



# ACCOMPANIMENT IN EDUCATION IN THE TRADITION OF ST IGNATIUS

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## Luke 24:13 – 35

### The Road to Emmaus

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

# Accompaniment – A Pillar of Ignatian Pedagogy

Denis Delobre SJ

The word ‘accompaniment’ is widely used. In general, it means the attitude of someone who joins another to go where they are going, at the same time, neither too far ahead or behind. They are nearby enough to share as well as respect.

Since it can designate a relationship of mutual ‘help’ between two people, within a group, or between the group and one or several guides, the use of the word ‘accompaniment’ has become common currency in secular and religious language, whether the process is pedagogical, psychological, spiritual or pastoral, and recently it even seems to have replaced the word ‘direction’ (as in ‘spiritual direction’).

Is this a passing fashion? It seems to me that it is more like a return to the sources of our human condition, even if it is caused by current developments in the humanities and the demands of our time reacting against all forms of interventionism. The preference given to ‘accompaniment’ indicates the rediscovery of a more refined sensitivity to the complexity of even the very simplest relationships of help.

The Jesuits, who began to found the first Colleges across Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, learned from Ignatius that manner of attentiveness to each of their pupils.

Ignatius ‘accompanied’ the people to whom he gave the *Spiritual Exercises*, being persuaded that “if retreatants advance considering matters for themselves, they find more relish and spiritual fruit than if their director explains to them and amplifies the meaning of the events.”<sup>1</sup> The Jesuits in the Colleges believed they should act in the same way with respect to their pupils. In this way, they made ‘accompaniment’ one of the pillars of their pedagogy, gradually called ‘Ignatian’ pedagogy and taken up by many others.

## A concept of the human person

It is clear that accompaniment (particularly as it distinguished from spiritual direction) is based first of all on the quality of the manner in which the one who accompanies looks upon the one who is accompanied; that is, on the value which is given to them and on the role which the one who accompanies knows he can and should play. What is this way of looking at the one who is accompanied?

## A unique person

In the eyes of the one who accompanies, as in the eyes of Ignatius, the person who

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<sup>1</sup> Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* n.2

is accompanied is, always and most importantly, a unique person. Far from having a model or pattern to reproduce, it is a vocation and a means to bring to birth in their life a new human being who will remain entirely unique.

Two consequences follow:

The one who accompanies does not know beforehand what this new human being will be. The one who accompanies can only learn it from the person they accompany. Any externally imposed model, however brilliant or wise it may seem, would always be eaten away by the worms of frustration and of regret at not being true to oneself. Hence, it is important that accompaniment should be imbued with a respect which does not allow itself to get ahead of the person being accompanied.

However, the person accompanied is always in the process of inventing and discovering what they feel called to become, in themselves and in their experience. Nothing is programmed in advance in the divine project which is unknown and has to be decoded. Young people are particularly sensitive to this uncertainty, because the construction of their lives has barely risen above ground level. Hence, the importance of warm accompaniment which, like a midwife, helps and gives courage during the often difficult process of giving birth to one's own life. Socrates called this 'maieutics'.<sup>2</sup>

One can see that in the very foundation of accompaniment, there is a very elevated

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<sup>2</sup> A dialogue which allows a person to 'give birth' to truths which would otherwise remain hidden.

idea of the human being. It takes its inspiration essentially from the One who "knew what was in everyone".<sup>3</sup>

## A person capable of responsibility

The person who is accompanied is fundamentally capable of responsibility, otherwise they would not know how to be a truly original being. This is because life, their life, is offered to them as a continual process of asking questions. The response which they will bring to these questions, in order to be true, can only be personal; this excludes, in principle, any conformist response imposed from the outside, even if this 'outside' wants to be loving and says that it is concerned to act for the good of the person who is accompanied.

On the other hand, this answer is frightening. The unknown, above all in oneself, frightens us. All the more so, because a true response can only come from the unique potential of each individual. Responsibility, therefore, begins with the search for, and the recognition of, the real capacities which are available to the one who will have to make the response. It is continued, as realistically as possible, by consideration of the consequences which will follow one's choice. It is extended, finally, by a commitment which is as deliberate and thought-out as possible.

So, responsibility excludes dreams and illusions which can only lead to failures and disappointments. Responsibility, to be lived well, is lived realistically. Thus, it

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<sup>3</sup> John 2:25

is important that the person who accompanies does not fail to shed the light and warmth of their own experience on the responsibilities which the person who is accompanied undertakes.

