THE WAY

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THE PULSE OF HISTORY

Book Reviews

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. A Special Issue is planned on spiritual conversation, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Autobiography	Ignatius of Loyola, 'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in *Personal Writings*
Constitutions	in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Diary	'The Spiritual Diary', in *Personal Writings*
Dir	*On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Exx	*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
GC	General Congregation, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009) and *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017)
MHSJ	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)
Personal Writings	*Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

AS I READ THROUGH the archives of *The Way*, I am struck by our authors' reflection on the rich variety of human experience over the years. Whether in the distant past or recent times, they have taken the pulse that beats at the heart of history and shown us how God has been at work. All human experience holds a perennial vitality, no matter how long its significance may remain hidden from our eyes. Their writing has measured the rhythm of that pulse and set it against the many challenges we face. In doing so they have given us a foretaste of our future, encouraging us not to linger in the past, but to engage with God's work in the present. They have inspired us to move forward together with hope.

The articles in this issue reflect that hope by considering the human response to God in history. Robert E. Doud uses the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead to show how our identity and commitment are constituted by our moment-to-moment responses. He argues that vocation is not a predetermined pathway but an act of ongoing discernment through which our uniqueness, in freedom, is revealed before God. His view would undoubtedly echo that of many young people who describe their vocation as a process rather than a state of life. This response is also exemplified by the development of the unique musical style of the eighteenth-century composer and missionary Domenico Zipoli. Ian Coleman discovers that his compositions were influenced by an experience of Jesuit education that fostered creativity and a generous devotion to his audiences in Latin America.

The corporate dimension of the human response to God is considered by Teresa White, who identifies authenticity as the key not just to the perennial relevance of religious life, but also to its future evolution. The deliberations of the first Jesuits before the foundation of the Society of Jesus illustrate her argument. They also offer Elizabeth Liebert a model for how we can respond to God through group discernment centred on prayer. The first Jesuits realised that their response to God would be strongest in the places where it was needed the most. Today, that need is at its most urgent among those affected by the ecological crisis. Drawing upon Karl Rahner's theology of grace and the mysticism of St Ignatius' religious experience, Ann-Maree O'Beirne argues that

our response to this crisis depends upon a relationship with creation and an interconnectedness with God cultivated through contemplative prayer.

In the previous issue we celebrated the anniversary of St Ignatius' conversion and Robert W. McChesney picks up the theme by reflecting on his response, first to the physical injury which he received on the battlefield, and then to the moral injury that emerged during his recovery. He presents the practice of spiritual accompaniment and the structure of the Spiritual Exercises as means to receive healing. Perhaps 'moral injury' is a phrase that could also be used to describe Pierre Favre's scruples, which form the historical background a letter giving advice about listening to confessions. Thomas Flowers neatly articulates God's involvement in Favre's scruples: God was never the cause of temptation, but rather 'made use' of it in order to bring about his conversion. He goes on to draw out a surprisingly contemporary person-centred approach to reconciliation that will be of interest to all those who accompany people in search of forgiveness. The ultimate cost of an authentic response to God is to give one's life in the service of faith. Nicolas Stebbing looks back on the murder in February 1977 of three Jesuits and four Dominican sisters in what is now Zimbabwe. He reminds us that God is at work even in the deepest of wounds to bring healing and even gratitude.

In our concluding article, Mark Yavarone takes a lively approach to describing the transition to everyday life at the end of a guided retreat. If we are to respond to the pulse that beats at the heart of history then we need to allow actions and gestures to emerge from our prayer. His guidelines for the end of a retreat will be useful not only to retreat directors but also to anyone who accompanies those in moments of transition. They might also be useful for the editorial board of *The Way* as we make our own transition: at the last meeting we said a fond farewell to Paul Nicholson after fifteen years as editor of *The Way*. Few editors have contributed so much to the journal and his voice will be missed. Since he was once my novice master you can be sure that, in one way or another, his influence will continue to be felt. I am always glad to hear your views and experiences, so please do not hesitate to get in touch. As the end of the year approaches I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, wherever you are on the face of the earth.

Philip Harrison SJ
Editor

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

The Call to Religious Life

Teresa White

IN TWO ARTICLES, published in July 2021 in *Thinking Faith*, Cardinal Michael Czerny reflects on *Fratelli tutti*, with its invitation to all people of good will to 'contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity' (n. 8).[1] Although Pope Francis does not refer specifically to religious life in this encyclical, Czerny sees that invitation as having a special significance for religious, given their distinctive ability 'to foster a sense of belonging … and create bonds of integration between different generations and different communities' (n. 53). In most religious congregations a plurality of cultures and generations already exists, so they could be seen to embody the 'universal aspiration to fraternity' of which Francis speaks here.[2]

Analysing some of the challenges facing religious life in today's world through the lens of *Fratelli tutti*, Czerny draws attention to the teaching of Vatican II and other church documents, holding that the vision and spirit of religious life predispose those following this vocation to be 'witnesses and architects of … unity'.[3] Religious communities, he suggests, by sharing faith together and in the quality of their life in common, create sacred spaces of encounter, kindness and dialogue in the midst of the culture of 'limitless consumption and empty individualism' (n. 13) so evident in the globalised world of our times. Those called to this life live in 'a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another' (n. 96) and, living in this way, the members 'make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all' (n. 94).

[1] Michael Czerny, 'The Renewal of Religious Life and *Fratelli tutti*', *Thinking Faith* (20 June 2021), at https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/renewal-religious-life-and-fratelli-tutti; 'The Renewal of Religious Life and *Fratelli tutti*: Reading *Fratelli tutti* for Religious', *Thinking Faith* (23 June 2021), at https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/renewal-religious-life-and-fratelli-tutti-reading-fratelli-tutti-religious.

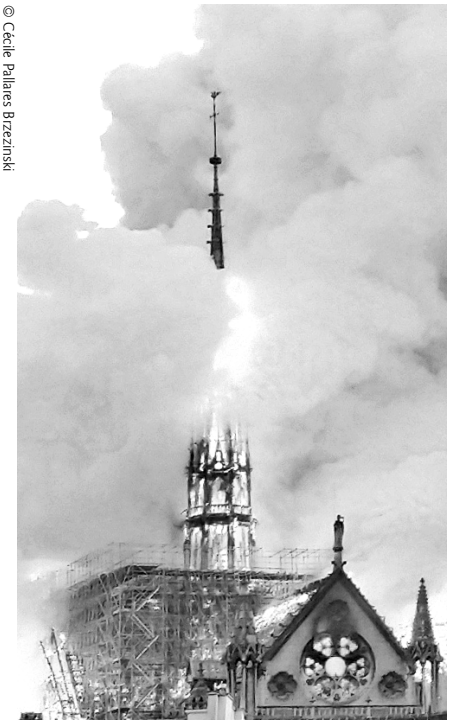
[2] I appreciate *Fratelli tutti* very much, but regret that the English translation appears to ignore the importance of inclusive language for many English-speakers today.

[3] Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Religious and Human Promotion*, n. 24, quoted in John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, n. 46.

Czerny interprets the challenges facing religious life today as 'signs of the times', and encourages religious not to allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the difficulties, but to recommit themselves to the *sequela Christi*. 'The reality of consecrated life as a sign', he says, 'finds in brother- and sister-hood the prophetic anticipation of a world in which unity is achieved while safeguarding differences, variety and mutual respect'.[4] Following Czerny's lead, and giving due attention to the insights of *Fratelli tutti,* I suggest that religious life, a gift of the Holy Spirit, has a particular relevance in the Church and world of the third millennium. Stretched as it were between heaven and earth, religious men and women pray, struggle and walk with the Church and with humanity, seeking God's kindly light on the journey of faith and life.

Sign and Symbol

In Holy Week 2019, I was living in Paris. For my little community of Faithful Companions of Jesus, that week began in Notre Dame Cathedral, as we listened to the last of the Lent Conferences, televised live on Palm Sunday. The very next day, 15 April, we were glued to the television all evening, watching in horror as sheets of flame swept through the ancient building. Along with the rest of Paris, indeed with the rest of the world, we felt utterly devastated and, like so many people, experienced a feeling of almost personal loss.



It was with relief we heard that the fire crews, by their hard work and expertise, had saved the familiar façade, external walls and towers of the medieval cathedral, along with its renowned stained-glass windows. But the slender, graceful spire that had crowned the central section of the roof above the main nave was lost. We saw it fall: carved

[4] Czerny, 'The Renewal of Religious Life and *Fratelli tutti*: Reading *Fratelli tutti* for Religious'.

in oak and covered with lead, it had melted, incinerated in the terrifying conflagration. That spire—the word in French is *flèche*, which means *arrow*—had a symbolic role: to point to the heavens. For me, a spire is a powerful symbol of the call to religious life; but it is an eminently Christian symbol, its meaning perceptible to Christian eyes. Does this symbol hold any relevance in an increasingly dechristianized Western world?

In the context of faith, symbols belong to the domain of the sacred; they draw our attention to spiritual realities. Religious life is not part of the institutional structures of the Church but belongs to its charismatic essence, finding its deepest meaning in the realm of sacred signs and symbols. In a certain sense, religious are 'sacraments' of God's presence in the world: their life signifies a reality beyond itself, the Kingdom of God. For those with eyes to see, their life points to God's presence in our world, in our universe, bridging what is often perceived as the gap between the sacred and the secular.

By its radical commitment to the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ, religious life acknowledges both God's transcendence and God's presence within time through faith and hope and love. Religious life is grounded in a vision of the whole of existence as graced by God, imbued with God's threefold presence: God beyond us, God with us and God within us. Religious remind humanity of what we can be, of what we must be, of what deep down, in our hearts, we most want to be, and this awareness grows when God's central role in all life is acknowledged, respected and accepted.

In the face of the 'distancing from religious values and the prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies' *(Fratelli tutti,* n. 175*)* that is so evident in our times, religious—by their lives, by their ministries, by their prayers and attentiveness to God's presence— invite and encourage those they meet to face the adventure of life knowing we are all held in the hands of God's mercy and love. God—beauty, truth, goodness—draws them onward. They listen to 'the music of the Gospel … hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman …. For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' *(*n. 277*)*

Vincent van Gogh once said that the word 'artist' means: 'I am seeking, I am striving, I am in it with all my heart'.[5] Perhaps religious

[5] Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, May 1882, in *The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh*, edited by Mark Roskill (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 148.

men and women are 'artists' in this sense. They have a wholehearted desire to respond to God's call through a primary life commitment that is both exclusive and enduring. Why would anyone wish to live such a life? Joan Chittister OSB offers an answer that has much in common with van Gogh's:

> Women and men give their very selves to it, whole and entire, day in day out, all the days of their lives, with nothing else to strive for, no place to call home, no one else with whom to share their lives. The question is: Why? The answer is: in order to be in the world a kind of contemplative presence that manifests, that requires the Reign of God, to be some part of bringing the world to the kind of creation God wants it to be. The identity of the group, in other words, is social and institutional as well as personal.[6]

Scriptural Calls

The calls of Abram, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Gideon, Mary, Peter, Mary of Magdala and Paul offer a scriptural pattern in which the dynamic of the religious vocation is evident: a personal encounter with God; a personal invitation, on God's initiative, to undertake a mission; an awareness of unworthiness; a conversion experience; a free and wholehearted acceptance of God's invitation: *Here I am, send me*. Ask any religious—you will find that, like those whose response to God's call is recorded in the pages of the Bible, the starting point of their call to religious life is a profound, never-to-be-forgotten experience of God.

Religious women and men recognise and acknowledge God dwelling at the heart of existence, a God with a human face who communicates with us personally in a relationship of love. Those who respond to 'a religious vocation' place God and the things of God at the centre of their lives and, in doing so, radicalise the experience of all Christians. This is not because they see themselves as good and virtuous individuals living among sinners, or as offering heroic models to lesser mortals—their desire is simply to pass on the touch of God to those they meet. They consciously write the story of their lives in God's presence, with God's eyes upon them: 'O Lord, you are the centre of my life: I will always praise you, I will always serve you, I will always keep you in my sight'.[7]

[6] Joan Chittister, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life* (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 15–16.

[7] Refrain of Paul Inwood's musical setting of Psalm 16.

Religious keep God in their sight, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ by who they are and what they do. Seeking dialogue with those they meet and establishing bonds of companionship with them (see *Fratelli tutti,* n.271*)* are essential parts of their lives. And they do these things as disciples of Jesus who, in his life on earth, created a life-giving culture by defying inequality, scorning hypocrisy, naming the truth and spreading peace. Jesus valued friendship, was gently compassionate, loved the unloved, healed the sick and welcomed strangers. Religious try to do the same.

A Prophetic Vocation in the Church

The Church is a sign of what God has done in Christ, of God's abiding presence in the world through the action of the Holy Spirit. Religious life is a radical sharing in the mission of the Church, in which the Kingdom of God and its priorities are raised above other considerations. Religious men and women are called to holiness, to intimacy with God in the service of God's people; and baptism, the context of all Christian living, is the foundation of their way of life: 'In the Church's tradition religious profession is considered to be a special and fruitful deepening of the consecration received in Baptism'.[8] The Church is the community where the redemptive work of Jesus has been recognised, received and proclaimed, and where this work continues.

A radical sharing in the mission of the Church

Religious life offers a kind of counter-culture, not by being negatively critical in the face of the complexity of human life, but by proposing an alternative way of living. Its members share the one mission: to announce the Good News, to be a sign and instrument of communion with God through Christ. The theological focus of this mission is twofold: transcendence, recognising God as 'other', as 'mystery'; and engaging with God's world, reaching out to God in creation and in human experience. Religious are on mission when their life (who they are) and action (what they do) prophetically point to, promote and make visible the Kingdom of God. They live intentionally in the light of faith, and their faith is strengthened by prayer, by the liturgy and sacraments of the Church, the people of God.

[8] John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, n. 30.

The Vows—Sign of Lifelong Consecration

Religious life has a mystical core, and those who follow the call to this life attempt to create a 'different' world, a way of living that is based on a faith response to God. They do this through the vowed life, which gradually developed into a distinctive form of life in the Church. Religious make three vows—poverty, chastity and obedience—professing them publicly and choosing to make them a framework for living. They do this with the intention of living their vows 'for ever'. All three vows, inspired as they are by the life and teaching of Jesus, are also known as 'evangelical counsels', and they characterize the self-giving of the person to God, translating into human terms the totality and deeply rooted nature of the gift. Poverty is understood as an expression of the person's radical dependence on God; chastity represents the primacy of the love of God in his or her life; while obedience symbolizes the desire to imitate the self-emptying of Christ by seeking God's will in this world.

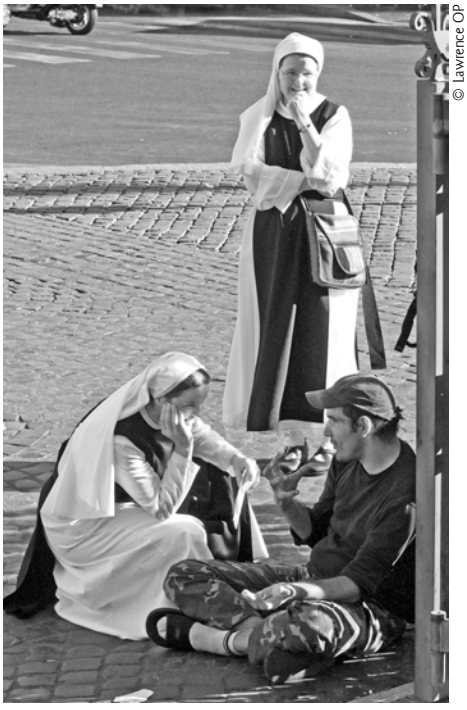
Religious are consecrated in the name of God and dedicate themselves to God's mission. At their profession, they publicly undertake to live in a way which radicalises the common experience of all Christians. They are 'set apart' for God, permeated by their desire to walk in God's presence, trying to make the world more deeply human and more open to God. Being 'set apart' in this way does not mean living on a higher plane or disregarding earthly realities; it means accepting the call to be sent in God's name to proclaim the Good News of salvation.

Religious women and men, through their consecration to God, forge new relationships with things and people, with human society, with creation. Mindful of the presence of God in the grandeur and misery of human existence, they respond with gratitude to the beauty of life and with courage in the inevitable times of suffering and grief. Compassion for those in any kind of need links religious life to the good of society, but the commitment of religious to the deprived and the disadvantaged is not simply dedicated social work. For religious, the work of caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, tending the sick, educating the young, welcoming the stranger, visiting the prisoner, has the special motivation of walking in the footsteps of Jesus, of following him, even to the foot of the cross. They have a 'shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources' (*Fratelli tutti*, n. 36).

God-Centred Communities

Religious communities are intentionally God-centred. They witness to religious and spiritual values in an increasingly secularised environment. Living like everyone else in the tangible, material world, they unashamedly acknowledge the importance of the transcendent. Committed to an ever-deepening relationship with God in Christ, they desire to be signs and bearers of God's love to the whole human family, knowing that we need to 'learn to live together in harmony and peace, without all of us having to be the same' (*Fratelli tutti*, n.100).

Contemplation is the energy of their life, the core of their identity. Their role is to bring to visibility what is Good News for the present time, not only by reaching out to unbelievers but, above all, by witnessing to the values of the Kingdom of God: respect for the whole of creation; encouraging the growth of free and integrated persons; building channels of communion and solidarity with all people by moving beyond prejudices and misconceptions. Religious communities are open to visitations of grace. Sensitive to God's unfailing presence in the whole of life, for them, 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God/It will flame out, like shining from shook foil ….'[9] They believe that God's providence is secretly shaping and guiding our lives, and this, as Pope Francis says, brings joy: 'Wherever there are religious, there is joy'.[10]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Religious women and men, longing for justice and peace, cannot be true to their calling without a preferential option for those who are poor. The action taken by religious on behalf of

[9] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur', in *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 139.
[10] Pope Francis, letter 'To All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life', n. 1.

those in any kind of need measures and demonstrates the integrity of their contemplation. This option is a spiritual choice made in imitation of Jesus, who recognised the human dignity of poor and suffering people, of prisoners, and of those who were excluded from the social order of his time. For religious, this means not only desiring to lead a simple life, not only caring for the poor out of compassion, but also, through their distinctive commitment and mission, responding with what Pope Francis calls 'a new vision of fraternity and social friendship' (*Fratelli tutti*, n.6).

Religious Life Today

In times past, it was customary to think of God as immutable and many found this thought comforting and reassuring: 'Change and decay in all around I see,/O Thou who changest not, abide with me'. Perhaps we are beginning to change this theological tune. The insight of faith is that we belong to something—Someone—greater than ourselves: God, whose presence, in moments of contemplative awareness, may be perceived in our lives, in creation. But the signs of that presence are not immutable—God has many names, and a 'new' face of God reveals itself in all the ups and downs of human existence.

In every age, religious life has been the seedbed of evangelical innovation, meeting new needs in new ways while integrating the tried and true wisdom of the past. In our day, there are indications that the paradigm of religious life seen as a 'total institution' is giving way to more of a flexible, deregulated expression of this form of life. In the face of this, religious today find themselves in the midst of a crisis of recruitment and, with an ageing membership, they have been forced to close many of their traditional establishments.

As they explore new patterns of evolutionary thinking, it may be possible for them to reach a clearer view of some of the paths religious life may take in the future. Whatever they do, they need to have the courage to acknowledge that, if there is one thing sure about the current state of religious life, it is that 'what is' is not sustainable. 'Everything, then, depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles' (*Fratelli tutti,* n.166). Those entering religious communities today need to be prepared not so much for what is, as for what will be. If religious life is to survive and flourish, religious need to focus on the fundamentals of living a God-centred life in today's world, setting aside what is peripheral or superfluous, including certain

traditional devotions, ministries and ways of proceeding. Elizabeth Johnson says it well: 'The living God who spans all time relates to historically new circumstances as the future continuously arrives. A tradition that cannot change cannot be preserved.'[11]

Looking to the Future

Karl Rahner, referring to religious life, once wrote: 'We have to make experiments, have the courage to change ourselves, to see and seize on new tasks and to give up old ones, to march into a future unknown to us'.[12] Religious life is not a monolithic institution; like the Church itself, it is and must always be responsive to what Vatican II called 'the signs of the times'. Therefore, since the way this life is lived is not unchanging, we must listen for the call of God in the present, in the world of the third millennium.[13]

Where is God opening a door for religious life now? Today, many religious are looking for authentic ways to continue to live a faith-centred life in a secularised world where humanism has largely become the accepted atmosphere and the renunciation that is integral to the vowed life is viewed with suspicion or scepticism. They are in the process of discerning how to adapt their way of living in the light of contemporary needs, while not losing sight of traditional ideals. Reflecting constantly on how their lifestyle decisions affect the earth and the poorest people of the earth, they are reviewing their ministries. Whenever and wherever possible, they are joining in positive action to bring about change in the face of the environmental emergency which is affecting the whole planet.

They value the fundamental, time-honoured elements of religious life—simple, sustainable living in community, daily prayer, celebrating the eucharist, spiritual reading, study and regular retreats. At the same time, through their varied ministries, they look to widen their circle of love in order to embrace all people, especially those who

[11] Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God* (London: Continuum, 2007), 23.
[12] Karl Rahner, *Opportunities for Faith: Elements of a Modern Spirituality*, translated by Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury, 1975), 87.
[13] Jane Herb, president of the American Leadership of Women Religious, in her address to the 2022 Assembly, put it this way: '… it seems we are leaning into the future of religious life, not simply the survival of our own congregations …. Something is coming to an end, and we do not know what is emerging.' ('Embracing a Traveler's Heart: Mapping Our Journey', available at https://lcwr.org/files/pdf/2022_lcwr_assembly_presidential_address_-_jane_herb_ihm.pdf, accessed 19 September 2022.)

experience exclusion, exploitation and injustice. In a spirit of hope, they place their future in God's hands. Theirs is 'a home with open doors' (*Fratelli tutti,* n.276).

I began by drawing attention to the symbolic spire of Notre Dame, destroyed in April 2019 in that terrible fire. I would like to conclude by referring to Shelley's 'Ode to a Skylark', in which I see an evocative symbol of religious life today. The poet hailed this bird as a 'blithe spirit' which pours out its heart's song 'from heaven or near it'.[14] Smallish, brown, unostentatious, the skylark is drawn inexorably to the heights: it can ascend to 1,000 feet, and there it hovers, singing its joyful song. Because it nests on the ground, this little bird is vulnerable. In our time, it also suffers from the effects of climate change, and in some parts of the world the whole species is endangered. My prayer is that the skylark will continue to hover between earth and heaven, singing its incomparable song: may the ears of present and future generations not be deaf to its call.

A final word from Timothy Radcliffe OP:

> It may happen that, in spite of all that we do, our congregations still shrink. That makes the witness of the remnant all the more beautiful and necessary. So, especially when we are few, our presence shows that we do not think of ourselves as a failing business, but as a fragile but lovely sign of the future unity of all humanity in the Kingdom.[15]

Teresa White fcJ belongs to the Faithful Companions of Jesus. A former teacher, she spent many years in the ministry of spirituality at Katherine House, a retreat and conference centre run by her congregation in Salford.

[14] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ode to a Skylark', in *The Complete Poetical Works*, edited by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: OUP, 1914), 596–597.

[15] 'Priest with Confidence in a Very Modest God', interview with Timothy Radcliffe by Madeleine Davies, *Church Times* (20 December 2019). Timothy was talking here about the declining membership of many Christian Churches, but his words ring true for religious life also.

