If we would speculate about the future of the Classics in Jesuit Education, we must first define our terms--and at once we face some difficult questions. We may agree upon a working definition of the “Classics” (e.g., literary works produced in Latin and Greek before the sixth century of the Christian Era), but the second term is more difficult to define. In these days, when there are so many Jesuit institutions and so few Jesuits to staff them, what exactly is a Jesuit education? Is it a curricular plan, organized around a “core” of required courses? Or should we think of it as a set of outcomes, the skills and attitudes that characterize the so-called Jesuit product? Or, finally, is it a pedagogical method, a way of handling any subject in any classroom? Recent literature on the subject lends support each of these characterizations (cf. Pavur, 57-59), and so it is difficult to grasp the quintessence of a Jesuit education.

Fortunately, there is a fourth category for us to consider, which in religious life is called conversatio morum. This might be translated as the “way of life” or “way of being” that characterizes a religious community, but it can be discovered in other callings, as well. In addition, then, to looking at what the Jesuits taught, how they taught it, and why they considered it worth teaching, we may also consider what it was like to be Jesuit teachers in the earliest schools. By stepping into their shoes, so to speak, we may find it easier to engage in pedagogical “conversations” in the transferred sense, and so clarify our ideas about ends and means.

In the present paper I will outline a document that discloses precisely this side of early Jesuit education. In the late 17th century, the Superiors of the Society had received a number of requests for a supplement to the Ratio Studiorum of 1599. They realized that the earlier document, detailed though it was, had left many questions unanswered. How, for example, should a new teacher brush up his skills? How should he keep his lesson plans varied and interesting without creating distractions? How should he relate to his students, both in and out of class? In short, they saw the need for a practical handbook,
rather than a prescriptive charter, of instruction in the “lower classes” of grammar, humanities, and rhetoric. To supply this need, they turned to the Reverend Joseph Jouvency (or Jouvancy; Latin Juvencius), an experienced teacher and an elegant writer, who has also left us a number of textbooks and a famous history of the Jesuit order (Ferté, xiii-iv, Schwickerath, 434). Jouvency revised and submitted a short treatise that he had published in 1692 with the title Magistri litterarum Christianis de ratione discendi et docendi. As the title indicates, the book is divided into two parts. The first part describes how instructors should learn their subject in preparation for teaching; the second deals with the challenges of teaching itself. Jouvency’s book was widely read and frequently reprinted throughout the next century, counting even Voltaire among its admirers (Ferté, xiv, Schwickerath, 163). I believe that it has something to say to us, as well.

Jouvency's treatise focuses on the teaching of Latin, but he opens the book with a plan for studying Greek. It is interesting that he does not expect his readers to have learned this language very thoroughly, and so the modern teacher can use his remarks as a template for remedial self-instruction. The first step is to make a thorough review of the rules of grammar from reference works that are “relatively easy” (faciliora, p. 6). New vocabulary should also be memorized at the rate of six to ten words each day. As an aid to the memory, Jouvency borrows a technique from the Jesuit practice of daily meditation: new words should be learned before going to bed, and then studied again, first thing in the morning (p. 7). The next step is to become more comfortable with Greek through a program of graded reading. One can start with the Gospel of Luke and then progress to short works of the Fathers and bits of classical oratory (p. 6). As part of the reading program, Jouvency recommends that his readers make their own translations from Greek to Latin, without relying on the bilingual and interlinear editions that were commonly available to beginners (p. 6). It is noteworthy that while he was aiming at a passive knowledge of Greek, Jouvency was not content with “reading for comprehension.” He recognized that to master a language, one has to come to grips with its peculiar resources and deficiencies, and the labor of translating helps one to do this (cf. p. 28). To multiply the benefits of this exercise, he directs his readers to turn their
versions back into Greek and to share the results with a more experienced Hellenist (p. 6).

