

## Understanding the Early Jesuit Context of “Our Way of Proceeding”

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The early Jesuits imbued the bland phrase “our way of proceeding” with peculiar significance. Most commonly invoked by the Spanish *nuestro modo de proceder* or its Latin equivalent, *noster modus procedendi*, the same concept also appears in early Jesuit correspondence and documents as *nuestro modo de vivir* (“our way of living”). The weighty significance attached to the concept for subsequent generations of Jesuits down through the present day, as well as its fast ascent as a signifier of Jesuit identity already in the time of Ignatius and especially after his death in the early operations of the Society, mean that a historical investigation of the term is warranted. As this article will show, the unique nature of the term in the early Jesuit context stems in part from the implicit understanding among the early Jesuits that its significance lay neither in the exactness of its expression nor in a carefully delineated definition, but in the embodied reality to which it pointed. When Ignatius of Loyola, Francisco Xavier, Pierre Favre, Diego Laínez, and others wrote or spoke of the Jesuit way of proceeding, I argue that they were not establishing a slogan or a formula, nor referencing a specific text, but rather indicating an attitude that pertained to an experience of life and ministry in which they shared and to which they aspired. As much as the Jesuit way of proceeding did appear in their early writings, is present in their foundational texts, and had concrete implications for the foundation of the Jesuit Institute as a whole and for particular Jesuit institutions, the early Jesuits used it to describe not *what* they did in their communities and ministries, but *how* they lived and worked. It described a process by which Jesuits

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sought to make decisions in a way consummate with their identity as members of the Society of Jesus.

When Ignatius of Loyola wrote to his nephew Beltrán in 1539 of the progress he and his companions were making at establishing themselves as a religious order in Rome, he told Beltrán that “all our way of proceeding” had been “approved and confirmed by the vicar of Christ Our Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Pope Paul III had, indeed, given Ignatius and his companions “the entire faculty to make constitutions among ourselves, according to our way of living [in Spanish: *nuestro modo de vivir*], as we judge most suitable.”<sup>2</sup> That Ignatius would refer in the same sentence to what is obviously the same reality as both a way of *proceeding* and a way of *living* makes evident that he had no concern for linguistic precision in regard to the concept he invoked. These two phrases nevertheless embodied for Ignatius, by his own admission, the whole of what the pope endorsed in allowing for the creation of the Society of Jesus as a Catholic religious order.

The pedestrian nature of the phrase “our way of proceeding” coupled with this looseness of expression underlines the fact that the most linguistically significant part of the phrase is neither *proceeding/living*, nor even *way*, but *our*. Before Ignatius and his companions adopted anything resembling a formal religious rule, they were united by their common commitment to a particular manner of life—a way of proceeding that they judged to be uniquely theirs within the Catholic Church. Their invocation of this *way* persisted even after they had a formal rule and constitutions. No pithy definition easily explains this sense the early Jesuits had of their own identity. Yet their reliance on the phrase in both their internal correspondence and in the eventual text of the Jesuit *Constitutions* reveals its foundational significance. The contexts in which they utilised the phrase suggest its importance to their self-understanding as a unified group. It referred not to a single ministry in which they engaged nor to a written religious rule, but to the manner of choosing and undertaking ministries that members of the Society claimed as *ours*. This way of proceeding had its roots in the Jesuits’ experience of making the Spiritual Exercises and embodied the particular notion of freedom to which the first companions committed themselves in choosing to make themselves available to the pope to serve the Church wherever the need was greatest.

1 Ignatius to Beltrán de Loyola, 24 September 1539, *Epp. Ign. I*, 149 (#20).

2 Ignatius to Beltrán de Loyola, 24 September 1539, *Epp. Ign. I*, 149 (#20).

The purpose of the present study is to shed light upon the connotations and implications of the phrase as it was utilised by Ignatius and the other nine Jesuits who formed the first members of the Society at the papal foundation in 1540. These parameters are further narrowed by my focus on the significance of the phrase in specific contexts. To this end, this analysis does not catalogue every instance of the phrase’s use over the history of the Society of Jesus nor does it trace the evolution of its significance, although this sort of quantitative analysis may provide promising further insights into this line of investigation. In particular, this qualitative study will focus on key examples of the phrase’s use by the first companions leading up to and including the formulation of the Jesuit *Constitutions*. The way Ignatius and the other first companions used the phrase “our way of proceeding” in their correspondence, I will argue, points back to their formation in the Spiritual Exercises—where the phrase itself is not utilised—and forward to the text of the Jesuit *Constitutions*—where the phrase, while neither prominent or defined, nevertheless appears over a dozen times. Between the foundational experience of making the Exercises and the effort at institutionalisation represented by the Jesuit *Constitutions* lies the pragmatic process of building up the Society evidenced by the correspondence of Ignatius and his earliest Jesuit companions. In these three sources—the Exercises, the *Constitutions*, and the correspondence of the first companions—and in the relationships among these sources, an overall context emerges for understanding the Jesuit concept evoked by the phrase “our way of proceeding”.

Comparatively little scholarship has been undertaken on the historical uses of this Jesuit concept. Tracing its later reception both inside the Society (particularly on the part of Jesuit leadership) and among historians (some Jesuits and some not) can help to identify a number of currents that flowed from the early Jesuit context this essay seeks to uncover. For example, a brief, but nonetheless comprehensive, historical treatment of the phrase is offered in the entry on “modo de proceder” in the *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*.<sup>3</sup> The *Diccionario*, noting various uses of the phrase in early Jesuit correspondence and in the Jesuit *Constitutions*, offers the summary definition that “our way of proceeding” and “our way of living” “refer to the institute of the SJ with all the specific traits

3 “Modo de Proceder”, *DHCJ* III, 2712–2713.

that distinguish it from other religious institutes".<sup>4</sup> This definition rests on a solid foundation of evidence. As noted above, Ignatius himself used the phrase to refer to everything which Pope Paul III had "approved and confirmed" in allowing the creation of the Society as a religious order. Further, although Ignatius and the first companions may not have ever offered such a compact definition of the phrase, Ignatius's faithful and chosen interpreter, Jerónimo Nadal, defined the phrase in almost exactly the terms utilised by the *Diccionario*.