GRACED ENCOUNTERS IN THE COMMUNITY OF CREATION

Responding to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

Ann-Maree O'Beirne

> The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. (*Laudato si'*, n. 233)

IN THESE ECOLOGICALLY CHALLENGING TIMES, responding adequately to what Pope Francis has called the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' requires a multifaceted approach. Ignatian spirituality, in particular the Ignatian motif of 'finding God in all things' and the rich theology underpinning it, are valuable resources for such a response. These are resources that Karl Rahner developed in his theology of grace and the experience of God. For both Ignatius and Rahner, theology and spirituality were interrelated. This relational approach offers new possibilities today as we live more deeply into our current ecological realities.

Grace and Experience of God

The discovery of God in all things is only possible because of God's grace offered to us. Ignatius understood grace as the gifts that God gives to the human person through all of life's experiences, to assist that person in finding, developing a relationship with and making a continuing response to God for all that God gives.

Ignatius and Rahner share an emphasis on the experience of God—of God's grace. Drawing on his Ignatian formation, Rahner sees grace as God's self, communicated through all of life and creation, to those open to see it. But experience of God depends on human experience itself and how this occurs. Everything experienced is first perceived and

then interpreted.[1] Our perceptions, thus, mediate experience. We cannot articulate experience without acknowledging the mediation of the senses, conceptualisation in thought, reflection, historical and cultural experience, and the use of language. If all experience is mediated, then all experience of God is mediated.

While Rahner uses the word 'grace' to speak of the way that God gives God's self to the human person, it is clear that he does see this gift as being mediated through all of creation:

> Grace is everywhere as an active orientation of all created reality toward God Himself, though God does not owe it to any creature to give it this special orientation. Grace does not happen in isolated instances here and there in an otherwise profane and graceless world …. Grace itself is everywhere and always, even though man's freedom can sinfully say No to it ….[2]

For Rahner, God's self-communication—God's gift of self through grace—to the human person, in freedom and always, is mediated by God's created world. This grace, offered to all, can be freely accepted or rejected. He also believes that the acceptance of grace in human history,

> … is mediated through man's taking a position toward a worldly reality …. Man says his Yes or No to this graced condition… over some worldly reality because he has this orientation consciously and freely only in a relationship to someone or something in this world.[3]

Rahner calls this mediated experience of God a 'mysticism of everyday life', which is available for all. Harvey Egan explains that surrendering to the mystery that life is—whether within Christian faith, hope and love, or outside it—is what Rahner means by mysticism.[4]

Extending Rahner's understanding of grace to our current ecological situation, we can say that God's grace can be accepted by human beings taking a position towards creation that brings about God's desire for all creation. Our 'yes' to God's grace within is made manifest through our right relationship with the created world. The link between the mysticism

[1] Reflecting on Karl Rahner's theology of grace, Denis Edwards writes about this perception and interpretation of human experience in a way that I feel is helpful for discernment of experience. See *Human Experience of God* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 9–13.
[2] Karl Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments*, translated by James M. Quigley (New York: Seabury, 1977), xi.
[3] Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments*, xiv.
[4] Harvey D. Egan, *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2010), 339–340.

of everyday life and the action taken by those who accept God's gift of grace through their responses to the ecological realities of our time is an important one. This connection between finding God and serving God is significant in our response to the cries of the earth and the poor. Paying attention to graced encounters in the community of creation opens our eyes and hearts to God's intention for our world today.

Mystical Encounters

Louie Schwartzberg, a recognised pioneer in high-end time-lapse cinematography, offers a window into what it means to pay attention and be captivated by this offer of grace through the natural world. He says,

> When people see my images, a lot of times they'll say, 'Oh my God'. Have you ever wondered what that meant? The 'oh' means it caught your attention; it makes you present, makes you mindful. The 'my' means it connects with something deep inside your soul. It creates a gateway for your inner voice to rise up and be heard. And 'God'? God is that personal journey we all want to be on, to be inspired, to feel like we're connected to a universe that celebrates life.[5]

Ignatius experienced significant 'Oh my God' moments, more formally known as mystical encounters. They were important for his developing understanding of God's grace in his life, and the establishment of the Spiritual Exercises—his response to this discovery of God in all things.

Ignatius' mystical experiences led him to understand that God is so integrally connected to that which God created—the natural world and creatures, including humans—that God acts in the world through creation and creatures. They provided Ignatius with a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all of life with God. In a letter to Francisco Borja in 1545, speaking about those people graced with the ability to become united to God, the clarity of this connectedness is made apparent.

> Persons who go out of themselves and enter into their Creator and Lord possess a constant awareness, attention, and consolation, as well as a perception of the way in which our entire eternal Good is present in all created things, giving existence to them all and preserving them therein by his own infinite being and presence.[6]

[5] Louie Schwartzberg, 'Nature. Beauty. Gratitude', available at https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude/transcript?language=en, accessed 22 March 2022.

[6] Ignatius to Francisco Borja, end of 1545, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, edited and translated by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institite of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 125.

This letter exemplifies how Ignatius sees the natural world as a place of encounter with God.

An Ecological Reading of the Exercises

The purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is to orientate a person to God so that she or he experiences God in the whole of life, and is then drawn to serve God where God is found, amid the world's suffering and wounded. Expanding our view of the embrace of God's reach to the whole of creation extends our responsibility to serve God into the whole of creation. Ignatius' central motif of 'finding God in all things' incorporates four theological insights, arising out of his life experiences and relationship with God, that enabled him to create a process for others so that they too could find God in every aspect of their lives. These insights are intricately woven into the dynamics and structure of the Spiritual Exercises and are most clearly evident as a theological substructure in his thought that subtly integrates the natural world. These insights are:

1. the relationality of the Trinity expressing unity in God;
2. the immanence of God in creation through the action of the Trinity expressing an interconnectedness with humanity and creation;
3. the incarnation of Christ in the world, offering salvation to humanity and creation;
4. that discerned encounter with God evokes a response of praxis in service of others.

These insights may also be described as relationship, interconnectedness, salvation and reciprocity, which are vital for any Christian spirituality of ecological awareness

Ignatius did not have an understanding of ecology as we know it, nor did he experience ecological crisis. However, awareness of the relationship between his intentions in the Exercises and the theology supporting them offers a straightforward approach when directing the Exercises in any historical period. It is the director's responsibility to understand the environmental, social and cultural contexts of the time that may be the source of God's action in the exercitant's life. In today's world, a grasp of the ecological issues that face the human and other species, and the planet's life-support systems, is critical.

While it is right to hesitate about directing a person on a particular path in the Exercises, given Ignatius' instruction to directors in the

fifteenth annotation—not to be an obstacle between creature and creator—there are ways in which conscientising an exercitant about the ecological crisis is in keeping with Ignatius' intentions. It is also the director's task to keep an eye on the movement of the spirits and assist the exercitant in noticing the graces received. Ignatius is pointing the exercitant to see God in all things, and directing the Exercises with this in mind can only enhance Ignatius' intent. Paying attention to the ecological moments or movements in the life of those whom we, as directors, are accompanying is one way of working with God's Spirit.

Reading the *Spiritual Exercises* from an ecological perspective, we need first to explore the instances where Ignatius points to God's presence in the natural world. I propose that these instances occur at two levels, direct inclusion of the natural world in the text and implicit inclusion at a theological level.

The Natural World in the Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius' focus was on humanity; his purpose was saving the human soul. That said, the Exercises do include the whole created world in some surprising ways. Ignatius uses specific words and scripture passages to highlight explicit inclusion of the natural world in the text, as well as three techniques that help a person plumb the depths of an image or passage of scripture: the *composition of place*, *colloquy* and *application of the senses*.[7]

Ignatius explains the composition of place in the very first exercise (Exx 47): 'to see in imagination the physical place where that which I want to contemplate is taking place'. The purpose of the composition is to bring the exercitant into a more intimate relationship with Jesus. From an ecological perspective, this technique takes note of the full scope of the scene, including the natural environment. All elements of the scene have a relationship with each other and can assist the person in finding God through developing his or her relationship with Jesus more intimately.

The colloquy places the exercitant in dialogue with the persons of the Trinity, Mary or other characters in the text. The contemplation on the incarnation (Exx 101–109) most clearly outlines how this technique highlights Ignatius' relational understanding of God. It connects exercitants to the interrelationship of God with all elements in the natural world. Dialogue is a necessary way of proceeding in our attempts

[7] Biblical scholarship on ecological questions can be of particular relevance. See the work of Elaine Wainwright and others involved in the Earth Bible Project, for example (http://www.webofcreation.org/Earthbible/earthbible.html, accessed 1 October 2022).

to address the ecological crisis—one that Pope Francis highlights in *Laudato si'*, and his general approach to all engagements with the world:

> The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that 'realities are greater than ideas'.[8]

The third technique is the application of the senses, which Ignatius introduces to exercitants in the Second Week, when contemplating scenes in Christ's life (Exx 121–126).[9] For the final prayer period of the day, the five senses are brought to bear on the graced material to which they are returning in repetitions: sight, hearing, smell, taste and finally touch.[10] The text of the *Spiritual Exercises* here gives some freedom to the exercitants. Using their imagination, Ignatius invites them to become part of the scene and to see and hear what is to be seen and heard, but also what *might* be seen and heard. Imagining the ecology of the setting

A Panoramic Landscape with Christ Healing the Blind Man, *by Lucas Gassel, 1540*

[8] Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 201, citing *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 231.

[9] There is a use of the five senses in the fifth meditation on hell in the First Week, which is not unlike the prayer of the senses (Exx 66–70).

[10] When Ignatius asks exercitants to repeat contemplations, he invites them to 'notice and dwell on those points where I felt greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience' (Exx 62).

through the senses can help exercitants discover God in all things. Michael Ivens explains: 'to belong authentically to the Ignatian Prayer of the Senses, such freedom must be related to the "interior knowledge" that comes from contemplating the "foundation in truth" of the scriptural word'.[11] By paying attention to a gospel passage in this way, a person's ability to see God in all things can be heightened.

The composition of place and the colloquy expand the interior knowledge of the exercitant—knowledge that includes the physical, geographical and natural landscapes of a passage of scripture—widening the scope of material available for God to utilise. Entering into dialogue with the Trinity and others so consistently draws an exercitant closer to God, emphasizing the relationality of life and our relationship to the whole created world. The prayer of the senses allows the exercitant to experience at a felt level the graced moments of the earlier prayer times in the day. Moments when God has graced the exercitant may include graced encounters in the community of creation and paying attention to these assists the discovery of God in the natural world.

These three techniques increase the likelihood of exercitants discovering God in all things. They can bring the natural world to the forefront of the exercitant's mind and heart. They also prepare a person for the second, theological, level at which the natural world is included in the exercises: that of Ignatius' trinitarian, incarnational theology.

The Natural World in Ignatius' Theology

I should like to highlight four instances of the implicit inclusion of the natural world in the theology of the *Spiritual Exercises*: the second exercise of Week One (Exx 60); the meditation on the incarnation (Exx 101–109); the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23); and the *Contemplatio* (Exx 230–237). The latter two instances, found in the two most important texts of the *Spiritual Exercises*—the Principle and Foundation and the *Contemplatio*—sit outside the chronological sequence of exercises. However, according to Rahner, they introduce, conclude and encapsulate the entire enterprise of the Spiritual Exercises.[12]

All Creatures (Exx 60). Ignatius' implicit inclusion of the natural world begins subtly in the very first exercise (Exx 45–54), where he opens the exercitants' reflection on three types of sin—cosmic, communal human

[11] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 99.
[12] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, translated by Kenneth Baker (South Bend: St Augustine's, 2014), 270.

and personal human sin—which in itself reflects a broad understanding of the effects of sin on the whole of creation.[13] However, a more overt reference occurs in the second exercise of the first week (Exx 55–61), where Ignatius sees God using the created world to hold and nurture the exercitants despite their sinfulness. In the fifth point, he asks the exercitants to exclaim with wonder and intense feeling as they reflect on the whole range of created beings (Exx 60).

This exercise reveals Ignatius' deep awareness of the divine interconnectedness between the heavens, the elements and all of creation and the human person: all have a role in maintaining human life, and even Earth shows mercy. According to Michael Ivens, Ignatius' point here is: 'if one can allow even nature (which does not sin) to make one conscious of one's sinfulness, nature itself will also proclaim God's mercy and faithfulness'.[14] If people can be aware of the contribution of earthly creatures, the life-support systems of Earth, as well as heavenly bodies, to their own life and well-being, and see how their own actions have harmed these creatures, and therefore God, then the ecological conscientising of the person making the Exercises has begun.

The Incarnation (Exx 101–109). The second instance appears at the beginning of the Second Week. Ignatius introduces the Week's central theme with a contemplation on the incarnation. For Ignatius, the goal of this contemplation is to experience the world through the Trinity's eyes. The three divine persons, who together decide to send the second person of the Trinity to Earth in the incarnation, highlight how the Trinity sees the world with the eyes of love.

Brian O'Leary regards this contemplation as clearly marking the theocentric worldview of Ignatius, which gave him 'a deep appreciation of the human person and of human values, as well as reverence for the cosmos'. In it, Ignatius, 'aims at leading a person into the Trinity's own loving gaze on the world and its people …. This loving gaze reveals something of God's self but, more immediately, it reveals God's involvement in creation.'[15] Ecologically this contemplation invites the exercitant to experience all of creation as being loved by God and worthy of God's loving action through the incarnation.

[13] 'There is an implicit awareness on Ignatius' part that the effects of sin move beyond the individual and eventually have cosmic significance': Robert T. Sears and Joseph A. Bracken, *Self-Emptying Love in a Global Context: The Spiritual Exercises and the Environment* (Eugene: Cascade, 2006), 34–35.
[14] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 57–58.
[15] Brian O'Leary, 'Ignatian Mysticism and Contemporary Culture', *The Way*, 52/4 (October 2013), 48, 47.

The Principle and Foundation (Exx 23). The Principle and Foundation establishes that the purpose of the human person is God-centred and relational. It indicates how human beings should relate to the things in the world and use (or not use) the gifts of creation towards the end for which they were created.

The Principle and Foundation does endorse Ignatius' understanding of humanity as separate from the rest of creation. But though it focuses on the human person's spiritual requirements, it also protects the non-human creatures and life-support systems of God's creation, allowing them to flourish. As Peter-Hans Kolvenbach states, 'Ignatius understands clearly that if God and the human person are not in a proper relationship this will have serious consequences in the biosphere'.[16] The Principle and Foundation locates the person as a creature in God's creation, presenting a threefold relationship between God, humanity and the natural world that invites practical service of God in the world. José Antonio García writes:

A threefold relationship between God, humanity and the natural world

> Is this not an inspiring principle—a triple relationship with God, with other persons, and with the earth on which humankind passes its life? Once we locate ourselves in this worldview, can we separate God from what God loves so much, the world? Can we respond to God's love without this response being expressed in the care of the habitat of all living beings?[17]

In the Principle and Foundation, the purpose of all creation and the human person—who has free will in a way that other creatures do not—is to praise, reverence and serve God. To attain this purpose, Ignatius calls for a spirit of indifference. By this, Ignatius does not mean that all things of this world are unimportant and a distraction from focus on God. Instead, he sees them as each having their place in creation; it is not for the human person to choose to prefer any of these things before God. As Karl Rahner states, 'man is always tempted to consider earthly things meaningless and of little value. For our relationship to God, the "other things" are absolutely necessary—they are the place of our service and worship.'[18]

[16] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 'Our Responsibility for God's Creation', address at the official opening of Arrupe College, Harare, 22 August 1998, 6, available at https://kolvenbach.jesuitgeneral.org/en/archive?view=archivo&id=204, accessed 23 March 2022.
[17] José Antonio García, 'Ecology and Ignatian Spirituality', *Thinking Faith* (31 March 2014), at https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/ecology-and-ignatian-spirituality, accessed 23 March 2022.
[18] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 20.

At the same time all creatures have the freedom to be as they are and not become the slaves of human desire and greed. They have value in and of themselves, not just for their usefulness to humanity—a view that Pope Francis affirms in *Laudato si'*: 'Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system' (n. 140).

This interpretation of the Principle and Foundation orientates the human person towards a relationship with God by not favouring any attachment to created things over God. It also reorientates the place of the human person as a member of the community of creation. Nonetheless, the human person does have a special relationship with God, which includes an invitation into a praxis in the service of others, in response to all that God gives. In terms of the ecological crisis, this praxis can be at the service of the whole earth community.

The *Contemplatio* (Exx 230–237). This Christ-centred prayer, prayed at the end of the Fourth Week, focuses on the ongoing participation of the Trinity in creation.[19] The trinitarian God is presented as immanent in all creation as gifts of God's self. God's connectedness to the exercitant through these lavish gifts also communicates salvation through the gift of God's self in the incarnation of Christ in the world, connecting humanity with all creation. The reflection and *Suscipe* prayer, repeated after each of the four points in the exercise, invites a response of service to others in practical ways. In the first point (Exx 234), Ignatius asks exercitants 'to bring to memory the benefits received—creation, redemption and particular gifts', noting that he includes creation with salvation (redemption). The passage, 'how much he has given me of what he possesses and further … to give me himself', encompasses the insights of relationship, immanence and interconnectedness in subtle ways, and the final *Suscipe*—'take, Lord, and receive'—expresses that of reciprocity.

The second point (Exx 235) of the *Contemplatio* powerfully articulates Ignatius' trinitarian, incarnational vision of Christ present in all of creation. This indwelling was also indicated in the General Examination of Conscience (Exx 39), but here, in the *Contemplatio,* it is brought to its climax with echoes of Ignatius' mystical encounters at Manresa and on the banks of the Cardoner river. All four of the theological insights are

[19] See Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 13–15.

involved here, and there is an explicit presentation of the natural world: 'how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence'. This articulation of God's indwelling is the most explicit indication that Ignatius gives us about the immanence of God in the natural world. It is an exceptional affirmation of the concept of 'deep incarnation'.

This term was first conceived by Niels Gregersen, who reflects on pain and suffering in human and creaturely life in this world, and the meaning that the cross of Christ brings to the costs of evolution.[20] Denis Edwards states:

> One of the startling implications of the Christian view of the depths of the incarnation is that it is a claim about a God who eternally binds God's self to flesh and to matter. In a thoroughly incarnational theology, God is understood as becoming *forever* a God of matter and flesh …. The Word is made flesh, and matter and flesh are irrevocably taken to God and embedded forever in the life of the divine Trinity.[21]

Drawing on the work of Athanasius, Edwards explores understandings of the Word and the cross—imprinted on all creation—that speak of a broad and expansive notion of the incarnation, one that implies a salvific intimate relationship of God with all creation. This intimacy is reflected in Ignatius' thought and in the process of the Spiritual Exercises.

The third point (Exx 236) of the *Contemplatio* presents God at work in human life through the elements of creation, leading to a dynamic encounter with God on a daily basis. This third point, like the second, highlights God's presence and action in all created things on Earth and emphasizes God's desire to be integrally connected with our human life. Ignatius again brings a specific cosmic dimension to God's immanence and activity in exercitants' lives. This awareness of cosmic reality in dialogue with science creates an expanded dimension to the ecological significance Ignatius offers contemporary theology of the natural world.

The *Contemplatio*'s fourth point (Exx 237) focuses on God as the source of the gifts of creation, including human qualities. Here there

[20] Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 40/3 (2001), 192–207.

[21] Denis Edwards, 'Key Issues in Ecological Theology: Incarnation, Evolution, Communion', in *Theology and Ecology across the Disciplines: On Care for Our Common Home*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (London: T. and T. Clark, 2018), 67–68.

are further echoes of Ignatius' mystical experiences in Manresa in the imagery of descending rays of the sun and waters from a fountain. These explicit mentions of the natural world give expression to God's immanence in more subtle ways than the previous two points of the exercise. Nonetheless, the presence of God in creation, providing gifts of human powers and virtues, is evident.

In the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius encourages an indifference to all created things so that the human person gives full honour, glory and praise to God. In the *Contemplatio*, Ignatius encourages exercitants to give full honour, glory and praise to God *in* all that God has created, by giving the gift of themselves back to God, through service in this created world. Graced encounters of God in the natural world call for a response to act in service of that world's needs.

An Orientation towards God

Ignatius has given humanity a wonderful gift to those open to experiencing it: a process by which to receive God's gift of love and the desire to return it with a service of care for our common home. Karl Rahner has interpreted this gift for our modern world through his theology of grace and prepared us to live it out in the twenty-first century. The Ignatian motif of discovering God in all things has the potential to create a way of being—an orientation towards God and discernment of God's grace in all of life. Responding to cries of the Earth and the poor relies on this way of being. It also promotes a unique contemplative awareness of God's presence that provides sustenance and support for the suffering felt and the discerned action required.

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OUR VOCATIONS

Novelty and Commitment

Robert E. Doud

SINCE THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, the idea of vocation has been closely tied to the theology of baptism. At baptism, the new Christian receives the vocation of living a sacramental Christian life. He or she now has the privilege and obligation to bear lifelong witness to Christian values. He or she is intimately involved with Christ, and lives forever afterwards in relationship to Christ. The seal of the triune God is imprinted at baptism. Baptism begins a process of growth and development by which the child of God will become a mature Christian in an ever-growing commitment to the love of God and neighbour.

Before the council, Roman Catholics were told—often with no reference to baptism—that there were three (or four) basic vocations: to priesthood or religious life, to marriage and to the single state. There was a hierarchy of value and importance here. Priests had the holiest vocation. Near to the priests were brothers and sisters in the religious life of vows, and then there were married people and finally the unmarried, who had the least status in the Church. Priests and religious kept vows of perfect chastity and were very close to God. Married people were chaste according to their vocation, and single people, priests and religious were allowed no sex at all, in thought, word or deed. Chastity was a huge matter in all discussions of vocation.

After Vatican II, these three (or four) vocations were seen as equal. Radically, all Christians enjoy the vocations of priest, prophet and king. God calls people through baptism in different ways. No one vocation is better or holier than any other vocation. All life is holy, and all callings are holy. Vocation is no longer a matter of status in the Church. We are all called to participate in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. We are all called to keep the commandments and work for social justice. We are all called in our own best ways, and in accord with our personal gifts and talents, to build the Church and the community, to serve in them. We all have a responsibility to grow and mature in our faith. Just standing still or just hanging in are not recommended options.

The Way, 61/4 (October 2022), 29–38

We all at times praise people who have *simple faith.* Actually, in today's complex world, simple faith is hardly any longer possible. We need some sophistication to handle questions involving religion and science, church history, scandals in the Church, and biblical interpretation. It is challenging even for priests to keep up with research and opinions on these complex and subtle developments in thought. Taking a college course in theology can add to the confusion if not taught well. It helps to have a liberal college education behind you but, even with that, distortions and confusions can creep in. It is possible to be very well educated in professional ways, and still to have an immature grasp of one's faith.

Prayer is part of the answer. Each of us must be sensitive to the movements sent by God in our own hearts, as well as in the world around us. We should pay attention to the signals God is giving us in prayer. Personal spiritual growth, along with intellectual growth, is necessary to make our way through a world and culture of complex and sometimes discouraging ideas. How does the Church fit into our lives, and how do we fit into the Church? Could we be closer to God? Could our experience of Church be better than it is? What is the relationship between Church and world? Are these questions important to us? If so, we are growing in our baptismal calling and our Christian commitment.

For He Had Great Possessions, *by George Frederic Watts, 1894*

The Rich Young Man

There is a story in the Gospels about a rich young man (Matthew 19: 16–30) who came to Jesus and asked to become a disciple. The young man was able to say that he had kept all the commandments all his life. Jesus told the man that he must give up all his possessions, sell them and give the money to the poor. That is indeed a strict requirement.

