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## DISCOVERING A SACRED WORLD

### IGNATIUS LOYOLA'S *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION



JOHN J. CALLAHAN, S.J.

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#### PREFACE

One of the most appropriate and fruitful ways to come to an understanding of what is behind the whole endeavor of Jesuit education is to go back to the source, the vision and insight of St. Ignatius Loyola.

The early life of Ignatius was typical of that of the minor nobility of the Basque country of northern Spain. In his late teens and through most of his twenties, Ignatius was a courtier at the corrupt and intrigue-filled court of King Ferdinand and the notorious Queen Germaine whom Ferdinand married shortly after the death of the reform-minded Queen Isabella. Ignatius fit in perfectly, a man of noble dreams and of often considerably less noble actions. After the death of Ferdinand, he sought his fortune as a "gentleman soldier." At the age of 30 he was hit by a French cannonball at Pamplona. After the battle, while he was nursing his destroyed legs, something happened. As he said, God began to "teach him." He began to write down the experiences of his relationship with God. Later, he continued this practice during ten months of prayer at the town of Manresa. Over the next 15 years he developed his notes. They were eventually published under the name *Spiritual Exercises*.

Jesuits, as well as men and women of other religious congregations, find the inspiration and rationale for their lives in the Exercises. In addition, over the centuries thousands of lay

persons around the globe have found in the Exercises a basic structure for their living the Christian life in a very secular world. This last should not be surprising, for Ignatius wrote the *Exercises* as a lay person primarily for lay persons, men and women.

But the *Spiritual Exercises* turned out to be more than a method of personal growth in the spiritual life. Its world-view and its methods became the foundation upon which the whole system of Jesuit education was built.

Written originally as a four-part series for the members of the Regis University Board of Trustees, **DISCOVERING A SACRED WORLD** presents, in a very condensed form, the central themes and processes of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in particular those which influence Jesuit education.

My hope is that you will have the time and opportunity to ponder over these pages, for they provide the background and motivating force behind what we do as students and educators in the Jesuit tradition.

John J. Callahan, S.J.  
July 2, 1997  
Feast of St. John Francis Regis

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND FIRST PRINCIPLE

### WHY THE MYSTERY?

The book of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola has often been referred to as the inspiration and source of "all things Jesuit." Familiarity with the work is also considered necessary for an understanding of Jesuit education. It is even supposed to explain the Jesuits! But what is the *Spiritual Exercises* and what is its vision? Why is it so often referred to, yet rarely, if ever, read?

One reason for this phenomenon is the very nature of the book. Unlike Teresa of Ávila or John of the Cross, Ignatius did not pen a beautiful spiritual treatise or compose mystical poetry. Rather, what he wrote was a book of directions for one person guiding another through a series of spiritual activities. As a result, the *Exercises* often reads like an instruction booklet. Its first pages, for example, consist of twenty detailed explanatory notes called "annotations." There are also pages simply indicating the topics in Jesus' life upon which a person should meditate.

The *Exercises*, then, is a book to be done, rather than a book to be read. The process and the experiences in the book are basically the same as those which Ignatius underwent during his conversion and growth in the spiritual life. What is found in the Exercises is more than method and procedure, however. What makes it a spiritual classic is that it also contains a distinctive, genuinely Christian and Scripture-based vision of the person, of the world and of a loving God working within both.

Ignatius began to make notes for what later became the *Exercises* as early as his convalescence at Loyola after his injury at the battle of Pamplona. He continued this practice during the eventful ten months at Manresa where, he said, "God taught him like a school

boy." He kept "his book" with him at all times, writing down his impressions even during his adventurous pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

He started to make use of the *Exercises* when he began his schooling. During his time in Barcelona and at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, he used the *Exercises* as the basis of the "spiritual conversations" he had with the many people he met. This led to trouble. Because he was an "untrained" lay person who was dealing with spiritual matters, he fell under suspicion of heresy, was arrested and jailed by the Spanish Inquisition, and finally was released after his book was examined.

In the course of his ten years at the University of Paris, Ignatius deliberately concentrated on his studies rather than on giving the *Exercises*. He used them only with a select few, such as the companions he was gathering around himself. According to Ignatius, God's will for him during those years was that he study. He believed that his desire to give the *Exercises* to many people was a temptation, a distraction from what God wanted him to be doing at that time. Nevertheless, the text of his little book was examined by the (relatively mild) French Inquisition and later, again, by the Inquisition at Rome. The book was finally published with papal approval in 1548, eight years after the founding of the Society of Jesus.

There have been hundreds of interpretations of the *Exercises* over the past 450 years. These chapters will attempt to explain some of the key elements of the method and vision of Ignatius' work. The hope is that the Spiritual Exercises may thereby become less a mystery and more an inspiration.

## THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The full title of Ignatius' book is: *Spiritual exercises to overcome oneself and to order one's life without reaching a decision through some disordered affection*. Using language more suited to today, the title could be paraphrased: "Spiritual exercises whose purpose is to lead a person to true spiritual freedom so that any choice or decision is made according to an ordered set of values rather than according to any disordered desire."