## A free person

The one who is accompanied must also stretch himself to become a free person, otherwise he will not know how truly to undertake his responsibilities. Freedom is a hare which is always difficult to catch. For there is a lot of conditioning in the midst of which we must find our freedom.

*Physical conditioning:* for example, we are conditioned by gender, health, race, a face, etc., which it is not always easy to accept, and on which it is therefore important to begin to look positively.

*Psychological conditioning:* linked to one's family background or to experiences at an early age, which inscribe themselves particularly on what psychologists call the 'superego'.

*Sociological conditioning:* linked to the social environment, so that each person feels the weight of multiple conventions, social shames and fears.

*Religious conditioning:* an area where obligations and feelings of guilt often multiply, or even alienations (understood in the strict sense of the word whereby a person longer gives himself the right to be himself for his own sake).

In relation to all these conditionings, 'education for freedom' will be opposed to every kind of 'training'. But it must also

allow one to get past many fears and *a priori* judgements. Here also we can see how crucial it is that the person who accompanies is himself free and clear-sighted, and can be an artisan of light and of freedom. Well conducted accompaniment is a condition of freedom.

## A relational being

In order to set themselves free in this way, human beings cannot forget that they are essentially relational beings. They can only express themselves and realise themselves in relationships.

From birth, and even before birth, humans are like a voice which never stops crying out; crying out towards others, who are absolutely necessary for life. We start with the other who provides food for the body. We encounter the other who needs to be loved and to love. We continue all the way up to the God who is the ultimate Other and who gives meaning to our existence.

In other words, no-one is self-sufficient, from any point of view. We always receive ourselves from others. Narcissism is a dead-end, as are the relationships which are refused or perverted by jealousy, lies or hatred.

Relationships, on the contrary, if they are lived well, allow one to discover the treasures of difference; a difference which is practically the only source of enrichment and growth, because only the other can give me what I do not have, just as I can give to them what they do not have. In this we see a reflection of the way God acts towards us. And so we see

the vital importance of accompaniment as a place of true and trusting relationship, provided that it is respectful and does not impose a direction on the one who is accompanied.

## Difficulties, temptations and confirmations

This view of the human being may seem idealistic to some. Yes, it aims very high. But I think it is very realistic. Indeed it is the only true respectful attitude towards reality. Nonetheless, there are difficulties and objections which tend to make such a view seem unrealistic. I list a few of them below.

The right to autonomy can easily be derailed and become anarchy. With each person claiming to be able to do whatever they wish, taking up slogans like 'it is forbidden to forbid',<sup>4</sup> there is a great temptation for those who have the responsibility of parents or educators to revert to a method of 'direction' which might appear to be more effective.

But does being directive and using only external structures and constraints help young people to develop a strong and coherent interior self? The challenge is to look beyond the immediate and to see the future fruits of using the method of accompaniment.

The courage necessary for a genuine commitment may also sometimes seem to resemble an impossible dream, above all for young people who are growing up in a

fragmented world with few motivations or landmarks. There is then a great temptation for us adults to make up for the fragility of young people by re-imposing a very rigid framework, reinforcing expectations, and excluding those who refuse them.

If we are conscious of the fragility of the younger generation, is there a danger that we resign ourselves to having to reject 'the less good' and fall into a certain selective elitism, working only with those who are responsive? It seems to me preferable, and more in keeping with our mission, that we should meet young people where they are waiting for us, with their qualities and their defects, so that we might accompany them according to their needs.

It also seems that our wish to trust will often be sorely tested, frequently disappointed and even betrayed. We might then be tempted to believe that we should have limited our trust much more, because so many young people do not know how to take themselves in hand or keep their word.

However, it remains, and will remain, true that human beings are creatures who only function on the fuel of trust: trust received and trust given, like ships communicating at sea; trust in others and trust in oneself which continually reflects back and forth and allows both to grow. There is no other way that is educationally effective. The road of trust refused or calculated is always a dead-end. We must continue, with our young people, on the path of trust which commits itself unreservedly.

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<sup>4</sup> 'It is forbidden to forbid' was a slogan of the 1968 student protests in Paris.

## Expectations

Let us sum up the attitudes which accompaniment demands. I emphasise three attitudes which seem to me more crucial than the others; attitudes which listen to and welcome all that might emerge from the heart of the person who is accompanied.

