

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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AT THE START OF THE SECOND WEEK of the Spiritual Exercises, the contemplation on the incarnation situates God's social role in the world quite vividly. St Ignatius invites retreatants to contemplate the Holy Trinity gazing at the world—seeing people,

... so diverse in dress and behavior: some white and others black, some in peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying, and so forth (Exx 106).

Ignatius then describes the Holy Trinity discerning what to do about the unhealthy side of things: the blindness that has beset humanity. The discernment process ends with the trinitarian decision to send the second person (Jesus) to restore things to their divine nature.

The divine gaze upon the face of the earth is not uniquely Ignatian. It is fundamentally and primarily rooted in the scriptures. For instance, Psalm 33:13–19 reads:

The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind. From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth—he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds

Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

The *Spiritual Exercises* remains deeply inspired by the word of God, but the Ignatian imagination brings to the fore a diversity in people's behaviour, attitudes and prospects which the Psalmist does not articulate.

Seeing in the same way that the Holy Trinity does immerses us in context. It is not merely seeing but being interested in what one sees that matters. I find this Ignatian contemplation and its use of the imagination very striking as it relates to our contemporary application of the See, Judge, Act methodology to social analysis. As a community of

Persons, the Holy Trinity sees what is going on, listens carefully and reflects on how this moves it to act, and then decides what to do. Reflection engages reasoning and asks critical questions about what is happening. In this case the Holy Trinity is concerned about the turn of events from the original purpose of creation to its perversion. Reason leads to judgment about what needs to be done to restore a lost relationship, to create right relationship.

In his book *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, Dean Brackley writes:

The Trinity observes humanity on the way to perdition and decides to send the Son to save all humanity from damnation and for eternal life. *This* is the cause for which Christ labors and to which he invites others to collaborate.¹

Brackley argues that Ignatian spirituality is apostolic. It is a call to labour in the vineyard as Christ's companions.² We live in troubled times, as were those of Ignatius, and so in our contemporary world we still need the Ignatian contemplation on the incarnation in order to collaborate in God's plan of salvation.

We may ask at this point how far our world is different from the one upon which St Ignatius contemplates the Holy Trinity looking down, or indeed the one over which the Lord stoops from the heavens with steadfast love according to the Psalmist. Today some people have comfortable homes and others are homeless; some have more than two meals a day and others sleep on empty stomachs; some earn decent living wages and others are jobless; some work hard to make ends meet and others are idle; some are displaced by effects of climate change while others are spending billions of dollars on space exploration—and the list can be expanded.

So the divine plan continues: Jesuits and those who work alongside them still need to 'save souls';³ we still need to be 'men and women for others';⁴ we still need to be just reconcilers in our broken world;⁵ we

¹ Dean Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 258.

² Brackley, *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 257.

³ See *Constitutions*, Examen 1.2 [3].

⁴ Daniel Cosacchi, 'Jesuits and Social Justice', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 6 (2019), 663. The phrase originates with Pedro Arrupe; see below 17–19.

⁵ GC 36, decree 1.

still have frontiers to which God sends us.⁶ Above all we are still called to the ‘faith that does justice’—which John W. O’Malley and Timothy W. O’Brien consider to be ‘the most important development in Jesuit pastoral strategy in recent years’.⁷ Subsequent Jesuit documents have put an emphasis on ‘moving toward the margins of society’.⁸ This invitation challenges us all, whether we are Jesuits or not, to keep the social justice dimension of Ignatian spirituality relevant.

O’Malley and O’Brien, in their sketch of how Ignatian spirituality has been constructed over the past several decades, suggest that it can best be understood by looking at its constitutive elements. These include, but are not limited to, the Ignatian texts—the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Autobiography*, the *Constitutions*—the Examen, discernment in common and seeking God in all things. Especially during the twentieth century,

... certain elements in the Jesuit tradition have been put together and articulated in a new way what is now called *Ignatian spirituality* is fundamentally faithful to the original inspiration of the Society and, paradoxically, is at the same time new.⁹

The authors refer to particular ‘words and expressions’ that illustrate this process: Jerónimo Nadal’s formula ‘contemplative in action’ is a key aspect of Jesuit identity and mission.¹⁰ Another expression of Nadal’s, ‘the world is our house’, is used to highlight the fact that ‘the order’s spirituality could not be one of retreat from the world, lived in isolation from problems of contemporary life’.¹¹ Both these phrases capture something of the marriage between Ignatian spirituality and social justice to which we now turn.