In 1552, when Ignatius was the superior general of the Society, he named Jerónimo Nadal as the general's commissary for the Jesuits in Spain and Portugal, delegating his own authority to Nadal for the governance of the Society in those regions.<sup>5</sup> Nadal carried out this assignment by traveling from community to community, meeting with Jesuits, giving exhortations on the newly composed—but not yet officially promulgated—Jesuit *Constitutions*, and issuing more specific rules for the life of the Jesuits under his charge. This assignment would set the pattern for most of the rest of Nadal's life, and his principal occupation for his remaining years involved explaining to Jesuits how to be Jesuits. That he had originally been entrusted with this work by Ignatius himself has lent his interpretations and explanations particular credence among the members of the Society. This invested authority combined with Nadal's skill in rendering vague concepts concrete combine to make him one of the most influential interpreters of the Society's ways in the entire history of the order. To give but two brief examples, when Jesuits today insist that "we are not monks" and that "the road is our home", wittingly or unwittingly, they reference not Ignatius, but Nadal.<sup>6</sup>

Such pithy expressions represent only a tiny piece of Nadal's legacy. Perhaps the most influential component of Nadal's teaching was the emphasis he laid upon the life of Ignatius as a model for the formation and life of a Jesuit.<sup>7</sup> In all of Nadal's teaching about the Jesuit *Constitutions* and the Jesuit way of life, he always returned

4 "Modo de Proceder", *DHCJ* III, 2712–2713.

5 See Bangert and McCoog, *Jerome Nadal*, 91.

6 For an illuminating analysis of what Nadal intended, and did not intend, by "we are not monks" see Geger, "Editor's Note", iii–vii; for Nadal's comments on the role of the road in Jesuit life see, Bangert and McCoog, *Jerome Nadal*, 40.

7 Bangert and McCoog, *Jerome Nadal*, 206.

to the example, and the words, of Ignatius, who himself regarded Nadal as his faithful interpreter.<sup>8</sup> As such, it is unsurprising that Nadal used the phrase “our way of proceeding” in his instruction about the Society and that his interpretation of the phrase has proved influential in subsequent Jesuit history. Nadal exhibited none of the reluctance of the first companions to define the Jesuit way of proceeding. In addresses given in 1561 and 1563, Nadal made clear that the Society’s “way of proceeding” was synonymous with “the institute” of the Society. Thus, he explained in 1561 that “this institute or way of proceeding, as thus Fr. Ignatius called it, is always addressed to seek the greater glory and honor of God our Lord” and in 1563 that “Our Father Ignatius was not accustomed to speak of the spirit of the Society, but the way of proceeding of the Society; we usually say our institute, our society, our congregation”.<sup>9</sup>

For Nadal “our way of proceeding” referred broadly to the entirety of what it meant to belong to the Society of Jesus. As such, there was a certain elasticity in the phrase, admitting any number of characteristics of the Jesuit approach to life and ministry. His notion of the phrase’s breadth is on full display in one undated text in which he listed no fewer than forty-two different aspects of the Society’s way of proceeding.<sup>10</sup> These aspects move from the spiritual concern that Society was to seek “the perfection of all virtues” and especially “obedience and abnegation,” to specific matters of the Society’s governance, such as that “superiors are well to have those with whom to consult; but they are not obliged to follow the counsel of consultors.”<sup>11</sup> The way that Nadal proposed both embraced the general maxim that “the way of proceeding of the Society is strong and gentle, in spirit and in truth” and required more specifically that a Jesuit should “not have colloquy or conversation without it being for some immediate or mediate spiritual fruit”.<sup>12</sup>

Nadal’s broad use of “our way of proceeding” represents

8 Ignatius says just this in his letter appointing Nadal his commissary for Spain and Portugal: Ignatius to Nadal, 10 April 1553, *Nadal I*, 143–145 (#46); here, 143.

9 Nadal, *Exhortationes Complutenses (Alcalá) (1561)* in *Nadal V*, 304 and “Instructio Brevis Quanam Scilicet Ratione De Rebus Theologicis His Temporibus Loquendum Sit” (1563) in *Mon paed. II*, 131 (#14).

10 Nadal, “Of the Way of Proceeding of the Society”, *Nadal IV*, 614–619 (#62).

11 Nadal, “Of the Way of Proceeding of the Society”, *Nadal IV*, 614, 616.

12 Nadal, “Of the Way of Proceeding of the Society”, *Nadal IV*, 616.

something of a finished product in the elaboration and definition of the phrase. For Nadal, the phrase stands for Ignatius's manner of describing the same reality that other Jesuits simply referred to as the "institute" of the Society or, indeed, as "our society" itself. Thus, everything that the Society had instituted—whether in the Formula of the Institute, the *Constitutions*, or in the various collections of rules issued universally and locally—pertained to the Society's way of proceeding. That Nadal's use of the phrase became normative is indicated by the use made of the phrase some 400 years later by Superior General Pedro Arrupe in a 1979 address. Although Arrupe was principally interested in the phrase's use by Ignatius, and particularly in its appearances in the Jesuit *Constitutions*, his interpretation followed along the lines that Nadal had established. Arrupe contends that "in the beginning, then, 'our way of life' and 'our way of proceeding' are parallel expressions meaning 'our institute'".<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, Arrupe's intention in bringing the phrase "our way of proceeding" to the attention of the Society of Jesus of his day lay in distinguishing between the perennial essentials of the Society and the contingent adaptations the Society has made to accommodate itself to different situations and eras, and thus he was less inclined than Nadal was to include every sort of Jesuit rule under the broad umbrella of the phrase. Nonetheless, at the heart of Arrupe's utilisation of the phrase is the link he draws between the Society's way of proceeding and its general purpose, which he defined, following Nadal, as "the salvation and perfection of souls for the greater glory of God".<sup>14</sup> Given this purpose, the Society's way of proceeding "opens world wide possibilities for our apostolate; it puts a premium on our acceptance of more difficult missions and, in consequence, calls for unlimited availability and mobility".<sup>15</sup>

The Jesuit way of proceeding served for Arrupe as a means to encourage a renewed commitment to the fundamentals of the Society. This is the meaning that underpins the most common context in which the phrase has been invoked by the leadership of the Society of Jesus. Thus, for example, when the Thirty-fourth General Congregation under the leadership of Superior General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach returned to the phrase in 1995, it was with a similar spirit and intention. The final decree of that congregation

13 Pedro Arrupe, "Modo nostro procedendi", 693.

14 Cited in Arrupe, "Modo nostro procedendi", 695–696 from *Nadal V*, 52 (#33).

15 Arrupe, "Modo nostro procedendi", 696.

outlines eight characteristics of the Jesuit way of proceeding, beginning, just as Arrupe had in 1979, with “deep personal love for Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> The drafters of this document were clear that “certain attitudes, values, and patterns of behaviour join together to become what has been called the Jesuit way of proceeding.” The decree emphasises that these characteristics “were born in the life of St. Ignatius and shared by his first companions” and references Nadal’s conviction that the Society should model its life on the life of Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>17</sup>