Jouvency concludes the section on Greek by offering a list of authors suitable for study. Chief among them are the Attic orators and historians and the epic and lyric poets. Of the poets, Homer should be studied first and most carefully, since he is the “father of all orators and poets” (*oratorum omnium et poetarum parens*, p. 6). Influence and canonical status are not, however, the only considerations. Even when he recommends an author, Jouvency is careful to warn his readers about infelicities in the author’s style and defects in his morals or ideas. Lucian of Samosata comes under particular censure. “This was a talented man,” the Jesuit writes, “but perverse and impious (*improbe passim et impie facetus*, p. 10); that is why one must read him with caution, and only in part.” As an admirer of Lucian, I sympathize with those who may balk at this characterization. But it is clear that Jouvency took language seriously, and that he appreciated its power to mould and influence the character of those who use it—teachers, as well as students. For this reason, he contributed several volumes to the “expurgated” classics that were read in schools well into the nineteenth century (Ferté, xiii).

Jouvency’s plan of Greek studies, then, provides an overview of his principal themes. Learning should be gradual, repetitive, and systematic, with an emphasis on active engagement and with due regard for aesthetic and moral propriety. When he turns next to a program of Latin studies, the theme of active engagement becomes more pronounced. Since most of his readers will have graduated from Jesuit schools, Jouvency presumes a certain fluency in Latin. The danger, then, is not that new teachers will lack competence in the target language, but rather that they will stop progressing toward genuine mastery (cf. p. 179). To keep them moving in this direction, Jouvency lays out a plan of continuing education in stylistics, rhetoric and poetics. As with Greek, the most important thing is to combine reading with writing. His list of Latin authors is quite extensive, but Cicero and the golden-age authors hold pride of place precisely because they are the most suitable for exercises in imitation (p. 19). The exercises themselves can be very simple. To begin, one may select a passage from Cicero and rearrange his Latin, either by deploying the same words in different syntactic structures, or by retaining the original structures and changing the words (pp. 21-22). Either way, one learns to walk, as
it were, by retracing the steps of the master. More advanced exercises include short declamations on a variety of themes. Some of these can be taken from classical sources, such as the mock court-cases of pseudo-Quintilian, but Jouvency also draws material from the manners of customs of East Asia, which the Jesuits had recently begun to evangelize (pp. 63-64). One may also get practice through occasional writing, such as a letter to a friend or an epigram in verse (p. 20). Finally, instructors should plan on giving Latin speeches and poetic recitations, which will be attended by their students outside of class. At the end of the year, they might even be required to compose and direct an original Latin play in three to five acts (p. 107).

Such was a teacher’s life in the seventeenth century. How can we apply these counsels to the twenty-first? To be sure, not many of us could dash off a complete Latin tragedy, especially at the end of term! Nevertheless, we can appreciate the thinking that informed these exercises. The first thing to keep in mind is that the liberal arts are precisely that--arts, not sciences. Arts are mastered through practice, and they are ordered to practical results. When painters study great paintings, for example, they do so in order to paint. Likewise, when we teach the classical language arts, our goal, presumably, is to help students think and express themselves in a more or less “classical” way. But this requires both study and practice on our part. We can begin, perhaps, by bringing to class more nuanced and elegant translations, so that we may nudge our students toward the same result. But we might also think about reviving, both for ourselves and our students, the discipline of Latin composition, which was formerly a distinctive feature of American and British schools. There are two reasons for doing so. First, as Jouvency has pointed out in connection with Greek, the benefits of translation as a linguistic exercise are doubled if one translates both ways. Second, it will be just as challenging and instructive for English-speakers to walk in the ipsissima vestigia of Cicero and Caesar as it was for Roman orators to imitate Demosthenes and Lysias when they wrote their practice declamations in Greek. The classic writers of English prose were nearly all trained in this way.

There is a third reason, as well. Writing in Latin—provided that we enjoy Latin—can become a creative exercise which stimulates the mind and refreshes the soul. As we get the hang of it, we will take pleasure in the fact that we are improving our competence
in Latin every day. This may provide a timely remedy for “burnout,” the not uncommon feeling that we are pouring our intellectual energies into sand. We may also find that our ongoing efforts establish a kind of sympathy between us and our students and the sense of a shared enterprise. We will be, after all, engaged in the same quest for mastery of the language. Ideally, then, our remote preparation and the enthusiasm we bring to it will spill into the classroom and sweep our students along. But this brings us to the second part of Jouveny’s handbook, which deals with teaching itself.

