders.¹⁷ In 1550, the Formula was somewhat revised in the light of experience and incorporated into a second Apostolic Letter, *Exposcit debitum*, granted by Pope Julius III on 21 July 1550 in order to confirm the Society.¹⁸

The Formula of the Institute is thus the foundational document of the Society of Jesus, indispensable for understanding the spirit of the order of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (a document that remains, nevertheless, relatively little known, even among historians of the Society). It is the source of Jesuit spirituality and the foundation of their attitudes and of all their activity. The Formula establishes the general orientations that, a few years later, would be translated into concrete structures and specific norms by the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. The Constitutions were drafted by Ignatius, who in the meantime had been elected Superior General, and they cost him several years of work. In 1552, the Latin translation of the original Spanish text was already ready. The official text was approved and promulgated by the First General Congregation of 1558. The Constitutions articulate the fundamental principles according to which the Society intends to pursue its objective.

When referring to the end proposed by Ignatius and his first companions, as well as by all those who desire to join them (and which is the

16 On the first contacts of the young Society of Jesus with Pope Paul III and on the first pontifical missions entrusted to the Jesuits, see also Ludwig von Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, vol. V: *Paolo III (1534–1549)* (Rome: Desclée, 1914), 354–431.

17 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 16–18.

18 *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, vol. I, 20–26.

end that God himself proposes to the Society: F I, 1; F II, 1), the Formula of 1540 describes the Society as:

a community founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith through the ministry of the Word, through the Spiritual Exercises and works of charity, and in particular through the Christian instruction of children and the unlearned (F I, 1). [*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*, 3–4]

In the Formula of 1550, this end, which the Society sets before itself, is further expanded and comes to embrace a greater number of concrete works:

[...] to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments [...] to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good (F I, 1) [*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus...*, 3–4]

A comparison of the two texts of the Formula of the Institute – the two versions being separated by ten years – reveals a renewed awareness on the part of the Jesuits of what they were, as well as changes in the direction of their activity. During these ten years, the young order underwent new experiences, among them the establishment of a first college at Messina – “*Primum ac prototypum bonis artibus et moribus in Societate Iesu collegium Pauli tertii auctoritate erectum anno salutis 1548*”. At first, the members of the Society saw themselves essentially as “pilgrims” or “apostles” who, following the example of Paul, would go from place to place, wherever the urgency of proclaiming the Word of God might require. They were above all itinerant preachers, like Jesus and his disciples, engaged in a spiritual ministry. Yet they soon came to recognize the advantages of sustained work in a single place and in a more stable manner. Thus, from the very beginning, the Jesuits sought to establish permanent residences supported solely by alms. At the same time, they held that most members were not meant to remain for very

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

long in what would come to be called the “professed houses,” but should be ready to move elsewhere whenever a new directive was given.¹⁹

Ignatius saw his companions travelling the roads of the entire world, radically detached from the monastic vow of stability. When, at a certain point, he came to perceive the apostolic urgency of engagement in the field of education, he did not hesitate to found stable institutions such as universities and colleges, within which he “enclosed” the greater part of the Jesuits. All this was undertaken in order to attain the greater universal good. Nevertheless, even when engaged in the colleges, they were (and remain) always to be ready to be sent and to go anywhere in the world and to serve elsewhere. The principle of the universal good led Ignatius to embrace every category of works of mercy and charity. He thus came to realize that teaching others to read and write is also a work of charity, provided that there were enough members of the Society to attend to everything (C, 451).

Even though neither of the two versions of the Formula mentions colleges (the Formula of 1550 lists, among the apostolic works, “lectures”), colleges and schools still form part of the definition of the Jesuits. The colleges, in fact, brought about significant changes within the Society and became something of a symbol of them. They contributed powerfully to the transformations which, in the first eight or twelve years of its history, affected its entire future. They marked a turning point in the life of the Society and significantly influenced Jesuit culture.²⁰

The colleges, therefore, with all their activities – cultural, educational, scientific, and so forth – became decisive for the future of the order of Saint Ignatius. If the college of Messina paved the way for all the other colleges of the Society,²¹ it was, however, the Roman College (*Collegium*

19 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 30–31.