This understanding of the phrase as a signifier of perceived essential Jesuit traits has entered the historical scholarship on the Society of Jesus as well. Jesuit historians naturally know the phrase well: in *The First Jesuits*, John W. O’Malley SJ indicated its importance but chose to leave definitions aside, simply noting that “our way of proceeding” was the first Jesuits’ “favorite, most inclusive, and pregnant expression for their style of life and ministry”, an expression which “indicated official documentation” but also “transcended [such documentation] by suggesting more spontaneous and actualised ideals and attitudes that distinguished Jesuit life and ministry from that of others”.<sup>18</sup> Yet O’Malley also utilised the phrase elsewhere as a means of explaining what he considers the definitive characteristic of what made the Jesuit order distinctive: the educational formation of its members and their eventual engagement in the business of education. As O’Malley explains, “the founders of the Society were not simply devout and intelligent Christians of their time, but were men formally educated at one of the most prestigious academic institutions of the day”, that is, the University of Paris, and this fact “contributed in multiple and fundamental, even if sometimes subtle, ways to the distinctiveness of the order from its first days”.<sup>19</sup> The Jesuits were visibly unique among religious in the sixteenth century because they “did not wear a distinctive habit, did not recite or chant the liturgical hours in choir, retained their family names, lived not in monasteries or convents, but simply in houses or colleges, and were governed not by provincial and general chapters, but by a superior general with expansive authority”. But these were only, O’Malley

16 General Congregation 34, Decree 26, 659.

17 General Congregation 34, Decree 26, 659 (#535).

18 O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 8.

19 O’Malley, “The Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus”, 4.

argues, outward characteristics “indicative of the distinctive way of life and way of proceeding they committed themselves to”.<sup>20</sup> O’Malley argues that the truest expression of the distinctiveness of the Society lay in its learned foundations and learned commitments. These commitments forged a way forward for the Society to engage with the secular world and to promote the common good beyond what typical religious orders had done before. Utilising the expansive definition of “our way of proceeding” solidified by Nadal, O’Malley’s interpretation of the phrase in the light of Jesuit training and key ministerial endeavours makes perfect sense.

Scholars of the Society of Jesus more broadly have also investigated possible explanations of the term’s significance and repeated use. Adriano Prospero takes a different approach to the phrase from O’Malley’s when he equates “that way” with a phrase of Ignatius’s “that remains proverbial: ‘enter with the other and leave with oneself’”.<sup>21</sup> Prospero’s conclusion regarding the phrase’s significance is narrower than O’Malley’s, but his justification for asserting the equivalence of these two phrases seems grounded in a not dissimilar logic. Prospero knows that the Jesuits used “our way of proceeding” to indicate that which made Jesuits unique, and also that “entering with the other and leaving with oneself” was characteristic of Jesuits, and so considers that the latter must be an essential component of the former. A similar conviction that “our way of proceeding” can be applied to anything that makes Jesuits and Jesuit ministries unique seems to lie behind the choices of scholars like Alexander J. Fisher and Robert Aleksander Maryks to utilise the phrase within the titles of their works.<sup>22</sup> In both cases, the phrase is employed broadly to identify the many ways that Jesuits proceeded in their ministries. The result is that the term’s precise significance and specific origins in the early history of the Society remain fruitful lines for further research.

At the same time, these historiographical treatments provide valuable evidence of the term’s use that can be traced back to Nadal’s interpretation of Ignatius. There can be little doubt that Nadal’s 1561 definition of “our way of proceeding” as synonymous with the Jesuit “institute” became the standard way

20 O’Malley, “The Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus”, 2.

21 Prospero, *La Vocazione*, 91.

22 See Fisher, “Music and the Jesuit “Way of Proceeding,” and Maryks, ed., *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness*.

of understanding the phrase, both within the Society and in the scholarship about it. Nor is there any reason to suspect Nadal of being disingenuous when he asserted that “our way of proceeding” was simply what “Fr. Ignatius called” the Society’s Institute.<sup>23</sup> That was likely his own understanding of Ignatius’s intentions. But the existing evidence for the use made of the phrase by Ignatius and the other first companions suggests that before the phrase arrived at this more general definition and broadly expansive usage, it served a different function among the first companions. The first companions may not have had a precise definition for the term in mind when they used it, but the contexts in which they utilised it point to their having had a narrower sense of the term than in later usage. For the first companions, “our way of proceeding” seems to have served not as a means to describe their entire enterprise, but as a tool that served the process by which they determined how to frame the efforts of their fledgling Society.

### **Our Way**

In a 1959 article, Jesuit Maurice Guiliani explored the spiritual underpinnings of the unity forged among the first Jesuits. Guiliani contends that the early Jesuits were united around a common ideal: “to serve Christ by continuing his work in the whole world”.<sup>24</sup> He does not treat the concept of “our way of proceeding,” but his essential point regards what “aroused and sealed the union of Ignatius and his companions”, and thus, without naming it, his entire article revolves around how the first companions came to form a way of proceeding that was *ours*.<sup>25</sup> He thus underlines what Arrupe would emphasise in his 1979 address: that the way of proceeding of the Society is inextricably linked to its purpose. Yet there is nothing uniquely Jesuit about a commitment to serve Christ and continue his work in the world. The first companions must have believed that they did this work in a unique way, else they could have joined established orders, rather than forming a new one. Among themselves, “our way of proceeding” offered an indication of how they wished to engage in the common work of the Christian church.

The phrase had clear currency among the first companions who

23 Nadal, *Exhortationes Complutenses (Alcalá) (1561)* in *Nadal V*, 304.

24 Giuliani, “Compagnons de Jésus”, 226.

25 Giuliani, “Compagnons de Jésus”, 233.

formed the Society of Jesus. The very day after Ignatius's letter to his nephew cited at the beginning of this article, Alfonso Salmerón wrote to the father of fellow Jesuit Diego Laínez on Ignatius's behalf and explained the situation of the Society in nearly the same terms as Ignatius had: "the pontiff, the vicar of Christ Our Lord, against many adversities [. . .] has approved and confirmed all of our way of proceeding" and granted "the full faculty to have constitutions among us according to that which we judge is most suitable to our way of living".<sup>26</sup> Francisco Xavier conceived of the papal founding of the Society along the same lines: he numbered it "among many mercies that in this life God our Lord has done for me and does every day is this one, that in my days I have seen what I so much desired, that is, the confirmation of our rule and way of living".<sup>27</sup> Clearly, it was the phrase these companions had used among themselves to express their hopes for founding the order.