Today, when young persons enter religious life and prepare to take a vow of poverty, they may at any time, with little inconvenience, leave the community and return to their families—presumably to the comforts and conveniences they had before joining. Moreover some candidates enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle in community than they had experienced at home before they joined. But there is little doubt that, with or without material sacrifice, if a person is generous enough to enter religious life for even a short time, he or she will continue to serve the Church and witness to the gospel as life goes on.

The young man in the Gospel walked away from Jesus sadly, because he had many possessions. We do not hear about him again. I like to think that he continued to be a follower of Jesus. Even then, there must have been many ways of supporting the cause of the gospel and of Jesus' disciples. That young man may have inspired others to follow in the steps of Jesus. Jesus may have been doing him a favour in setting the bar so high that he could not follow them, at least not for a while. Perhaps, at some later date, the young man joined the Jesus movement.

These thoughts lead me to thinking that finding one's vocation is a lifelong process, and not simply a decision made definitively in the earliest phase of one's life. Pensioners and retired people still struggle to find their path to God and through life. There are nudging instigations that come to us every day about serving God and extending ourselves to others. In virtue of the mysteries of the incarnation and the holy eucharist, Jesus accompanies us as we seek ways to accompany him and his present-day disciples. Vocations are not just for young people. Or maybe it is better to say, that life at any stage is a series of decisions that build up over time into a commitment. Commitments evolve and mutate.

Philosophy Might Be of Help

Inspired by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, we can view our commitment, and indeed our very identity, as a series of momentary events that string together successively over a long span of life which creates its own trajectory.[1] The direction, we hope, is towards

[1] See Robert E. Doud, 'Identity and Commitment', in *Religious Experience and Process Theology: The Pastoral Implications of a Major Modern Movement*, edited by Harry James Cargas and Bernard Lee (New York: Paulist, 1976), 388: 'Our identity is a series of microscopic events. We are only one of these events at any given time, but any one of the events we are can only be understood in relation to the events preceding it and succeeding it.' And, 'A commitment is [or involves] a [sustained] concern on the part of a person to preserve a certain direction in the trajectory that he is' (390).

God, but it allows for periods of divergence as it wends its way, revising its direction slightly as it goes. Each moment, called an *actual entity* by Whitehead, comprises a decision at its core and a myriad of influences inhabiting its surrounding flesh. God supplies to each momentary entity a *lure*—a unique package of possibilities for actualisation in that single instant.[2]

Each entity is free, self-determining and capable of making adjustments to the lure, divine persuasion or aim for self-realisation that is given to it by God. Each entity is then succeeded momentarily by a novel entity that is constituted in the same way as its predecessor. Spiritual discernment involves giving attention to the daily and instantaneous lures that come from God, and to the succession of lures and decisions that lead and give definition to our personal trajectories. Our spiritual examen is about gratitude for these lures, and to how we may have missed making a good response to some of them. Even our mistakes and blown chances can help set us up for better responses next time.

Our partners in community, religious superiors and the saints who have gone before us can be examples and influences through whom God is trying to form and inform us. The trajectories of other good people can affect us while not becoming personally constitutive of our own ever-emerging identities. We carry God within us, not only directly, but also as God influences those who in turn influence us. Thus, God has an overwhelming presence for us, both directly and indirectly.

I borrow the term *sedimentation* from another philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, especially when I discuss Whitehead, to describe how the past accumulates in each of our momentary instantiations of identity (our personal actual entities).[3] Each actual entity succeeds its predecessors along our living trajectory. Our identity is cumulative. Each moment of our living selfhood contains as its core a decision that ratifies and realigns the decisions in our previous moments of selfhood. The trajectory of our progressively accumulating self contains and comprises our ever

[2] See Robert E. Doud, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Whitehead', *The Way*, 48/3 (July 2009), 47–60, here 53: 'A lure is something that provides an element of instigation or purposeful orientation. Every actual entity receives its own proper lure or unique initial aim from God, as an instigation towards its full and free development and satisfaction.'

[3] Donald A. Landes, 'Memory, Sedimentation, Self', in *Time, Memory, Institution: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self*, edited by David Morris and Kym Maclaren (Athens, Oh: Ohio U, 2015), 137–138: 'Merleau-Ponty characterizes consciousness as simultaneously spontaneity and sedimentation, as the past being taken up toward a future by sedimenting [it into] a present'.

emerging identity. The immanence of our personal past in our personal present is expressed as sedimentation.

Discerning a vocation, which is a matter of following the persuasive hints and lures provided to us by God, also involves attending to our personal emergence as a self-determining individual. Our freedom and God's freedom are intertwined. God absorbs influences from us and from the ever-emergent world and universe, just as we incorporate into our own personal trajectories influences from God and from the universe. For Whitehead, God has a historical identity that is formed interactively with the world and with us, just as God has an absolute identity that transcends time and history.

Considerations from Scripture

We are a new self in every novel instant along the trajectory of our lives, according to Whitehead. The decision we make in every new instant is or can be a renewal of our personal covenant with God.[4] Scholars have pointed out that the idea of covenant is not a static and unchanging idea, but is rather a fluid and developmental one, and is a theme that is applied in different ways to different situations.[5] The nature of the covenantal relationship with God grows through time and history. In Jeremiah (31:31–34), there is a verse where the Lord says: 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel'; and in Ezekiel (36:26), 'a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you'. The biblical idea of giving us a new heart is consistent with the idea in Whitehead's philosophy of supplying a new initial aim that lures forth the formation of a new occasion of experience (new actual entity).

The new covenant spoken of in the New Testament book of Hebrews (8:6–13) is treated as an individual and personal covenant with God, rather than God's covenant with the nation of Israel. The lure of God—which is consistent with the *more* or *magis* in Ignatian theology—is God's ever-renewed invitation to a new covenant with the individual. The new covenant is closely associated with the reality of

[4] Doud, 'Identity and Commitment', 393: 'The covenant lived in its renewals, not in its relics. It was a developing reality, always being restruck in a new event, which intended to be faithful to the past and creative of the future …. There is a trajectory of covenant commitments.'

[5] See John L. McKenzie, 'Covenant', *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), 153–157. Having provided an exhaustive list of the various covenants in the Old Testament, McKenzie writes;: 'The covenant is a basic and recurring motif in the OT'.

grace in the New Testament, rather than the notion of law, as happens in the Old Testament.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, as in St Paul's theology generally, we read about a *new creation*, which brings with it the freedom of the children of God. The Church is God's new creation, and Easter is a time, not only of renewal, but of rebirth for nature and the universe. Whitehead's philosophy views the actual entity as *self-creating*, that is, as assembling itself out of a throng of prior actual entities in a process that is called *prehension*. For him, God is also a creative agent in so far as God supplies, in every instant, the actual aim or package of pure potentials as a lure or suggestion to the newly forming actual entity. It is the *decision* of each momentary pulse of selfhood that puts the final touch on the identity of the actual entity. The point made here is that each actual entity within a human trajectory is, in an important sense, a new creation that is the product of God's providence and grace, and also of individual self-determination.

Suppose it was Jesus' intention for the rich young man in the Gospel that the lad think about his vocation, considering the implications for his future, giving his life to serve the poor, not caring for his fortune and its preservation. It was true then, as it is now for most of us, that if we do not live frugally and invest carefully we lose what we have. There would indeed be very few followers of Jesus if we, literally and immediately, rich or not, had to sell all we have and give the money to the poor. More and more, however, we need to envision the Kingdom of Heaven and find ways to preach the gospel, always living in compromise and falling short of an absolute commitment to its values.

More Scriptural Considerations

The gospel is good news, and the novelty of its message and demands lies at the essence of its new reality. Collect the aspects of novelty in the good news: the new covenant (Jeremiah), new heart and new spirit (Ezekiel), new creation (St Paul) and new law (St Paul). The term *New Testament* itself means new covenant; *testament* is an alternative translation of the Greek word for covenant, which is *diatheke*. Our relationship with God is like our relationship with ourselves. It is an ever-new and ever-growing covenant of mutual love, and a partnership in creating ourselves and our world together.

Prayer, on the process view, is mutual persuasion, in which the ever-adjusting lure of God is assimilated and responded to by the emerging

trajectory of our lives. God rejoices in the novelty and creativity that we bring to the ever-developing situation of the universe. It is a new world every instant. Every Christian vocation is a call to prayer: persistent prayer, progressive prayer, *lectio divina*, liturgical prayer, contemplative prayer, common prayer and personal prayer. The four ends or purposes of prayer are adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. Catholics ask Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the other saints to intercede for them before God the Father, and for the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire them. We pray for one another, for the dead, for the sick, the old, the dying, for those with whom we share responsibilities and for those who have needs of some kind. We ought always to pray, says St Paul.

Every Christian vocation is a call to prayer

Freedom and Obedience

Every Christian vocation is a call to serve, to do good, to be good, to be a power for good. God also calls us to be witnesses to the freedom we enjoy as children of God and as heirs of the kingdom. The freedom mentioned in St Paul's letters is intended as a complement, indeed, a transformational complement, to the biblical idea of obedience. We do not respond to God as a soldier to a commander but, rather, as adult sons and daughters to beloved parents. God gives us graces and instigations as we live our lives, hints and attractions towards good deeds and sound patterns of existence. God wills our happiness in this life and hereafter.

God makes demands and places burdens on us, while saying: 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:30). It is also true that God is the ground of our freedom, who allows us and prompts us to use that freedom as an authentic power for choice and self-determination. In most cases God gives us a range of options rather than strict orders to follow a path that is narrow and specific. True, it is probable that God's lures become more specific and focused as we follow our path and discern among the options it presents along the way. For example, if I am fortunate enough to attend a Jesuit university, it is likely that at some time I may consider a vocation with the companions of St Ignatius.

Our freedom is determinative of who we are and what we do. As we discern the will of God for our lives, we are aware that God always wills our freedom and relishes the uniqueness of our personal response. God lovingly desires to see what we will do with our talents and

opportunities. Learning to live obediently is not like learning to cope with living in the cell block of a maximum-security prison. It is, rather, like being given the skills and equipment to build a house for ourselves, and then surprising others and ourselves with the beauty and usefulness of what we construct. God is in many ways like a poet or an artist, not an autocrat, and God is also one who enjoys seeing the creativity of God's human partners.

There is no *one-size-fits-all* approach to discernment in decision-making. The big constant is prayer, and honesty is the way the discerners present themselves before God. Important in the discussion between the discerner and his or her spiritual director will be certain surprising and even distracting ideas that come up in the conversation. Even so, primary attention is given to the spiritual pattern that emerges in the life, especially the prayer life, of the individual. Context is also important: what was the early and family life of the person like? Then, what was his or her life in school and neighbourhood like? What subjects did he or she enjoy, dislike, excel in, or give extra attention to? What were the person's friends like and what vocational paths did he or she follow?

The old model of understanding the notion of vocation was one in which a young person made a choice early in life, perhaps taking vows in a religious community and then living out those vows in patterns of fidelity or compromise. In a recent article, Ronald Rolheiser OMI enters this discussion. Basically accepting this older model of understanding life's trajectory. Rolheiser takes the mild position that those who miss their true vocation (including perhaps one who resigns from the priesthood or religious life) might not lose his or her eternal salvation, but rather, will 'suffer the pangs of one who has deeply disappointed him-or-herself'. What is at stake he writes is 'our happiness and generativity on this side of eternity'.[6]

Rolheiser does not discuss the opposite side of leaving or missing out on a religious vocation. Suppose a person who is afraid or reluctant to take on the responsibilities of marriage and parenting tries to escape such a life by entering a monastery or religious community. Would we then even mention the possibility that he or she might lose eternal salvation? Or would we suggest that the person might then remain in

[6] Ronald Rolheiser, 'The Notion of a Vocation', *The Angelus* (3 December 2021), 8: 'This voice is gentle, but firm and unrelenting, and it tells us that we are not free to do anything we want with our lives'.

the ranks of certain trapped souls who do not have the courage to leave forms of consecrated life that restrict their freedom and their right to determine their own destinies? Is it never the case that God lures someone away or allows that a priest might leave the priesthood or a sister leave her convent, perhaps with the desire and hope of finding a spouse and living a more fulfilling married life?

Maternity, *by Edmund Blair Leighton, 1917*

Part of discerning a vocation is finding a lifestyle that serves God while bringing us joy and fulfilment in this earthly life. If vocation is fluid and emergent, then the old, psychologically destructive concern about missing our vocation is obsolete. Whatever we chose as a style of life, that style is unhealthy for us if there is no means of escape when that lifestyle becomes diminishing, unhealthy or destructive. Few today would insist that a couple stay married if their relationship cools to the point of becoming toxic or dangerous for one or both of them.

Rolheiser accepts the view that feeling one has a vocation means knowing intuitively that one does not have a choice, but that one must follow a certain path that it is 'unthinkable to turn away from'. To this end he quotes the psychologist James Hollis: 'Our real desires and our destinies are not chosen for us by our ego, but by our nature and "the divinities"'. Rolheiser also paraphrases columnist David Brooks thus:

> A vocation, he [Brooks] writes, is an irrational factor wherein you hear an inner voice that is so strong that it becomes unthinkable to turn away and that you intuitively know that you do not have a choice, but can only ask yourself, what is my responsibility here?[7]

Certainly, we need to pay close attention to the call of our own inner voice, and to the commanding will of God. But, is not the call of

[7] Rolheiser, 'Notion of a Vocation', 8.

conscience and the lure of God more like a suggestion or an invitation rather than a threat that disobedience would bring eventual unhappiness and strong regret, if not painful remorse? For most of us, there is not one sole divine lure that comes at only one time in our lives, but rather, God's will for us comes in a gentle persuasiveness that spreads itself, moment by moment, within an ever-emerging trajectory. How we think of God affects how we think of our own destinies and vocations.

Whitehead's philosophy affirms that 'God's experience of the world is contingent upon what in fact happens as a result of a creaturely decision, and grows as a commitment in the course of the creative advance'.[8] Our personal vocations are given to us as a shower of aims for the optimal benefit of ourselves and for the universe, which then evoke and trigger our freedom to respond and share authentically in the process of creative transformation.

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[8] Lewis S. Ford, 'Our Prayers as God's Passions', in *Religious Experience and Process Theology*, 430: 'Process theism … denies that God controls things by determining what they shall be; the course of the world is the conjoint outcome of creaturely decisions made in response to divine persuasion'.

DOMENICO ZIPOLI

The Sound of the Jesuit Baroque

Ian G. Coleman

Architecture is a sort of frozen music.[1]

THE TERM 'JESUIT BAROQUE' is usually applied to a certain style of architecture, a style which originated in the mother church of the Society of Jesus, the church of the Gesù in Rome. This great edifice, designed by the architect Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola was started in 1568, twelve years after the death of Ignatius of Loyola, but two of its most celebrated elements, namely the façade and the *trompe l'oeil* ceiling frescoes, were added considerably later—the façade by Giacomo della Porta in 1584 and the frescoes by Giovanni Battista Gaulli only in 1679.

In a previous article, I drew attention to that celebrated section of St Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* which can plausibly be seen as the root of the Jesuit Baroque style, the *Contemplatio ad Amorem*, or Contemplation to Attain Love, conventionally attached to the Fourth and final Week of the Exercises.[2] Here, I hope to make the case for a musical branch of the Jesuit Baroque by considering, in particular, the role of the somewhat mysterious figure of Domenico Zipoli (1688–1726), a Jesuit missionary, musician and composer, in reappropriating this architectural term to the very different area of music. The demands of spirituality and mission, and, indeed, the idea of a spirituality *of* mission, which lie right at the heart of Ignatius' Exercises, come into focus in the person of this exceptionally gifted musician.

Some points of similarity between Baroque architecture and music strike the attentive observer at once, mostly to do with the use of ornamentation in both art forms, but there is, I would submit, more to

[1] Friederich Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1960), 576 (n. 107),

[2] Ian G. Coleman, 'The Spiritual Exercises and the Jesuit Baroque', *The Way*, 58/1 (January 2019), 61–70.

be said.[3] First though, we should consider the life-story of Domenico Zipoli, for it already contains many hints as to the wider importance of the Jesuit Baroque. Right away, merely by noting Zipoli's dates, we are struck by the fact that he inhabited the world of the *late* Baroque, living at a time when the Society of Jesus had long moved beyond its meteoric beginnings to become the institutional mainstay of the Roman Catholic world which it has been, to some extent, ever since.

Musician and Missionary

Zipoli was born and raised in Prato, a town in Tuscany so close to Florence as to be virtually one. It seems likely that he attended the Jesuit school in Prato, although no firm evidence of this survives. Clearly exceptionally musically gifted from an early age, he followed an educational path common to many musicians of the time, seeking both noble patronage and apprenticeship to recognised masters. This path took the young Zipoli to four of the major Italian cities: Florence first, sponsored by the Medici family, then Bologna, Naples, where he studied (and apparently disagreed with) the famous Alessandro Scarlatti, and finally Rome.[4]

Significantly for our purposes, two of his earliest documented compositions were sacred oratorios, based on the lives of St Anthony of Padua (written in 1712) and St Catherine of Alexandria (written in 1714). Unfortunately, none of the music from these early works survives, but we can assume that their musical style was similar to that of three other works, the secular cantatas 'O Daliso, da quel dì che partisti', 'Mia bella Irene' and 'Dell'offese a vendicarmi', scored for solo voice and basso continuo, which do survive from this same period.

Zipoli settled in Rome and, in 1715, was appointed organist of the church of the Gesù. By this time not only was the building dazzlingly complete, but it had famously become the architectural model for countless Jesuit churches throughout the world, as Zipoli himself would

[3] Certainly more than was said in the first recorded use of the word 'baroque' as applied to music: 'If they wanted to distort their singing, they would make it hard, baroque and almost unsingable; if they were content to adorn it with accompaniments other than those natural to it, they would only be better highlighting its banality by an inevitable contrast.' (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Lettre sur la musique française' (1753), in *Oeuvres complètes*, volume 5 [Paris : Gallimard, 1959], 295)

[4] According to a brief biographical note written by the celebrated Padre Giovanni Battista Martini; see *Sonate d'intavolatura di Domenico Zipoli*, edited by Luigi Tagliavini (Heidelberg: Süddeutscher Musikverlag, 1959), xxi.

discover in South America. The following year of 1716 saw the publication of what is still his best-known work, the collection of keyboard pieces entitled *Sonate d'intavolatura per organo e cimbalo*. This set of pieces was a mixture of short items intended for liturgical use, such as the *Elevazioni*, which would have been played at the Consecration at High Mass; less specifically sacred pieces such as the *Canzone*, which were more extended; and harpsichord works with no sacred connotation at all. To have attained not only such a prestigious post but also the ability to produce and publish so imposing a collection by the age of 28 is a clear sign that Domenico Zipoli had a glittering and successful career ahead of him.

But something momentous happened in his life around this time. Although we have no way of knowing for sure, it seems as if he had some sort of conversion experience, because, by 1717, having served half his time in the novitiate at Seville, he was travelling to South America, to work in the missions there as a Jesuit.

His destination and base for the years of study ahead was the town of Córdoba in modern-day Argentina, a striking example of the Jesuit Baroque transplanted, so to speak, to the New World. The Jesuit quarter or 'Manzana Jesuítica' of Córdoba still exists, and is now a UNESCO world heritage site on account of the state of preservation of its unique ensemble of churches and residences, constructed as part of the Jesuit mission there.[5] The influence of the Gesù can clearly be seen, in the church buildings, in particular, even if, significantly, there is a 'regional accent' to their architectural language. For Zipoli, then, the

Ceiling of the Jesuit church in Córdoba, Argentina

[5] See https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manzana_Jesuítica.

environment in which he found himself as a missionary would have appeared uncannily similar to what he had known in Rome!

Although his studies would have been mainly undertaken in Córdoba, his destination as a missionary would have been what were then known as the *Reducciones* or Reductions of Paraguay. To give an account of these extraordinary experiments in indigenous self-government is well beyond my scope here, but the Reductions were to play a remarkable and unexpected role in Zipoli's musical oeuvre, as we shall see.[6]

First, however, we must follow Domenico Zipoli's career to its somewhat tragic end. For, in 1726, he died of tuberculosis while still awaiting ordination. The see of Córdoba was vacant at this point, and so there was simply no bishop available to ordain him. This apparently disastrous conclusion to Zipoli's vocation as a missionary seemed further compounded by the subsequent loss of all the music he wrote in South America, during the turmoil which followed the suppression of the Society in all Spanish dominions in 1767. Zipoli thus remained a mysterious, tantalising figure: from the *Sonate d'intavolatura*, the cantatas and an impressive violin sonata in A major, we can tell he was a true master of the late Baroque style. But we also have accounts of the works he wrote both for the churches in Córdoba and the Reductions—how fascinating it would be to hear and perform them!

The Lost Scores

In fact, this has now become possible, by a wonderful twist of fate. For two momentous discoveries were made in the twentieth century. First, in 1959 the US musicologist Robert Stevenson found, in Sucre, Bolivia, the score of a mass by Zipoli which had been copied in Potosí in 1784 at the request of the viceroy of Lima, and then, even more remarkably, in 1972, came the discovery of more than 5,000 manuscripts in the Reduction of Chiquitos, Bolivia, by the Swiss architect Hans Roth, who was studying the church buildings there. Among these manuscripts were copies of motets and hymns, and a complete setting of Vespers for the feast of St Ignatius of Loyola by Zipoli.

It is already clear that these were wonderful and exciting discoveries. But it is worth examining both the music and the places where the

[6] The classic introduction to the history of the Reductions is probably still Philip Caraman's *The Lost Paradise: The Jesuit Republic in South America* (New York: Seabury, 1976).

scores were found in greater detail, because this affords an insight, first into the question of style, and secondly, quite remarkably, into the very heart of what missionary endeavour—and not only Zipoli's missionary endeavour—implies and entails.

The fact that these lost scores were found, not in the archives of Córdoba, but in the Reductions themselves, is extremely significant. Zipoli's music was preserved there at first by other missionaries. Here another remarkable figure of the Jesuit Baroque arrives on the scene, namely the Swiss Jesuit Martin Schmid (1694–1772). Not only was Schmid a gifted mathematician and musician, he was also, by a happy coincidence, an architect. The score of an opera on the life of St Ignatius was rediscovered among the treasure trove of the Chiquitos, and this seems to be the work of both Zipoli and Schmid, but since the latter did not arrive in South America until two years after Zipoli's death, we must presume that the original imitative was the Italian's and that Schmid augmented it and brought it to completion.

After Schmid himself died, an even more significant process of transmission occurred, through the work of the indigenous musicians in their mission churches themselves. Alain Pacquier, musicologist and founder of the Early Music Festival of Saintes in France, expresses it thus:

> Amazingly, it was realised that the Chiquito regularly retranscribed the works attributed to Zipoli, performing them every year, thanks to their oral tradition, on the occasion of the feast of Saint Ignatius Loyola ... to whom they remain completely devoted.[7]

Indeed, some of the churches of the former Reductions have preserved the same musical tradition virtually to the present day.[8] In other words, Domenico Zipoli's music, together with the liturgical structures of the missionaries and the musical instruments that went with it, were all preserved and passed on by the people he served and evangelized.[9] And it is thanks to these missionary traditions that we have rediscovered those very sounds today.

[7] See Alain Pacquier, liner note, in *Musiques des missions et cathédrales andines* (Metz: K617, 1992).

[8] See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, 'Missions in a Musical Key: The Jesuit Reductions of Chiquitos, Bolivia', *Company Magazine* (Winter 2003).