Firstly, 'material' unpacked without caution can surprise us, even shock us and make us tremble. However, this is what is deposited in the heart of the one we accompany, which sometimes stifles them. It is necessary for that to emerge because that is what is there. It is also the raw material from which something will be built.

So, the person who accompanies should not imagine any other. To do so would lack reality. Listening must be unconditional. Even if what they hear shocks the person who accompanies, it is then, unexpectedly, that the opportunity arises to bring about an interior peace in the accompanied person. The purpose of our listening is to allow things to emerge and express themselves in the safety of the relationship of accompaniment.

Secondly, we who accompany need the courage to shine light into the life of the person who is accompanied.

Sometimes a revealing light can make clear the differences between the generations and their points of view and value systems. This light should dare to speak as it finds, and allow itself to critique, albeit in a serene and reflective

manner and with a measure of detachment. But this light must respect differences and not seek to impose conformity to its point of view at any cost. It does not instruct the other, nor does it tell them what they should wish for.

The purpose of the light we shine could be described as helping to read what is still closed, gathering what is scattered, naming what is hidden, freeing what is stuck.

Lastly, we need patience which, as St Paul says, "is not irritable, does not insist on its own way; it excuses all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."<sup>5</sup> In other words, each person has their own rhythm and pace of life. Accompaniment neither pulls too much ahead nor lags too far behind. It does not precipitate a choice which is not ready to be made, nor does it allow a well-made decision to be forgotten about. It serves simply as the catalyst of a reaction which is not ours and of a decision which does not belong to us. Only an attitude of benevolent detachment is truly fruitful. Our unselfish patience helps us to meet, to update and then disappear if necessary.

Educators have plenty of experience of this sort of accompaniment. Sometimes accompanying young people can be a harsh and in-your-face experience, but it must never be entered upon for the satisfaction or benefit of the educator, or lead to dependence, or a distancing, or judgement, or the desire to impose expectations. It is certainly not a violent confrontation of differences, or mutual

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<sup>5</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5-7

incomprehension, but neither is it an erasing of the differences, or settling for sterile compromise. Accompaniment is an experience which always has respect for difference. Deep down, it involves entering into the mystery of the Other in the other. Is not what is essential, that the other (with or without upper case) grow and that I diminish?

It needs a lot of love to enter the game of accompaniment. To tell the truth, only God knows how to accompany, as Jesus

did with his disciples. But God wants to send companions according to his heart, so that, as we walk in his path, each of those he entrusts to us may be less alone. Will we dare to refuse this mission of trust?

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# Accompaniment in Ignatian Education

Alan Harrison SJ

What do we mean when we talk about accompaniment as a key part of Ignatian education?

For many, myself included, accompaniment has resonances of great classical musical performances, Gerald Moore for example accompanying Janet Baker, or Benjamin Britten accompanying Peter Pears. This musical image is helpful since accompaniment relates essentially to the art or skill of becoming or acting as a companion to a person or persons. It implies a willingness to associate with and establish some union of interest with others, and often a desire to further the well being of the other or others, always within essential professional boundaries. It can imply being a companion on a brief journey or on a life time venture. Ideally, it requires a harmonious joining of interest and normally involves a shared ease of communication and a shared language.

It can at times involve elements of gentle guidance where one who knows the hazards of what lies ahead assists one who may not. At other times accompaniment calls for the more assertive use of instruction and direction where these are necessary for the individual or common good. At other times stillness, silence and careful attentive listening are the necessary attributes of good accompaniment.

All of us are aware of positive experiences of being accompanied in our lives especially perhaps in our own formative years, and perhaps poor experiences too. Indeed accompaniment is all pervasive in our experience, and so basic is the desire for accompaniment and the resulting companionship that it appears to be hard-wired into our human condition. Accordingly, accompaniment in Jesuit education is simply about the relationship we form with those we minister to, or at times those we minister with, in schools. It is not essentially about what we teach or how effective we are as administrators.

It will come as no surprise that what we now call accompaniment is central to the practical methodology of St Ignatius Loyola as seen in the *Spiritual Exercises* which in turn illuminates much that is fundamental about Ignatian education. Much could be written on the influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* on education as understood in the western world; however, at the heart of all education, as at the heart of the *Spiritual Exercises*, is a three-fold relationship which in the *Spiritual Exercises* can be described as **Director – God – Retreatant**, and in education as **Teacher – Knowledge – Student**. Put at its simplest the director accompanies the retreatant on a journey towards God, the teacher or educator accompanies the student on the journey into knowledge, virtue and truth

(including often of course knowledge of God).