It was also utilised, as the years passed, in the context of the expansion of their ministry into new territory. Salmerón used the phrase when writing to Ignatius from Edinburgh, Scotland in 1541 to inform him of the inroads he had made with the queen, Mary of Guise. Salmerón had been able to deliver to the queen a letter of support written by her brother, the archbishop of Rennes, informing her of "our life and profession and way of proceeding."<sup>28</sup> Pierre Favre related similar good news to Ignatius in 1541, declaring "that I am shocked, in a good sense, by the grand support that there is in Spain for the way of proceeding in things spiritual in conformity with our way".<sup>29</sup> In 1553, Laínez wrote to Ignatius from Genoa, informing him that in his meetings with the Spanish ambassador there and other "principal people of this land" he had "declared the way of proceeding of the Society, and I offered them help".<sup>30</sup> Part of the work of the early Society clearly involved convincing those whom they wished to serve, or to serve under, of the goodness and utility of the Society's particular way.

The phrase also pertained to the Society's efforts to maintain itself and its integrity. Just a few years after his time in Genoa, but now as

26 Salmeron to Juan Lainez, 25 September 1539, *Epp. Ign. I*, 153–155 (#22); here, 154.

27 Xavier to Roman Companions, 15 January 1544, *Mon. Xavier I*, 278–295 (#17); here, 294.

28 Salmeron to Ignatius, 2 February 1541, *Salmeron I*, 2–10 (#32); here, 4.

29 Favre to Ignatius, 17 November 1541, *Faber*, 135–137 (#44); here, 136–137.

30 Lainez to Ignatius, 18 November 1553, *Lainez I*, 239–243 (#93); here, 241.

vicar of the Society after Ignatius’s death, Laínez wrote through the Society’s secretary Juan Polanco to fellow first companion Paschase Broët regarding the upcoming general congregation to elect Ignatius’s successor. He reminded Broët that “beyond the election, establishing the constitutions and the way of proceeding of the Society has to be treated”.<sup>31</sup> Simão Rodrigues, one of the longest-lived of the first Jesuits, was still using the phrase in 1574. He wrote that year to Superior General Everard Mercurian, insisting that in the specific troubles they faced they should nevertheless “conform ourselves with the general way of proceeding in the Society regarding this particular”.<sup>32</sup>

The confidence with which these first Jesuits utilised the phrase in these diverse contexts suggests that it had particular resonance in their way of thinking about the Society. In none of the examples cited above did the letter writer feel any need to explain its meaning to the recipient, even when—in the case of the letter of Ignatius to his nephew or Salmerón to Diego Laínez’s father—the recipient was not himself a Jesuit. Yet neither did they assume that everyone outside of their circle would immediately understand their way of proceeding. Laínez “declared” their way of proceeding to the authorities in Genoa and Salmerón relied on Mary of Guise’s brother to “inform” her of their way, while Favre was “shocked” that people in Spain had accepted their way so readily. Xavier went so far as to imply that even some Jesuits might not be adequately knowledgeable concerning the Jesuit way of proceeding. In a 1552 letter to Rodrigues, Xavier listed among the desired qualities for a Jesuit to be sent as a missionary to India that he be “a person who also knows the rules and *Constitutions* of the Society and its way of proceeding”.<sup>33</sup>

The conviction of the early Jesuits that their way was unique emerges clearly from these references to explaining and acquiring knowledge of the Society’s way of proceeding. Patrons had to be won over to it, those they served had to embrace it, and recruits to the order had to acquire knowledge of it. Yet for all their insistence upon its centrality, the first Jesuits were either loath to define it, or were content that the mutual understandings formed in the early days of their companionship sufficed to make its sense clear

31 Lainez to Broët, 31 October 1556, *Lainez I*, 469–470 (#210).

32 Rodrigues to Mercurian, 11 May 1574, *Broët*, 766–769; here, 769.

33 Xavier to Rodrigues, 7 April 1552, *Mon. Xavier I*, 723–730 (#110); here, 726.

among themselves. Its specific contours, to the extent that it had any, appear in their correspondence most clearly in the light of its practical implications.

There were, to begin with, some traditional religious practices that the early Jesuits rejected as being incompatible with the Society's way of proceeding. In 1548, Ignatius wrote a series of letters to Antonio de Aroz, the provincial superior of Spain, in response to the desires of Spanish Jesuit Andres de Oviedo to live a more contemplative style of life. The first request of Oviedo was to celebrate two or three masses in the same day.<sup>34</sup> To this, Ignatius replied through Juan Polanco that "looking [. . .] at the Institute of the Society and the way of proceeding, it does not seem that this [saying] of two or three masses suits, because it seems rather to be for one who has a hermetic way of life, not having another thing in which to occupy himself, rather than one who has to employ himself exteriorly in the help of neighbours, as our institute asks".<sup>35</sup> For Ignatius, the only conceivable reason for saying more than one mass a day was if a priest had "charge of two churches which he has to satisfy".<sup>36</sup> His concern that this Jesuit's desires led him away from an active life of ministering to people and toward the contemplative life of a hermit proved to be well-founded. Oviedo soon wrote to ask the superior general for "license to go to a wilderness for 7 years" since it seemed to Oviedo "that 8 hours [of prayer] is not enough (to which he has been used to giving himself up until now)".<sup>37</sup> There was no question in Ignatius's mind about the suitability of such a life for a Jesuit: "it is very repugnant to our institute and way of proceeding".<sup>38</sup> In a subsequent letter, he further emphasised that eight hours of prayer was not appropriate "for our way of proceeding and of professing to help others".<sup>39</sup> And when Ignatius wrote to the man himself, he went so far as to refer to a seven-year withdrawal for contemplative prayers as "a dangerous example for the way of proceeding of the Society".<sup>40</sup> The Jesuit way

34 Ignatius to Aroz, 5 March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 11–13 (#260), esp. 12.

35 Ignatius to Aroz, 5 March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 12 (#260).

36 Ignatius to Aroz, 5 March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 12 (#260).

37 Ignatius to Aroz, End of March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 42–44 (#291); here, 43.

38 Ignatius to Aroz, End of March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 43 (#291).

39 Ignatius to Aroz, End of March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 45–47 (#292); here, 46.

40 Ignatius to Oviedo, 27 March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 54–65 (#295); here, 56.

of proceeding implied active ministry to people, not contemplative prayer that removed one from the rough and tumble of the world.