[9] In a letter of 1744, Schmid reports with great enthusiasm that 'All villages now have their organ, many violins and double bass made of cedar, clavicordio, spinets, harps, trumpets, shawm' (quoted in Heinrich Krauss and Anton Täubl, *Mission und Entwicklung: der Jesuitenstaat in Paraguay* [Munich: Kösel, 1979], 152).

Fresco of musicians, church of San Rafael de Velasco, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Zipoli and Schmid's legacy endured, then, not only in the music itself, but in the continuing culture of the people to whom they were destined to minister. What is it about this musical culture that we could see as an authentic expression of the Jesuit Baroque?

The Sound of the Jesuit Baroque

Stylistically speaking, Zipoli's early works are very characteristic of the late Baroque. To English ears, both the virtuosic lines of the cantatas and the fluid and sophisticated violin sonata will seem 'Handelian', but we should not forget that, in fact, George Frederic Handel himself was deeply influenced by the Italian style, during his sojourn in Rome between 1706 and 1710. We know that Zipoli too was in Rome on a brief visit between June and October 1708—could the two young musicians (Handel was three years Zipoli's senior) have met at that point? Certainly Handel was a very bright star in the Roman firmament, writing enormous amounts of music, both sacred and secular, including what may well be his finest work, the setting of the Vesper-Psalm 110, *Dixit Dominus*.

Zipoli's *Sonate d'intavolatura* of 1716, whilst having affinities with the writing of his Italian masters, the Neapolitan Alessandro Scarlatti and the Roman Bernardo Pasquini, already seem to have surpassed them; the grand *Canzona* in G minor, above all, shows a maturity and confidence that reminds one of the North German organists such as

Diderik Buxtehude. Indeed, one could claim that Zipoli's small output of keyboard music forms the crucial link between the early Italian Baroque of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643) and the celebrated sonatas of the younger Scarlatti, Domenico (1685–1757).

Turning now to the missionary years, it is clear that Zipoli's style changes somewhat. Instead of the impressive complexity and sophistication of the works intended for a European audience there is a robust simplicity to the South American pieces. They certainly show great skill in the use of what is known as *stile concertato*, where different musical groups are juxtaposed and contrasted, often with changes of mood and rhythmic metre, and we should especially note the inclusion of a variety of instruments. Zipoli's Jesuit predecessors in the South American missions determinedly fostered indigenous crafts and craftsmen in the production of furniture, woodcarving and, especially, musical instruments, and Martin Schmid was to continue this tradition.[10]

Moreover, the choral music in these works is clearly written with non-professional choirs in mind, often with three vocal parts rather than the more common four or more. In this respect, Zipoli's music forms a contrast with that of the Spanish-Mexican composers Juan Guttierez de Padilla (1590–1664) and Antonio de Salazar (1650–1715), both of whom wrote in the more complex and elevated style. Padilla, in particular, is notable for his mastery of the late Renaissance and early Baroque use of polychoral techniques, the same *cori spezzati* which were associated with the Basilica San Marco in Venice and the composers Giovanni Gabrieli and Claudio Monteverdi. Nothing of this richness and complexity is to be found in Zipoli and, to a certain extent, this is no surprise, since the later Baroque had more or less abandoned these particular effects.

However, there is curious sense in which Zipoli's South American style does, nonetheless, hark back to the earlier Baroque, most notably in the *concertato* effects mentioned above. The juxtaposition and repetition which characterize this style, and which derive ultimately from Monteverdi, invite parallels with the spatial drama of the architecture not only of Córdoba's Jesuit Quarter, but also of the outlying regions of the Reductions such as San Juan de Chiquitos, where so much of Zipoli's music was rediscovered.[11]

[10] See Rainald Fischer, *Martin Schmid SJ, 1694–1772: Seine Briefe und sein Werk* (Zug: Kalt-Zehnder-Druck, 1988), 112–119.

[11] An excellent example can be found at the start of Zipoli's Vespers of St Ignatius, with the declamatory 'Domine, Domine, Domine' of the choral response to the *Deus in adiutorium*; see n. 6 on the listening list.

This, of course, is exactly where Martin Schmid adapted the Jesuit Baroque style to make it more suitable for the indigenous peoples, and if the basic language of both art forms is unmistakeably Baroque, there is nevertheless a strong regional accent discernible again.[12] One way of appreciating this difference—or even reversion—of musical style is to compare the *Misa San Ignacio* of Zipoli with the *Missa Santa Cecilia* written by the teacher with whom he disagreed, Alessandro Scarlatti, in 1720.[13]

In both, the words are set very 'sectionally', with the change of tempo, metre and mood that characterized early Baroque music. But Scarlatti's work is on a much more extended scale, free from the constraints of the missionary milieu with which Zipoli had to contend; the words are repeated and, so to speak, 'atomised', with each phrase receiving a different type of figuration and musical treatment. Zipoli's mass, precisely because of its (necessary?) conciseness and more modest resources, ends up sounding much more like the *concertato* masses of Alessandro Grandi (*c.* 1586–1630) or Orazio Tarditi (1602–1677). And the extended arias which were to become more and more part of late Baroque and early Classical liturgical music—and with which Zipoli was clearly familiar, as we can hear in his early secular cantatas—are wholly absent from his 'missionary' style.

Similarly, in the churches of the Reductions, the materials and structures designed by Martin Schmid were apparently very different from the model of the Gesù, but the spatial organization and decoration, especially of the interiors, are still fundamentally Baroque. One might say that both stylistic adaptations, the musical and the architectural, are characterized by exuberance and physicality, and that, paradoxically, the adaptations made by their creators actually ended up by highlighting something of the essence of the Baroque style.

The Jesuit Ethos and Jesuit Education

It is difficult to say how 'Jesuit' Zipoli's music is, because he is the only significant composer ever to have become a Jesuit. Is his 'missionary' musical style perhaps only an expression of his own individual genius? I think we can be more affirmative than that; the example of Martin

[12] See Geoffrey A. P. Groesbeck, 'Jesuit Mission Life: Santa Cruz Bolivia', at https://www.boliviabella.com/jesuit-mission-life.html.
[13] The Scarlatti may be heard at https://youtu.be/G2O-UAT_eR0.

Schmid indicates that there was a shared missionary aesthetic at work.[14] And there is, in the area of opera and oratorio at least, a more specifically Jesuit influence, although one which is hard to pin down.

When we consider the work and the ethos of the Society of Jesus, we naturally look in the first place to the *Spiritual Exercises*. But a crucial element in the success of the order that Ignatius founded was the fostering of a high ideal of education, at first within the Society itself: Ignatius himself went to great lengths to further his own studies and insisted his followers do the same. But such was the thirst for a deeper and more structured education in the world of the High Renaissance that the early Jesuits soon found themselves running schools and seminaries for non-Jesuits. To further this aim of a structured education in Jesuit institutions, a document was drawn up known as the *Ratio studiorum*. This was promulgated in 1599, and would have been influential both in the school in Prato, which Zipoli may have attended, and in his subsequent studies for the priesthood.

A crucial—and surprising—component of the education that the *Ratio Studiorum* presented was the detailed and serious study of pagan classical authors. Top of the list of these authors was the Roman orator Cicero, but the Roman and Greek poets and dramatists were also on the curriculum for the older pupils.[15] Care was taken not to use the more obviously pagan or profane works of the ancient authors but, nonetheless, pupils at Jesuit institutions would have learned a good deal of their cultural modes of expression from pre-Christian and non-Christian sources.

In the case of the Greek dramatists, these same authors also inspired the twin art forms of opera and oratorio.[16] The sixteenth-century Florentine *intermedi* and Monteverdi's development of them started as attempts to reimagine ancient Greek drama, and St Ignatius' younger friend St Philip Neri's Chiesa Nuova in Rome provided the venue for the first oratorio or 'sacred opera', Emilio de Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione*

[14] Schmid's music is harder to unearth than Zipoli's, but some scores survived; a graceful *Regina caeli* is to be found at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/dfpa/2/.

[15] 'Tragedies and comedies, which are to be produced only rarely and in Latin, must have a spiritual and edifying theme. Whatever is introduced as an interlude must be in Latin and observe propriety.' ('Rules of the Rector', n. 13, in *The Jesuit* Ratio studiorum *of 1599*, translated by Allan Farrell [Washington, DC: Conference of Major Superiors of Jesuits, 1970], 17)

[16] The Roman tragedian Seneca should probably also be included as a model author; the Englishman Jasper Heywood, a first-generation Jesuit and professor of moral theology, translated his plays into English. He was also the uncle of the poet John Donne and may well have had some influence on the *Ratio studiorum*.

Church of St Ignatius, Velasco, Bolivia

di anima et di corpo, in 1600. Here, the art of Baroque spectacle has a definite connection with the more sober productions of the Jesuit schools.

But there is a wider point to be made from the influence of the *Ratio studiorum* too: when the missionaries of the Jesuit Baroque encountered pagan or radically different cultures from their own Christian ones, they already had a template for how to approach them: that of the Jesuit humanist education, which, in line with St Augustine's praise of Cicero in *De doctrina Christiana*, sought to use the arts of a 'foreign' culture—that of pagan Rome—in the service of the gospel.[17]

The *Ratio studiorum* was, then, at least as influential as the *Spiritual Exercises* for the formation of the Jesuit Baroque, and we should not forget, either, that that celebrated architectural style with which we began was itself modelled on and developed from ancient Roman sources. When transferring the language of the Baroque to missionary contexts, both Zipoli and Schmid would certainly have had a clear idea of *Romanità* in their minds, an idea formed by the revival of Classical art forms, rhetoric and architectural principles, but which, thanks to the pedagogy

[17] See *De doctrina Christiana*, 4. 12.

of the *Ratio studiorum*, was open to adaptation to radically different cultures and contexts.

Generous Devotion

The difficulty which often besets the student of musical styles and influences is that musicians are not usually apologists or theoreticians. We would love to know more exactly the inner reasons and thought-processes of Monteverdi as he transformed the idea of opera, just as we would love to know the inner reasonings of Mozart and Beethoven in their respective efforts at perfecting sonata form. The testimony, though, is only to be found in the music itself.

So it is also with Domenico Zipoli: his ease and assurance as a composer is absolutely evident in his early Italian works. The change of style in his missionary years also seems evident and, while it would be useful to have had an explicit explanation of this change from his own lips, the testimony afforded by the preservation and recreation of his music in the former Reductions of the Chiquitos is equally clear. This music was written *for* them, and with a spirit of generous devotion *to* them. We can be sure that this generous devotion is also what impelled Martin Schmid to disseminate Zipoli's dazzling works further among those same peoples for whom he inventively reimagined a Jesuit Baroque architecture more adapted to their needs and predilections. In other words, the happy accident that Zipoli's music was lovingly preserved by the people he was called to serve is itself a proof, not only of the enduring quality of his work, but also of the missionary inspiration and effectiveness of his apostolate. If there is any justification, then, in talking of a 'Jesuit Baroque' style in architecture, we are certainly justified in extending it to music, through the work of this enigmatic master.

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A Brief Listening List
Zipoli's music has enjoyed a heartening revival in the past thirty years. Here are some suggestions of recordings:
1. On the Tactus label, a useful selection of the Italian works: *Domenico Zipoli, Cantate e Sonate* (Bologna: Tactus, 2013) TC682603.
2. The keyboard works from the *Sonate d'intavolatura*, played, as appropriate, on either organ or harpsichord: *Zipoli: Complete Keyboard Music* (Leeuwarden: Brilliant Classics, 2016), 95212.
3. The *Misa San Ignacio* is on *Musiques des missions et cathédrales andines* (Metz: K617, 1992), K617123.
4. Further motets and hymns of Zipoli's are on the companion disc *Vêpres de San Ignacio* (Metz: K617, 1992), K617027.
5. *San Ignacio*, the opera by Zipoli and Schmid: *San Ignacio: L'opéra perdu des missions jésuites de l'Amazonie* (Metz: K617, 1992), K617065, and K617094/4,
6. The *Vespers* of St Ignatius, in a wonderfully vigorous rendition, is available for free on YouTube: https://youtu.be/sRSGo6hgn3k.

THE MORALLY INJURED IÑIGO DE LOYOLA

New Insights for Ignatian Spiritual and Pastoral Care

Robert W. McChesney

THE JESUIT HERITAGE originates in physical violence perpetrated by and against its founder at the siege of Pamplona. Five hundred years on, remarkably, Iñigo de Loyola's experience during four terrifying months of depression and despair at Manresa in 1522 remains compelling. Many conscientious twenty-first-century seekers, scarred by violence, recognise themselves in similar episodes, whether they are persons actively practising their faith or not. One must often leave home to discover oneself. Through fresh insights from the recent literature of violence, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and moral injury, the Manresa episode can still offer ways forward for wounded survivors, their Ignatian caregivers and those in the wider care circle.

Moral Injury

If one can retroject today's language into the sixteenth century, Iñigo displayed symptoms of *moral injury* during his Manresa episode. His conscience had been shattered by his behaviour and choices before, and presumably at, the siege where he was wounded. But Iñigo remained spiritually clueless, without an inkling that only his military combat had ceased, and that his moral and soul injuries were more dangerous.

According to the Georgetown University philosopher Nancy Sherman, the term 'moral injury' is 'at least as old as the preaching of Bishop Joseph Butler in early eighteenth-century England', but she notes that it has been revived recently in clinical circles, beginning in the area of military behavioural health.[1] This still unfamiliar construct is increasingly utilised in the literature surrounding PTSD and post-traumatic growth. It has found vibrant resonance within the study of war and the impact of

[1] Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (New York: Oxford U, 2015), 8.

war upon returning veterans. 'Roughly speaking, it refers to experiences of serious inner conflict arising from what one takes to be grievous moral transgressions that can overwhelm one's sense of goodness and humanity.'[2] Sherman works clinically with veterans based on her research training in psychoanalysis. Her practice confirms what has been shown to be the case with Iñigo—that war leaves an enduring mark on the wounded souls of many soldiers.

Within the broader literature, moral injury is typically described as a 'construct' or 'syndrome'. Academically, it finds its home in clinical psychology and mental health studies, as Sherman suggests, though wider references in philosophy, Protestant theology, medicine, healthcare, scripture scholarship and pastoral psychology are increasingly common. The theoretical and clinical study of moral injury has become something of a sub-speciality in a variety of fields.

The groundbreaking work of the clinical psychologist Brett T. Litz is credited with initiating the scientific study of moral injury in 2009. Litz concludes that it is a hypothetical construct describing a compromised conscience which results from 'perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations'.[3] This clearly applies to Iñigo the swashbuckler and rake:

[2] Sherman, *Afterwar*, 8.

[3] Brett T. Litz and others, 'Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29 (2009), 695–706, here 695.

at Manresa he would have examined his past using the traditional Catholic moral categories of sin, both venial and mortal.

Transgressive acts are best construed as '*potentially* morally injurious', in that different individuals may react with different levels of distress according to subjective variables.[4] The theologian and psychologist Zachary Moon understands moral injury on a continuum: 'Moral distress is best recognized as a spectrum of suffering, with moral injury at the pole of most radical suffering'.[5] Some wounded survivors of violence present no distinctive symptoms, just as the same event may leave one person traumatized and another not. Typical events in the military arena include injuring or killing enemy combatants, failing to prevent the suffering or death of comrades-in-arms or civilians, or being betrayed by a leader or fellow service member in a position of power. Once again recall Iñigo at Pamplona.

Larry Kent Graham, also a theologian and psychologist, distinguishes between 'agential moral injury brought upon ourselves by our own agency, and receptive moral injury caused to us by the agency of others'.[6] The distinction is important because it places moral injury within 'the context of everyday moral living' as well as on the battlefield.[7] 'Receptive moral injury' also opens the construct to the countless innocent wounded survivors of sexual or domestic violence who have no agency in what has happened to them.

Michael Yandell calls moral injury 'despair of the world and oneself—an internalized scream: "This should not have happened. I should not have been a part of this."'[8] Recall the famous 1970 photograph of the anguished fourteen-year-old Mary Ann Vecchio on the campus of Kent State University. She kneels on one knee above a fallen, bloodied student with whom she had only moments before struck up a conversation, mouth agape in a scream of despair. The so-called 'Kent State Pietà' reinforces the truth that observers of violence, as well as those who accompany wounded survivors, can be subject to moral injury. No one escapes it. Even viewers watching violent events on television, such as the appalling footage of George Floyd's murder by police in 2020, are vulnerable.

[4] Litz and others, 'Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans', 695.
[5] Zachary Moon, 'Moral Injury and the Role of Chaplains', in *Moral Injury: A Guidebook for Understanding and Engagement*, edited by Brad E. Kelle (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), 59–70, here 68.
[6] Larry Kent Graham, *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017), 13.
[7] Graham, *Moral Injury*, 78.
[8] Michael Yandell, 'Do Not Torment Me: The Morally Injured Gerasene Demoniac', in *Moral Injury*, edited by Kelle, 79.

A Spiritual Model of Moral Injury

Brett Litz and his team continue to refine the construct of moral injury in their clinical practice and research, and recently they have begun to distinguish different *models* of that construct. Given the lack of empirical research, Litz notes that 'clinicians and laypersons working from different perspectives and backgrounds may gravitate to different understandings'.[9]

Here I am taking the spiritual approach described by Litz:

> Other models view moral injury primarily through a spiritual lens, claiming that it stems from the loss of spiritual beliefs or a ruptured relationship with God, or difficulty in making meaning out of morally transgressive experiences.[10]

This spiritual model best illuminates Iñigo's Manresa episode and offers fresh tools to Ignatian caregivers who serve those wounded by combat and other forms of violence. Recall that the enemy successfully drove Iñigo to such religious despair that he seriously considered suicide. It was only when God's mercy broke through that their relationship was repaired. Iñigo's moral injury was of a spiritual nature, in which a believer experiences 'distress in relationship with a Higher Power'.[11]

An informed overview of the topic for practitioners such as chaplains, pastoral counsellors and spiritual care professionals can be found in a recent publication from the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, based at Brandeis University:

> 'Moral' can refer to different things, if you read the moral injury literature. In its essence, however, the word is a gesture. It gestures toward a form of suffering tied to the experience of violence, and in particular, feeling that you are complicit in violence, that is not easily reduced to psychological or medical terms or categories. This is why some people speak of a 'soul' injury or wound, since 'soul' gestures toward an aspect of human experience that affects one's identity and sense of self. It involves the way we see and imagine ourselves and others, as well as what we value and how, and what goodness is even possible in the world.[12]

[9] Brett T. Litz, 'The Emergence and Development of the Concept of Moral Injury', in *Moral Injury*, edited by Kelle, 27.
[10] Litz, 'Emergence and Development of the Concept of Moral Injury', 26.
[11] J. Irene Harris and others, 'Spiritually Integrated Care for PTSD: A Randomized Controlled Trial of "Building Spiritual Strength"', *Psychiatry Research*, 267 (2018), 420–428, here 427.
[12] Shelly Rambo, Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, and Jasmine Terry Okafor, *Trauma and Moral Injury: A Guiding Framework for Chaplains*, rev. edn (Waltham: Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, 2020), 35–36, available at http://chaplaincyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/TRAUMA_MORAL_INJURY-Final-8.7.20-.pdf.

Consider an example drawn from the work of Fernando Ona, a scholar and mental health practitioner who works fluidly across disciplines. He describes a case from his clinical practice concerning Tola (not her real name), a devout African Christian who, for political reasons, had been tortured and repeatedly raped. Eventually, she found her way safely to the United States, where she received political asylum. But Tola was suffering both from severe PTSD and moral injury, her Christian conscience shattered by the degradation of her sense of purity. Ona notes:

> For many refugees and asylum seekers, the struggle to reconcile the evil that has happened to them with their identity as people of faith or their faith in the goodness of the world becomes deeply overwhelming to them.[13]

Ona observes how researchers have begun to characterize such spiritual crises as 'moral injury'. He adds, referring to Tola, 'these faith struggles may exacerbate and amplify existing trauma-related symptomology'.[14]

Ona is convinced that for such clients a therapist must be able to serve as a 'spiritual witness', or refer to someone who can assist professionally in that regard. For example, a pivotal therapeutic moment came when Tola removed her Bible from her handbag and asked Ona about his interpretation of Mark 4:35–41, a scriptural text in which Jesus calms a storm on the sea. A storm was raging inside *her*, she explained: 'I'm waiting for Jesus to still the storm'. Ona was indeed familiar with the text, and asked her an astute, scripturally savvy healing question:

> 'In this passage you mention, is the storm in the disciples or was it around them?' Her eyes got big and she looked at her therapist with astonishment. The therapist went on … 'Jesus is calm amidst the storm that's all around them and says: "Have you still no faith?"' …. They spoke about Tola's faith as a way to help reinforce her inner Light and that her storm was around her, but she could be like Jesus.[15]

Notably, this case displays how a professional mental health care provider can incorporate the spiritual model of moral injury into a medical

[13] Linda Piwowarczyk, Kathleen Flinton and Fernando Ona, 'Refugee Resilience and Spirituality: Harnessing Social and Cultural Coping Strategies', in *Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Interdisciplinary and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by S. Megan Berthold and Kathryn R. Libal (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2019), 171.
[14] Piwowarczyk, Flinton and Ona, 'Refugee Resilience and Spirituality', 172.
[15] Piwowarczyk, Flinton and Ona, 'Refugee Resilience and Spirituality', 169–170.

diagnosis of PTSD. His approach demonstrates a method for clinicians to address the challenge of theodicy in clients of faith, vindicating the providence and goodness of a Higher Power in the face of overwhelming evil. The spiritual model of moral injury provides an innovative tool to accompany people whose faith is ruptured, including those who also have a PTSD diagnosis, questioning the goodness of God. It can be utilised by astute Ignatian caregivers conversant with moral injury who themselves are not mental health professionals. Moral injury manifests in specific symptoms, which are increasingly being distinguished from those of PTSD. For this reason, clinical expertise is not necessarily required for pastoral and spiritual accompaniment.

Collaboration between Medical and Spiritual Practitioners

The case of Tola raises a persistent question about the distinction between trauma and moral injury. Joseph McDonald advises that 'it is useful and could be essential to distinguish them for understanding and treatment'.[16] The Chaplaincy Innovation Lab puts it this way: 'A helpful way to think of moral injury is that it is something extra, some feeling of shame, guilt, betrayal, or hurt that seems to go beyond how trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder are described'.[17] Some psychologists ask their clients to consider PTSD symptoms as a reaction to the

[16] Joseph McDonald, 'What is Moral Injury? Current Definitions, Perspectives, and Context', in *Moral Injuty*, edited by Kelle, 13.
[17] Rambo, Wiinikka-Lydon and Okafor, *Trauma and Moral Injury*, 17.

physical safety of the body and moral injury as a reaction to the soul's question—am I a good person? Did I do the right thing?

Individuals who begin with a PTSD diagnosis should work with their medical professionals, unless and until the latter approves religious, spiritual or pastoral accompaniment. But mental health professionals should more readily refer clients for spiritual or pastoral guidance when indicated, something about which too many admit to being reticent. An undue number of clinicians remain uncomfortable with the growing inclusion of religious and spiritual variables ('R/S' in the trauma literature) in therapy. In a recent special issue on moral injury, the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* reports:

> Over the last 30 years, the mental health field has made significant strides in recognizing the importance of R/S and its association with positive health outcomes, yet many providers avoid discussions of spirituality or religion for fear of stepping outside their scope.[18]

Some clinicians, however, recognising the challenge, are responding positively. One team of clinical psychologists has developed training modules in the area of religion and spirituality, focusing on specific competencies, which they propose should be required for licensing.[19] For scholars and practitioners associated with the Jesuit network, interdisciplinary collaboration is an extraordinarily opportune area for establishing constructive dialogue and practice.