20 The ideas and directives concerning education and teaching are contained in Part IV of the Constitutions (“The Learning and Other Means of Helping Their Neighbor That Are to Be Imparted to Those Who Are Retained in the Society”), of which seventeen chapters are devoted to colleges and seven chapters to universities. (C. 307–509). In Chapter 13, Ignatius announces to the Society its proper and definitive *Ratio studiorum*; he adds, however, that it “ought to be adapted to places, times, and persons” (C. 455). See also: Dominique Julia, *Jésuites et universités: les logiques d'une politique d'après les textes normatifs*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI–XVIII)*, eds. Gian Paolo Brizzi, Roberto Greci (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002), 13–36.

21 László Lucács, *L'origine dei collegi e l'insegnamento pubblico nella storia pedagogica della Compagnie di Gesù*, in *La pedagogia della Compagnia di Gesù. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Messina 14–16 novembre 1991*, ed. Franco Guerello, Pietro Schiavone (Messina: E.S.U.R. Ignatianum, 1992), 117–126; Andrea Romano, *Il “Messanense Collegium Prototypum Societatis Iesu”*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 79–94; Andrea

Romanum), founded in 1551, that would become the model for all Jesuit schools.²²

Even though the Society was not founded as a “teaching order,” the Jesuits became, within a short time, a “teaching order” :²³ they were the first religious order in the Catholic Church to regard the institutional sphere of education as a central ministry, even though teaching was not the exclusive field of Jesuit activity – as the missions make clear – the Society of Jesus is a “teaching and missionary” order.²⁴ It is difficult for us to measure the boldness of such a course of action in its own time. The origins, and above all the dynamic development, of the Jesuits’ educational work seem extraordinary: from the opening of the first institution in 1548 to the death of Saint Ignatius in 1556 – thus, within only a few years – no fewer than thirty-three colleges and public schools were established. In 1559 – the year of the promulgation of the *Ratio studiorum* – there were more than two hundred colleges in Europe alone. In that same year, the greater part of the Jesuits (8,277) were engaged in the work of teaching and education.²⁵ The consequences for the culture of early modern Catholicism were incalculable. The consequences for the culture of early modern Catholicism were incalculable. In 1773, the year of its suppression by papal decree (Clement XIV, brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*, 21 July), the Society administered more than eight hundred universities, seminaries, and above all secondary colleges throughout the world. Never before, nor since, has the world seen so vast a network of

Romano, *Les jésuites dans la culture scientifique française de l'époque moderne. Bilans et perspectives*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 435–452.

- 22 Ricardo García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano dal suo inizio (1551) alla soppressione della Compagnia di Gesù (1773)* (Roma: apud aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1954).
- 23 Pietro de Leturia, *Perché la Compagnia di Gesù divenne un Ordine insegnante*, “Gregorianum” 21 (1940): 350–382. Volume 58 of the journal *Gregorianum* (2004), consisting of eight articles, is devoted to the pedagogy of the Society of Jesus. See also (among others): Gabriel Codina Mir, *Aux sources de la pédagogie des jésuites. Le «modus parisiensis»* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1968); Ignatius von Loyola und die Pädagogik der Jesuiten. *Ein Modell für Schule und Persönlichkeitsbildung*, eds. Rüdiger Funiok, Harald Schöndorf (Donauwörth: Auer, 2000); Ignacio Iglesias, *Influjo de los Ejercicios Espirituales en la pedagogía ignaciana*, in *Universitas Nostra Gregoriana. La Pontificia Università Gregoriana ieri ed oggi*, ed. Paul Gilbert (Rome: AdP, 2006), 15–33.
- 24 Pierre-Antoine Fabre, *Conclusions: le collège, université jésuite. Les jésuites et l'université à l'âge moderne: quelques réflexions*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 458.
- 25 Marek Inglot, *Założenia “Ratio studiorum” (1599) i “Charakterystycznych cech jezuickiego wychowania” (1986)*, in *Pedagogika wiary. Książka dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Zbigniewowi Markowi SJ w 60. rocznicę urodzin i 35. rocznicę kapłaństwa*, ed. Andrzej Hajduk, Janusz Mółka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2007), 85–95.