Social Justice in Church Teaching

Introduced by Pope Pius XI for the first time within Catholic Social Teaching in his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* of 1931, the concept of social justice was meant to safeguard an equitable and disinterested

⁶ See GC 35, decree 3, ‘Challenges to Our Mission Today: Sent to the Frontiers’.

⁷ John W. O’Malley and Timothy W. O’Brien, ‘The Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality: A Sketch’, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 52/3 (Autumn 2020), 38.

⁸ Pope Francis, ‘Address to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus’, 24 October 2016, in GC 36, accompanying documents, 38. See also GC 35, decree 3, n. 29.

⁹ O’Malley and O’Brien, ‘Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality’, 3.

¹⁰ O’Malley and O’Brien, ‘Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality’, 31; Jerónimo Nadal, ‘In Examen annotations’, MHSJ MN 4, 651.

¹¹ O’Malley and O’Brien, ‘Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality’, 37.

distribution of social and economic resources. It was intended to promote the common good so as to bridge the increasing gap between the few super rich and the poor majority (n.58). To achieve this, there was a need to regulate 'economic life' through 'reform of institutions' (the state) and the 'correction of morals' (among citizens of the state) (n.77), allowing for the principle of subsidiarity (n.79) to prevail among 'the institutions themselves of peoples and, particularly, those of all social life' (n.88) under the guidance of the Church with its 'divinely imposed mandate to be vigilant and to teach' (n.96).

It is important to note that social justice was meant to address issues related to the living wage, raising or lowering of wages, livelihood, unemployment and the need for being realistic in all these matters given the great economic depression that began in 1929, during which *Quadragesimo anno* was written. Raising these important issues related to labour relations has a scriptural basis. We read in Leviticus 19:13, 'You shall not defraud your neighbour; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning'.¹² This is a call to justice and fairness in relation to the working conditions of the poor, when withholding a day-labourer's wage could have serious implications for the family which was depending on that wage for survival.

According to O'Malley and O'Brien, 'the momentum' of social justice 'culminated in Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, which made concern for the world and its betterment an essential element in any authentic Catholic spirituality'.¹³ Subsequent papal teaching inspired by Vatican II expanded the Church's engagement in the social and economic milieus. For Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* social justice forms part of,

... a three-fold obligation: 1) mutual solidarity—the aid that the richer nations must give to developing nations; 2) social justice—the rectification of trade relations between strong and weak nations; 3) universal charity—the effort to build a more humane world community, where all can give and receive, and where the progress of some is not bought at the expense of others. (n.44)

In 1971, when the declaration of the Synod of Bishops on *Justice in the World* brought together justice, the proclamation of the gospel and participation in the transformation of the world as integrally intertwined

¹² See also Deuteronomy 24: 15.

¹³ O'Malley and O'Brien, 'Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality', 6.



The preferential option for the poor, mural by Maximino Cerezo Barredo, 1980, Lima, Peru

(n.6), the Church opened a window for evangelical social justice.¹⁴ But the document pointed out that for this to be effective, the Church must be just in its own way of life (n.47). The signs of injustice within the Church led to what Pedro Arrupe, then Jesuit superior general, referred to in his commentary on *Justice in the World* as ‘a credibility gap’ that can only be bridged by a life of witness.¹⁵ This was arguably one of the greatest inspirations for Fr Arrupe’s shift from regarding the social apostolate and its social justice dimension as one of the works of the Society of Jesus to making it an inseparable aspect of the Society’s mission.

Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, held in 1975, states:

¹⁴ World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 305–318.

¹⁵ Pedro Arrupe, ‘Witnessing to Justice in the World: Urgency for Bold Action by the Church’, in *Justice with Faith Today: Selected Letters and Addresses II*, edited by Jerome Aixala (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), 81.

The life we lead, the faith-understanding we have of it, and the personal relationship to Christ which should be at the heart of all we do are not three separate realities to which correspond three separate apostolates. To promote justice, to proclaim the faith and lead others to a personal encounter with Christ are the three inseparable elements that make up the whole of our apostolate. (n.51)

The 32nd General Congregation mandated the Society of Jesus ‘to engage, under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time: the struggle for faith and the struggle for justice which it includes’.¹⁶ This social justice that is strongly anchored in faith is now integral to Jesuit identity. As Daniel Cosacchi affirms: ‘social justice has been a significant lens through which the Society has framed its mission in the postconciliar period (1965–present), especially with the documents of General Congregation 32 (1974–75)’.¹⁷

The Social Justice Dimension of Ignatian Spirituality

I argue that the social dimension of Ignatian spirituality begins with the contemplation on the incarnation. Pope Francis speaks of ‘social love, as a reflection of the Trinity’.¹⁸ Could this trinitarian deliberation and decision to send the second person to earth be construed as social justice? Isn’t Ignatius’ trinitarian contemplation of God reaching out of God’s self to save humanity—to ‘save souls’—an important way of understanding social justice?