The Symptoms of Moral Injury and the Graces of the First Week

The war correspondent David Wood has developed a basic taxonomy for distinguishing symptoms of moral injury from those of PTSD and noting symptoms that overlap.[20] For moral injury, he lists 'sorrow, grief, regret, shame, alienation'—all of which were experienced by Iñigo at Manresa, and are also pivotal to the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises.

[18] Brandon J. Griffith and others, 'Moral Injury: An Integrative Review', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 32/3 (June 2019), 350.

[19] Based on survey research and focus groups, the clinical psychologist Cassandra Vieten and her colleagues propose that all licensed psychologists be required to demonstrate sixteen spiritual and religious competencies. When beyond their competence, they should welcome consultation, seek professional development and establish trusted referral networks. See Cassandra Vieten and others, 'Spiritual and Religious Competencies for Psychologists', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (August 2013).

[20] David Wood, 'The Grunts: Damned if They Kill, Damned if They Don't', 5, available at https://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury/the-grunts, accessed 9 March 2022.

The Jesuit provincial of Canada, Erik Oland, notes in a blog post that the most apt one-word descriptor for Ignatian spirituality is 'desire'.

> By this I mean that, for Ignatius, the starting point is *id quod volo* (this I want or desire). In this way the individual is mandated from the outset to articulate his desire and to take responsibility for personal agency and engagement in the prayer.[21]

For example, in the first exercise of the First Week, the exercitant asks for 'shame and confusion' as a grace which mediates God's merciful love (Exx 40–41). In the second exercise, the exercitant desires 'growing and intense sorrow' (Exx 55). Remarkably, what the literature of moral injury (and frequently PTSD) encounters as symptoms appear within the Ignatian paradigm as moral and spiritual affect inviting God's compassionate intervention towards the First Week gift of mercy and reconciliation.

The spiritual or religious content of moral injury symptoms may be unknown or uncertain for a given survivor, who may not be practising her or his faith, like Iñigo before Pamplona. But for believers the phenomenological and linguistic overlap of moral injury symptoms with the graces of the First Week provides another propitious starting point for the classic Ignatian ministries of conversation, pastoral and spiritual accompaniment, and even preaching. Any of these modalities may well bring about an experience of divine encounter for a wounded survivor, but the First Week remains foundational, for 'the God of the First Week is a God of mercy …. The essential grace of the First Week is that of a conversion arising out of the literally heart-breaking experience of being loved and forgiven.'[22]

Experienced Ignatian caregivers should find 'casual', non-threatening ways to inquire explicitly about traumatic events experienced by those in spiritual direction or counselling, as an important way of giving them permission to bring such trauma to the light, as they themselves know best. In orientation meetings with retreatants, for example, it is recommended to demonstrate simply that you are familiar with the terrain and language, to stipulate that you are not a licensed medical professional, and to invite retreatants to broach the topic should the Spirit so inspire them.

[21] Erik Oland, 'The Spiritual Exercises … What an Experience!', *IgNation* (19 April 2016), at https://ignation. ca/2016/04/19/the-spiritual-exercises-what-an-experience/, accessed 2 March 2021.
[22] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 43–44.

Moral Injury and the Theology of Sin

Moral theologians will note limitations in the discourse around moral injury, including its failure to establish a systematic theological foundation. 'The field of moral injury has plainly been "colonized" by psychology, and some mistakenly think that one discipline can answer every question and resolve every dilemma.'[23] Christian practitioners and the broader care circle around survivors need more clarity about the relationship between moral injury and sin.

One outlier who clearly recognises the challenge is Colonel Timothy Mallard, a career US army chaplain with a PhD in Christian ethics. As a veteran of five combat and operational deployments overseas, he values the construct of moral injury highly. But, he notes,

> … the definition borrows a manifestly theological concept such as transgression—which in Christian theology is tied to the antecedent concept of sin and the descendent concept of forgiveness—without any linkage between the three.[24]

Further thought is needed to situate the construct more coherently within the Ignatian and mainstream Christian traditions.

Recently, the theologian Brian S. Powers has taken a formidable step forward. Building explicitly on Augustine, he has made a significant contribution to the literature regarding the relationship between original and personal sin. Powers aims to restore the capacity of sin to name humanity's *collective* participation in evil, while holding on to individual human agency and moral responsibility. Original sin is a force field which distorts human agency and will. Individuals are infected by inherited, damaged human nature, as well as the corrupt ideological inducements of the culture and institutions into which they are born. The latter are occasions of sin, existential distortions that bind human freedom. Powers provides a coherent framework in which to understand human brokenness more organically, which in turn facilitates personal healing and 'a more graceful moral order'.[25]

Students of Catholic Social Teaching may hear echoes of Pope Benedict XVI's terse formulation: 'The Church's wisdom has always

[23] Tom Frame, 'Moral Injury and the Influence of Christian Religious Conviction', in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, edited by Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 195.
[24] Timothy S. Mallard, 'The (Twin) Wounds of War', *Providence Magazine* (17 February 2017), 51.
[25] Brian S. Powers, *Full Darkness: Original Sin, Moral Injury, and Wartime Violence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 177.

pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society'.[26] Pope Saint John Paul II described the human person as 'also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth.'[27] But unfortunately, as Daniel K. Finn observes, as yet 'Catholic social thought has no coherent account of what a social structure is'.[28]

Powers's second chapter, 'External Forces and the Contemporary Military Experience', provides a fine case study in how to render such an account. He examines the basic training of the US military, from his own personal experience, and confronts 'the way combatants are enmeshed within deeply violent (and thus sinful) conditions and situations that have existed long before they were born'.[29] Moral theologians need to get their hands dirtier and look closer to the ground for more such examples. Here action meets reflection, so as to help bodies and souls more fruitfully.

Michael Ivens underlines the specifically *social* nature of sin and redemption in Ignatius' First Week.

> To live according to the First Week perception of sin, and to be aware of the range of its applications, it is necessary to have an outlook formed by a moral education adequate for our own time. This will include among other things a contemporary understanding of the person in relation to society.[30]

In contemporary theological perspective, then, the relational distortions of original and social sin on the human agency of traumatized survivors of violence will also be a significant consideration.

Patriarchal Distortions, Institutional Betrayal and Trauma

Iñigo the rake was enmeshed in sixteenth-century Castilian patriarchal culture, social structures, laws and institutions—all dramatically pervaded by the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. By definition, Iñigo was compromised by original (and social) sin. Doubtless he was an

[26] Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, n. 34.
[27] John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, 38.
[28] Daniel K. Finn, 'What is a Sinful Social Structure?' *Theological Studies*, 77/1 (2016), 138.
[29] Powers, *Full Darkness*, 40.
[30] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 44 note 44.

eager participant in this system, if in the refined fashion of the courtier. He was a responsible moral agent, thus guilty of many sexual sins.

Today, by virtue of new philosophical, psychological and theological tools, it is possible to unmask certain sinful social structures that were also in play. The culture and institutions of Iñigo's day can be viewed as his patriarchal *enablers in sin,* reflecting the distortions of original sin; that same patriarchal culture and those same institutions are still implicated in social sin today and thus in need of systemic repentance and conversion, no less than the individual pilgrim then and now.

A recent pertinent sub-speciality in trauma research and practice focuses on 'betrayal trauma' and its cousin, 'institutional betrayal trauma'. The psychologist Jennifer J. Freyd of the University of Oregon has been a pioneer here. Her primary research interest is in trauma associated with the sexual abuse of women by trusted perpetrators. 'Betrayal trauma theory posits that abuse perpetrated within close relationships is more harmful than abuse perpetrated by strangers because of the violation of trust within a necessary relationship.'[31] Note that the focus here is on *interpersonal* sexual violence—the model that dominates the field of trauma studies. But trauma psychology has more recently evolved an interest in *systemic* forces as well.

Freyd looks at the added traumatic impact of *institutions* on interpersonal sexual betrayal. She typically cites schools, churches, the military and the government as examples of trusted, powerful institutions. What Freyd concludes is that 'a deep lack of validation of an interpersonal trauma by an institution mirrors a mechanism thought to predict the development of complex posttraumatic responses'.[32] This includes failure to prevent or respond supportively to sexual exploitation within the institution when there is a reasonable expectation of protection. This may result in 'complex PTSD' (CPTSD), which is typically more destructive of the human person's resilience than the effects of simple trauma. The subsequent institutional betrayal exacerbates the traumatic symptoms of the initial, interpersonal sexual betrayal.

This is the experience faced by rape survivors, for example, who describe unresponsive or antagonistic law enforcement and legal systems as a 'second assault'. Priests or religious who have been subject to

[31] Carly Parnitzke Smith and Jennifer J. Freyd, 'Institutional Betrayal', *American Psychologist*, 69/6 (September 2014), 577.
[32] Smith and Freyd, 'Institutional Betrayal', 578.

sexual harassment—if not worse—by older, often influential religious authority figures, sometimes within their own diocese or congregation, describe an institutional culture and norms which are more damaging than the immediate boundary violations or sins. If religious institutions do not incorporate just policies and independent, knowledgeable experts into their care regime, traumatic symptoms may continue to be revisited upon the survivor.

Institutional betrayal theory calls institutions to just and legal account. Those who suffer from CPTSD typically manifest the symptoms of PTSD but also alienation from and loss of trust in the institution in question. When that institution is a church, cynicism towards the goodness of human nature or God may result, even bitter loss of faith in God. The damage from CPTSD, therefore, can be both psychological and practical. Too often in the case of ecclesial betrayal, faithful members of the Church and those close to them opt out of the institution that has betrayed them.

Pastoral and spiritual caregivers in the Ignatian tradition typically serve in an institutional setting and should be conversant with this area, as should those in the wider care circle of survivors. Referral to professional medical specialists, as needed, is always a consideration. But mature persons of faith, who have no doubt weathered their own trials with the institutional practice of religion, should recognise that they can make the most effective witnesses.

Reconnection and Reconciliation

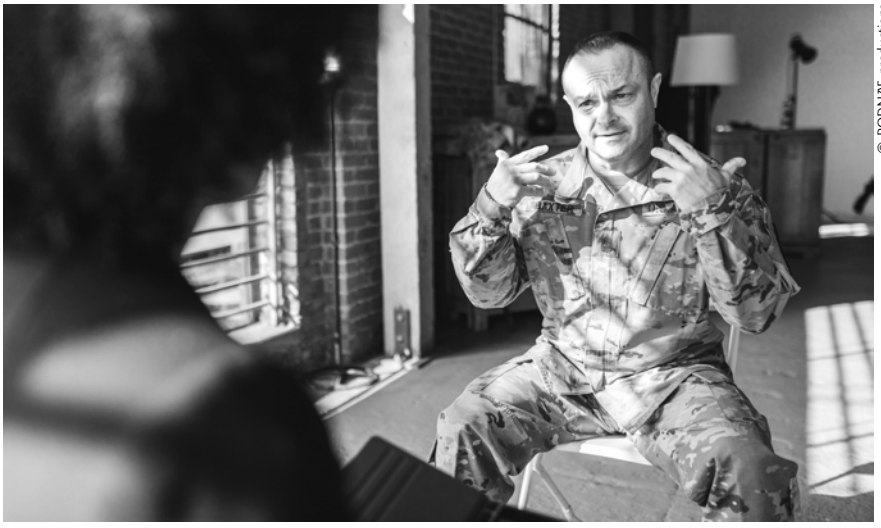
Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* is widely recognised as a groundbreaking text in trauma studies, which is required reading for understanding trauma survivors and their process of recovery.[33] Herman does not write from a religious or spiritual perspective, and her work predates the construct of moral injury, but she explicitly recognises the significance of moral emotions such as guilt and shame as integral to the recovery framework. Because of significant similarities between the three stages of recovery that Herman describes and the First Week—as well as her book's status as the ur-text in trauma studies—Ignatian caregivers will benefit from familiarity with it.

[33] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

Herman's three stages of recovery from trauma and PTSD are not a simple linear process, and every client moves through them at a unique pace. The experience can be emotionally excruciating.

> The recovery process is based upon empowerment of the survivor and restoration of relationships. The recovery process may be conceptualized in three stages: establishing safety, retelling the story of the traumatic event, and reconnecting with others.[34]

The central task of the first stage is the establishment of trust and safety. A spiritual director or pastoral counsellor accompanying a wounded survivor of moral injury or trauma should evaluate if a foundational, trusting relationship has been established and, if so, may discerningly inquire whether the individual desires to move forward. If the survivor is ready, she or he is now invited to tell the story of what happened, in some depth and detail if possible. The narrative includes the event itself, and also the survivor's emotional response to it. Pacing and timing are unpredictable, and the survivor may wish to move 'backwards' to re-establish the zone of safety. He or she tells the story when ready—today, or next year, or never. The survivor must examine the moral emotions at stake, including guilt, shame, confusion, responsibility and grief. This is essential to assist him or her to reconstruct a system of belief which makes sense of undeserved suffering.



[34] Judith Herman, 'Recovery from Psychological Trauma', *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 52 (1998), S145–S150, here S145.

The second stage is accomplished 'when the patient reclaims her own history and feels renewed hope and energy for engagement with life'. At this point, the survivor begins to accept, intellectually and affectively, that 'perhaps the trauma is only one part, and perhaps not even the most important part, of her life story'.[35] To move forward, those seeking Ignatian spiritual or pastoral care will have to allow God's mercy to transform any moral feelings of shame and guilt, as a prerequisite to the healing reconstruction of their interiority.

The central task of the third stage of recovery is reconnecting with 'ordinary life' and, most importantly, emerging from physical and/or affective isolation. Healthy relationality brokers recovery. For Herman, the survivor's,

> … relationships have been tested and forever changed by the trauma; now she must develop new relationships. The old beliefs that gave meaning to her life have been challenged; now she must find anew a sustaining faith.[36]

Here, the overlap with the First Week grace of reconciliation is evident to Ignatian practitioners, who desire to bring about a renewal of transformed religious faith. For Herman recovery is based upon restoration of relationships, and this is the most apt Ignatian opening; as David L. Fleming writes:

> How we understand or imagine redemption or salvation affects our relationship with God and with Jesus. That same understanding also affects how we view ourselves and our world. In the Old Testament and in the New, various images are used to clarify God's relationship to human beings. Words such as *sacrifice, expiation, propitiation, ransom, satisfaction, substitution* provide distinct understandings of salvation/redemption—all of them dealing with a relationship.[37]

God's mercy acts in uniquely personal ways on behalf of each survivor according to his or her profile, needs and desires. Mercy is God's compassionate eagerness to enter into each person's sins and life-chaos, as well as the chaos and sinfulness of institutions, ideologies, cultures and structures which distort individual moral agency. Reconciliation—

[35] Herman, 'Recovery from Psychological Trauma', S148.
[36] Herman, 'Recovery from Psychological Trauma', S148.
[37] David L. Fleming, *Like the Lightning: The Dynamics of the Ignatian Exercises* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 90.

with God, with others, with institutions and with the self—best specifies the desired outcome. Reconciliation on God's initiative promotes self-awareness and integration of the symptoms of moral injury. The erasure of these symptoms is unlikely and never the goal. Authentic reconciliation bears fruit in the form of a vulnerable Good Samaritan, a wounded healer maintaining a capacity to notice, to care and to be available to other scarred survivors. The grace of the First Week refracts spiritual light on Herman's seminal framework. Seekers of Divinity or a Higher Power who embrace living spiritual practice find here a traditional way to God through their scars. As the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic Rumi noted, 'the wound is the place where the Light enters'.

A traditional way to God through their scars

Spiritual Direction and Recovery from Trauma and Moral Injury

The reclaimed nexus of religion and psychology, of spirituality and clinical practice, is exciting. 'There is broad consensus today that a recovery of religious and spiritual significance has occurred in American Psychiatry over the past 30 years'. For mental health practitioners seeking further understanding from within their professional framework, Ignatian caregivers can point to the radical reappraisal of 'the psychic function of belief'. The very construct of religious belief 'has undergone dramatic metamorphosis … in a reassessment of religion and spirituality as aspects of human experience that are grounded in the development and functions of the human psyche'.[38]

The importance of personal narrative in trauma therapy, so central to Herman's classic formulation, has required the field of psychology to acknowledge that for most psychiatric patients, religion and spirituality are integral to how they structure their human identity. To ignore these facets of the human personality, and how one constructs a sense of selfhood, would be to deny a client's self-identity.

> Research surveys have consistently found that substantial numbers of psychiatric patients, on the order of 80%, regard themselves as spiritual or religious and believe that their faith has a positive impact on their recovery.[39]

[38] Clark S. Aist, 'The Recovery of Religious and Spiritual Significance in American Psychiatry', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51/3 (September 2012), 615–629, here 615, 624.
[39] Aist, 'Recovery of Religious and Spiritual Significance', 626.

The time has arrived for spirituality and mental health clinicians to acknowledge their alliance and act accordingly. It will be a healthy, generative challenge for both. The contribution of spiritual directors and pastoral counsellors to the recovery of wounded survivors of trauma and moral injury is an opportune arena to develop such collaboration.

Berry Bishop is a licensed psychologist and trained spiritual director who practises both disciplines with a particular interest in trauma and spiritual direction. She is quite literate in Ignatian and other spiritualities and offers a glimpse of interdisciplinary possibilities. Bishop relies on William Barry and William Connolly, whose definition of spiritual direction, she believes, is most apt for her review of the literature. 'Arguably one of the most referenced sources', Barry and Connolly define spiritual direction as 'mostly concerned with an individual's relationship with God'. This may seem obvious but, in those trying to cope with trauma, 'negative spiritualities' which 'negate the relational aspects of religion and spirituality', abound.[40] Here the Ignatian paradigm is a solid foundation upon which to build.

There is 'a need for interventions that specifically address spiritual struggles' for believers moving through post-traumatic growth, Bishop notes, 'and spiritual direction could be just that'. However, she is cautious because 'Spiritual direction, like psychoanalysis, is a long and slow process …. It is not for acute treatment', but rather for more open-ended practice.[41] The caregiver must allow the time and space for a wounded survivor to recover according to her or his timeline, and also be realistic about the person's skills and energies. Specialised spiritual formation and mentoring are recommended.

Nevertheless, spiritual direction can provide the safe environment and trusting relationship required for Herman's first stage of recovery. Here, 'stories once perceived as "traumatic" are discerned as "redemptive"'. A unique advantage of the spiritual direction tradition is its inclusion of silence, in which God can speak directly. Psychologists rely on talking therapy, and psychiatrists may add medications to the menu. But 'the quiet space, which is often overlooked in modern talk therapy practices, allows identification of the directee's perspective and needs rather

[40] Berry Jane Bishop, 'The Impact of Spiritual Direction on Trauma Processing, Recovery and Growth: A Review of the Literature' (PhD dissertation, Asuza Pacific University, 2018), 3. And see William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Harper Collins, 1982).
[41] Bishop, 'Impact of Spiritual Direction on Trauma Processing, Recovery and Growth', 34, 35.

than being overwhelmed by the voice of another'.[42] Caregivers thus promote the client empowerment and ownership that is central for Herman.

Not all spiritual directors are competent or have the required temperament to accompany those wounded by trauma or moral injury. Nor can it be assumed that spiritual direction is recommended for all believers with traumatic or moral injury symptoms. These are questions requiring more applied research and thoughtful practice; in the meantime, directors should 'do no harm' and consult as needed. One valuable lesson for Ignatian caregivers and their support networks is the admonition to hone the interpersonal and specialised skills to help directees disclose a potentially morally injurious or traumatic event. Attentive listening is paramount, as is some facility with trauma and moral injury theories. For the directee, recounting the narrative 'in a coherent, ordered form enables him or her to see how one's religious beliefs and spiritual practices can reshape what one previously thought to be unresolvable trauma experiences'.[43] The caregiver will have to be discerning as to what is prudent in a given relationship, and at which point other, more specialised, collaborative resources will be beneficial or even required.

A Seat at the Table of the Lord

'For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.' (Jeremiah 20:8) Traumatized persons, like the prophet Jeremiah, too often find themselves emotionally or even physically isolated, exiles from conventional church and society. Too frequently they find themselves ignored by religious leadership and marginalised by prevailing social norms, awaiting a Good Samaritan to stretch forth a compassionate hand. They can take refuge in the Book of Jeremiah, which portrays 'a people, prophet, and a God who are all deeply wounded'.[44] But they can also find recuperative guidance with Ignatian caregivers who viscerally identify with the three Divine Persons looking down from heaven 'on the whole face and circuit of

[42] Bishop, 'Impact of Spiritual Direction on Trauma Processing, Recovery and Growth', 37.
[43] Bishop, 'Impact of Spiritual Direction on Trauma Processing, Recovery and Growth', 36.
[44] Julianna M. Claassens, 'Jeremiah', *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, edited by José Enrique Aguilar Chiu and others (New York: Paulist, 2018), 678. Claassens interprets Jeremiah through the lens of recent trauma literature, 'for readers who are living in a world that day by day is becoming more and more violent' (667).

the earth', and who hear the summons to 'work the redemption of the human race' (Exx 106–107).

Since the outset of his papacy, Pope Francis has incorporated the word 'accompaniment'—widely used by the Jesuit Refugee Service and other refugee NGOs—into his vocabulary of the New Evangelization. 'Although it sounds obvious', those who accept the Church's mission of spiritual accompaniment 'must lead others ever closer to God'. Such a ministry would be contradictory and 'counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father'.[45] Starting with the language, existential reality and personhood of trauma and moral injury survivors, and following the Jesuit custom of pastoral adaptation, fresh tools and motifs are available to such ambassadors of reconciliation. They are empowered to proclaim afresh the Good News of a seat at the Lord's table to the exiled survivors of moral injury.

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[45] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 170.

PIERRE FAVRE ON THE MERCY OF GOD

Thomas Flowers

ST PIERRE FAVRE (1506–1546) came to see his battle with scruples as an occasion for the mercy of God. As a young man, guilt overwhelmed him. He worried not only over every actual and possible sin, but over whether he had confessed properly the sins he had brought to the sacrament of confession; perhaps he had forgotten a sin or neglected some detail and thus not actually been absolved by the priest. Yet in the spiritual diary he kept between 1542 and 1546, when he reflected on his most torturously scrupulous moments, he gave thanks. In words addressed to his own soul, he marvelled that 'without those scruples Iñigo perchance might not have been able to get through to you, nor you to desire his help as happened later on'.[1]

The 'Iñigo' to whom he refers is St Ignatius of Loyola, who became his room-mate and companion at the University of Paris in 1529, and whose spiritual guidance transformed Favre's life interiorly and exteriorly. Ignatius gave him 'an understanding of my conscience and of the temptations and scruples I had had for so long without either understanding them or seeing the way by which I would be able to get peace'.[2] The friendship of Ignatius and Favre was the first step in forming the group of companions who would become the founding members of the Society of Jesus. That friendship was rooted in the peace of God to which Ignatius led Favre through spiritual counsel and the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius helped Favre to know the mercy of God for which he had longed his whole life, and Favre spent the rest of his life preaching that mercy to all whom he served.

[1] Pierre Favre, *Memoriale*, in *The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, edited by John W. Padberg and translated by Martin E. Palmer and Edmond C. Murphy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), n. 6.
[2] Favre, *Memoriale*, n. 9.