Two important items should be noted at this point. The first is that the *Exercises* is about choice and decision-making. The thrust is toward action, not simply reflection. The second is that the *Exercises* aims to bring about an inner balance and steadiness within an individual so that, once fundamental values are determined, the person is not distracted or led astray by contrary passions or desires. This "balance" brings about an inner freedom to choose rightly.

What are "spiritual exercises?" According to Ignatius, just as running is an exercise which benefits the body, so spiritual exercises are activities which benefit the soul. Spiritual exercises encompass all the ways of making contact with God -- "every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal and mental prayer, and other spiritual activities." Ignatius was hardly a man of a single method.

The *Exercises* is divided into four parts called "weeks." The First Week is set in the context of God's love and its rejection through sin. The Second Week centers on the life of Jesus from its beginnings through his public ministry. The Third Week covers Jesus' passion and death. The Fourth Week looks upon the Risen Christ and the world renewed by the resurrection.

There are no fixed number of days within the "weeks." The number of days in each week depends on the progress of the person making the retreat. Normally, the *Exercises* are finished after thirty days of silence and prayer. However, if a person cannot make the concentrated thirty-day retreat, Ignatius suggests that the *Exercises* be made over the course of several months, with an hour each day reserved for prayer. This extended version of the *Exercises*, sometimes called the "19th Annotation Retreat" or "Retreat in Everyday Life," is the most common way that busy people with many obligations make the *Exercises* today.

### **PREPARATORY EXERCISE: THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION**

At the very beginning of the *Exercises*, Ignatius proposes a major "consideration." Called the "First Principle and Foundation," it sets forth the basic "ordered set of values" upon which the whole *Exercises* is based. It answers the question, "What should I most consider before making a decision?" or, put another way, "What should be the context of all the decisions I make?" Ignatius wastes no time; his first exercise presents a real challenge. He asks the person making the retreat (the "retreatant") to seriously consider that

*Human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord and by this means to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings to help them in working toward the goal for which they are created.*

*Therefore, I am to make use of these other things insofar as they help me attain the goal and turn away from these other things insofar as they hinder me from attaining the goal. I must make myself indifferent to all created things, as far as I am allowed free choice and am not under any prohibition.*

Consequently, as far as I am concerned, I should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things. My one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to reaching the goal for which I am created.

Though the First Principle and Foundation may appear, at first, like a catechism response of a young child, it is really quite profound. Four points:

1. **The concept of "creation."** Central to understanding the Principle and Foundation is seeing oneself as God's continuing creation. This creation is a dynamic, moment-by-moment activity shaped by a free, loving, self-giving God and by grateful, loving human beings who share the divine freedom. The "soul" is this free self, posited by God and engaged with God and things in continually creating something new. Evil arises from a human being's free decision to turn in on oneself and refuse God's loving desire.
2. **The principle of tantum ... quantum ("as much ... so much").** The "other things on the face of the earth" -- material things, genetic structure, physical and intellectual abilities, passions and feelings, hopes and desires, social status, friends, time, etc. -- important as they are, do not compare in importance with that of cooperating with the creating God. A person either uses or does not use these created things depending only on whether or not they help or hinder this creative cooperation with God. "As much" as things help this cooperation, "so much" does one use them; insofar as things hinder this cooperation, they are avoided.

3. **The principle of "indifference."** Therefore, when making decisions, a person should be "indifferent" in regard to these "other things" until one is clear that God is directing the person in a certain way. The "other things" are not obstacles between God and the self. The question is how to use them properly.

Indifference is a distance from things that allows a person to freely choose "without prejudice." It is a distance from things that makes true vision possible. Ignatius is asking everyone to love themselves and all things as coming from God. Yet each is to "stand apart" from all created things in an inner freedom which awaits God's desire and invitation.

4. **The principle of the magis ("more").** The "active indifference" of the Exercises is the exact opposite of unconcern, uniformity or mediocrity. Indifference does not exist for its own sake. Rather, it exists for an active choice, the free choice of "what is more conducive." Ignatius asks that a person not even consider choosing the second-rate. His challenge: freely choose the "more."

## THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND EDUCATION

Love of God,  
 love of self,  
 love of all things as coming from God,  
 recognition of one's place in creation,  
 analysis and evaluation of what helps or hinders in achieving a life goal,  
 inner freedom,  
 self-discipline,  
 choice,  
 the desire to be better and to do more --

these make up the First Principle and Foundation both of the Ignatian vision and of Jesuit education.

## II: THE FIRST WEEK

### GOD, FREEDOM, AND SIN

God, as presented by Ignatius in the *Exercises*, is the divine, all-powerful person whose very nature is to give of self through the act of creating. Ignatius sees God as working in the world. The vastness of the universe and the beauty of its laws are manifestations of God's constant, faithful love. God creates not only things, but persons -- free beings who share God's power to think, to love, and to create. Because human beings share in God's freedom, they are free to relate in love with God, other human beings, and the universe itself. To do so is God's plan or God's will. Perhaps it is better to say that to do so is "God's desire" or "God's loving wish," for human beings are free to respond or not to God's invitation.