Education of course has a double etymology and a double dynamic: *educare* (to lead forth) and *educere* (to elicit or invite forth that which is latent within). The accompanier is invited to do both, but the emphasis will often be on the latter process.

Ignatius Loyola was well aware of this and with an exquisite sensitivity to the unique needs and complexities of individuals, he offers sound advice applicable to any type of accompaniment which can be culled from the notes prefacing the *Spiritual Exercises*.

First and foremost, he emphasises that the journey being accompanied is the retreatant's (student's) own particular journey into truth and not that of the accompanier, who can impede progress or cause unnecessary deviation by intruding their own favoured route regardless of the desires or needs of the person being accompanied.

The accompanier should be always sensitive to the capabilities and temperament of those accompanied, and adapt material accordingly, but always remain un-intrusive and balanced in approach. Always begin where people are, not where one happens to think they should be or where one would like them to be, is a sound Ignatian maxim in any accompaniment.

The retreatant (student) is to be supported by provision of necessary material for the stage of journey they are

attempting, and their capacity to find within it all that they truly need should be trusted and affirmed, rather than having the material explained in detail and the accompanist's interpretations offered as the only or preferred way ahead.

At the same time, Ignatius emphasises that the retreatant (student) will profit much more by "savouring and tasting things in the depths than by much knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Hence, assisting the slow assimilation of awareness is a more effective aid to progress than any number of Gradgrind-type facts, figures, or assessments.

Ignatius also reminds us at the start of the *Spiritual Exercises* of the importance of always putting on good interpretation on another's statement "to assure better cooperation" and if necessary to challenge another "with all kindness".<sup>7</sup>

The *Spiritual Exercises* also offers us the simple but key dynamic at the heart of this methodology: namely, that all depends on the freedom of dialogue between the accompanier and the person being accompanied. Ignatius had a favourite word to sum this up: *conversar*, which can be translated as the skill and art of conversation.

Ignatian spirituality can be characterised in many ways; the order and structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the emphasis on God at work in the individual, the practice of finding God in all things. But ultimately and essentially all of these depend on the skills of listening and responding, on the

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<sup>6</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.2

<sup>7</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.22

give and take of ordinary conversation, on the sharing of life with one another, on the satisfaction and joy that comes from understanding and being understood by another. *Conversar* is not pious talk but is the genuine engagement with another which can include greetings, affirmation of the value of the other, seeking news, passing the time of day, giving information, responding to questions, asking questions, and discussing and challenging opinions. All of which are open to talk of virtue, of the transcendent and of the reality of the God in human experience.

Unlike Benedictine spirituality with its linking of work and prayer, or Franciscan spirituality with its emphasis on poverty, or Dominican spirituality with its emphasis on the preaching of the word, Ignatius aimed at a more dynamic and interactive model which can be seen in his startling assertion that “God deals directly with the individual”.<sup>8</sup> God, that is to say, communicates directly with the individual, with you and with me, now and always. God communicates with us and invites a response. God, in other words, accompanies us and engages us in dialogue.

We see this in Ignatius's description of God's action in his life when he was still struggling to find his way after the experiences of Pamplona and Manresa, “God dealt with him as a teacher deals with a pupil.”<sup>9</sup> And we note the gentle patience and care that Ignatius experienced in the way he sensed that he was being guided and accompanied by

God in those years. This is the accompanying God who, in the words of Ignatius, “is seeking to give courage and strength, consolations . . . and quiet . . . making things easy and removing all obstacles so that the person may move forward in doing good.”<sup>10</sup>

The basic methodology of all of this is admirably summarised in the *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* and bears repetition here since it is applicable to all Ignatian ministry:

“Growth in the responsible use of freedom is facilitated by the personal relationship between student and teacher. Teachers and administrators are more than academic guides. They are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student . . . While they respect the privacy of the students they are ready to listen to their cares . . . to share their joys and sorrows, to help them with personal growth and interpersonal relationships.”<sup>11</sup>

Ignatius would surely have been familiar from his Paris studies with the work of the first century writer Clement of Alexandria<sup>12</sup> who wrote much on this area particularly in his *Paedagogus*. We are familiar with the role of the private tutor in classical times. In Greek and Roman culture, the pedagogue was often a slave who was charged with the moral

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<sup>8</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.15

<sup>9</sup> *Autobiography* n.27

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<sup>10</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.315

<sup>11</sup> *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (Rome 1986) n.43

<sup>12</sup> Titus Flavius Clemens (c.150 – c.215)

instruction of the young people in a household; but there was a difference, the pedagogue did not simply instruct the young in such matters, but was one who had the care of the young people, who looked after their security, health and well-being and who was responsible for the education of their inner life. The pedagogue literally accompanied and guided the young person, carried what they needed for their studies, sat with them in their academic studies and persuaded them by word and by example.