Such mercy speaks as eloquently to our own era as it did when Favre proclaimed it in the sixteenth century. A persistent temptation to believe that we presume too much in our constant cries for God's forgiveness dogs the spiritual progress of so many Christians in every age. We listen to Jesus' words in the gospel that call us to 'be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' and we consider such evangelical challenges as to 'love your enemies' and to stop judging 'so that you may not be judged', and we all too easily feel inadequate, unsuited to the Christian life.[3]

Yet what Favre learned so powerfully through his conversations with Ignatius and through the sort of prayer Ignatius taught him to pray was that our God is not a God of ideas and ideals, but a personal God concerned with persons. If we fixate on rules of life by which we hope to attain moral perfection without recognising that Christ's call to conversion is always a call filled with care and concern for our weakness and well-being, then we miss the opportunity to encounter the God who gave Pierre Favre peace. The God to whom Ignatius introduced Favre was one whose love could transform even the worst harm Favre did to himself into an occasion for grace.

Pierre Favre, *by Johann Kravögl, 1873*

At the heart of the gratitude Favre expressed for his scruples lies a nuanced understanding of divine providence. Favre did not believe that God had made him scrupulous so that God could lead him to Ignatius and show him mercy. Such a view of God's providence would be profoundly unchristian, for it would attribute something that causes us harm—the scruples that torment us and make us think we have sinned when we have not—to our all-loving God.

[3] Matthew 5:48; 5:44; 7:1.

Indeed, in the same section of his spiritual diary, Favre bewilderingly writes of 'some scruples and remorse of conscience by which the demon began to drive you to seek your Creator'.[4]

Favre does not believe that God sent either his scruples or a demon to lead him to God. Rather, schooled in the Spiritual Exercises, Favre was convinced that God uses all possible means to labour for our good. This is because all things 'on the face of the earth are created for human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created', and God 'works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth' (Exx 23, 236). God made his mercy manifest to Favre in the way he utilised every possible means, even Favre's own scruples, to lead and care for him.

These are the convictions that grounded Favre as a confessor. Favre's renown as both a director of the Exercises and a confessor was already solidly established in 1544 when he wrote a letter to fellow Jesuit Cornelius Wischaven, counselling him on the art of hearing confessions.[5] Composed only a few years before Favre died at the age of forty, it is Favre's master text not only on confession, but on the mercy of God. For Favre, the sacramental encounter in confession created a privileged occasion to immerse the penitent in the mercy of God. In confession, the fragility of the penitent met the healing embrace of God, whose personal care Favre prayed would be made manifest in the tenderness of the confessor.

Such tenderness reveals itself immediately in the welcome Favre proposed a confessor ought to give to his penitent. Favre wanted a penitent to be at ease, and so allowed that someone previously unknown to the confessor should by all means 'make his confession in his own way, following the usual procedure of going through the commandments, the deadly sins, the five senses, and so on'. A traditional approach to the sacrament had considerable merit if it felt familiar and comfortable to the penitent. But Favre did not regard this as the best possible way to begin a confession, suggesting rather that one should 'start off by accusing himself of what he himself considers his worst sin' because 'almost everyone is conscious of being weighed down by one sin more than others' (356). One's worst sin need not be one's gravest sin, for the

[4] Favre, *Memoriale*, n. 6.

[5] Pierre Favre to Cornelius Wischaven, January 1544, in *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 356–361 (subsequent references in the text).

criterion Favre here proposes is entirely subjective: the sin with which Favre hopes penitents might begin confession is the one that weighs them down most heavily, the one that bothers and disturbs them most.

The point is not to disregard the gravity of sins, but rather to begin where the burden is greatest. For Favre saw the sacrament as serving not only to reconcile sinners to God and the Church, but to lift the weight that sin imposes upon us and to set sinners on the road to a life of greater freedom and fulfilment. It was not enough for a confessor to identify sins and evaluate the contrition of the penitent so as to determine appropriate penance and give absolution; Favre wanted the confessor to help sinners to free themselves from the morass of sin and to establish new habits rooted in God's grace. Thus, 'the causes and occasions of their sins should be examined', not merely to determine gravity and culpability, but 'with a view to their removal'. Knowing why sinners fell into the sin that particularly plagued them, a confessor could offer counsel for how to avoid those occasions and, yet more significantly, propose virtuous habits to replace the habits of vice (356–357). It was essential that the confessor 'give your penances not just with a view to their making satisfaction for their previous life but also to their improving their lives in the future' (359).

Favre had been a pious youth. As such, he undoubtedly already followed the established custom of the Church and confessed his sins at least annually when he first encountered Ignatius in Paris. But he knew personally that absolution from one's sins did not always grant peace. The grip of one's sinful tendencies could make even the sublime gift of God's grace offered in the sacrament seem distant, as Favre knew from his own doubts about the completeness of his confessions. And so Favre believed that a confessor needed to do more than absolve: a confessor needed to console. A confessor needed to console because consolation is the primary language with which God reveals himself to us. Favre had learned that from Ignatius and the Exercises. He had learned that left to ourselves, too many of us excel at devising new ways to torment ourselves, supposing that our sinfulness is too great to be truly pardonable. But Favre knew that God's mercy knows no such limits.

Favre believed that, with help, people could begin to see how God worked even amid their sinfulness. This was why Favre desired that a penitent should 'look into himself and state his own sins without fear and without any intimidation stemming from your words' (356). There was no reason to fear sin when brought into the sacrament: for in

confession, by God's grace, past sins became places of encounter and transformation. The confessor therefore needed to keep ever in mind that his presence embodied the presence of the God who forgave, who transformed, who consoled; there was no room for 'intimidation' in such an encounter. Rather,

> We must make sure that no sinner is ever made to feel bad in the very place where he came for the sole purpose of being examined, instructed, and judged by us, to whom he has come as the representative of the gentle Christ (360).

Favre acknowledges the traditional role of the confessor as one who 'judged' the culpability and contrition of the penitent. But such judgment ultimately belongs not to the confessor, but to 'the gentle Christ' whom the confessor represented, and that judgment ought not to make a sinner 'feel bad'. Confession is a place for a sinner to feel good, to feel burdens lift, to feel certain of Christ's gentle consolation.

This is why 'so far as we can, we should never let a person leave us who would not willingly come back' (360). It is perhaps the most telling line in the entirety of Favre's instruction. Encompassed in these words is the very personal encounter Favre envisioned taking place in the sacrament of confession. He wanted the penitent to feel cared for, to remember with fondness the person who represented Christ in his gentleness. Favre does not shrink from the seriousness of the task in confession: he acknowledges the wiles of sin and proposes specific strategies to uncover the full extent of the hidden habits of sin. But sin never becomes the centre of Favre's concern because Favre had come to know that sin never is the centre of God's concern. The seriousness of sin has less to do with which commandments, laws or rules are violated, and more with the harm sin inflicts, the burdens it creates. Commandments, laws and rules exist to help us not to inflict harm and not to create burdens. God is concerned with persons. Favre came to know this as God's consolation broke the grip his scruples had upon him. And he spent the rest of his life helping others to know the same gentle care God lavished upon him.

Sin never is the centre of God's concern

Thomas Flowers SJ recently completed a PhD in Jesuit history at the University of York and is currently teaching Jesuit history to Jesuits in formation in the USA.

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Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

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PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD

Prayer in Ignatian Communal Discernment Today

Elizabeth Liebert

THE PROCESS DEVELOPED by Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions as they took the collective decision to become a religious order united under a superior is often cited as the origin of group discernment. In the last thirty years, however, group discernment has increasingly transcended the context of the Society of Jesus. Men and women religious all over the world turn to discernment as an integral part of their decision-making. Parish councils and denominational committees and boards of religiously orientated non-profits recognise the value of prayerfully moving together towards decisions.

Acknowledging that many groups now turning to communal discernment do so without the shared assumptions within the Society of Jesus about discernment in common and the role of prayer in the process, I should like to examine the dynamics described in that paradigmatic discernment process and comment on its adaptation in contemporary settings using insights from the Spiritual Exercises. How did these first companions learn to make key decisions? What was the role of prayer in their deliberations? How might this awareness help contemporary groups deepen their practice of discernment?

The Deliberation of the First Fathers[1]

The year was 1539. Ignatius had drawn his ten companions around him in Rome. They were not yet very clear about their style of being together; they were literally feeling their way forward. All but one, Alfonso

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[1] For the record of these proceedings, see 'The Deliberation of the First Fathers', in John Carroll Futrell, *Making an Apostolic Community of Love: The Role of the Superior according to St Ignatius of Loyola*. (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 188–194 (subsequent references in the text). See also http://predmore.blogspot.com/2010/04/ spirituality-text-of-deliberations-of.html, accessed 9 September 2022.

Ignatius and His First Companions, *by Cristóbal de Villalpando, 1710*

Salmerón, were now ordained.[2] They had taken vows of poverty and chastity, and had formed a loose association of like-minded persons. It began to appear, however, that the Pope, at whose service they had placed themselves, intended to send them out singly or in very small groups. They expected, then, to be widely dispersed. The crucial issue before them was: should they, in order to retain some unity, elect one of their number as superior and bind themselves by vow to him? If the answer to those questions was 'yes', they would, in effect, become a religious order.

They were an incredibly diverse group, spanning several languages and cultures (the text explicitly mentions French, Spanish, Savoyards [Italians] and Portuguese); in no way could it be said that there was unanimity about the decisions they faced. But they were united about one thing: 'to seek the gracious and perfect will of God according to the scope of our vocation' (n. 1). Recognising the differences among them, they set out to find some way to being open so that they could come to some common discernment about the specifics.

Over three months from March to June they met together. During the day each continued to work at his ministry. In the evenings, their process became an adaptation of the election material from the Spiritual Exercises. They began by agreeing to give themselves to the spiritual

[2] John Carroll Futrell, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 6/4 (1974), 179.

disciplines of prayer and sacrifices with greater than usual fervour, and after using all their own resources to work with the issues, to cast all their care upon the Lord. That is, they set a context of earnest prayer for indifference as set out in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23). They worked as if everything depended upon them, and prayed and trusted as if everything depended upon God.

They did lots of circling while framing the question and its component parts. Each one would meditate and pray over the matter under consideration during the day. When they came together in the evening, in the words of the text,

> … each man proposed to the rest what he judged to be more correct and more expedient, in order that all might unanimously embrace the opinion that was truer and that had been examined and proved by stronger reasons and by the votes of the majority (n. 2).

When this process did not seem to yield an answer that filled them with peace, they began to adapt it. They considered withdrawing to a more secluded place and working at the deliberation intensively. They considered staying where they were in the city, but devoting more time and energy to it. They decided for various reasons to remain in Rome, and remain at their ministries.

They eventually settled upon the following process: each would make three preparations:

1. He would devote himself to prayer dedicated towards coming to deep freedom about the choices in front of them—to becoming more and more disposed to do whatever would be for God's honour and glory.
2. He would avoid talking to any other companion about the issue on which they were reflecting, with no lobbying and no trying to persuade anyone in one direction or another. Each one was to set out as 'more expedient' only that which emerged from his prayer and meditation.
3. He would think of himself as if he were not in the company, in order to distance himself personally from the outcome. (n. 5)[3]

[3] Note the similarity to the first preparation for the Second Method of the Third Time for making an Election (Exx 185). There, however, the discerner is to imagine someone whom he or she does not know at all, hardly the case in this situation.

After these preparations, they came together, each one speaking all the disadvantages of the proposal. The next day, each one named the opposite, all the advantages of the proposal. They continued with this process 'over many days of thinking through the pros and cons of our problem and examining the more serious and weighty arguments'. Finally there came a day when they were able to arrive at a decision, unanimous, without even one dissenting vote. Having determined this procedure, they then used it for all the remaining decisions (n.8).

We can make a number of observations about the first companions' paradigmatic Ignatian communal discernment process:

- Their process of group discernment assumed that individuals were already familiar with and committed to the process of discernment, to personal prayer and to seeking God.
- They took great pains concerning the disposition of the individual discerners and the dispositions of the community as a whole.
- They based their discernment upon shared vision.
- They engaged in lots of circling in framing the question and its component parts.
- They built in ways to overcome the natural tendency to politic for the position that each one might naturally prefer.
- Each person spoke to both the cons and the pros, even separating them by a day, thereby lessening any tendency to dig in to one position or to defer to those who spoke first or more forcefully.
- They built in a place for external authorities to confirm the decision before they finalised it.
- They allowed ample time and, in fact, saw no need to conclude before all felt satisfied. The group and its individual members were willing to tolerate a long period of ambiguity and open-endedness without rushing to premature closure.
- Their process could accommodate voting, but after extensive prayer and reflection in the spirit of discernment.

Each of these observations gives us important information related to prayer in communal discernment in a contemporary setting. For the purposes of our discussion, we can summarise their process in the following steps:

- coming to spiritual freedom individually and collectively;
- framing the issue under discussion in a focused way;
- gathering appropriate data relevant to the issue;
- offering individual and common prayer to seek the best way forward;
- collecting the prayer into a formal, yet tentative, decision;
- seeking confirmation (personal, corporate, ecclesial) that the decision represents the best way forward and the concrete will of God in this circumstance;
- looking back after the completion of the process to evaluate and learn.[4]

What Counts as Prayer in Communal Discernment?

The first issue, however, concerns the meaning of the word *prayer*. Is it prayer only when the discerners are preparing themselves, or are they also praying when they are seeking indifference, or doing the weighing implied in the term 'discern', or actively awaiting some confirmation that their decision does indeed manifest the greater good? What about the sometimes lengthy process of formulating the question, or of gathering relevant data, without which discernment violates a key commitment of Ignatius that decisions be based on good data carefully considered?[5]

In my experience of participating in and teaching about communal discernment, I often find one or more of the following: a corporate culture that mirrors secular wisdom on speedy decision-making; a tendency to 'begin the meeting with prayer' followed by a brief spoken prayer and nothing more; or, in a casual bow to the term 'discernment', a moment of silence before voting. None of these situations comes close to the depth of prayer that Ignatius and the first companions had in mind. Another kind of struggle occurs when the group is engaged in gathering concrete data or doing the social analysis critical to understanding

[4] For slightly different enumerations of the steps in discerned decision-making, see Elizabeth Liebert, *Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 19–21 and *Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 25. Futrell speaks of three steps: prayer for light from the Holy Spirit, in which he includes all aspects of discernment of spirits; gathering all possible evidence for the matter at hand, including consultation with others; and the effort to find confirmation of the concrete choice in this circumstance (*Making an Apostolic Community of Love*, 124). However, when presenting communal discernment to those unfamiliar with it, breaking the process down into more discrete steps helps them to grasp the key elements.

[5] Futrell, *Making an Apostolic Community of Love*, 108, 110.

their situation more accurately. Here the temptation is to perceive such tasks as either unspiritual or not actually key to the discernment process. Rather, they feel like tasks to be slogged through so the group can 'get to the discernment'.

To counter these common contemporary assumptions, all of which weaken the power of the discernment process and sap the energy of the participants, I am presenting the entire seven-step process as prayer, albeit a prayer of numerous modalities and intensities. Circling around the situation, often for a considerable time, as the issue for discernment becomes clearer *is itself* prayer. The often tedious process of gathering data from a variety of sources and sorting through mounds of information to discover what is crucial *is* prayer. We are not sitting in a corporate boardroom and going through the motions deemed essential to good decision-making as understood in the business world—a default setting for many boards and committees even in church settings. The entire process of communal discernment *is itself prayer*, and at each new phase we renew our intention to seek God's call in the concrete and shift to the modality of prayer that this new step requires.

Communal discernment is itself prayer

Praying Together as Background for Communal Discernment

Communal discernment does not simply happen by marching through steps. It begins in the consistent practice of prayer by each of the members of the discerning group.[6] When they then gather together, they can more readily enter into the parallel process of praying together as a key element in forming themselves into a discerning group. Consistent and heartfelt prayer, individual and shared, builds a strong and stable foundation upon which discernment rests. When a situation or question arises that invites discernment, prayer for indifference can flow organically and without any awkwardness—the group already prays, and now they simply frame the discernment and insert it naturally into their corporate prayer life. Discernment in common both asks the group to be a praying community and, at the same time, creates and deepens that community's prayer.

If it is hard to imagine this level of prayer in a decision-making group, it might serve us well to examine the resistances to such deep and

[6] Futrell insists frequently on personal prayer as a prerequisite for discernment in common. See John Carroll Futrell, 'Communal Discernment: Reflections on Experience', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 4/5 (1972), 162–163, 167.

shared prayer. I hear voices saying: *Too much business to do*; *Not enough time; Reticent to share deep spiritual experiences with persons I don't know very well*. One way, perhaps the only way, to dissolve such resistances is not to try to convince people of the benefit of prayer but actually to introduce a season of deep prayer. Let the group members discover for themselves that business often gets done more quickly and with less rancour when a substantial portion of a meeting is given to prayer. Let them discover how, when one member shares something vulnerable, it often opens the floodgates for other members to do likewise. Over time, the group members begin to know and trust each other at a deep level because, little by little, they have already entrusted something precious to the group: how God has been at work within.

The unspoken and unattended assumptions that sometimes undergird such resistances are more difficult to confront. Sometimes people have not been taught how to pray together or have not seen deep prayer modelled. It is simply outside their realm of imagination. The remedy is straightforward: teach a simple prayer practice (*lectio divina*, for example, can be grasped by anyone of good will). The key, then, is to practise and practise and practise until the group is completely at ease and eager to see what will happen when they come together.

Framing a Focused Issue

In using a discernment process similar to that of the early companions, a clear, focused discernment question is key. They articulated their first question as follows: 'would it be better for us to be so joined and bound together in one body that no physical dispersal, no matter great, could separate us? Or perhaps would this be inexpedient?' (n.3) This framing of the question offers several insights. They began by addressing the most significant issue, the one that, once they had answered it, would frame the subsequent questions, which they continued to ponder one after another for several more months.

It is also important that they posed the question and evaluated their responses in light of their common vision. They were absolutely clear that they wanted to 'seek the gracious and perfect will of God according to the scope of our vocation'. The process of developing a charism, vision or mission statement bears its fruit at precisely this point. If it is well phrased, the result of wide consultation and owned by all, the group's expression anchors communal discernment. It provides both the touchstone against which options are considered and the framework

for selecting leadership. It offers a context into which new members are invited.[7] Guiding the group in light of the vision, mission or charism statement is perhaps the most basic responsibility of the leadership.

Notice that the two questions of the first consideration, as recorded in the text, are actually positive and negative forms of a single question. Discernment in common proceeds most effectively if there is only one question rather than several nested inside each other or tacked together. There are no rules about how to arrive at this question. Will the sifting be done by a committee as a whole, or delegated to a smaller group? How will the smaller group be chosen? How will they gain the insights of the whole? The trust built up through deep communal prayer becomes invaluable here, as is facilitation immersed in a rich understanding of discernment.

Praying for Indifference

The Spiritual Exercises attest to the importance Ignatius placed on indifference; the entire palette of exercises, the structure of the days and Weeks, the points for the director all indicate the key role of indifference. Discernment of spirits and election presume a prior openness to the radical ordering of one's desires so that the most basic desire is God, 'the end for which I am created'. In Ignatian usage, 'indifference' means putting everything in right order: God first and everything else after God. All created things, wealth, health, vocation and, indeed, life itself need to be orientated to one outcome: the greater praise and reverence of God and participating in God's work in the world (Exx 23).

Ignatius's reminiscences, usually called the *Autobiography*, end just before the events we have been examining. Though the scribe, Luis Gonçalves Da Câmara, requested further documents, he concluded his work by noting that Ignatius would not give them to him. Thus, we must return to 'The Deliberation of the First Fathers' for indications about the significance of praying for indifference in communal contexts. There are many, beginning with the companions' acknowledged unity around their ultimate purpose: 'to seek the gracious and perfect will of God according to the scope of our vocation'. Indeed, this goal drove them to keep adapting the election material from the Spiritual Exercises to fit the new communal situation, and to keep trying until they found a way

[7] One particularly clear example of the significance of discernment and of the role of prayer in discernment occurs in the *Constitutions*, II. 3. 1–7 [218–226], which describes the steps that a superior should go through in considering whether to dismiss a member.

to determine the practical implications that flowed from this unity. This purpose launched and anchored their common process.

The possibilities for misunderstanding indifference in contemporary situations are legion, beginning with the usual connotation of the word itself. For many English speakers, 'indifference' signifies not caring or dismissing something, exactly what Ignatius does *not* mean! We are to care so much about what God desires that our only desire is what God desires. Everything else comes under that orientating desire. Because Ignatius' term is so easily and deeply misunderstood, I usually substitute another phrase, *spiritual freedom*. Any term, however, will need to move from conceptual understanding to abiding deep within.

The challenge for contemporary discernment groups is how to invite the grace of indifference to take root not only in each individual but also in the group as a whole. Such a grace growing within the group is perhaps the most significant component of a discerning community. Devoting significant and repeated time to praying for spiritual freedom, both individually and collectively, is key. What is God calling *this group* to be and do at this moment? How can we open ourselves, individually and collectively, to the generosity that this requires? As we recognise—at any point in the process—that we have forgotten this end, or pulled back into ourselves, or lost our courage as a group, we stop and return to our prayer for spiritual freedom. The good news in the reality that indifference cannot be conjured up at will is that it comes only as God's gracious gift. So we return, again and again, begging for this grace. The rest is up to God.

Praying Personally about What Is Deliberated Communally

Each member of the group continues his or her prayer even as the group engages in its discernment. This prayer is of two kinds. Discerners continue their own personal discipline of prayer: the prayer in which they would engage regularly. As the group process continues and the question is framed, they also begin to seek their own spiritual freedom with respect to the outcome of the question. Ideally, each should have come to such freedom before the group's formal deliberations begin. However, since indifference is a gift and cannot be simply summoned up at will, the individual discerner is responsible only for earnest prayer to desire what God desires as it becomes evident as the discernment unfolds. The organic nature of the process, then, assumes that each individual must continually return to his or her own prayer for indifference throughout the process.

There is grace in this necessity: the continual seeking for God strengthens the foundations of the group discernment and renews the basic posture of all contemplative prayer—yearning for God. Indeed, it relativises discernment itself by putting the very search for the better option into right order: God's ultimate will is primary; arriving at a decision is secondary. We can relax even in our deepest need, knowing that God is already present in our deliberations, imperfect and limited though they may be. We can also trust that, if we have done our human best to listen and discern, God will honour our attempts, even if the conclusion of our process should prove to be less than satisfactory.

Praying the Pros and Cons: The Ignatian Paradigm

The prototype for the weighing process the first companions settled on comes directly out of the *Spiritual Exercises* (Exx 178–183). It consists in an introduction and six points. Since all the first companions were deeply immersed in the *Spiritual Exercises*, a detailed look at this section reveals the context and assumptions behind the process they used.

Ignatius set out three ways of making a choice (election). First, if it is immediately and certainly obvious that God is acting, no further discernment is warranted. Neither Ignatius nor his companions seem to have entertained this option given the variety of perspectives among them. In the second situation, or 'time', election flows from careful observation of the various inner motions within the discerner. Presumably, this weighing was going on almost continually within the heart of each individual companion during their extended periods of personal prayer and conversation. But the companions did not choose to highlight

the second time's ongoing discernment of spirits within the common discernment. Did they not see a practical way of 'harvesting' the various motions expressed by individuals in the group? In fact, it appears that they began this way, but got bogged down: 'After many days of reflection and prayer, nothing had transpired to fill our souls with peace in solving this problem' (n. 5).

At this point, they realised that their situation matched the conditions set out in the third time (Exx 178–183). They then went through some further reflection about their preparation, which they intensified as per the Spiritual Exercises (Exx 89). They deepened their prayer and other spiritual exercises, set limits on their conversations outside the formal process in order to block out even subtle influence towards one outcome or another and tried to imagine what they would say to the others were they not themselves members of the nascent Society (n. 6).