This may sound anachronistic, since the idea of social justice does not appear in what we consider today to be the foundational documents of Ignatian spirituality and of the Society of Jesus, such as the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, but the elements that constitute it date back to the founding of the Society.¹⁹ The ‘progress of souls and propagation of the faith’ (*Formula of the Institute*, n.3) have been rearticulated as ‘the service of faith and the promotion of justice’, pointing to the social dimension of the Ignatian charism and spirituality inspired by the *Formula*.²⁰ These two expressions reflect the outward-bound mission of the Society of Jesus right from its founding,

¹⁶ GC 32, decree 2, n. 2.

¹⁷ Cosacchi, ‘Jesuits and Social Justice’, 651–652.

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, n. 324.

¹⁹ See Cosacchi, ‘Jesuits and Social Justice’, 655.

²⁰ GC 32, decree 2, n. 9, and n. 11, which quotes this passage from the *Formula of the Institute*. GC 33, decree 1, n. 38 describes the mission articulated in GC 32, decree 2 as ‘the application today of the Formula of the Institute and of our Ignatian charism’. This is reaffirmed in GC 34, decree 2, n. 14.

but always thinking with the changing times and evolving doctrine within the Church under the guidance of ‘the present Roman Pontiff and those to come’. Such openness to the dynamism of circumstances, time, people and places is clearly expressed in the *Constitutions*.

Pius XI’s reminder that ‘social justice’ must go hand in hand with ‘social charity’ also remains pertinent to the roots of Ignatian social justice, since the early Jesuit ministry of reconciling the estranged, works of mercy and the constant search for peace embraced justice as an essential expression of charity.²¹ These same ministries, albeit adapted to the changing times, continue to mark the Society’s commitment to social justice globally.

In founding the Society, St Ignatius did not want simply to add another congregation to the existing ones. He had a trinitarian-inspired passion which was outward-looking—‘saving souls’. In its contemporary application, saving souls means integral human liberation—‘leading to participation in the life of God’.²² Ignatian spirituality employs graced human deeds to transform human hearts to make the world a better place where a healthy relationship with God, with self and others, and with the rest of creation can be forged. This is what ‘praise, reverence, and service of God’ (Exx 23) concretely means: to practise faith through acts of justice.²³ As James Hanvey puts it, it entails ‘the whole Divine purpose of working the “redemption of the human race” (Exx 107)’.²⁴

What Constitutes Ignatian Spirituality

Rather than defining Ignatian spirituality, David Fleming suggests that we consider what it has to offer instead. He sums this up in three ways: a *vision of life*, a *vision of work* and a *vision of love*.

As a *vision of life*, Ignatian spirituality invites us to recognise God as a creator and source of life who is constantly at work giving life to all created things—including you and me. For Fleming, this is the vision that inspires the Principle and Foundation in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

As a *vision of work* Ignatian spirituality challenges us to rethink our ways of working and ask ourselves: ‘What is our work in this world all

²¹ Pius XI, *Quadregesimo anno*, n.88.

²² GC 32, decree 2, n. 11.

²³ Brackley, ‘Appendix II (to Chapter 10), The Meaning of the Two Standards’, in *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 263.

²⁴ James Hanvey, ‘Some Political and Cultural Implications of the *Spiritual Exercises*’, *The Way*, 63/1 (January 2024), 24–44, here 30.

about? Why do we do what we do? What values would govern our choices?’²⁵ This requires humility and a constant discernment because the mission belongs to God, and we are simply co-workers. The Exercises invite us to contemplate the eternal King—Jesus—who has great ambitions to transform the world and end everything that oppresses human beings. You and I are invited to join Jesus in this enterprise. As Fleming puts it, Jesus invites us ‘to be *with him*’ and put on the mind and heart that are his. Jesus also invites us ‘to work with him’: to become helpers in his mission.²⁶