Clement of Alexandria depicts Christ as *the* pedagogue for each of us, Christ the educator who cares for us, who is in constant dialogue with us and who forms us and accompanies us in every aspect of our lives, inspiring us by his word and example, guiding and guarding us as a good pedagogue would.

The key New Testament text is perhaps that of the journey to Emmaus where we see the characteristics of good accompaniment. Christ joins the disciples on their journey, *walks by their side*, and engages them in dialogue. Listening to their story and their disappointed hopes, he gently challenges them to see more deeply into what has happened to them

and carefully helps them to a realisation of God at work in their experience and in human history. He then attempts to withdraw, to move on, his task done. They, because their hearts burn within them as he speaks, press him to remain and share their meal, only then do they realise whom they had walked with in companionship and listened to so intently. Ignatius and the early companions spoke of their ministry as 'helping souls' and this is still today our ministry in schools.

I started with a musical image of accompaniment and I will end with one. One of the great formative experiences of Ignatius was his experience of God as Trinity in the form of complete musical harmony, an image that stayed with him all his life. The life of the Trinity is harmonious companionship, is perfect accompaniment amongst the three persons of the Godhead. We share by our Baptism in that life, in that harmony, in that accompaniment. The accompaniment we in turn offer to students singly or in groups, to our teaching colleagues, to anyone we engage in *conversar* with, is surely an echo of and a participation in that Divine life which is our destiny.

# A Reflection on the Idea of Accompaniment in the Light of Experience of Working in School

John Stoer

*Cura personalis*, or care of the individual person, is one of the pillars of Jesuit education. This short article explores what that might mean in terms of the teacher-pupil relationship in a Jesuit school and in doing so suggests what the goal of Jesuit education should be. The stimulus for this article has been reading and sharing in discussion of a much longer article by Fr Denis Delobre SJ entitled *Accompaniment: Pillars of Ignatian Pedagogy*, which was published in the French journal *Christus*. The discussion took place at a Colloquium on Jesuit Education organised by the Jesuit Institute in April 2012.

In Scottish education, the emphasis is very much on academic attainment. I suspect it is no different in any other modern educational system. Whilst we all want to develop the whole person, we put most of our energy and efforts into learning and teaching academic subjects. Given the importance of grades, inspections, pupil and parental pressures, and our own pride in the performance of our pupils, this is hardly surprising. All good systems of education and all good teachers will, however, know that there is more to education than grades and results. It is right that, on an occasional basis, we should stand back and remind ourselves

that there is a bigger context and greater goal for all that we do and for all the energy that we expend.

For those of us who work in Jesuit education, there is no shortage of key phrases to guide our thinking. For example: 'finding God in all things', 'being men and women for others', or 'forming men and women of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment'.

I believe that reflecting on *cura personalis* and the ideas that lie behind it will be of great benefit in helping us think about the bigger context and the goal of Jesuit education.

## The teacher-pupil relationship

Until quite recently, in Ignatian retreats the term 'spiritual direction' was commonly used.

This has changed and the term 'accompaniment' is now used to describe the process and the relationship between the retreatant and his or her guide. The accompanier's role is to encourage and enable self-discovery. Without wishing to make too much of a parallel with teaching, the shift in emphasis that has

taken place in the profession from teaching to learning and the idea that the curriculum is what the pupil takes away and not what the teacher teaches, is making a broadly similar point. The use of the term accompaniment takes this a step further.

For us as teachers, what might it mean to accompany pupils? In particular, what impact might it have on our understanding of pastoral care as a head of year (or line), as a form or class teacher and, in a more general sense, as a member of staff of a school committed to the care of the individual person?

The points below draw very particular inspiration from Fr Delobre's article:

- Our goal is for pupils to consider matters for themselves with a focus is on personal growth, “. . . of giving birth to one's own life”, “not on training”, or, as it is put by Fr Delobre, on “*dressage*” (which can be translated as ‘to lick into shape or tame’).
- We need to avoid the assumption that we know best (even when we may well do!) and avoid “pre-judgements” and “forced direction”.
- Understand that for many pupils their priorities and ours will be different; especially so for those who are in some way troubled.
- Accept that we have very little idea of what it is like to be a teenager in 2012 or any other year.