These adjustments in place, and following the steps for the first method of the third time, the companions intentionally completed the first three points. They put before themselves the matter for election, they renewed their individual and collective desire to seek only the will of God for the group in this situation, and they collectively begged God to bring their minds and wills into conformity with God's gracious will and purpose. Then, as the fourth point directed, they began the process of weighing, first the advantages and disadvantages for the proposal. The following day, they set out the advantages and disadvantages against the proposal.

In my experience, this 'double double' set of considerations often gets reduced to a 'single double' one: namely, the reasons for and against the issue. For many discernment situations, this simplification might indeed yield a commonly held sense of the better choice. However, what the *Spiritual Exercises* actually recommend is a consideration of the pros and cons of the positive statement and then the pros and cons of the negative statement (Exx 181). This 'double double' process actually yields new insights for consideration. It also explains the positive and negative statement of the question the companions were trying to weigh.[8]

Commentators have observed how having each person carefully name both the reasons for and those against a proposal diffuses the

[8] Ignatius did conflate the two in the Deliberation on Poverty. He headed his list with the statement: 'The disadvantages of having no fixed income are also the advantages of having such an income either in part [churches or sacristies] or in whole [the entire Society]'. For the text of this deliberation, see George Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist, 1991), 225–228.

tendency towards politicizing and hardening into preferred sides.[9] This experience can come as a relief to groups that, in considering particular issues, find that polarization is significant or long-standing. Groups that already have a mandated decision-making framework immediately experience a difference in the quality of their deliberation once they include such a process. For example, the chair can suspend the rules by common consent and then return to taking a vote after the group has arrived at its decision via this less polarizing discernment process. Religious congregations whose constitutions specify certain kinds of decision-making or conditions within which decisions are made will likewise need to examine how to place a discernment process within their governing parameters.

Significantly, each of the original companions spoke on both sides of the consideration. No one took a pass. They were all to offer the fruits of their reflection, prayer and reasoning to the whole group.[10] This strategy offers a way for all to own the eventual decision, but also to give the Spirit room to speak through even the most unlikely member of the group.

'And so, after many days thinking through the pros and cons of our problem and examining the more serious and weighty arguments … at last with the help of the Lord, we arrived at our conclusion.' (n.8) This sentence offers one more clue: the companions considered and weighed. They did not simply count. They were looking for the more 'weighty arguments', so they winnowed out those of less substance. They tested the relative weight of each consideration until they finally arrived at their conclusion with such unanimity that not a single person dissented. They originally considered making decisions by majority—that is, they did not rule out voting. But if voting occurs at the conclusion of this kind of deliberation, the outcome is likely to be much closer to unanimous than not.

Finally, it is important to assure participants who do not hold the majority position or share the consensus that eventually develops, that

[9] See Ann O'Hara Graff, 'Vision of Reality: Discernment and Decision Making in Contemporary Roman Catholic Ecclesiology' (University of Chicago Divinity School, PhD thesis, 1983), 94, cited in Mary Benet McKinney, *Sharing Wisdom: A Process Group Decision Making* (Allen: Tabor, 1987), 160. See also Futrell, 'Communal Discernment', 179; Futrell, 'Deliberation that Started the Jesuits', 203; and Toner, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 3/4 (1971), 141–142.

[10] Such a process is manageable with as small a number as the first companions, who were ten. Facilitators of large discernment groups will have to give careful thought to adaptations allowing all to offer the fruits of their prayer.

their perspective is not less good, and that they have not, somehow, discerned less well. The Spirit works through all voices. If they have faithfully participated in all aspects of the discernment, they can rest assured that the Spirit will work in and through the result, including their minority voice.

Awaiting Confirmation, Personal, Communal and Ecclesial

A concluding step appears in both of the methods Ignatius offers in the third time of election. After making a decision, but before finalising it, we ought 'with great diligence go to prayer to God our Lord and beg [God] to conceive it and confirm it, provided it is conducive to his greater service and praise' (Exx 183, 188).

Unfortunately, neither the *Spiritual Exercises* nor anything else that Ignatius said or wrote publicly, explains what such a confirmation looks like in practice. The best clue comes from the snippet of Ignatius' Spiritual Diary that somehow escaped destruction. Here we catch a glimpse of Ignatius' process as he works out questions that came up as he was writing the *Constitutions* of the Society.

Between 2 and 12 February 1544, Ignatius worked with the question 'About whether the Society should be without fixed income'.[11] He considered it during the day and then brought his leading from that day's prayer first to his celebration of Mass and then to colloquies with Our Lady, the Trinity, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, noting what happened interiorly during the colloquies.[12] Consolations encouraged him; desolations made him doubt the conclusion he had reached. On 8 February he noted how he began the process of confirming his tentative decision:

> After mass, devotion not without tears, while I considered the choices in the election for an hour and a half or more. When I came to offer what seemed to me most reasonable, and to which my will felt most impelled … (Diary, 8 February 1544)

He continued his confirmation for the next month, counting consolations, as it were, and, along the way, received many mystical experiences. However, he was still unable to conclude the matter, and this fact gave

[11] According to George Ganss, Ignatius formulated this question as he deliberated about the type of poverty that would characterize the Society. This deliberation was either simultaneous to the Spiritual Diary or just a bit prior to it. See Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 217.

[12] Note the similarity to the persons addressed in the colloquies in the repetitions of the First Week (Exx 63), the contemplations of the Second Week (Exx 109, 117), the Two Standards (Exx 147, 156) and in the contemplations of the Third Week (Exx 199).

him pause. On 12 March he found himself totally without consolation and was forced to submit to whatever God wanted. In this state, giving up his hold on consolation as a source of confirmation, he began an election on whether he should conclude!

He realised that he was the one driving the need for continual tests and continual consolation, and that the Evil One was using that need to sow confusion about the original matter. At this point, he concluded his original election once and for all, trusting in God for the outcome. Thereafter he treated doubts as temptations, and told the tempter, 'Get to your place' (Diary, 12 March 1544); he received confirmation for this second election about the meaning of confirmation. Over the next weeks, he continued reflecting on confirmation, concluding at first that affection, awe (*acatamiento*) and humility are indications that the election was, indeed confirmed. Yet he soon realised that the sense of being in the divine will is more significant than any external manifestation (tears, visitations, voices) or internal consolations including affectionate awe.

What are we to make of this lengthy and convoluted process? Perhaps simply this: external or internal signs, while important and encouraging, can be counterfeited and used by the Evil One to weaken trust in God, as per the second set of Rules for Discernment of Spirits (Exx 328–336). Thus, we pause for an appropriate amount of time, as suggested by the significance of the matter at hand, while we offer our tentative decision

to God. We pay attention to any major consoling motions such as greater faith, hope, love, humility, affectionate awe, courage to proceed, peace, calm and so on. We hold these consoling motions with the same gentle curiosity suggested in the second set of rules to see if they ring true. Meanwhile, we can also notice other indicators that the long tradition suggests indicate the work of the Spirit, such as conformity with scripture, the confirmation of authorities or other knowledgeable persons, and a settled sense that the decision is in conformity with the call of God at this moment. In the absence of serious indicators that we should not proceed, we conclude the election with thanksgiving.

Since the first companions developed their process out of the first of Ignatius' two methods, we might expect it to show up directly in the procedures described in the deliberations. Yet, we find reference only to the fact that they continued a similar procedure over the three months they were together and that they concluded everything on the feast of John the Baptist with great joy and concord of spirit. They did note, however, that to get to that point they engaged in many labours of mind and body before the deliberations (n.9).

In sum: do the preparatory work carefully, deliberate prayerfully and check the tentative decision by both the inner resonances in the discerners and the outer fruit in the community. Discerners can also look back over the whole course of the discernment (Exx 33) to see both what they can learn for the next discernment and if changes would assure that the implementation remains true to the actual election.

Contemporary groups seeking to discern in common are likely to omit confirmation, perhaps because it is all but hidden in the paradigmatic experience of the early companions. The fast-moving nature of today's culture also encourages both individuals and groups to move quickly from decision to implementation, especially when the decision has taken a lot of time and energy. To counter this tendency, the facilitator or planning group needs to design an appropriate confirmation process and introduce it at the beginning of the discernment as its key concluding step.

For example, before finalising a lengthy discernment involving not only the sale of property but also a move to new quarters, one church congregation's discerning group (consisting of its governing board) was asked to check in individually with the pastor a week after they arrived at their decision. They were to use the intervening week to review the entire process and note their inner sense about the outcome. Only when all the participants reaffirmed the decision would they consider

their discernment completed. They also agreed that each of the planned implementation groups would report its progress to the board at regular intervals. These reporting moments provided the opportunity to tweak the implementation so that it more truly reflected the sentiment of the original election. At the same time, without quite realising it, this congregation began an ongoing process of discerning, checking, implementing and evaluating, leading to the next discernment.

The conditions for a decision need to be clear ahead of time. Will the group vote? What percentage of the votes need to be affirmative to conclude the discernment? Will the group seek consensus about the way forward? Does that consensus have to be a hundred per cent of the discerners? Is there any group that also needs to ratify the decision before it is implemented? How will the concerns of the minority be accounted for in the time of confirmation? What the group determines will affect the quality of the confirmation period?

However these questions are answered, all discerners should be consoled that they prayed and worked with integrity, and that any dissenting voices are also part of the process, used by the Spirit in ways they may not yet see. If the other members of the discerning group receive any objections and minority views respectfully, bringing them into their prayer and considerations, it helps all participants to be assured that they have diligently honoured the process and that they can leave the result in the hands of the Spirit.[13]

Enriching this Paradigmatic Model

This discernment process works best when the group has a clearly focused question. What about other situations? Suppose, for example, the issue is framed like this: *We sense that we have arrived at a new moment in this church's life. How are we now being called to respond?* The group could spend a lot of time in prayerful conversation, as the first companions did, eventually arriving at a well-formed statement of the question. But perhaps there are other ways that the Ignatian tradition could assist the communal discernment. What could the Ignatian tradition offer to such a wide-open question?

[13] Jules Toner reflects on the situation of the person whose individual discernment does not match the group's by comparing it to the situation of prophets, who have an insight or truth prior to a community's awareness of that insight. They witness to the truth by continuing to participate faithfully in the community, awaiting the work of the Spirit in the future. (Toner, 'Method for Communal Discernment', 166)

Ignatius prized using imagination in prayer. The *Spiritual Exercises* present imaginal contemplation early in the Second Week (Exx 101–109), but imagination has definitely not been absent in the rich symbolism of the First Week meditations. The starting point for Ignatian contemplation is scripture, of course, but other 'texts' can also evoke the imagination. For example, what if, after suitable preparation into a discerning group, their discernment exercise went something like this?

Preparatory Prayer
First Prelude: a brief description. Here it could be the church's current pregnant moment.
Second Prelude: the composition. Here it could be imagining all the various aspects of the church as it is now: its people, its possessions, its neighbourhood, and so on.
Third Prelude: to ask for what we desire. Here it will be to *wonder about what form the church could take in five years' time*.
First Point: after sufficient time for the participants to internalise the preparatory preludes, there follows a period of quiet, in which the participants are to sit with the question and allow images, insights, wonderings or other 'offerings' to arise from the depth of the shared silence.
After this time of silence, participants are invited to voice what came to them in the silence. The comments, ideas and images are recorded to be used later in the discernment.
Second Point: the participants are invited to return to the silence with the invitation, *Pick one of the sharings you just heard (it could be your own), and engage it with your imagination. You might find yourself unfolding a visual image, a metaphor or, perhaps, a 'word' for the group. Let your imagination work the way it works best for you, welcoming what comes without censoring it*.
After a suitable time of silence, the participants are invited to offer the results of their imaginative prayer to the group.
Colloquy: the participants and invited to silent prayer over what they have heard, and after some time of quiet prayer, to share a brief prayer aloud.

I would rarely, if ever, burden a group with the Ignatian format and jargon used in the above example, but a process similar to this could help a discerning group to break free of the limits of their imaginations. If we cannot imagine something, we cannot work towards it, so why not invite imagination into our common discernment? Can the Spirit work through our imagination? Ignatius surely thought so.

All sorts of variations are possible. The participants could pick one of the imaginary scenarios and enter into it collectively, allowing the various offerings to stimulate other imaginings. The group could select several of the offerings and, over several meetings, elaborate each one. After one or more sessions, the leader asks the group: *What have we learnt collectively from this imaginary exercise? What clues arise about how God is inviting us into the future?*

Ignatius also takes the body seriously, with numerous additional notes in the *Spiritual Exercises* designed to facilitate the use of the body in prayer (Exx 26, 75–76, 79, 83–86, 89, 210–215). He also includes a whole prayer form based on the body in the Additional Ways of Praying (Exx 247–248). The two key indicators in the second time for making an election, consolation and desolation, often register directly in the body. How might the body enter common discernment? One opportunity—others are certainly possible—comes in the time of confirmation. Participants might be encouraged to pay attention to how the tentative decision feels in their bodies. Is there a felt sense of 'rightness', or does something jar the body, if ever so subtly (Exx 335)?

Memory also shows up in the *Spiritual Exercises*, most notably when Ignatius reminds one in desolation to remember the times of consolation, with the assurance that consolation will indeed return (Exx 321). Likewise, remembering the ways God has worked in the community in the past can encourage discerners to start on a discernment journey and, when they wonder when the discernment will conclude, to continue their prayerful attending. God will surely honour their attempts to respond faithfully—though how God works that faithfulness out concretely may very well surprise them!

The prayer of examen also has a significant role to play in common discernment. The discerning group could conclude each session with some moments of consciousness examen over their time together.[14] If it

[14] They might follow a simple format introduced in Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn and Matthew Linn, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* (New York: Paulist, 1994).

is done silently, each discerner carries away a fresh awareness of how God has been at work interiorly. But if discerners briefly voice aloud their sense of the Spirit's grace and the points where it seemed that the Spirit was absent, examen becomes a moment of deepening the insight into the process and of the Spirit's work with their group. Within the deliberations, at the various moments in which the group pauses for prayer, discerners can be encouraged to reflect on where they do not feel free with respect to the issues being discussed and where they do not feel truly open to the words of another member of the discerning group.[15] At the conclusion of a discernment, examen can provide a format for looking back at the beginning, middle and end, as suggested in the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (Exx 333). Such moments of Examen embedded within the longer process can help continually deepen the spiritual freedom of the discerners.

This close examination of the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises* and other documents reveals a system of discernment in common that is still effective today, more than four hundred years later. However, this process, robust as it is, should not be canonized as 'the way to do common discernment'. Ignatius himself was never shy about adapting resources from the tradition to his situation, and would not be shy today.[16] Nor should we be shy about incorporating well-tested forms of discernment to the extent that they assist our group in deepening its mission.[17]

Beyond the obvious need to adapt the process left to us by the first companions for groups of very different sizes and responsibilities, the more basic lesson Ignatius and the first companions leave us is: do not confuse the means and the end. Discernment is the means; the end is more effectively following—together—God's invitation for this group in this time and place. The Ignatian pattern of discernment in common is extended through any practice that nourishes deep common prayer

[15] For this use of examen within the group's prayer, see Toner, 'Method for Communal Discernment', 175.
[16] For a concise summary of the spiritual traditions influencing Ignatius, see Javier Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominister: Gracewing, 2000).
[17] For example, the Quaker Meeting for Business occurs within the same worshipful silence as the Meeting for Worship, and embeds decision-making within careful listening and thoughtful conversation, as well as worshipful silence, arriving at decisions without voting. See Michael Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decisions in the Religious Society of Friends* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1983), for a thoughtful presentation of the history, belief systems and processes of decision-making in the Quaker context. For a contemporary Quaker-influenced work suitable for a wide variety of contemporary contexts, see Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012). Tellingly, the first two-thirds of the book deal with practices that deepen the prayer of the leadership group.

together building a praying community into a discerning community, any practice characterized by the earnest desire for indifference, and any practice that sorts and weighs options with attention to whether or not they are confirmed. Together we pray, as Ignatius invites us:

> Take, Lord, and receive all our liberty,
> our memories, our understanding
> and our entire wills,
> all we have and call our own.
> You have given all to us.
> To you, Lord, we return it.
> Everything is yours; do with it as you will.
> Give us only love of you and your grace,
> That is enough for us.[18]

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[18] Exx 234, translation modified.

THE MARTYRS AT MUSAMI

Nicolas Stebbing

MANY READERS WILL RECOGNISE the date 6 February 1977, especially if you add the words 'St Paul's, Musami'. That is where three Jesuits and four Dominican sisters died in a hail of bullets during the Zimbabwean civil war. They were not the only people to die. Roughly 30,000 people perished in that war, including many other missionaries and a far greater number of innocent village folk. Yet some of us have special cause to remember the Musami martyrs and I am one. They had a big impact on my life.

I am an Anglican priest and in 1977 I was the priest in charge of the neighbouring mission in Chikwaka. I had been there a year and loved the work, travelling round on a motorbike, saying Mass in churches, schools and villages. I loved the people, who were so friendly and grateful for whatever I could do. I loved that beautiful countryside with its *kopjes* (hills), rivers and lovely long grass. Driving a motorbike on dirt roads is a joy, especially if you are young. Quite often I would meet Fr Christopher Shepherd-Smith on his motorbike (a better, trail bike!) covering the same area and we would stop to compare notes. Once he came to borrow wine for a Mass, as he had left his behind.

I loved to visit St Paul's, tucked under a *kopje* which looks rather like a ship. It was across the Nyagui River, just a few miles away from us as the crow flies, but much further by road. The Jesuits there were always friendly in a quiet, English way. I had a few meals with them, stayed the night once and was encouraged by their example. Fr Mark Hackett was the superior. Martin Thomas was a cousin of our own Anglican bishop. Brother Conway was not quiet; he was Irish! I didn't know the Dominican sisters so well, though I can picture some of their faces: Sr Magdala laughing, and elderly Sr Epiphany getting out of a chair to greet me.

So it was a shock that went right through me, listening to the lunchtime news one day to hear that Martin Thomas, Chris Shepherd-Smith and Br Conway had been killed, along with the four sisters. It

was a shock because I knew them. It was a deeper shock because it shattered my idea of God. Zimbabwe missions were dangerous places in those years, but I had always thought I was pretty safe. I was white, so white soldiers would not shoot me. I was on the side of the liberation struggle so the guerrilla fighters would not shoot me. And of course there was God. I was a priest. God would look after me.

And then Musami happened. God hadn't looked after those Jesuits and Dominicans, and they were much better than me. Why should God look after me? That was the beginning of a long journey with God, trying to understand that actually God does look after us, but it doesn't mean quite what we think it means. Lots of faithful Christians make this discovery—when they get cancer, or when a tragedy happens. Some people in wars, both combatants and victims, find their lives turned in a meaningful direction by their experience of violence. Most of them find they can still cling on to God, still believe God is a loving God and even a powerful God, but is not at our command. God doesn't do what we say. God does what is good and right. When we learn to believe that we can learn a deeper trust, a more mature love.

Martyrs such as the Musami martyrs remind us, too, that life is not just a matter of staying alive as long we can. That is especially true of Christian life, or should be. We have a different perspective from the secular world. We can love this world intensely and yet look forward to the next. In the last Harry Potter novel Dumbledore tells Voldemort that death is not the worst thing that can happen to a person. Voldemort is shocked; he is desperately trying to avoid death and most of the terrible evil he does is because of that. Christians know Dumbledore is right. It is a message the Church should have preached during this COVID pandemic. It would have caused offence, but it is true, and in the end the truth brings deep comfort where collusion with our secular culture does not.

The Zimbabwean war taught me to look differently at death, and therefore at life. Life becomes more precious, more beautiful, when we discover it can so quickly end. Trivial things are shown up for their triviality when seen in this light, and so are more easily discarded. Death is not nothing. It can be tragic; it may be traumatic. Death is very important. Yet, 'In my end is my beginning' as T. S. Eliot reminds us in the *Four Quartets*. I don't live up to this knowledge very well but when I think properly about it, death looks very different, and so does life. They take on a new glory. A few weeks after the killings I was complaining

about the war to one of the lovely nuns from the mission, how it went on and on, and seemed as though it would never end. She put me right: 'Father, don't you trust our friends from Musami? Don't you believe they are praying for us?' She was right, and the war did come to an end, though many thousands more people were to die before that happened.

Nicolas Stebbing with Sr Anna Marie and Sr Elizabeth Chita cheZita Rinoyera at the Chikwaka mission

Yet, we must not be glib. Tertullian said, 'The blood of Christians is seed'; and churches that have martyrs certainly grow.[1] Yet still a martyrdom is a tragedy. The women and men at Musami had families who were deeply hurt by their deaths. Fr Chris was an only child. He and I were about the same age, and I have had a wonderful life since then. I am glad I didn't die a martyr, though I might have done more good to my people if I had! Chris missed so much of life. So did the others. And the people they served lost so much. The people of Musami were grief-stricken. The killers themselves would have been scarred by their action. We should never want martyrdom; it is great evil that produces martyrdom, even if, as with Christ himself, the evil is turned into great good. And who were the killers? Fr Hackett told me the local guerrilla fighters had sent a message to say it wasn't them. Many believed they were Rhodesian army soldiers giving the guerrillas a bad name. Certainly, many of my compatriots hated us missionaries. Whoever they are we should pray for them, but it is sometimes hard.

I have other things to be grateful for. The Musami Jesuits were the first I really knew and they began a long intertwining of my life with

[1] Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, chapter 50, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, translated by Sydney Thelwall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 55.

this great Society. In Zimbabwe, in South Africa, at St Beuno's, training to give the Spiritual Exercises, I have found learning and wisdom lightly worn, humour and humanity, and respect towards me as an Anglican. I found, too, that there is a long history of martyrdom in the Society of Jesus, stretching back to the English martyrs under Elizabeth, embracing the martyrs in El Salvador in 1989 and Fr Stan Swamy in India in 2021.

There have been so many others. I remember Fr Gerry Pieper and that great friend of the Jesuits, John Bradburne, both also killed in Zimbabwe. It is a privilege to have known them and a joy to remember them. We can rejoice now at the gift they made of their lives to the people of Zimbabwe. Through their sacrifice we may grow in our knowledge of Christ and deepen our own commitment to God. The current war in Ukraine reminds us all of the courage and the tragedy of war. There is no simple answer but a need to take the whole story to God.

But these martyred men and women, and the thousands of anonymous people who died in that Zimbabwean war and other conflicts, bear another important witness: to the sheer evil of war. It is one manifestation of sin in our world. The manner in which our Western world still profits from war, from the war industry and the lies that go with it, must stand as a shame to us all.

And there is another painful reason why I am grateful to that civil war. Forty years after it ended there is still so much violence around the world: civil war, oppression, random violence. Having seen it up close I know what it looks like. I think of the ordinary people, the mothers and fathers trying to feed their families, the kids trying to get to school, the young couple wanting to make a life. How they suffer. I think also with gratitude of the sisters and priests, the church leaders, the aid workers and the ordinary officials who struggle to keep a country going and risk their lives to help the victims of the violence. Pictures of that are alive in my imagination and inform my prayer. My friends from Musami keep me alive to the cost of this care.

Martyrs of Musami, pray for us!

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FAITHFUL TO BRING IT TO COMPLETION

Encouragement for Daily Life as a Retreat Nears Its End

Mark Yavarone

> At the end of the retreat we cannot easily avoid the question of how successful we will be in carrying out our new resolutions.[1]

AS A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, I find that the prospect of returning to daily life after a retreat often elicits fear from retreatants, especially if the retreat has been powerful for them. The thought begins to form, vaguely at first, that the fruits of the retreat may not last. Directors may experience a familiar temptation at this point: to try to solve the retreatants' problem. We want their retreat to be effective in their daily life both for their own sake and for our own sense of usefulness. And there are plenty of lists of post-retreat suggestions and plans of life to choose from and offer to directees. However, an immediate move to practical suggestions overlooks the primary task of discerning the movements that are prompting the fear in the first place. Let us begin by asking what St Ignatius of Loyola's Rules for Discernment of Spirits can teach us about this situation.