If Ignatius was anything, he was a realist. The experience of his own life made clear to him that human beings, in their freedom, can choose not to live out God's loving desires for them. This fateful choice gives rise to moral evil in the world. This is sin.

Gilles Cusson, in his book *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, has put it well: The Ignatian vision of the relationship that exists between the world and God is one of continual exchange inspired by love. Sin is, simultaneously, an infidelity to God's indefatigable love and a deformation of the real world order, an order relating to the loving God. Sin is defined from the human point of view as a disordered use of creation. The human free will, meant to portray the trace of God, profanes itself and devotes itself to serving another purpose which is its own satisfaction. Creation, which should find in human beings a road to God, comes up against a wall of selfishness that upsets the destinies of human beings and the universe. Sin, in the Ignatian universe, is more than a personal and an individual event. It is a cosmic horror.

## **THE FIRST WEEK**

The First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* is about sin and the faithful love of God. St. Ignatius presents five exercises for the period. The first exercise is a meditation on the sin of the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, and the sin of an individual human being. The second exercise is a meditation on sin in the life of the person making the *Exercises*. The third exercise is a repetition of the first two exercises with special emphasis on the points where the retreatant experiences "greater consolation or desolation." The fourth exercise is another repetition, this time of the previous three exercises. The fifth exercise is called an "application of the senses" in which the retreatant strives to experience the loss-of-God-and-love which is called Hell.

A grim list of topics. (One can almost see the wounded Ignatius at Loyola wrestling with these issues as he reviewed his life of courtier, soldier and gallant.) Ignatius undoubtedly wants the retreatant to experience the personal and cosmic horror of sin. But the purpose is not to lead the person to wallow in self-pity, or worse, to come to a debilitating self-hatred. Rather, in Ignatius' view, the personal realization of the horror of sin leads to an ever greater love of a faithful God and an ever greater desire to "work with" God in bringing about God's loving desires for the whole of creation.

## **THE PRAYER OF THE FIRST WEEK**

The exercises of the First Week are prayers. As such, each is a dialogue between the pray-er and a loving, faithful God. In these prayers the retreatant asks God for specific gifts. The gifts sought in the First Week are an experience of "shame and confusion" at one's sins and an experience of the "seriousness, loathsomeness and malice" of sin itself. The gift one prays for is no mere intellectual assent to the fact that one has sinned. It is a perceived realization at the core of a person's being -- a feeling of shame, an experience of disorientation, a sense of horror.

If the goal of the prayer is to experience these gifts at the core of one's being, the method of prayer also involves the whole of human understanding, imagination, and feeling. Ignatius asks the pray-er to "see in the imagination" the angels misusing "the freedom God gave them," to visualize Adam and Eve in the Garden, and to picture the effects of one person's sin of hatred or neglect. He also asks the pray-er to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch the world-without-God which is Hell. In our time, Ignatius would invite the pray-er to "see" the results of sin, e.g., to feel the pain of ethnic hatred, to touch the horror of war, to breathe the killing smog of Eastern Europe, etc.

Yet, Ignatius instructs, the prayer should be a constant "cry of wonder accompanied by a surge of great emotion as I pass in review all creatures: how they have permitted me to live and sustained me, why the heavens, sun, moon, stars, and the whole earth -- fruits, birds, fishes, and other animals -- have served me." Notice the balance of feelings Ignatius seeks. Prayer on the pain and malice of sin leads to a prayer of wonder at a faithful God's loving creation.

Each prayer is to end with a "colloquy" -- a conversation with Mary, Jesus, or the Father -- in which one "speaks exactly as one friend to another." In the colloquy, Ignatius seeks the gift of turning grief at sin into a desire to work with God. For example, at the end of the first exercise in which the history of sin is reviewed in all its repulsiveness, Ignatius asks the pray-er to "imagine Christ our Lord present on the cross and to begin to speak with him." The pray-er should first ask Christ how, as Creator, he became a human being and gave himself in love. Then the pray-er should ask: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ? . . . As I behold Christ, I shall ponder upon what presents itself to my mind."

In the First Week the retreatant, faced with the fact of sin in the world and of sin in oneself, is in turn faced with a loving, self-giving God who is always faithful. There is no room for self-recrimination or fear. There is only room for a loving choice: what I ought to do for Christ.

## THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

In his *Autobiography*, Ignatius describes "his first reasoning about the things of God." As he lay on his bed of pain after the third attempt to fix his shattered leg, he had asked his sister-in-law for something to read. He would have preferred some romances of the time, but all that was in the house was a *Life of Christ* and a *Lives of the Saints*. He read and reread them. Ignatius dreamed about imitating the deeds of St. Francis and St. Dominic. He also dreamed of knightly deeds in service of "a certain lady." Gradually, he began to notice a difference in the way these competing day-dreams affected him. He examined his feelings and found that through these "movements of the spirits" God was at work in his life. When he dreamed of the lady and knightly honor, he was joyful. Later, he found himself dry and unsatisfied. When he dreamed of imitating the saints, he was also joyful. But the joy and satisfaction remained. By analyzing these "spirits," Ignatius discovered God's loving desire. He had found "God's will" for himself.

Proper discernment of spirits is absolutely crucial if the First Week of the *Exercises* is to be a success. As Ignatius experienced at Manresa, the retreatant during this period is constantly buffeted by affections -- joy, peace, wonder, love, fear, despair, horror, feelings of closeness with God, feelings of separation from God, even no feeling at all.

One of the most important charges of the director of the *Exercises* throughout the retreat is to guide the pray-er through the experience of and reflection upon these "affects." The director helps the retreatant discern which of the affects are from the "good spirit" which leads the person to God and which are from the "evil spirit." The battleground of the *Exercises*, the terrain of choice, lies in the clash of affections, the conflict of desires.

Ignatius lists a number of "rules for the discernment of spirits proper to the First Week." Only an example can be given here: If a person is living "from sin to sin," the evil spirit will

encourage feelings of peace and complacency. The good spirit will arouse "the sting of conscience" and feelings of remorse. If, however, a person is attempting to live a good life, the good spirit will bring peace and encouragement. The evil spirit will harass with anxiety, raise obstacles and disturb the soul.

## THE FIRST WEEK AND EDUCATION

From the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises come six characteristic themes of Jesuit education:

1. **The goodness of the world.** Everything that exists comes from and reveals a loving, creating God. Therefore, everything is open for study and inquiry. In principle, there cannot be a contradiction between science and religion. Difficulties and conflicts which may arise originate in a failure of human understanding rather than in a contradiction in the nature of things. The more one knows about the universe, the more one knows about God. The sense of the divine beauty of all things also leads a person to be a responsible steward of creation.
2. **The dignity of the person.** Human beings share the dignity that everything in creation shares. But the dignity of the person is qualitatively different and much higher. Each person is the object of God's special love and concern and, therefore, cannot be treated as "part of the herd." Created in God's image and likeness, each person shares in God's power to think, love, create, and choose. The more a person develops these powers, the more human a person becomes, the more that person participates in God's life. "To create a world at once more human and more divine" is one way to express the goal of Jesuit education.
3. **Hope in the presence of evil.** Moral evil arises from a free choice to misuse creation. The knowledge of nuclear physics or of economics is a good. The misuse of nuclear devices or of economic manipulation is an evil. Hope arises from the confidence that the desire for a more just world, which lies at the center of each human being, is also the desire of a faithful, loving God. People, in fact, do choose to "work with" God to create a better world. So there is hope.

The Jesuit stress on quality education, values, and theology is not accidental. It comes from the vision of the Exercises. To participate in creating the world, one must know it well and be able to subject everything to a rigorous critique. Values, too, must be based on the God-given desire to create a loving world and a corresponding abhorrence of anything which distorts that desire.

4. **The importance of imagination.** The stress Ignatius places on the use of the imagination is remarkable. Through imagination a person can see, taste, hear, and feel God's desires and the beauty of creation. A person can also smell and touch the corruption of evil. Imagination is the initial step in a person's participating in God's creative power. Language and literature, the fine and performing arts, the development of utopias and mathematical theories, new ways to manage data and the world's resources, elimination of disease and the promotion of health -- these creating activities make a person more human. And in Ignatius' world-view, to become more human is to become more divine. Jesuit art, prior to the suppression of the order in 1773, was a vibrant reality. Jesuit architecture, theater, music, opera, and dance were a



real force in Western culture. It is a shame so much of this part of the Jesuit tradition has been lost.

5. **The teacher as companion.** Without doubt, the role of the director is to instruct the pray-er in methods of prayer and in the understanding of the discernment of spirits. But mostly, the director is to be a companion, someone who listens for the movements of the spirit as the retreatant relates experiences rather than someone who imposes ideas from the outside. This practice is the origin of the emphasis on the student in Jesuit education, as opposed to an emphasis on the teacher. To instruct is essential to being a teacher. To listen, to build on student experiences and insights, to support, and to gently guide are even more so.
6. **The prominence of desire.** The book of the Exercises is about making decisions. Ignatius is convinced that a person makes decisions not only with the head, but also with the heart. Choice follows that combination of mind and feeling called desire and Loyola believed God communicates through the most genuine desires of the human heart. The Jesuit educational tradition has always included a deep respect for the heart, for the affects which influence a person's life choices. This is behind the tradition of "educating the whole person." The liberal arts develop the heart as well as the mind and lead students to pay attention to their inner feelings. The counseling and common sense advice offered by teachers are also more than just another service. In the Ignatian view, these processes help students discover within themselves the loving desires God has for them.