Jouveny did not need to say much about the organization of the Latin curriculum, since the Ratio had set this out in detail. He therefore concentrated on questions of the “how-to” variety. Novice teachers, for example, may require guidance on how to put together a lesson plan. Jouveny obliges them by laying out the following scheme. After going over the previous day’s homework, the teacher might spend a little time on dictation, and then explain a new passage in detail, before translating a few lines into the vernacular (p. 130). The rest of the class can be devoted to concertatio, a kind of competitive knowledge-game. The exercise that involves the most work for the teacher is the preliminary explanation or “prelection” (praelectio), and so Jouveny provides a few helpful templates. He divides the entire presentation into six sections, whose Latin titles are argumentum, explanatio, rhetorica, eruditio, latinitas, and mores (p. 133). In a class on the Aeneid, for example (pp. 146-53), the explanatio consists of a running gloss or paraphrase of each of the words in a short passage. The teacher proceeds to point out rhetorical figures, to discuss the historical background of the narrative, and finally to offer a critical appraisal of Vergil's Latinity. One is struck by the detailed and systematic character of these notes, and it is tempting to dismiss Jouveny’s approach as too mechanical and pedantic for use in the modern classroom (cf. Schwickerath, 468).

Nevertheless, we can profit once more from grasping the principle behind the precept. For Jouveny, a Latin text is rather like a great machine with many moving parts. To learn how it works, it is not enough to run the machine; one also has to break it down and put it together again. The point of the prelection is to indicate the various ways in which the text under study can be analyzed. Once this has been accomplished, the passage can be read again in cursu with a more complete understanding and appreciation.
Perhaps, then, we can adapt Jouvency’s model lesson to our own teaching styles by rearranging the elements into more varied and digestible portions. We might start, for example, by devoting a few minutes to reading the assigned passage out loud, so that students will form an immediate impression of its structure and component parts. We can continue by alternating the topics of the traditional prelection with translations from our students. The work of parsing forms and identifying structures can be relieved here and there with historical background and stylistic appreciation. Moral and religious ideas can also be pointed out as they occur. Jouvency notes that the burden of analysis can be shared with students through informal question and answer. When it comes to translation, he opines that one should not always settle for a mechanical rendering, but should challenge students to produce a more idiomatic and elegant version (p. 137). Translation can be turned into a collaborative or even competitive exercise, in which students correct or improve upon each other's work. They can be encouraged to puzzle through ambiguous terms or to imitate the structure and sound effects of the original text. They can even compete for a prize for the best translation of the day. The prize might take the form of a laurel wreath over the door, bearing the student’s name (p. 126).

In this way, Jouvency fleshes out the Ratio with a few sample lesson plans on which beginning teachers can hang their hats. Mutatis mutandis, modern teachers can study these plans for tips on how to present and analyze a text, so that their students may better appreciate its complexity and artistry. Nevertheless, Jouvency recognized that teaching is not simply a question of pedagogical mechanics. Every class has a pervasive soul or spirit, as well as discreet members and activities, and keeping a class “alive” often depends on intangibles such as earning the respect of students, motivating them to succeed, and helping them to form good habits. This brings us to the third and most important part of the work, where we find that teaching is indeed a “conversation” in both the ancient and modern understandings of the term.

On the subject of discipline and motivation, Jouvency points to three ways in which teachers can maintain and strengthen their auctoritas in the classroom. They should apply themselves, he says, to winning the respect of their students, the love of their students, and the fear of their students (pp. 171-74). At first glance, these three attitudes do not seem to go together. But when we look into the details of Jouvency’s
advice, we discover that their mutual coherence depends on the teacher himself. The instructor who holds himself to high standards will naturally do the same for his students, and they, in turn, will be afraid to disappoint him. This means that a teacher will not hesitate to dish out praise and blame (laus et vituperium), which Jouvency calls the “twin stimuli” of student performance (p. 122). These stimuli must be applied with moderation, of course, and with good humor. Friendly competition is encouraged precisely because it provides an occasion for praise that is truly deserved. But whether praise or blame is required, teachers must hold their ground with firmness and equanimity (p. 175). In our present culture of self-esteem, the Jesuit model of tough love may appear counter-productive. But for Jouvency, it only makes sense that if a teacher is consistent in his attitude toward himself, his subject, and his students, they will respond with the appropriate sentiments of respect, love, and fear.

