

## Spiritual Leadership: Ignatius as a leader

Here are a set of traits and characteristics from the Ignatian tradition that are considered important for any type of leader working in Ignatian institutions. You are invited to reflect on each of the traits and find how well do you represent each of these them (taking into account how relevant they are for your work) and what actions you can take in your daily life to grow in each of them.

Trait	Description	How am I doing myself on this trait? Try finding concrete examples of your day-to-day	What actions can take do to improve in this trait?
<b>Friendship with God</b>	In the first quality, regarding Spirit, Ignatius wants someone who is 'closely united with God our Lord and [has] familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations' (CN [723]). The spiritual qualities of a potential future Fr. General are the most important. The experience of God is different from an ideological or theoretical knowledge acquired through study. It is something that nurtures, excites, and inspires interiorly who we are and what we do. Such an experience is the first characteristic of an Ignatian leader.		
<b>Magnanimity</b>	Ignatius identifies 'magnanimity' as especially important for Fr General (CN [728]). Traditionally, this virtue is defined as being willing to do things worthy of great glory. Some therefore bristle at the mention of magnanimity today, because it tends to connote a self-importance and insufferable pride. One need only consult Aristotle's famous portrait of the magnanimous man to be aware that the Greek ideal of the great-souled man, who is self-sufficient, looks down on his inferiors, and seeks honour for himself, is hardly biblical or Christian. And yet there is a core to this originally Greco-Roman		

	<p>quality, namely, the <u>willingness always to go further in the good</u>, which enabled it to be appropriated by the Christian tradition through a transformative marriage with the biblical virtues of humility and love. ‘A big heart open to God and to others’: an accurate description of the holy and selfless ambition of magnanimity, which, for Ignatius, leads us to ‘initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord’.</p>		
<b>Practical wisdom</b>	<p>It is not surprising that Ignatius emphasises the need for <u>academic excellence</u> in the superior general, since ‘learning is highly necessary for one who will have so many learned men in his charge’ (CN [729]). Today we are conscious of the importance of learning for the contribution the Society can offer the Church, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us at GC 35. Yet even more important than intellectual accomplishments, for Ignatius, is another virtue. It is variously named ‘<u>prudence</u>’, ‘<u>discretion</u>’, or ‘<u>discernment</u>’.</p>		
<b>Freedom</b>	<p>Ignatius says that Fr. General must be ‘<u>free from all inordinate affections, having them tamed and mortified</u>’ (CN [726]). This paragraph reflects a traditional cluster of virtues especially important to Ignatius, temperance, decorum, modesty, which he understands as the manifestation of the indifference the Principle and Foundation at the level of affectivity.</p>		
<b>Kindness that is just</b>	<p>‘he should know how to <u>mingle the required rectitude and severity with kindness and gentleness</u>’ (CN [727]). In a superior, a soft heart without fairness and</p>		

	justice can degenerate into a kind of indulgence. Similarly, a justice that is not tempered by compassion and love can be cold and hard.		
<b>Proactivity</b>	It is worth mentioning that Ignatius places emphasis upon the pragmatic virtues of the <u>'executive power, such as solicitude, constancy and perseverance</u> (CN[728]). For the general must not merely initiate great projects, but 'persevere in them with the needed constancy, neither losing courage in the face of the contradictions, even from persons of high rank and power, nor allowing himself to be deflected by their entreaties or threats from what reason and the divine service require.' He repeats this later by identifying the virtue of being 'vigilant and solicitous in undertaking enterprises and vigorous in carrying them through to their completion and perfection, rather than careless and remiss about leaving them begun but unfinished' (CN [730]).		
<b>Indifference</b>	while Ignatius values the virtues of execution, he cannot justly be accused of a worldly attachment to success. For he also recommends the kind of equanimity of soul that is the fruit of discernment of spirits and freedom from disordered attachments. 'He should be superior to all eventualities, not letting himself be exalted by success or cast down by adversity' (CN [728]). This equanimity can of course only come from a profound spiritual indifference, an <u>indifference even to 'success' and 'failure'</u> . Even at his most pragmatic, Ignatius does not forget the		

	underlying spiritual qualities required in the general.		
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After reading this list you might feel a little bit overwhelmed. It is normal. Not everyone can excel at all these traits, not even Ignatius himself. These characteristics offer you a guide like the North Star guides those who are lost find their way.

As the final part of this exercise we recommend that you connect with the real Ignatius and the difficulties of leadership by reading two texts:

- **Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Ignatius of Loyola: The Memoriale of Luis Gonçalves Da Câmara** – Translated by: Alexander Eaglestone, Joseph A. Munitiz - [Link](#)
- **Who do you say Ignatius is? Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond** – Fr. Philip Endean SJ - [Link](#)