From the invitation to *be with* Jesus and work with him in transforming structures of evil we join in his Kingdom of justice and peace. We cannot afford to be bystanders once we heed his call. Through the *Spiritual Exercises*, especially in the Principle and Foundation, Ignatian spirituality challenges us and places before us a fundamental choice where there is no middle ground. As James Hanvey reminds us: ‘The Exercises confront us with the ultimate reality of choice: are we for Christ, or not? They do not allow us the luxury of neutrality. This, too, is part of their theo-political character.’²⁷

Salvation of souls is rooted in an incarnational spirituality that journeys with the risen Jesus, who is not just ‘on the cross’ but one who is ‘*carrying* the cross’—a pilgrim.²⁸ In this pilgrimage our work becomes that of Simon of Cyrene. We help Jesus carry the cross. Saving souls may sound daunting to contemporary ears, but for Ignatius being



Mural by Maximino Cerezo Barredo, 1977, São Félix, Brazil

²⁵ David L. Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 2–3.

²⁶ Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 4.

²⁷ Hanvey, ‘Some Political and Cultural Implications of the *Spiritual Exercises*’, 35.

²⁸ Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 102.

placed with the Son of God meant *helping* souls: ‘Ignatius described service much more simply. He used the Spanish word *ayudar*—“to help”. The work of the Jesuits, he often said, was to “help souls”.’²⁹ Helping souls denotes a humble service in the mission of Christ humble and poor. Here again Fleming’s words are instructive:

In helping others, we need to be wise, discerning and disciplined. We do not have to be anxious about helping souls. We can relax because we are working alongside God. God calls us to service and gives us colleagues and friends to work with. The work is his. We are merely helping him with it.³⁰

One of the most basic ways of understanding Ignatian spirituality, which I have experienced personally on the two occasions when I have done the long retreat, is that it starts with God loving us.³¹ Ignatian spirituality offers a *vision of love*. Divine love manifests itself in two ways: ‘God creates, and by so doing God is actively showering us with gifts. God acts, and all his actions show his wisdom and love.’ As ‘Love loving’, God invites us to love without measure. Ignatius, according to Fleming, raises a series of questions to help us see how God loves: ‘What does it mean for us to love? How do we go about expressing our love? How do we show our love for God, for ourselves, for others, and for the world?’³²

To respond adequately to these questions, we need to experience how God loves us without any limits, unconditionally. This is why at the end of the Spiritual Exercises we do the Contemplation to Attain Love (*Contemplatio ad amorem Dei*) so that we can grow in love as God loves. The Spiritual Exercises thereby ignite in us a burning desire to serve God and our neighbour. This virtue and practice are perhaps one of the major elements, if not a central purpose, of Ignatian spirituality.

Men and Women for and with Others

Pedro Arrupe remains an icon of the Society of Jesus’ recovery of its charismatic social apostolic dimension. On the Feast of St Ignatius of Loyola in 1973, Arrupe addressed the European Jesuit alumni in Valencia, Spain. The title of his address was ‘Men for Others: Training Agents of

²⁹ Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 104.

³⁰ Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 102.

³¹ Each finally professed member of the Society of Jesus does the long retreat at least twice in his Jesuit life.

³² Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 8, 5.

Change for the Promotion of Justice'. For Arrupe, a talk to Jesuit alumni was not merely one item on the agenda of his international travel activities. It was a response to the Church's call since the Second Vatican Council to read the signs of the times, which culminated in making justice an integral part of evangelization in *Justice in the World*.³³

Later the phrase 'men and women for [and with] others' was used to express the idea of 'saving souls' in terms of dedicated service to our neighbours, especially those who are marginalised, to bring about a positive difference in their lives and the world around them.³⁴ Here we find the very profound zeal for faith that is expressed in active love with justice. As Arrupe affirms, 'love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce'.³⁵

According to Elias Omondi Opondo and Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, social justice remains an integral part of the gospel because it is rooted in the fact that everyone is created in God's image.³⁶ 'Social justice is about people' and their dignity; it is essentially about creating right relationships (societal, structural or ecclesial) that ensure the realisation of an impartial and equal dignity for all. For them, social justice ensures equal treatment of everybody; promotes solidarity among peoples; serves the needs of all; and conforms to God's dream or vision for the world. It is a Kingdom value.³⁷

Decree 4 of the 32nd Jesuit General Congregation reminds us:

A key element in the pedagogy of the Exercises is that its aim is to remove the barriers between God and man so that the Spirit speaks directly with man. Inherent in this Ignatian practice of spiritual direction is a deep respect for the exercitant as he is and for the culture, background and tradition that have gone into making him what he is

The Exercises help to form Christians who, having personally experienced God as Savior, are able to stand back from the spurious absolutes of competing ideologies, and because of this detachment can play a constructive part in the reform of the social and cultural structures. (nn.57–58)

³³ Pedro Arrupe, 'Men for Others: Training Agents of Change for the Promotion of Justice', in *Justice with Faith Today*, 127–128.