Yet the Jesuit way of proceeding in the world was also meant to be distinct from the mores of the secular clergy and secular society. Indeed, Ignatius insisted that even allowing a non-Jesuit cleric to reside with the Jesuits would bring about “that our institute and way of proceeding [would] be broken”.<sup>41</sup> And he insisted to one Jesuit that “you should already know that it is not in conformity with the way of proceeding of the Society to live by taking stipends, and, among the fathers, to have care of nuns”.<sup>42</sup> The Jesuit *Constitutions* would eventually declare that “to be obliged to saying perpetual Masses [. . .] or to similar care, which does not allow the necessary freedom for our way of proceeding in the Lord, is not in the least suitable”.<sup>43</sup> Such prohibitions in the name of the Society’s way of proceeding extended into even the seemingly more trivial: in 1556, Vicar General Láinez suggested to Everard Mercurian that for Jesuits “to teach the [use of the] abacus could seem a thing somewhat alien to our way of proceeding”.<sup>44</sup> So, too, the lavishness of a celebration offered by a patron of the Society caused Alfonso Salmerón to excuse himself from attendance, for which Polanco—writing on behalf of Superior General Láinez—applauded him, advising that in the future “when His Lordship [. . .] insists on these or similar things, Your Reverence should plead on behalf of our Father that as a patron he help us to conserve our institute and way of proceeding, with God’s help”.<sup>45</sup> Jesuits were expected, in conformity with their way of proceeding, to keep themselves separate from the secular clergy and excessive dealings with religious women, as well as to refuse the saying of perpetual masses, to offer their services free of charge, and to avoid lavish entertainments.

### The Way of the Spiritual Exercises

There is much less positive evidence in early Jesuit correspondence of what sort of practices were clearly in conformity with their way of proceeding. This is telling in and of itself, as will be explored below. Yet Pierre Favre has left a clear testimony of at least a

41 Ignatius to Nadal, 14 July 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 153–155 (#386); here, 154.

42 Ignatius to Giovanni Baptiste Pezzano, 12 October 1549, *Epp. Ign. II*, 575 (#911).

43 *Constitutiones III*, Part VI, Ch. 3, #6 (p. 190).

44 Láinez to Mercurian, 4 November 1556, *Lainez I*, 494–496 (#230); here, 495.

45 Polanco to Salmeron, 16 July 1564, *Salmeron I*, 536–538 (#213a); here, 536.

few practices that were closely associated with the Jesuit way of proceeding. In the letters in which Favre referenced the Society's way of proceeding, the phrase tended to appear in conjunction with the Spiritual Exercises. Writing to Rome from Speyer in 1541, Favre gave "praise [to] God our Lord for the fruit that that good dean [of St. Martin] has done [. . .] in regard to moving others, hard like stones, so that also many in this city through his letters have understood our manner of proceeding and have already the desires to make the Exercises".<sup>46</sup> A few days later he made similar joint mention of the Exercises and the Jesuit way of proceeding: "thus always I had something to do, and I open doors at least for offering the Exercises, speaking and having audiences in the way they do, and I do not little esteem that through all parts, and also among the best [people], our manner of proceeding is known".<sup>47</sup> Writing from Regensburg a few months later, Favre related that "this last Sunday I had for my part up to 23 persons that received communion, among whom, at least, there were four principal gentlemen, including Don Juan de Granada, who confesses at least each week and receives communion; women are not among that count". He summed up by noting, "I can in general speak about the great fruit that is produced through this our way of proceeding".<sup>48</sup>

None of which suggests that the Jesuit way of proceeding should be conflated with the giving of the Exercises nor, indeed, with the encouragement of frequent communion or confession. Yet for Favre, it was the eagerness of people to embrace these practices that indicated their openness to the Jesuit way of proceeding. The connection that Favre makes between the Spiritual Exercises and the Jesuit way of proceeding seems particularly natural. The Spiritual Exercises were not only a key component of the ministry of the early Jesuits, but the experience of the first companions themselves making the Exercises was central to what formed and united them as a group. All ten of the founding Jesuits named in *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, the papal bull that formalised the Society's foundation, had made the Spiritual Exercises as part of their joining the group—seven had made the Exercises under Ignatius's own direction, and three under Pierre Favre's.<sup>49</sup> Particularly in the days when the

46 Favre to Ignatius and Codazzo, 25 January 1541, *Faber*, 60–66 (#24); here, 62–63.

47 Favre to Ignatius and Codazzo, 27 January 1541, *Faber*, 67–68 (#25); here, 68.

48 Favre to Ignatius and Codazzo, 21 June 1541, *Faber*, 113–116 (#38); here, 114.

49 See Iparraguirre, *Practica de los Ejercicios*, 267ff.

Jesuits had no official rule or other founding text, the experience of the Exercises provided them their surest sense of unity, offering the group a common spiritual language and perspective.

This perspective provides a key for understanding what unites the seemingly disparate claims of the early Jesuits for what did and did not conform to their way of proceeding. According to the first prefatory note of the Exercises, the term “spiritual exercises” signifies anything that serves “to prepare and dispose the soul to remove all disordered affections, and after having removed them, to seek and to find the divine will”.<sup>50</sup> A few pages later, the text establishes that it is the “principle and foundation” of these particular spiritual exercises that “man is created to praise, make reverence to, and serve God our Lord and through this to save his soul”. To this end, “the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and for the help and pursuance of the end for which he is created”, and therefore “it follows that man ought to use these things inasmuch as they help toward his end and he ought to free himself from them inasmuch as they impede it”.<sup>51</sup> The vision of human life presented by the Exercises is clear from the start: human beings exist in relationship to God and their lives are rightly directed toward the service of God. Determining what “things on the face of earth” are conducive toward the end of serving God and what things deter humans from that end, as well as how to free oneself from such things, becomes, therefore, essential to the spiritual vision of the Exercises.

Of itself, this sorting between what does and does not help toward the service God cannot explain the prohibitions and encouragements associated with the invocation of “our way of proceeding” as an operating principle for the early Society. For one, some caution must govern any approach toward interpreting the relationship of the Exercises to Jesuit life and ministry, not least because there is not now, nor has there ever been, a solitary way of understanding the “purpose” of the Exercises. Yet the spiritual perspective of the Exercises clearly imbued the thought of the first companions. It is worth noting, for example, that when Favre wrote in his personal, spiritual diary about his parents he declared that “they were farming folk and had enough of the world’s goods to be able to help me to have the proper means for saving my soul

50 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus* in *Exerc. Spir. I*, 141–143 (#1).