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

educational institutions operating on an international basis. The colleges were often at the centre of the cultural life of the cities and towns where they were established. Each year, they staged plays, produced ballets, and gave musical concerts.²⁶

The Society, especially through its colleges – though not only through them – profoundly influenced the entire social, cultural, and religious life of numerous countries. It worked in a variety of fields, such as instruction and education, libraries, printing presses, publications, and even pharmacies, architecture, and, more generally, the arts. Practically everywhere in the world, the Jesuits contributed significantly to the development of language, culture, and science.

At roughly the same time as they began to found colleges, the Jesuits, by papal mandate, became more numerous and more resolutely engaged in the struggle against the Reformation in Germany. Just as the Society of Jesus was not founded as a “teaching order,” neither was it founded to combat heresy and the Reformation.²⁷ The Society arose from the desire to serve God and his Church. When the Jesuits saw the unity of the Church threatened by the Reformation, they understood that this had become the most urgent and serious pastoral need. As John O’Malley writes:

There is no need to insist that the Reformation influenced the image of the Society of Jesus, which in fact is often described as having been founded precisely in order to oppose Protestantism. That description of course misses the mark. In Paris the companions witnessed the incursions of “Lutheranism” into the French capital, and they had no use for what they understood to be the tenets of the new movement. Aware as they were of the Reformation, however, it played no palpable role in the future they then designed for themselves, and they make few references to it when they describe their years in Paris. When, in 1534, they took a vow to spend some time in ministry in a distant place, they set their eyes on Jerusalem, not Wittenberg.²⁸

It was the impossibility of travelling to the Holy Land that compelled them to choose Rome instead, in order to receive directives from the pope, who, in their view, possessed a broader vision of pastoral needs. As a result, there also emerged the possibility – indeed the near inevitability – of joining the struggle against Protestantism. By October 1540,

26 O’Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 31–32.

27 Rogelio García Mateo, *Loyola y el luteranismo. ¿Contrarreformista o reformista?*, “Estudios Eclesiásticos” 82 (2007): 309–338.

28 O’Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 16.

Pierre Favre was already in Germany, though not at Jesuit initiative. It was Pope Paul III who ordered him to accompany Pedro Ortiz, the representative of Emperor Charles V, whom the pope had dispatched to the religious conference at Worms; in January 1541, he subsequently travelled on to Regensburg. In January 1542, he returned to Germany under a papal mandate to accompany Cardinal Giovanni Morone, the papal nuncio in Germany, to Speyer.²⁹ As early as 1550, however, the “defence of the faith” found a privileged place in the Formula, for the Jesuits had come to understand that the Reformation constituted for them a pastoral concern of the most serious urgency.³⁰ They understood that it was through the education and formation of the young members of the ruling class that they could attain and consolidate this objective.

The missions *ad gentes* remained the privileged work of the Society of Jesus from its very origins.³¹ Thus, while the Church was mobilizing the Jesuits in Europe against the Reformation, the Society of Jesus continued to send its members outside Europe.³² As mentioned earlier, as early as 1540 (even before the papal approval of the Society), Ignatius of Loyola sent Francis Xavier to the Indies. Leaving Rome in March 1540, he traveled via Lisbon (which he left in April 1541) and arrived in Goa on 6 May 1542, where he established the Indian province of the Society.³³ In August 1549, Francis landed in Japan, where he succeeded in

29 Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, 368–370; 418–419; Giuseppe Mellinato, *Pierre Favre 1506–1546*, AHSI 59 (1990): 185–190; Antonio Alburquerque, *Fabro, Pedro, DEI*, 863–868.