- “Have an elevated idea of a human being” and try to believe that all of our pupils are capable of taking responsibility especially when we are “. . . sorely tested, frequently disappointed and even betrayed.”
- Be aware of the “. . . delicate sensitivity . . . of even the simplest relationship of help,” and the “quality of manner” in which we as teachers “look upon” the pupil. We must try to “shed warmth and light”, “. . . be like a midwife helping and giving courage”.
- Accept that some things cannot be rushed and that patience will be needed.
- Above all, be able to listen, to be attentive to the pupil in his or her world, (the French word in the article, *attentif*, can be translated as ‘careful, close, searching, painstaking, thoughtful, watchful’).

I know that all this is easier said than done. We have lessons to teach, jotters or exercise books to mark, reports to write and so. What the above list is highlighting is a set of values which should guide us in our professional lives not a list of prescribed actions. It tries to say something of the qualities of heart and mind that a teacher in a Jesuit school should try to have.

At its heart is a profound respect for the other person, a belief that God is living and working in each of us and that our role is to help the pupil consider matters

for him or herself. Without the consent and engagement of the pupil what we do and the time that we expend will not work other than in a superficial way. Even things like good quality learner feedback, pupil tracking systems, or appropriate intervention, will only work if the pupil will let them work. No matter how good policies may look on paper, and what excellent evidence they may provide for inspections, relationships rather than policies should come first (accepting that a good policy can help to build relationships).

If we emphasise care of the individual to the extent that we should, it means that you will have to vary what you do depending on the pupil. This is a real challenge for schools and for teachers and not everyone will agree or be comfortable with this. For example, sometimes the needs of the individual may mean that you do not take action or do not apply the school's behaviour policy in a particular disciplinary case. Whilst care of the individual should always be balanced with the needs of the community, the latter should not automatically take precedence.

Many teachers will be uncomfortable with the suggestion that they should accompany pupils. After all, in secondary schools we are first and foremost teachers of English, history, physics, and so on. In addition, you could ask what are the pastoral staff, such as heads of year, given time and money to do? In the same way that this article stresses pupil consent, there must also be teacher consent to being an accompanier. Indeed, some teachers do an excellent job of accompanying pupils but would be

horrified at the suggestion that they were practising accompaniment in the way that it is described in this article.

## The goal of Jesuit education

Cardinal Hume, when asked what the purpose was of Catholic education, replied that it was to help us prepare for death. No one would disagree that our 'ultimate' goal is to help us and our pupils find life in this world and the next; ". . . I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."<sup>13</sup> All of us who are engaged in Catholic education share that goal.

The particular insight of the Ignatian idea of accompaniment is the stress that it puts on human freedom and individual choice. As Alan Harrison SJ pointed out at the same Colloquium, Ignatius makes the startling assertion that "God deals directly with the individual"<sup>14</sup> and that the accompanying God seeks to ". . . to give courage and strength, consolations . . . and quiet . . . making things easy and removing all obstacles so that the person may move forward in doing good'.<sup>15</sup> Our role as teachers in Jesuit schools is no different. It is to remove obstacles to help our pupils move forward. It is not to prejudice, direct or 'lick into shape' (*dressage*) but give them the freedom to act in a responsible manner.

In his article, Fr Delobre puts great stress on one to one relationships of accompaniment. He makes no comment on the role of a community to help individuals. Interestingly, community is

<sup>13</sup> John 10:10

<sup>14</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.15

<sup>15</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* n.315



not something that is emphasised in *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*. Yet, if you look at the mission statement of a Benedictine School, for example Ampleforth College, great emphasis is put on community. Schools are not just collections of individuals. The school as a community, and groups within a school, can be a powerful influence for good and bad. Whilst we, as teachers, should focus on the individual, we should also seek to build our community and its sub-groups, such as a class, into a force for good. In a very real sense, a community can accompany an individual to help him or her ‘... move forward in doing good’.

In the mission statement of St Aloysius’ College, Glasgow, this is expressed in the following way: “Our starting point is to build a strong community which enables our young people, as individuals, to learn how to use freedom in a responsible manner.”

Through care of the individual, by being warm in manner, sensitive and attentive to his or her needs, often in an unobtrusive and sometimes informal ways, we can practise accompaniment and help young people, in the language of Fr Delobre, to give birth to their own life.