51 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus*, *Exerc. Spir. I*, 164–166 (#23)

in conformity with *the end for which I was created*".<sup>52</sup> Here he cites the very text from the "Principle and Foundation" quoted above as if these were the entirely obvious terms in which to consider his upbringing. But even accepting the ubiquity of the Exercises in the thought of the first companions, it must be further noted before rooting any Jesuit practice in the spiritual perspective of the Exercises that the Spiritual Exercises were not designed to recruit all those who made them into the Society. In the opening annotations of the text, meant to establish guiding principles for one who would lead others through the Exercises, Ignatius emphasises that "the one who gives the exercises ought not to move the one who receives them more to poverty or promises than to their contraries nor to one state or way of living [Spanish: *modo de vivir*] than another".<sup>53</sup> Ignatius goes on to insist that although "outside of the exercises we can licitly and meritoriously move all persons who are probably suitable to choose continence, virginity, religion and every way of evangelical perfection", nevertheless while someone is actually making the Exercises "it is much better and more suitable, when one is seeking the divine will, that the Creator and Lord himself communicates with the devout soul".<sup>54</sup> In addition to this counsel that the one giving the Exercises should leave all encouragement toward a particular way of life to God alone, Ignatius further makes clear, at a later point in the text, that those making the Exercises should learn from God "how we ought to dispose ourselves to come to perfection in whatever state or life that God our Lord gives us to choose".<sup>55</sup> There was, in the mind of Ignatius and the logic of the Exercises, more than one "way of living" to which God might call a person who made the Exercises. The Exercises were meant to assist the ones making them to find the highest degree of perfection possible in whatever way of life to which God called them.

Nevertheless, the text of the Exercises indicates a concern with changing the way that people lived, particularly as regards how they exercised their human freedom. Certainly Favre seems to have considered frequent confession and communion to have been among those things which a person formed by the Exercises would rightly desire to use "inasmuch as they help toward his end" of

52 *The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 60 (#1). Emphasis added.

53 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus, Exerc. Spir. I*, 152 (#15).

54 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus, Exerc. Spir. I*, 154 (#15).

55 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus, Exerc. Spir. I*, 242 (#135).

the praise and service of God.<sup>56</sup> There could be no question, in the minds of the early Jesuits, that frequenting these sacraments more regularly would help any person in the pursuit of the “end for which he is created”. The text of the Exercises also suggests the sort of specific impact the early Jesuits hoped this spiritual perspective might have on members of the laity and the secular clergy. For while Ignatius acknowledges that married people and priests who made the Exercises had already undertaken an “immutable election” to their respective states of life that no experience of prayer should or could change, nevertheless, there still existed things in their lives “that fall under the category of a mutable election, such as to take on benefices or to leave them behind, to take temporal goods or to reject them”.<sup>57</sup> For just as more frequent recourse to the sacraments would certainly help people to serve God, amassing benefices and temporal goods might “impede” a person in the pursuit of serving God.

When Ignatius and other early Jesuits spoke of behaviours that were “alien”, “repugnant”, or “dangerous” to their way of proceeding, they did so as men formed by this perspective. Long hours of prayer, the taking of stipends, and the care of nuns could not be conceived of, in themselves, as contrary to the service of God. But they could be considered as not conducive toward the end of serving God in the Society of Jesus. Such a determination demonstrates how thoroughly the Exercises informed the early Jesuits’ thought about life. The problem was not the inherent merits of the activities in question, but whether or not such activities would allow Jesuits the freedom to serve God completely. This was the very language the *Constitutions* used to prohibit Jesuits from saying perpetual masses: such a practice “does not allow the necessary freedom for our way of proceeding in the Lord”.<sup>58</sup> Freedom was, for a person formed by the Exercises, freedom to serve God. In the particular context of the Jesuit way of proceeding, saying perpetual masses, lavish parties, and even teaching the abacus all had the potential to impede this freedom.

It can be thus argued that the Jesuit way of proceeding was the Jesuit way of being free. Such freedom entailed not merely the rejection of sinful behaviour, but a commitment to a particular

56 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus, Exerc. Spir. I*, 164–166 (#23)

57 Ignatius, *Textus Autographus, Exerc. Spir. I*, 266 (#171)

58 *Constitutiones III*, Part VI, Ch. 3, #6 (p. 190).

way of serving God. In this, the otherwise pious practices that the early Jesuits saw as impeding their freedom provide a particularly revealing glimpse of the essential attributes of the Jesuit way of proceeding. Jesuits were not to spend long hours in prayer or saying mass for the same reason that they should not make commitments to celebrate perpetual masses: these practices imposed obligations on Jesuits that would limit their availability to go wherever they were needed.

### **The Way of Freedom**

This same notion of freedom undergirds the use of “our way of proceeding” in the Jesuit *Constitutions*. As in the correspondence, the *Constitutions* utilise the phrase rather than define it, giving the impression of a concept so ubiquitous and fundamental to Jesuit identity that no simple explanation of its content could suffice. Yet through the ways the phrase is utilised in the text of the *Constitutions*, it becomes clear that the phrase is rooted in this particularly Jesuit notion of freedom. This usage of “our way of proceeding” in the Jesuit *Constitutions* is, thus, in accord with the way the first companions utilised the phrase in their correspondence. But its presence in the *Constitutions* also represents a significant step toward the institutionalisation of the phrase as the Society itself began to establish a clearer set of institutional principles and rules.

The *Constitutions* invoke the concept of “our way of proceeding” between thirteen and fifteen different times.<sup>59</sup> On thirteen occasions, the phrase “our way of proceeding” itself appears, and clearly refers to the Jesuit way of proceeding. In two other instances, the *Constitutions* references “the method of our Institute” [Latin: “*Instituti nostri rationem*”], and in the other, “the method peculiar to our Institute” [Latin: “*notrisque Instituti peculiari ratione*”].<sup>60</sup> The relationship between the Society’s way of proceeding and its institute is undeniable, even if the institute and the way of proceeding cannot necessarily be equated. So it is possible that the intention of these phrases is the same as when “our way of proceeding” is more explicitly invoked. With or without these two less certain invocations

59 The thirteen certain uses can be found in the *Constitutions* at: #92, #137, #152, #216, #321, #398, #589, #624, #629, #657, #680, #789. The two possible uses can be found at #547 and #92.

60 *Constitutions* #92 (General Examen, Ch. 4, paragraph 35) and *Constitutions*, #547 (Part VI, Ch. 1, paragraph 1). My translation is from the Latin in *Constitutiones III*, 40, 175.

of the concept, the list of appearances of “our way of proceeding” in the *Constitutions* I suggest differs slightly from the list cited by Arrupe in the 1979 address and also, seemingly, from the *Diccionario*’s list. Although the *Diccionario* does not list the places in the *Constitutions* where the editors had located the phrase, since it accords with Pedro Arrupe’s 1979 address in asserting that phrase appears sixteen times, it seems safe to assume that the list the address provides is the same as the one behind the *Diccionario*’s claim.<sup>61</sup> There are two reasons for the discrepancy between my list and that one utilised by Arrupe and the *Diccionario*. First, I have located two instances of the phrase in the *Constitutions* not included on Arrupe’s list, and did not find evidence for one instance he cites.<sup>62</sup> Second, four of the places cited by Arrupe plainly use the phrase “way of proceeding”, but by my own reckoning, in these instances, the use of the phrase does not pertain to “our” way of proceeding—that is, to the Jesuit way of proceeding—but merely utilise the phrase in a more general, unspecified sense.<sup>63</sup> Thus, for example, one of these references “the way of proceeding said in Part IV” of the *Constitutions*.<sup>64</sup> This “way of proceeding” refers to the procedure and norms outlined in the earlier part of the *Constitutions*, not the overall way of proceeding of the Society. Another refers to “the way the Society ought to proceed in those things which pertain to the General”.<sup>65</sup> Again, the use of the phrase makes clear that the reference is to a specific procedure to be outlined, not to “our” way of proceeding. The other instances are similar. Regardless of these minor differences, the bulk of the two lists remains the same, and both point to a subtle significance for “our way of proceeding” in the internal logic of the *Constitutions*.