Consistency, then, is identified as the key to success in the interpersonal aspect of teaching. It is also required of the educational experience as a whole. In the view of Jouvency, a Jesuit education should integrate two objectives: litterae and pietas (p. 111), with the latter term denoting an entire way of life. It is important, then, not to miss the opportunities for moral and religious formation that arise within the humanist curriculum. As we have seen, Jouvency prefers to let these opportunities arise spontaneously through the prelection; one can also find them in private conferences outside of class. His bottom-line advice, however, is that instructors should teach by example: they should try to be what they want their students to be (p. 111). Thus, they should avail themselves of the sacraments, be committed to daily prayer and meditation, and maintain a sacrificial attitude in their work (pp. 111-12). Above all, they should love their students as they wish to be loved in turn, and should manifest this love in little ways. They should be certain, for example, to visit students who are ill, to protect those who are weak or despised for their poverty, and to keep parents apprised of their children's difficulties and progress. In fact, they should assume “the attitude of a concerned father and a kindly mother” (seduli patris ac piae patris viscera, p. 174). Jouvency understood that this is not always easy, since love for one’s students is an act of the will, rather than a spontaneous movement of the feelings. But this love can be kindled and re-kindled through prayer. Jouvency's many templates include a model petition of a teacher for his students (p. 113; see
Schwickerath's translation in the appendix). The keynote is humility. The teacher thinks of himself as God’s “mouthpiece” or as a channel of grace that flows, like an electric current, directly from God into the hearts of his pupils. When this current is established, God is glorified, which is to say that his goodness (benignitas) is manifest and his life is shared. A more succinct expression of the Jesuit ideal of teaching can hardly be found.

We must try, then, to be the sort of people we want our students to be. This is Jouvency’s rule of personal piety, but it may serve as the motto of the entire book. If we want our students to be competent in Latin, we must become experts ourselves, and this requires continual study and practice. If we want them to be aware of the complexities and virtues of classical literature, we must be thorough and versatile in our presentation of ancient texts. If we want them to be good students, Christians, and human beings, we must set them a good example. In fact, like the ancient authors we study, we must try to become “heralds of Christ” (praecones Christi). This is the conversatio morum, the way of being, of the first Jesuit schools. It is a challenging vocation—especially when we so often feel under-prepared, overworked, and uninspired. But precisely because it is a vocation, teaching has unique and enduring consolations. Jouvency invites us to compare ourselves to a centurion who, despite wounds and battle fatigue, may proudly wear the corona civica—for we too have saved fellow citizens from spiritual and intellectual death (pp. 185; 188-89). Or, if we prefer a less militant analogy, we may ponder this quotation from the Book of Daniel, with which Jouvency concludes his work: “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness, will be like the stars forever” (Daniel, 12:13).

Works Cited
Jouvency (Juvencius), Joseph S.J. (1764). Ratio Discendi et Docendi. Lyons and Paris. This is a revised and expanded version of the original manual, which was published in Lyon in 1692. A PDF of the latter can be found in Google Books.

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Appendix
A Prayer for One's Students (Jouvency, p. 113; translated by Schwickerath, 634)
Lord Jesus, thou hast not hesitated to meet the most cruel death for these children; thou lovest them with an unspeakable tenderness; thou wouldst that they were led to thee (Mk 10:4). Yea, whatever is done to one of these thy least brethren, thou wilt consider as done to thee (Mt. 24:50). I beg and implore thee, “keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me”; “they are thine,” “sanctify them in truth” (Jn. 17:6, 9, 11, 17). “Give thy words in my mouth” (Jer. 1:9), open their hearts that they may begin to love and fear thee. “Turn away thy face from my sins” (Ps. 50:11), and let not thy mercy be hindered through my faults. Give me the grace to educate these children, whom thou hast entrusted to me, with prudence, piety, and firmness, to thy glory, which is all I ask.