### III: THE KINGDOM MEDITATION AND THE SECOND WEEK

#### THE KINGDOM

The dynamic of the First Week of the *Exercises* simultaneously included an abhorrence of sin (an anti-desire) and a desire to give oneself to God. As seen earlier, for example, the meditation on sin concluded with the contemplation of the cross and the question "What ought I do for Christ?"

It is in this context that Ignatius presents one of the key moments of the *Exercises*, the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ. Structurally, the prayer serves as a bridge between the First Week and the Second. The gift, or grace, one asks for in this prayer is not to be deaf to God's call, but to be "prompt and diligent" to accomplish God's holy desire.

The first part of the meditation is the parable of the "earthly king." Nowhere else in the *Exercises* do we see such a reflection of Ignatius himself and his times. He was a Spanish knight. His desires centered around service to a noble king. In his past, these knightly desires were often in conflict with his actions. In the parable, Ignatius looks to the desires which so moved him before his conversion. He presents a king about to embark on a noble but difficult undertaking. The king addresses his people:

*All who wish to join me in this enterprise must be content to share the same food, drink, clothing, and so on. So, too, they must work with me by day and watch with me by night, that as they have had a share in the labor with me, afterwards, they may share in the victory.*

Ignatius then asks the pray-er of this parable to consider what answer a good subject would give to such a king. He also notes that, if the subject refuses the invitation, "how justly he would be looked upon as an ignoble knight."

Contemporary commentators on the *Exercises* wrestle, often unnecessarily, with the problem of what this parable could mean to an age when kings signify little. At times they propose modern day heroes as substitutes for "the king," a practice which is often a distraction or a disaster. Heroes to some are not heroes to others. Rather, it is better to take the meditation as we do the gospel parables and employ one's imagination and enter into its world and absorb its spirit. At the same time, it is important to listen to one's own personal desires, the interior call to good and noble deeds and to examine how one has followed these desires or not.

Ignatius goes on. He applies the parable to Christ. He asks the pray-er to imagine Jesus giving very much the same address as the earthly king. Christ calls the person to *his* cause: to conquer evil and bring the whole of the universe to unity with God. "All who wish to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with me, that by following me in suffering, they may follow me in glory."

To this call of Christ, Ignatius invites the pray-er to respond with "the more," the *magis*: "Those who desire to give *greater* proof of their love and *distinguish* themselves in the service of the eternal king" will not only offer themselves entirely for the work, but also act against (*agere contra*) any thing or any desire which would prevent a total commitment. (Hugo Rahner calls this the "theology of the comparative.") Such persons would pray:

*I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice to imitate you in accepting all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, if it is for your greater service and if you call me to this way of life.*

## THE SECOND WEEK

In the meditation on the Kingdom, Christ has invited the pray-er to join him in his work, to *labor* with him in creating the universe of God's loving desire. The pray-er has offered to follow Christ in any way that he may call, whether, in the words of the First Principle and Foundation, it be in "health or sickness, riches or poverty, long life or short life." The principle of active indifference has become a commitment, not to an idea, but to a person and that person's work; it has become a partnership.

The Second Week is the longest of the four "weeks," lasting at least 12 days, almost half the standard thirty days of the Exercises. Two movements are simultaneously operative throughout the period. The first is praying the gospels in order to seek the gift of an "intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become a human being for me, that I may love him more and follow him more closely" -- the *magis* again. The second movement is making a choice or, as Ignatius puts it, an "election."

The goal of the Week is to make a decision about adjusting (changing) one's life "in and with Jesus Christ," walking the dusty roads with him, seeing what he saw, thinking what he thought, feeling what he felt, becoming a partner with him in his work. Christian living, to Ignatius, is not following a set of ideas or adopting a set of values; it is falling in love with Jesus to such an extent that one will follow him wherever he leads at whatever the cost.

On the first day of the Second Week, Ignatius asks the retreatant to contemplate the Incarnation and the Nativity. Using their power of imagination, pray-ers are asked to see all the persons on the face of the earth, "some white, some black, some laughing, some crying, some well, some sick." He asks them to listen to what people say to each other and how they act toward one another, in justice and injustice. He asks them to "see" God looking at all this and making the decision to become human, to send the angel to Mary, and to await her free decision. He asks them to hear the angel's words, re-live Mary's thoughts and fears, and hear her reply as she responds to God's call.

In the second contemplation, the retreatant is asked to travel with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and to feel the helplessness and panic of having no place to stay as the child is coming. He asks the pray-er to imagine himself or herself as a servant who assists in the couple's needs, contemplates the child, listens to what they say, watches what they do, and welcomes the lowly shepherds. He then asks the retreatant to consider how all this will end in the human disaster which is the cross and the triumph which is the resurrection.

On the second day, Ignatius asks the retreatant to pray in the same manner on the Presentation in the Temple (dedication to God's desire) and the Flight into Egypt (the cost). On the third day he asks for prayer on the Hidden Life at Nazareth (quiet commitment) and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple (while doing his "Father's will").