The theme of Jesuit freedom runs throughout a significant portion of these references. It hardly seems accidental that the first

61 Arrupe, “*Modo nostro procedendi*,” 693. The full list cited by Arrupe is: *Constitutions* #92, #137, #142, #152, #216 (twice), #321, #398, #409, #547, #589, #624, #629, #680, #778, #815.

62 The two instances missed by Arrupe’s list are in (#657), which is Part VIII, Ch. 1, paragraph 2; and #789, which is Part IX, Ch. 6, paragraph 1. The place where Arrupe’s list asserts the use of the phrase where it does not seem to appear is #142, which is Part I, Ch. 1, paragraph 3.

63 These instances are: #137 (from the Declarations on the Preamble), #409 (Part IV, Ch. 8, paragraph E), #778 (Part IX, Ch. 5, paragraph 1), #815 (Part X, paragraph 4).

64 *Constitutions*, #815 (Part X, paragraph 4). My translation is from the Latin in *Constitutiones* III, 272.

65 *Constitutions*, #778. My translation is from the Latin in *Constitutiones* III, 258.

appearance of the phrase “our way of proceeding” in the Jesuit General Examen which precedes the main text of the *Constitutiones* enjoins that Jesuits should “always be ready, in accord with our profession and way of proceeding, to roam in every part of the world whenever it is enjoined on us by the Supreme Pontiff or our immediate superior”.<sup>66</sup> The commitment to the help of others required that Jesuits not be bound to one place or occupation so that they could go wherever they were needed most. As such, they could not engage in practices that would limit their availability to serve. This is precisely the reason Ignatius ultimately provides for his wrath at Oviedo’s desire to lead a more contemplative life—that such a lifestyle would take him away from “our way of proceeding and of professing to help others”.<sup>67</sup> The two phrases are not joined incidentally—the Jesuit way of proceeding required that Jesuits help others directly. Nor could such help be conditioned on payment, which is why it was contrary to the Jesuit way of proceeding to accept stipends. Simply put, “obligations or conditions are [. . .] not to be accepted which impede sincerity in the proceeding of our way, which is to give freely that which we have freely received”.<sup>68</sup>

In the Jesuit way of proceeding, the concept of freedom espoused by the Exercises met the practical insistence of Ignatius and the other early Jesuits on availability to serve wherever people were in greatest need. Availability to serve in the most challenging of circumstances determined whether a person was suitable for membership in the Society. It would not do “to admit men difficult to an excessive degree or useless to the Congregation” even if their membership in the Society “might not be useless for themselves”. This was because “considering [. . .] the end of our Institute and our way of proceeding, we are persuaded in the Lord that it is not expedient for his greater service and praise”.<sup>69</sup> A person whose temperament limited his ability to serve anywhere in the world could not conform to the Society’s way of proceeding. So too, “it is not possible” for a man of weak physical health “to progress in the labours which our way of proceeding requires for the service of God”, and anyone who “is not able to conform his life to live under obedience and cannot lead himself according to the Society’s way

66 *Constitutiones III*, General Examen, Ch. 4, #35 (26).

67 Ignatius to Aroz, End of March 1548, *Epp. Ign. II*, 45–47 (#292); here, 46.

68 *Constitutiones III*, Part IV, Ch. 7, #3 (130).

69 *Constitutiones III*, Part I, Ch. II, #4 (48).

of proceeding because he is unable or does not wish to overcome his own understanding and judgment” ought to be dismissed from the Society.<sup>70</sup> Whether the problem stemmed from—as we would now deem it—psychological difficulty, physical impediment, or sheer obstinacy did not matter: if a man could not serve where he was asked to serve, he could not conform to the Society’s way of proceeding.

As indicated by the last example, this availability to serve required willingness to do whatever superiors asked. This was why Vicar General Láinez had no patience in December 1556 with a Jesuit who had written to him complaining about his superior. According to Láinez—writing, again, through Juan Polanco—the great sin of this Jesuit was that “in place of confessing your faults of such great irreverence toward your superior in Modena, and of such great mistrust, and of such great disobedience and of such great dis-edification in the house and outside of it against our institute and way of proceeding, you place yourself to accuse your superior”.<sup>71</sup> The *Constitutions* put the matter of a subject’s attitude toward his superior bluntly: “it is highly expedient and truly necessary that all give themselves in perfect obedience to the Superior (whoever he may be), recognizing him in place of Christ our Lord, following him with internal reverence and love”.<sup>72</sup> Thus, if a Jesuit sought, according to the Society’s way of proceeding, to free himself from all that kept him from the service of God, then he needed to free himself from all inclinations that were contrary to following the will of his superior, who sat in the place of Christ. To argue against the determinations of one’s superior represented, for Láinez, a fundamental unwillingness to be completely available in the service of Christ’s mission.

The relationship between this complete availability to serve where most needed and the Jesuit way of proceeding offers at least partial explanation of why the early Jesuits more often talked about their way of proceeding in terms of what inhibited it rather than what it actually entailed. There was no specific ministry associated with their way of proceeding: their way of proceeding implied that they needed to be open to any number of ministries. Thus, they were more concerned to fight back against those behaviours that

70 *Constitutiones III*, Part II, Ch. 2, #4 (68).

71 Láinez to Baroëlo, 12 December 1556, *Lainez I*, 605–607 (#305); here, 605.

72 *Constitutiones III*, Part III, Ch. 1, #23 (90).

would limit this availability than to catalogue the activities that were in conformity with it—such a catalogue would have been long, and constantly expanding.