³⁴ Cosacchi, 'Jesuits and Social Justice', 663.

³⁵ Arrupe, 'Men for Others', 124.

³⁶ Elias Omondi Opongo and Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Faith Doing Justice: A Manual for Social Analysis, Catholic Social Teachings and Social Justice* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2007), 44.

³⁷ Opongo and Orobator, *Faith Doing Justice*, 45–46.

Here inculturation poses its strongest challenge, because we always carry our biases and cultural baggage with us. This has implications for all our lives, calling for the incarnation of faith among both local and global cultural values. To be able to listen attentively to God's voice within and around us requires 'that the ears of our heart have to be trained'.³⁸ We must avoid what Pope Francis calls 'cultural colonization', resulting from 'loss of the sense of history' and the imposition of 'a single cultural model'.³⁹ And we must remain open to encountering other cultures and learning from them:

The different cultures that have flourished over the centuries need to be preserved, lest our world be impoverished. At the same time, those cultures should be encouraged to be open to new experiences through their encounter with other realities, for the risk of succumbing to cultural sclerosis is always present.⁴⁰

In African liberation theology, incarnation may be particular (contextual), familial and cosmic. According to Engelbert Mveng, 'the Incarnation [is] considered not as a limited event, but as the assumption by the Son of God of the whole human nature and condition in their cosmic, anthropological and historic dimensions'.⁴¹ The link between faith, life, personal and cosmic relationship with Christ is impossible without open hearts ready to listen, learn from others and recognise the presence of God in a culture different from one's own.

Compassion and Humility

One of the graces for which we pray for during an Ignatian retreat is compassion: to suffer with and for others. This is the grace that draws us out of ourselves—out of our comfort zones—to reach out to those in need. It is a virtue that allows us to be totally present to others in their affliction. Indeed, 'compassion refers to the most active and engaged form of empathy, namely, disposition directed particularly to those in great need or suffering'.⁴² Compassion expresses the social aspect of our faith

³⁸ Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* 44.

³⁹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, nn. 13–14.

⁴⁰ Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 134.

⁴¹ Engelbert Mveng, 'African Liberation Theology', translated by Barrie Mackay, *Concilium*, 199 (1988), 17–34, here 30.

⁴² William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 90.



Blessed Are Those Who Seek Justice, by
Maximino Cerezo Barredo, 2006

in Jesus, whose compassionate love led him to reach out to the socially excluded of his time and resulted in his untimely death for our sins. In Jesus we come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of a God 'whose passion is compassion'.⁴³

For Christians, compassion derives from the compassionate Christ. As Dean Brackley states, 'contemplating the suffering and death of Christ intensifies our union with him. It should also draw us to know and love the crucified people of God today.' These crucified people of today include victims of war, forced migration, human trafficking, homelessness, landlessness, all forms of addiction, corruption, rape, terrorism, xenophobia, religious extremism, tribalism and genocide. To counter injustice, social justice takes a preferential love for the poor, the exploited, the oppressed, the neediest and most vulnerable members of society. It is neither impartial nor neutral. We are invited to focus on and spend time with the victims of injustice and not dwell on their pain, which we need to transform whenever possible: 'The focus is not on pain but on *being with* the one who suffers'.⁴⁴ In the words of José García de Castro, it is Ignatian to 'look at the world (Exx 106–107), feel it, suffer and encounter it through our actions'.⁴⁵ This is what it means to be 'contemplatives in action'.

Inspired by the Ignatian contemplation on the incarnation, Ignatian spirituality hinges on Jesus as poor, humble and sent. In this way it is a missionary spirituality that invites you and me to be sent as Jesus was.

⁴³ Peter McVerry, 'A Kingdom Here on Earth: Jesus the Social Revolutionary', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 112/448 (Winter 2023–2024), 431–438 at 432.

⁴⁴ Brackley, *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 173, 178.

⁴⁵ José García de Castro, 'Alcanzados por las fuentes: ¿por qué? ¿cómo?', *Mamresa*, 81 (2009), 311–328.