In understanding the power of this type of imaginative prayer, developed at Manresa, one can appreciate why Ignatius was driven to make a pilgrimage to *see* the Holy Land and why his first companions so wanted to go there.

## **THE TWO STANDARDS**

On the fourth day, again using the imagery of the noble knight, Ignatius asks the retreatant to consider under which standard ("banner" or "flag") one wishes to live. He asks that the retreatant personify the tendencies which separate a person from God by imagining "the chief of all the enemy in the vast plain of Babylon, seated on a great throne of fire and smoke, his appearance inspiring horror and fear." He asks the pray-er to imagine the "battle plan" of Satan: "to tempt human beings to covet riches (money, talents, etc.) that they may the more easily attain empty honors and then come to overweening pride which leads to all other vices."

Ignatius then asks the retreatant to imagine Jesus, "beautiful and attractive, standing in a great plain around Jerusalem" and to hear his plan: how he sends "his friends" to help all, how he recommends spiritual poverty (and, at times, actual poverty) to oppose riches, insults to oppose empty honors, and humility to oppose pride. Ignatius then asks the retreatant to pray for the gift "to be received under Jesus' standard."

## **THE THREE CLASSES**

On the evening of the fourth day, Ignatius presents a consideration on the Three Classes. The persons in each class are good people striving to serve God. Each has a possession (a thing, talent, or affection) with which they are uneasy in the light of following God's desire. Ignatius uses 10,000 ducats as an example. The people of the first class do nothing and live and die with the uneasiness. The people of the second class want to rid themselves of the attachment to the possession but still retain the possession, "so that God must come to desire

what they desire" instead of the other way around. This is the response of "I'll give some to charity" or "I'll work in a homeless shelter twice a year." The people of the third class want to rid themselves of the attachment but in such a way that they will *either* keep or rid themselves of the possession depending only on what God desires.

## THE MYSTERIES

For the next eight days Ignatius recommends one contemplation (with repetitions) per day: Jesus and John the Baptist at the Jordan, the Temptation in the Desert, the Calling of the Apostles, the Sermon on the Mount, the Calming of the Sea, the Teaching in the Temple, the Raising of Lazarus, and the Triumphal Entrance into Jerusalem. Other "mysteries" of Jesus' life may be added. The purpose of the repetitions is to come to an ever deeper "intimate knowledge" of Jesus so that one loves him more and desires to follow him more closely. Without this constant contact with Jesus in prayer, without this growing sensitivity to the inner movements of God's call, the "Ignatian meditations" of the Kingdom, the Standards, and the Three Classes have little context.

## THE THREE WAYS

While praying the mysteries of Jesus' life and, at the same time, considering the choice involved in adjusting one's life in the context of Christ's call, the retreatant is also asked to review the meditations on the Kingdom, the Standards, and the Three Classes. During the same period, Ignatius asks the retreatant to consider what he called the Three Degrees of Humility.

The virtue of humility is not a hidden form of self-hatred. Rather, it is an acknowledgment of creaturehood, a dependence upon and openness to a lover, a rejoicing in a "glorious partnership." This is why the Three Degrees of Humility is sometimes called the Three Ways of Loving God.

The first way is to love God to such an extent that one desires faithfully to follow God's desire as expressed in the law. The second way is to love God to such an extent that a person places God's desire, God's call, above all personal desires and attachments, despite one's fears and weaknesses. The third way is the most difficult. Ignatius encourages the retreatant to ask God for the desire to reach this level, or at least to pray for the "desire for the desire." The third way is to love God to such an extent that a person *offers* to be with Christ actually poor, humiliated, and made a fool of, if God calls the person to that state.

In this way, with the retreatant seeking the desire to be united with God's call, Ignatius concludes the Week of decision.

## THE SECOND WEEK AND EDUCATION

1. **Contemplation and practical action.** The Ignatian prayer of contemplation on the events of Jesus' life leads to an "intimate knowledge" of Christ. But it is not simply a "resting in God." In Ignatian spirituality, the intimate knowledge of Christ leads to action -- to a decision to change one's life according to God's invitation to "labor" with Christ in Christ's own "work."

In the same way, the goal of Jesuit education is not simply "knowledge for the sake of

knowledge." Neither is it knowledge only for the benefit of the one learning. Rather, in the Ignatian tradition, knowledge of the universe and contemplation of its wonders leads to an impulse to labor for a better world. In this sense, Jesuit education aims to be not only "contemplative" but "practical."