30 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 32; Rainer A. Müller, *The 'Jesuitensystem' in the University Structure of Early Modern Germany*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 108.

31 For a general but comprehensive overview of the missions of the former Society of Jesus (1540–1773), see: Paolo Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo. Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America: secoli XVI–XVII* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2004); Markus Friedrich, *Javier Torres Nafarrate, Los jesuitas: Inicio, supresión, resurgimiento* (Mexico: Ediciones Ibero, 2024), 459–498.

32 *El Océano y la Cruz: doce misioneros Jesuitas*, ed. Wenceslao Soto Artuñedo, José García de Castro Valdés (Aranjuez: Xerion Comunicación y Publicaciones S.L., 2024).

33 In 2025 we celebrated the 450th anniversary of the arrival in Goa of the first Jesuit originating from the lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: Father Andrzej Rudomina (Rudamina) (ca. 1595–1631). He entered the Lithuanian Province in 1618 and departed for the missions in 1624. He worked in Goa (1625–1626), then in various regions of China, where he died in September 1632. He was the first Lithuanian Jesuit to reach India. See: *Encyclopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy, 1564–1995*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1996), 583–584. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Father Rudomina's arrival in India, Pope Leo XIV joined the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman in commemorating the event and sent a telegram expressing his gratitude for the faithful witness of the Lithuanian Jesuit, and recalling his missionary fervour and enduring legacy. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2025/08/25/0591.pdf> ([accessed:, 1. 01. 2026]).

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur...

establishing contacts with intellectuals and converting several thousand natives. Xavier ultimately attempted, unsuccessfully, to enter China, but died at its borders, on the island of Sancian (Shangchuan), on 3 December 1552.³⁴ The example of Francis inspired many disciples. The Jesuits established themselves in China in 1583. The first to obtain permission to enter and reside there (in 1582) were Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. After establishing several residences in different cities of China, Father Ricci succeeded in settling in the capital in 1601, where he was received by the emperor and began his work among the scholars of the imperial court. A few years after the mission in India, the missions in Brazil began (1549) with the arrival of Manuel da Nóbrega and other religious men, who devoted themselves to the education of the colonists and to apostolic work among the indigenous populations. The mission in Spanish America began in 1586 with the dispatch of a group to Peru, followed by the founding of the Province of Paraguay in 1607 and the establishment of the reductions in Paraguay and Argentina. In a short time, the missionaries of the Society of Jesus reached other countries on various continents. In Africa, the Jesuits attempted to establish themselves in Morocco as early as 1548, but were expelled shortly thereafter. Their missionary activity on this continent achieved greater success in Ethiopia (from 1556 onward), and later in Mozambique, Angola, the Congo, and Cape Verde. In North America, after a few isolated attempts in previous years, the first Jesuits from France arrived in Quebec in 1632 under the leadership of Paul Le Jeune.

In 1583 – the same year as in China – the Jesuits established a first residence “among the Turks” in the Ottoman capital.³⁵

The missionary work of the Society of Jesus continued to grow rapidly, reaching regions throughout the world in less than a century. This continued until 1773, the year of its canonical suppression by Pope Clement XIV. At that time, nearly 4,000 Jesuits (out of some 23,000 in existence) were working across the globe, and it was impossible to replace them, either quantitatively or qualitatively; about 500,000 neophytes, in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies alone, had lost their shepherds. The suppression caused very significant damage to the missions, and in some regions perhaps irreparable harm.

34 On Xavier and his immense work, see: Schurhammer, *Franz Xaver*. See also: James Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552)* (New York: Wicklow Press).

35 Carmelo Capizzi, Henri Jalabert, *Turquía*, in *DHCJ*, vol. IV, 3849–3852; Jean-Marc Balhan, «*Même chez les Turcs!*». *Une paroisse œcuménique et internationale au service du dialogue inter-religieux*, in “*Jésuites. Annuaire de la Compagnie de Jésus*” 48 (2008): 82–86.

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