So, where do we want to be sent in imitation of Christ? We can focus on Luke 4:16–20 and on the meditation on the call of the King, who is intent and determined to rid this world of all evils that beset humanity. It is a personal call in need of a personal response, but it is also an ecclesial, a congregational call in need of a communal or corporate response. It is a partnership with God as co-workers in God's vineyard.

Discernment is required in situations of oppression and violence to come to decision about what to do in addressing injustice and liberating people from their afflictions. One approach could be to form social as well as individual consciences so that people can make well-informed decisions. Dean Brackley has this to say about Ignatian spirituality:

We are more aware today of the social and institutional dimensions of our lives. Christians are more aware of the social implications of their vocation and of the mission of the church. We are all more conscious of the scope of the misery in the world, of the institutional mechanisms of injustice, and of the global dimension of our moral drama. Responding to massive injustice according to one's calling is the price of being human, and Christian, today. Those looking for a privatized spirituality to shelter them from a violent world have come to the wrong place.⁴⁶

The compassion of Ignatian spirituality and its humility invite us to guard against what Pedro Arrupe called 'religious alienation'—'religion without "social commitment"'.⁴⁷ Pope Francis has described this as 'the globalization of indifference':

A globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them.⁴⁸

Such indifference leads, according to Francis, to a selfish 'spiritual worldliness' which we must combat 'by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor'.⁴⁹ He cites *Libertatis nuntius*: 'Spiritual

⁴⁶ Brackley, *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 7.

⁴⁷ 'Padre Arrupe: toda la verdad sobre la Compañía de Jesús', interview with Manuel Alcalá, *Vida Nueva*, 727 (25 April 1970).

⁴⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 54.

⁴⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, nn.93 following, 97.

conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbour, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone'.⁵⁰

Pope Francis's use of the term 'spiritual conversion' is significant here. It reminds us of Ellen Calmus's account of her own conversion in her foreword to Dean Brackley's *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*. She understands conversion as 'spiritual transformation'—as opposed to the abandonment 'of a supposedly inferior religion in favor of a supposedly superior one'.⁵¹ Pedro Arrupe describes it as,

... a putting away of something we are: our old self, with its all-too-human, all-too-worldly prejudices, convictions, attitudes, values, ways of thinking and acting; habits which have become so much a part of us that it is agony even to think of parting with them, and yet which are precisely what prevent us from rightly interpreting the signs of the time, from seeing life steadily and seeing it whole.⁵²

Conversion blends spirituality with a social transformation that must stem from our inner transformation and reach out to the marginalised in our society. In Arrupe's terms, social justice presupposes conversion, which is a prerequisite for discernment:

There can be no true discernment without conversion; for discernment, when all is said and done, is nothing else but being guided by the Spirit: seeing the world, and what we must be and do in the world, no longer with our own eyes, but with the eyes of the Spirit.⁵³

Breakfast on the Beach

St Ignatius had a great sense of imagination and encourages us to use our gift of senses in prayer. Contemplation and imaginative prayer enable us to learn from Jesus and humbly to seek the grace to act as he does. So, for example, in contemplating the biblical scene of Jesus preparing breakfast for his disciples after the resurrection (John 21:9–14) we can do the following:

⁵⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis nuntius*, 11.18, cited in *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 201.

⁵¹ Ellen Calmus, introduction, in Brackley, *Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, xviii.

⁵² Arrupe, 'Witnessing to Justice in the World', 95.

⁵³ Arrupe, 'Witnessing to Justice in the World', 95.

1. Apply our sense of sight to envision Jesus going to the sea to catch some fish.
2. With our eyes, observe him preparing a charcoal fire.
3. Apply our sense of smell to smell the roasted fish that Jesus has just prepared for his disciples' breakfast.
4. When the fish is ready, apply our sense of hearing to listen to the voice of Jesus calling his disciples for breakfast.
5. With our sense of touch, feel the fish in our hands as we eat it along with the disciples.
6. Through our sense of taste, savour the fish and enjoy all the spices in it.

But, above all, with the eyes of our hearts we see the love with which Jesus prepares the breakfast to teach disciples how to witness to the Risen Lord by ministering to each other and to their neighbour in love and service.

This pericope helps us to be not simply observers in prayer but participants in God's act of love and service to his disciples and therefore to us. We can then through this contemplation how God cares for us, feeds us and teaches us how to care for one another. This form of prayer may lead us to ask for the grace to love and care for others as Jesus loves and cares for us. Contemplative prayer then enables us to come out of our comfort zones, readies us to become socially active and in this way help us bring together Ignatian spirituality and social justice, contemplation and social action at the service of our neighbour.

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