The sheer variety of what might be done according to the Jesuit way of proceeding also underscores why the early Jesuits believed that knowledge of it had to be acquired over time. Francisco Xavier's inclusion among the necessary attributes for a Jesuit who should be sent to India of knowledge of "the rules and *Constitutions* of the Society and its way of proceeding" has a parallel in the *Constitutions*.<sup>73</sup> There, amid the discussion of missions Jesuits receive from the superior general of the order, the text notes that "if someone less practiced in the way of proceeding of the Society and of acting with neighbours is sent, he ought to be joined to another better practiced in these things, whom he can imitate, with whom he can confer, and whom he can consult concerning doubtful matters which occur"<sup>74</sup> Knowing the orders from the superior who had sent a man on mission was not sufficient to ensure the preservation of the Society's way of proceeding. This resulted, quite simply, from the fact that Jesuits often had to make on-the-spot decisions without recourse to a long-distant superior's perspective. Being deeply familiar with the Society's way of proceeding was meant to guarantee that Jesuits would act like Jesuits even when they lacked specific instructions. Certainly this meant avoiding the taking of stipends or participating in lavish entertainments, as referenced above, but it meant more than a simple list of prohibitions.

Above all, keeping to the Jesuit way of proceeding entailed a decision-making process rooted in the spiritual perspective of the Exercises. If Jesuits were meant, by virtue of their membership in the Society, to be completely free and available to help those who were in greatest need, then they needed a process by which to determine whose need was greatest and how they might be of help. Since there was no particular ministry or single group of people the Society was meant to serve, Jesuits were expected to engage in a constant re-evaluation of the circumstances in which they found themselves so that they could discover, in their particular situation, what was most conducive to the praise, reverence, and service of God. This was why, even after the particulars of the Jesuit "institute" were spelled out in the Formula of the Institute and

73 Xavier to Rodrigues, 7 April 1552, *Mon. Xavier I*, 723–730 (#110); here, 726.

74 *Constitutiones III*, Part VII, Ch. 2, F (207).

expounded upon in the *Constitutions*, the early Jesuits still make reference to their “way of proceeding”. Paul III’s 1540 bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* established that the Society was created “chiefly for this: to strive principally for the progress of spirits in life and Christian doctrine and propagation of the faith”.<sup>75</sup> The Jesuit way of proceeding provided the means for determining how best to serve that end: through the process of discernment taught by the Spiritual Exercises. Anything that limited a Jesuit’s freedom to serve those in greatest need mitigated against the Society’s way of proceeding. Anything Jesuits did that helped people to draw closer to “the end for which they were created” was in harmony with their way of proceeding.

It seems doubtful that when early Jesuits like Laínez and Salmerón wrote of explaining the Society’s way of proceeding to people in authority that they spoke about discernment or any of the finer points of the Spiritual Exercises. They more likely strove to convey to the princes and bishops under whom they desired to serve that the Society did not proceed in the usual way of religious (i.e., with a strict daily regimen of prayer), that they intended to offer their services free of charge, that they wanted to give people the Spiritual Exercises, and that, above all, they were seeking to do that which would be most helpful to the spiritual betterment of people. It seems probable that they spent more of their time in these conversations dispelling presumptions about how a group of religious would comport themselves than actually explaining the finer points of their spiritual perspective. They did not want to do things in the usual way, and the encouragement of frequent confession and communion as well as leading individuals through their novel Spiritual Exercises were indications that their way of proceeding was not typical. The enthusiasm with which they were embraced by some and the suspicion in which others held them were equally indications of the novelty of their way.

The Jesuit way of proceeding was rooted in the perspective of the Spiritual Exercises, and directed toward a way of serving freely. In this, “our way of proceeding” represented an embodied, rather than defined, reality. That is to say, the early Jesuits most likely never sought to define the phrase because they recognised it was something more to be lived than analysed, to be learned through experience rather than study. And the embodiment of the Jesuit way of proceeding in the lives and manner of the first companions

<sup>75</sup> *Constitutiones I*, #3 (26).

spoke eloquently—it was this witness, after all, that convinced Pope Paul III to allow them to found a religious order and form constitutions “according to our way of proceeding”. Much as the text of the Spiritual Exercises was an attempt to describe and pass on to others the quintessential experiences that formed Ignatius’s spiritual perspective, the concept of “our way of proceeding” predated, and grounded, its codification and formalisation in the foundational texts of the Society—which texts were themselves an attempt to encapsulate, and pass on, the vision and experience of the early Jesuits.

The Jesuit way of proceeding lay behind the process of institutionalisation that began with *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* and reached its first significant culmination point in the promulgation of the Jesuit *Constitutions*. By the time Nadal defined the phrase more broadly and clearly in the 1560s, encompassing with this expression the whole of the Society’s endeavours, the Society was already well along its way toward establishing its institutional order, both internally and externally. Nadal’s more expansive meaning was the one generally picked up on both by later generations of Jesuits and by scholars of the Society’s history. But when the first companions used the phrase between 1530 and 1550, and even when Ignatius used it in the *Constitutions* themselves, it was not a descriptor of what the Jesuits had established, but a tool used to demarcate and delineate the process by which the Society determined its methods and presence in the wider Church. Appreciating the particularities of the phrase’s usage in the earliest years of the Society’s history offers a glimpse into a pre-institutional moment in the Society’s history. It can thus serve as lens to consider the process of the Society’s progress toward institutionalisation.

### **Abstract**

The phrase “our way of proceeding,” ubiquitous in internal Jesuit communication and scholarship on the Society alike, can easily appear too elastic to be useful in understanding the Society’s charism. Yet the context in which Ignatius of Loyola and the other founding members of the Society employed the phrase indicates its utility in establishing and delimiting the contribution to the work of the Church that the earliest Jesuits hoped to make. It was a phrase, above all, meant to evoke the freedom Jesuits were supposed to have to serve wherever the need was greatest in the Church. As an indication of an embodied, rather than a defined, notion of what it meant to be a Jesuit, the phrase’s use among the first companions offers a lens through which to examine the Society prior to the major process of institutionalization begun with the writing and promulgation of the *Constitutions*.

### **Sommario**

La locuzione “il nostro modo di procedere” onnipresente sia nella comunicazione interna dei gesuiti che negli studi sulla Compagnia, può sembrare troppo generica per aiutarci a capire il carisma dell’ordine ignaziano. Il contesto, però, in cui l’espressione veniva impiegata da Ignazio di Loyola e dagli altri membri fondatori risulta utile a stabilire e delimitare il contributo che i primi gesuiti speravano di offrire alla missione della Chiesa. Si tratta di un’espressione che, innanzitutto, intendeva evocare la libertà che i Gesuiti dovevano avere per servire la Chiesa dove ce ne fosse più bisogno. Come un’indicazione della realtà incarnata—ma non definita—di quello che significava essere gesuita, l’utilizzo dell’espressione fra i primi compagni ci offre una lente attraverso la quale esaminare la Compagnia prima del processo di istituzionalizzazione, avviata con la redazione e promulgazione delle *Costituzioni*.

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