2. **Values and critical thinking.** One way to look at the Second Week is to say that it is about values, the values of Jesus Christ which the retreatant makes his or her own. The values of riches-honor-pride are opposed to those of spiritual (or actual) poverty-contempt-humility. But a person may have Christ's values and still act wrongly. Ignatius surely did so when, in the enthusiasm of his conversion, he adopted penances which threatened his life. Ignatius learned that, even though he possessed values which he would never dilute, he must also discern God's call. A rich person, using riches according to God's desire, may well be more "poor" than an impoverished person grasping for money. True to its Ignatian heritage, Jesuit education not only features the development of values, but also stresses the critical thinking necessary to discern how to act out those values in one's life.
3. **Leaders in service - the promotion of justice.** Loving knowledge of and total commitment to Christ, the goal of the Second Week, means to become a partner in Jesus' work of making a better and more just world and of bringing God's loving care to everyone. It means to see the world as Jesus saw it and to distinguish oneself (*magis*) in acting out one's love in the service of others, as Jesus did. It means, among many things, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit prisoners, to care for the sick. It means bringing freedom to others so that they too may love and serve. The ultimate goal of Jesuit education is to form men and women who are leaders *ad serviendum aliis*, leaders "for the service of others."

#### IV: THE THIRD AND FOURTH WEEKS AND THE CONTEMPLATION

##### THE THIRD WEEK

The Second Week of the *Exercises* had as its goal an "intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become a human being for me, that I may love him more and follow him more closely." This desire to follow Christ more closely leads to a decision to adjust one's life in order to become a partner in Christ's life and work. In this decision the person adopts Christ's values and view of the world and places God's desire above all personal desires and attachments. The great desire of one's life has become "to be with Christ." The decision is based on love, on a self-giving which is a response to the self-giving of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Second Week the retreatant has followed Jesus in his public life, seen what Jesus saw, felt what he felt, walked at Jesus' side along the Jordan, reached out a hand to Jesus on the troubled sea, played with the children at Jesus' side, guided the sick through the crowds, looked in Jesus' eyes as he cured the blind, wept with Jesus at Lazarus' tomb. The retreatant has come to love more and more -- a love of Jesus and a love of the people he touched. The pray-er has determined to follow this Jesus wherever he may lead.

During the Third Week the journey "with Christ" continues, this time through Jesus' ultimate act of self-giving, his passion and death.

During the seven days of the Third Week, Ignatius groups his topics in fairly complete units: the Last Supper and the Garden, the religious and political trials, the way of the cross, the crucifixion and death, the burial, and the three days of death.

As was the case in the prayer on the mysteries of the public life, the retreatant is a "companion of Jesus," becoming, in prayerful imagination, a participant rather than a passive spectator, taking the part of Jesus, of Peter, or of a soldier, etc. The pray-er feels the cool water as Jesus washes Peter's feet, falls asleep with John in the Garden, experiences Jesus' agony and fear, lurks with Peter amid a curious crowd, feels the lash on naked skin, cringes at the laughter of Herod's court, crashes to the ground under the weight of the cross, hears the thud of the nails being pounded into the wood, gambles for Jesus' clothes, gasps for air with trust and hope in a God who seems to have faded away, assists Jesus' friends taking the body down from the cross, and helps roll the stone across the entry to the tomb.

Ignatius calls the contemplation on the passion "labor." The retreatant's partnership with Christ in his "work" leads to a union between two spirits. Throughout the period the retreatant prays for the "gift" to grieve, to be sad and to weep -- to enter into Jesus' helplessness. But the prayer of the Third Week is also one of wonder -- wonder at the extent of God's love made human in Jesus, wonder that Jesus did this "for my sins," wonder at how God gives strength in one's own helplessness, wonder at one's own desire to return love: "What ought I to do for Christ?"

The exercises of the Third Week confirm and strengthen the choice or "election" of the Second Week. What is the retreatant's "decision to adjust one's life" in comparison with Jesus' choice to give himself totally in faith? "With Christ" in his passion day and night for an entire week, the retreatant begins to understand that the sufferings of Christ are also one's own. In the health and sickness, the success and failure, the joy and hurt of one's own life and death the retreatant, with Jesus, can, in faith, die to the self-centered self and live for others.

## THE FOURTH WEEK

Jacques Lewis has said that the book of the *Exercises* simply contains a process in which the meditations of the Kingdom and the Two Standards are met, embraced and fulfilled; met in the Principle and Foundation and the colloquy of the First Week, embraced during the Second Week, and fulfilled in the cross of the Third Week and in Christ's risen life. The Fourth Week is the time of the Resurrection.

Ignatius indicates no particular number of days for the Fourth Week. What he asks is that the retreatant contemplate the apparitions of the Risen Christ (which are made only to those who have faith) as these appearances are related in the gospels. To these he adds the "pious belief" apparitions to Mary and to Joseph of Arimathea. The last meditation of the Week is on the Ascension, Christ's return to God.

Again, the prayer is asked to become a participant, to be present at the Resurrection, to feel the confusion of Magdalen, to race with Peter and the beloved disciple to the tomb, to walk the road to Emmaus with an unrecognized stranger, to shyly eat fish with Christ on the shores of the sea, to feel the joy of Jesus as his friends recognize him. The gift one prays for during this Week is "to be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord."

The retreatant has prayed for an intimate knowledge of Christ and to love him more and to follow him wherever he goes. Where Christ now goes is into the fullness of life and complete human joy. Directors of the *Exercises* have often wondered why some retreatants have difficulty entering Christ's joy. As Joseph Tetlow has pointed out, perhaps this is because the retreatant is concentrating on self, focusing on one's sin ending Jesus rather than on Jesus defeating sin, on what humankind did to Jesus rather than on Jesus taking the initiative to embrace harsh and dark human things to win through them. "The intense joy of praying over Jesus Christ's risen life comes with the gift of realizing utterly that God initiates. In everything, even in happiness of life, God initiates." Jesus' joy comes from the fact that the passion was not something which happened to him but something he chose. It is a victory over sin and death which can now be shared with all the people. The goal of the Fourth Week is to enter into this joy of Jesus and rejoice in it.

## THE CONTEMPLATION

After the Fourth Week, after the retreatant has "entered in to the joy of the Lord," Ignatius presents one last contemplation, the Contemplation on the Love of God. This contemplation is the culmination of the whole of the *Exercises* and is, along with the Kingdom series of contemplations, the basis of Ignatian spirituality.

In his usual laconic way Ignatius begins the prayer with two prenotes:

1. *The first is that love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words.*
2. *The second is that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods. For example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he or she possesses . . . and the beloved shares with the lover. . . Thus, one always gives to the other.*

Ignatius then sets the scene: "I behold myself standing in the presence of God and his angels and saints who intercede for me." The gift one asks for is an "intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude, I may love God in all things." Then:

*I will ponder with great affection how much God has done for me and how much God desires to give love and self to me.*

*Then I shall reflect on how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in human beings bestowing understanding. So God is dwelling in me and giving me being, life, sensation, and intelligence and making a temple of me, since I am being created in God's image and likeness.*

*Then I shall consider God working and laboring for me in all creatures upon the face of the earth -- in the heavens, plants, animals, and so on.*

*Then I shall consider all blessings and gifts as coming from God -- justice, goodness, compassion, love, and so on.*

*Then I will reflect on myself and consider what I ought to offer God in return, that is, all I possess and my total self. Thus, moved with great feeling, I will make this*

*offering:*

***Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. All is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me your love and your grace; this is enough for me.***

The Contemplation announces what Teilhard de Chardin has called the "divine milieu" -- the sacredness of all reality. It is also the foundation for a profound, spirituality-based concern and care for nature and the environment. It calls the person to be one who, in the Ignatian phrase, "finds God in all things."

## THE FINAL WEEKS AND EDUCATION

At first glance, one might wonder that prayer on the passion and resurrection would contribute to the practice of Jesuit education. As has been seen, the First Principle and Foundation, the First Week and the Second Week contain elements which have direct influence on educational goals and process.

With its constant use of the imagination, reflection on experiences, repetition of material and active participation of the retreatant, even the "method" of the *Exercises* has influenced the teaching methods selected by Jesuit educators throughout the centuries.

In the context of the *Exercises*, the Third and Fourth Weeks "confirm" the choices of the Kingdom, the Two Standards and the election of the Second Week. In the same way, what the Third and Fourth Weeks contribute to the ethos of Jesuit education is confirmation:

**Altruism.** Following Jesus in his passion and death leads to an intense desire to join Christ in serving the world and all of its people. It leads to a discerning longing to give of one's self, to sacrifice, even to suffer for that which is higher than mere personal advantage.

**Optimism.** Glorifying in Christ's resurrection leads to an intense joy and a passionate optimism. It leads to a profound confidence that one's "work" of making a better world and creating a more just society is assured of success, despite all difficulties.

**Vision.** Praying the Contemplation leads to a vision of the world which sees God in all things -- in prayer, in chemistry, in philosophy, in accounting, in the environment, in people. All things reveal God; all learning is learning about God; all love is the giving and receiving of God; all good action is God's work in the world.

An educated person of altruism, optimism, and vision names the ideal "outcome" of Jesuit education.



## V. THE IGNATIAN VISION

### DISCOVERING A SACRED WORLD

If there is any expression which uncovers the mysticism of the *Spiritual Exercises* and reveals the dynamism behind the 450 years of Jesuit education, it is the phrase, found in the Contemplation, "love God in all things."

As Ignatius says, love is a sharing between lover and beloved. Each gives all one is and all one has to the other. This giving, this love, is revealed in deeds.

The creating God's "deed of love" is the whole of the universe. All things are gifts, freely shared with free and creating human beings. This sharing, this self-giving, is also revealed in the "deed" which is the loving service of the God-Human Jesus Christ.

A human being's free response is to love like God, to give all that one is and all that one has. Each person's "deed of love" is to know, understand and love this world, to give one's self, as Christ did, to the service of others, to create the new and to make "the better." In this mutual sharing in God's work of "laboring in all creatures upon the face of the earth," a person becomes a contemplative-in-action and truly discovers a sacred world.



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