Behind Enemy Lines

The 1977 film *A Bridge Too Far* recounts the story of Operation Market Garden—a bold attempt by Allied forces in 1944 to hasten the end of World War II by penetrating Holland to prepare for an invasion of Germany. The operation would begin with large numbers of Allied forces parachuting in behind enemy lines. In general, historians judge Operation Market Garden to have been a failure. Successfully dropping behind enemy lines (not to mention safely returning) is no easy task.

[1] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, translated by Kenneth Baker (London: Herder and Herder, 1986), 284.

Ignatius' Rules for Discernment of Spirits give the impression that he not only dropped behind enemy lines but brought back the enemy's battle plan with him. In the second of the First Week rules, Ignatius tells us that for maturing Christians, it is 'characteristic of the evil spirit to cause gnawing anxiety, to sadden, and to set up obstacles. In this way he unsettles these persons by false reasons aimed at preventing their progress.' (Exx 315) It is of *primary* importance prayerfully to bring such 'obstacles' to Jesus, in this case the fear that the fruits of one's retreat will not endure.

Once retreatants have begun to relate these concerns to Jesus, a director can be of help in unmasking the evil spirit by showing that their reasonings about returning to daily life are misguided. Often, this fear originates with a failure to recognise a simple truth: God is as reliable in *maintaining* the fruits of a retreat as God is in *giving* those fruits in the first place. As St Paul encourages the Philippians, 'I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6). St Paul does not say, *He who began a good work in you will now leave you on your own to sink or swim*. We realise that St Paul's confidence is well founded if we consider that Jesus promised to remain with his followers until the end of the age. His promise not to leave them orphaned was a response to a similar fear that the apostles were experiencing at the time. Jesus' ongoing presence, particularly his eucharistic presence, is proof that he had no intention of leaving them on their own.

With retreatants, such 'false reasons' are often supported by selective memory: *How many times has the good of previous retreats slipped away after a few days or weeks back at the grind?* Persistent thoughts of this type indicate that spiritual desolation is distorting the retreatant's recall. The misconception can be exposed by means of a simple question: *How do you* know *that your previous retreats have not had lasting effects?* To be able to conclude this, retreatants would have to be able to compare their current spiritual situation with their hypothetical condition if he had never made those retreats. No one but God is capable of this.

Imagine a married friend who is pessimistic about celebrating his upcoming thirtieth wedding anniversary. *We've been celebrating our anniversary every year since we were married*, he says, *and we still have trouble getting along. After a few days it's back to life as usual.* With a little reflection, you can probably surmise what you would say to your friend: *Do you think your marriage would have survived this long if you neglected your anniversary every year?*

Likewise, in his classic book *A Vacation with the Lord,* Thomas Green compares a good retreat to a good vacation in which we exert ourselves at something we love to do.[2] We might imagine a co-worker saying, *My holidays don't do me any good. I've taken one every year for eighteen years, and when I return, it's back to the rat race just like before.* Once again, your words of wisdom would probably be simple: *Do you really think you would have survived eighteen years of the rat race if you never took a holiday?*

Clearly, the fear that a retreat will not have lasting value is usually an obstacle backed by false reasons intended to lead retreatants into discouragement. We should not be surprised by this. If, as Venerable Bruno Lanteri said, 'There is nothing so valuable in this world as to be able to spend several days in peace, occupied only with the great concerns, God, the Soul, Eternity', we should expect the evil one to invest a great deal of spiritual capital in convincing us that there is nothing *less* valuable than doing so.[3] If the evil spirit cannot entice us to give up on retreats entirely, he will at least try to get us to forego having a retreat director in the future, the better to turn those retreats into solitary exercises in self-deception.

[2] See Thomas Green, *A Vacation with the Lord* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1986), 30.

[3] Venerable Bruno Lanteri to Leopoldo Ricasoli, 4 September 1804, in *Documents of the Founder: Pio Brunone Lanteri, 1759–1830*, edited by Timothy Gallagher (Boston: Oblates of the Virgin Mary, 1988), 61. Venerable Bruno Lanteri (1759–1830) was the founder of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, a group of Catholic priests and brothers dedicated to giving the Spiritual Exercises.

Starting from the Basic Good of a Retreat

The director can encourage retreatants by reminding them that a good has been accomplished simply in making the retreat, which can never be taken away. We know that Jesus is the good shepherd who goes in search of his lost sheep. How it must move him when a sheep takes temporary leave of his fellows and comes looking for *him*! This is exactly what retreatants have done by choosing to make a retreat. *This is good in itself,* even if some seeds planted by the Lord remain dormant for a time, perhaps even until a future retreat.

In addition, retreatants have probably spent hours in prayer, including time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, praying for God's glory in their lives and their own salvation. *This is also a good in itself.* There are always after-effects when we spend long hours with the Lord; this is precisely why we sense the dissonance so profoundly when we return to the secular world. Jesus himself seems to have felt this dissonance when he descended from Mount Tabor to find his followers engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to cast out a demon (Matthew 17:14–21).

Many retreatants will also have received the sacraments during their retreat and will have been at least reasonably honest with their director. If they are consecrated persons, they may also have fulfilled a wise requirement of their rule that enjoins them to make an annual retreat. *All of these things would be good in themselves* even if the false supposition about a lack of lasting fruits from the retreat were true.

'You Will See Greater Things than These' (John 1:50)

Beyond these basic goods from a retreat, we can confidently expect that the fruits will multiply if we follow the simple way that the Lord lays out for us. Some retreatants think that their retreat will only be worthwhile if they are faithful to a multitude of new resolutions. In contrast, Thomas Green suggests that the fruit of a good retreat has a certain compactness: 'I believe that in a good retreat the Lord has just one "message" for us. It is an exciting adventure to discover gradually, with the help of the journal and the daily repetition, what that message is.'[4]

This message may involve the choice of a state of life if the retreatant has made an election in the usual sense. Post-retreat faithfulness, in

[4] Green, *Vacation with the Lord,* 12.

this case, may simply mean carrying through on the first good step towards effecting the election: applying for the graduate programme, proposing marriage, making an appointment with the diocesan vocation director, and so on. While this might seem obvious, retreatants sometimes experience enough doubt after their retreat to delay action on their election.

Jules Toner offers sound advice in this regard. He tells us that, strictly speaking, our election does not concern what we will *do;* we can only elect what we will *efficaciously intend* to do. In other words, we can only *begin* to enact our election, realising that the Lord may afterwards lead us in unexpected ways.[5] The lives of many holy men and women bear out this wisdom. Venerable Bruno Lanteri's early attempt to found the Oblates of the Virgin Mary in the diocese of Turin ended with the dissolving of the group in 1820. He discerned that the 'next best' option would be to enter the Jesuit novitiate, despite his advanced age. While making his pre-novitiate retreat, he unexpectedly received the inspiration to found the Oblates once again in another diocese. Had Lanteri not begun to enact his choice to enter the Jesuit novitiate, he might never have received this inspiration, and I might not be writing these words now. Similarly, at first glance the path that the Israelites trod through the desert seems more like the work of a drunken cartographer than a provident God. But they arrived at the promised land by taking one unexpected step at a time towards the fire and cloud.

'There Is Need of Few Things, or of One' (Luke 10:42)[6]

Even if the fruit of the retreat is a reordering or readjusting of life rather than an election in the strict sense, I believe that Thomas Green's point about the 'compactness' of the message of a good retreat still holds. In Exx 14.1, Ignatius warns retreatants against hastily making a vow when in consolation and great fervour. By implication, a similar danger exists in resolving *too many* good things.

In his retreats for priests, Archbishop Fulton Sheen often spoke of the daily Holy Hour as the key to holiness:

[5] Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 62–69.

[6] Some biblical manuscripts have these words in Luke 10: 42 instead of the more common 'There is need of only one thing'. See Charles Ellicott, *A New Testament Commentary for English Readers* (London: Cassell, 1897).

> Every retreat for priests that I ever gave had this as a practical resolution. Too often retreats are like health conferences. There is a general agreement on the need for health, but there is lacking a specific recommendation on how to be healthy.[7]

Sheen is making a point similar to that of Green. Any positive changes that we resolve to make during a retreat have not yet gained the strength of habit. We generally do better to focus on one new habit than to multiply them. Most of us can verify this principle from our annual experience of Lent. Multiple Lenten resolutions often lead to disappointment because each old habit dies hard, and each new one takes time to develop.

John the Baptist apparently made use of the same wisdom when people 'retreated' to him in the desert. Rather than giving them an elaborate plan of life he stuck with the one thing (or a few things) necessary for each: 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise'; to tax collectors he said, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you'; and to soldiers, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages' (Luke 3:11–14). John knew well that if a change of heart led to reform in one area, other changes would follow. Unless the Lord indicates otherwise, then, I encourage retreatants to limit themselves to *one concrete response to God's grace in the area of prayer and another in the area of action* as their retreat draws towards its close.

How do we arrive at the 'one thing necessary' in each of these areas? As retreatants contemplate the mysteries of Christ's life, I am alert to what they are noticing about Jesus, and I encourage them to note it in their journals. The grace of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises is illuminative, and often a certain aspect of Jesus' frame of mind or heart strikes retreatants. There is usually a connection between what is attracting them and latent desires to reform their own lives to become more like Christ. Retreatants who have become bogged down in the details of administration might tell their director, *I see how Jesus always kept his eyes on the Father, no matter how busy he was*. One who is an effective preacher but uncomfortable in one-to-one situations might say, *I'm amazed that he was equally at home with individuals and with the multitude*. A teacher who is trying to benefit his or her students despite opposition from superiors might note, *Jesus was so self-possessed, even in the midst of opposition*.

[7] Fulton J. Sheen, *Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Archbishop Sheen* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 194.

I sometimes find it helpful to ask the following question at this time:

> *Imagine that you were to return to your room after this meeting to find an angel seated at your desk. He turns to you and encourages you to select one concrete change in your prayer life, as well as one change in the living of your life among others. The angel also tells you that a special grace will be given to you that will guarantee success. What would you choose to change?*

There is a certain calmness that should prevail as the retreatant narrows down the possibilities with Jesus to the 'one thing necessary'. Ignatius compares such discernment to a servant who offers various dishes to his prince and notices which one is most to his liking.[8]

Before considering some possible examples of these specific faith responses, let us discuss some general helps to implementing them *before the retreat ends*.

Making Explicit Recourse to Mary

In his classic *True Devotion to Mary,* St Louis de Montfort has the following to say of those who have fallen away from the spiritual treasure that God has given them:

> If they had but known the admirable devotion which I will unfold presently, they would have confided their treasure to a Virgin powerful

[8] Dir 1: 21.

> and faithful, who would have kept it for them as if it had been her own possession.[9]

With respect to God's grace, we are all containers that are more holey than holy, so it is important that the retreatants *explicitly* entrust the gifts of their retreat to Mary before returning home. I have become increasingly grateful that the retreat centre where I am stationed is named after Our Lady of *Perpetual* Help. She is not one to give *temporary* help during a retreat, only to deny the retreatant's request to given ongoing protection to the gifts that her Son has bestowed.

Composing a Personal Retreat Prayer

As I have already mentioned, Thomas Green says that the Lord generally 'has just one message, one word, so to speak, for us' on retreat, and as the retreat nears its end this word of the Lord for us begins to become clear. Green makes a suggestion on how to encapsulate or 'pack up' the grace that the Lord has given. 'It is helpful', he says, 'to take the time to formulate a prayer expressing what this word is, what the message of the Lord to us has been and what our response is'.[10]

My interpretation of this is that the first part of the retreatants' brief prayer should be an expression of gratitude for what God has given them during the retreat. The second part then asks for God's help in being faithful in their own response to the grace given. Green says that for many retreatants such a prayer has been 'a very great help in keeping alive the vision and the spirit of the retreat once they returned to the pressures of daily life'.[11] Although their words cannot fully express the reality of their retreat, I have also found the composition of such a prayer to be very helpful to retreatants. Some of them have been very creative with their prayer, printing it out as a bookmark or card and keeping it in their breviary, or attaching to the prayer some physical reminder of the retreat: a pressed flower from the retreat grounds, a small seashell, and so on.

Composing this prayer can be considered a simplification of the Contemplation to Attain Love of the Spiritual Exercises. Here the retreatant thanks God for the many blessings received, then gives voice to the *suscipe* prayer, offering everything to the Lord in return. As I

[9] St Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary* (Bay Shore: Montfort Fathers, 1950), 64.
[10] Green, *Vacation with the Lord*, 120.
[11] Green, *Vacation with the Lord*, 121.

have described it here, the action part of the prayer may be more focused than the *suscipe* of the contemplation, but it expresses the truth that, 'Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words' (Exx 230.2).

Concreteness in Taking the First Step

A readjustment of life in the area of prayer or action should begin with a concrete step that retreatants settle upon *before leaving the retreat.* Rather than simply resolving to begin praying for their enemies, they could commit to prayerfully lifting up the name of a workplace adversary every time they stop at a traffic light. The intention to try to get up earlier in the morning to pray might include the decision to purchase a second alarm and place it on the other side of the bedroom. Abstract resolutions can lead to discouragement and disappointment because they often require a sweeping transformation to realise. But a simple, concrete step can be a realistic beginning to such a transformation.

A simple, concrete step can be a realistic beginning

I once heard about a study of various ways to initiate a lasting physical exercise regimen. The study showed that the most effective means to begin the habit of exercise was simply to *stand for five minutes each day on a treadmill and do nothing.* As the subjects in the study habituated themselves to standing on the treadmill, they began to walk on it, and then to extend their time of walking. Should we be surprised that a similar strategy is often best for effecting change in our spiritual lives?

Accountability to the Regular Spiritual Director after a Retreat

Before leaving a retreat, it is also a good idea for retreatants to make their next appointment with their regular spiritual director, if they have not already done so, and to commit themselves to discussing the fruits of the retreat with him or her. If a retreatant does not have a regular director, finding one may be the 'one thing necessary' to initiate in the area of action.

Having discussed these four helps to fruitfulness before the retreat's end, we now move to some examples of concrete proposals. Plans of life from various authors and lists of possible post-retreat resolutions can be helpful here, but we should see such resources merely as aids to arriving at the 'one thing necessary' in prayer and in action. I offer my own list of possibilities presently.

The 'One Thing Necessary' in Prayer

Reception of the Sacraments

It is not uncommon for Roman Catholic spiritual directors to go through several sessions of direction without mentioning the sacraments. Perhaps when we try to ascertain what has been 'happening' in the directee's prayer, we unconsciously limit ourselves to what has been happening in his or her *private* prayer. In reality, the liturgy, and particularly the eucharist, is the 'source and summit' of all of our prayer and activity; it is the place where more 'happens' than anywhere else.[12] By analogy, we should not limit post-retreat growth in our life of prayer to private prayer only. For example, in the unlikely event that a Catholic retreatant does not participate in Sunday Mass each week, this is the best concrete change possible. If he or she already attends weekly Mass but does not do so daily, adding one daily Mass per week may be a good next step.

Receiving the sacrament of reconciliation regularly should also not be overlooked. It is important to arrive at concrete means for an area of growth before concluding the retreat. This specificity may include imagining what steps one would take to schedule regular doctor's appointments for a life-threatening condition, and then taking the same initiative with the sacrament of reconciliation. Examples might be adding the times of confession at a local parish to one's appointment book or calendar app and scheduling the sacrament once a month. Likewise, selecting the day of the week on which one is most free to attend daily Mass and adding it to one's calendar can mark the beginning of an invaluable habit of prayer.

Eucharistic Adoration.

It was not without reason that Archbishop Sheen suggested a daily Holy Hour as the practical resolution for every priests' retreat that he preached. If a daily Holy Hour seems impractical or too daunting to a retreatant who is not accustomed to it, a half-hour may be a good beginning. Our treadmill analogy illustrates that spending ten distracted minutes before the Blessed Sacrament *today* is a better beginning than saying, *I'll wait until I have more time next month and start doing an entire Holy Hour then.*

[12] *Carechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 11.

Reception and adoration of the eucharist confirm the graces received on retreat and reinforce daily faithfulness to other aspects of one's election or reform of life. An important fringe benefit is that the time of adoration, or the time immediately before or after Mass, provides a regular occasion for practising the particular examen.

Particular Examen

It once puzzled me that Ignatius placed the particular examination of conscience before the general examination in the *Spiritual Exercises*. After all, it is the general examination that most of us think of first when we think of the examen prayer. Could it be that Ignatius himself recognised that the 'one thing necessary' in the spiritual life has priority over the many things possible?

Following this order of Ignatius, I place the particular examen before the general examen here as a means of regularly asking Jesus' help in being faithful to one's resolution in the area of action. In his book *Discovering Your Personal Vocation,* Herbie Alfonso describes a refreshing way of making the particular examen, originally formulated by Luis de La Palma. In La Palma's view, practising the particular examen,

> … consists in choosing some very definite moments of the day—moments that one can *be sure of* in one's daily schedule, no matter how few in number they may be—and at these moments, putting on the attitude of the area that has been chosen as the subject of the particular examen … all one needs to check is whether one has been faithful to the definite number of moments chosen for the already mentioned putting-on of the attitude.[13]

To illustrate, let us consider the earlier example of the retreatant who has been inspired during retreat to begin praying for his enemies, and has resolved to begin by lifting up his workplace adversary in prayer whenever he is stopped at a red light. His particular examen, done perhaps during his time of adoration, or before or after Mass, would consist of noting if he has been faithful in adopting this prayerful attitude towards his enemy at those specific moments. He would then thank Jesus if he has been faithful, and ask for Jesus' help if he has not.

[13] Herbie Alphonso, *Discovering Your Personal Vocation* (New York: Paulist, 2001), 71–72.

General Examen

One of the best means of post-retreat faithfulness is the examen prayer. Whoa! I can almost hear the evil spirit talking into your ear from here:

> *How many times have you rededicated yourself to being faithful to your daily examen, only to become sloppy again or leave it off entirely when it begins to feel dry and sterile? What makes you think that this time will be any different?*

The superior general of my religious congregation once sent a letter to all of our members throughout the world. He had become aware that some of us were no longer being faithful to the examen prayer, and he enjoined us to begin again the practice of the examen by doing the first step—giving thanks to God our Lord for favours received—and *ending the examen there.* This single step of gratitude can begin to develop the habit of the examen while avoiding the negative associations that many people have with this trusted form of prayer. Such an examen could include gratitude for the recent retreat, as well as praying the first part of the prayer that was composed, in which the retreatant gave thanks to God for the gifts given.

After the gratitude part of the examen has become second nature, one can then add to the examen five minutes of spiritual reading from a source that will nourish the examen prayer further. The classic article 'Consciousness Examen' by George Aschenbrenner, or Timothy Gallagher's book *The Examen Prayer* can be very useful for this purpose.[14] One is sure to be inspired to add further steps that will vivify the examen, perhaps one at a time.

Spiritual Direction

As I have already suggested, one should take the initiative in informing one's spiritual director about the fruits of a retreat and checking in with him or her during subsequent sessions about his or her ongoing response. As an aid to this, I suggested making one's next appointment for spiritual direction before leaving the retreat facility.

It is common to find retreatants who say that they cannot implement this suggestion because they have not been able to find a regular spiritual

[14] George Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious,* 31/1 (1972), 14–21; Timothy Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer* (New York: Crossroad, 2006).

director. Although finding a director can indeed be difficult, one should be open to beginning with someone who might not fit one's 'ideal job description'. At least the retreatant can choose a regular confessor and ask him if he would be willing to answer some spiritual questions after confession. This is a much better strategy than waiting for the 'perfect wave' to begin spiritual direction.

Periodic Times of Silence and Solitude

Many consecrated and lay persons as well as priests withdraw from their usual occupations to be alone with God for a day on a monthly basis. A monthly day of recollection provides a privileged opportunity to review one's spiritual development, and to take a longer view of how the fruits of a retreat are unfolding. It also provides a good opportunity to revisit one's retreat prayer and to pray it more deeply. Again, we must be concrete in planning these days of recollection. Such times of silence and solitude will likely never happen if we do not include them in our calendar.

A Spiritual Journal.

An excellent Catholic laywoman once lamented her own habit of overlooking the great things that God was doing in her life: *I could trip over a miracle*, she said, *and not notice it*. Keeping a journal prevents or at least minimises such neglect. If those who pray regularly write about where they 'felt greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience' (Exx 62.2), they may be surprised at the convergence of those experiences and the divine communication they indicate. I find it is seldom necessary to write more than half a page at one sitting, and that the conclusion of one's regular prayer is the best time for this.

Daily Meditation and Contemplation.

In describing the 'wellsprings of prayer' through which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places the Word of God first.[15] There is no shortage of possible ways to use the scriptures for daily prayer. Some people take the gospel passage from the Mass of the day for their private prayer; others pray their way during the week through the readings for the coming Sunday. Some find it more fruitful to use one of the four Gospels in a more or less continuous fashion, perhaps the one highlighted by the Church during that liturgical year.

Preparing to pray by using a simple commentary or a study Bible that gives the background of the passage is also highly recommended. I have found it helpful to read such materials before the actual time of prayer, and then to use a version of the Bible without many notes during the prayer itself. This helps to ensure that the time of prayer will not become a time of study.

There is an abundance of books and other resources available that allow us to pray through the scriptures, the *Spiritual Exercises*, or the writings of a particular saint. Regardless of which of these we use, we should remember the principle of Ignatian repetition: lingering for several days with a particular passage in which we experience greater movements of spirit or spiritual appreciation is better than routinely moving on to a new passage each day.

Spiritual Reading

As a retreat draws to a close, it is wise to ask the retreat director to suggest spiritual reading that would complement what the Lord has given during the retreat. St Ignatius of Loyola began his lifelong journey of holiness with two books—a life of Christ and a life of the saints. When in doubt, these are two fine subjects for spiritual reading both during and after a retreat.

Reading about prayer itself can also be a great spiritual investment. If one has not yet developed a habit of daily prayer at all, Matthew Kelly's book *I Heard God Laugh* is a good choice.[16] If one has already begun to pray regularly and now desires to learn more, I recommend Thomas Green's book *Opening to God.*[17] If one wishes to learn more

[15] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* n. 2653.
[16] Matthew Kelly, *I Heard God Laugh* (North Palm Beach: Blue Sparrow, 2020).
[17] Thomas Green, *Opening to God* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 2006).

about prayer using the scriptures as St Ignatius of Loyola describes it in the *Spiritual Exercises,* Timothy Gallagher's *Meditation and Contemplation* is a fine place to start.[18]

Many suppose that catechisms are by nature dry, and are surprised to find that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes excellent spiritual reading. The *Catechism* frequently elaborates on doctrinal points in a deeply spiritual way. The entirety of the fourth and final part of the *Catechism* is entitled 'The Life of Prayer', and readers will find ample nourishment in it for their prayer life. A commitment to even one page of such spiritual reading per day can be a valuable fruit of a retreat.

Liturgy of the Hours

It has been pointed out that 'sloth' is an acronym for 'skipping Liturgy of the Hours'. It is not uncommon even for those who are obliged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Office, as it is sometimes called) to leave off this trusted form of prayer. I confess that for my first few years as a priest, I did not pray Daytime Prayer. At some point, I received the graced realisation that Daytime Prayer was the 'one thing necessary' to add to my life of prayer. I now find that it makes for a much-needed thanksgiving after midday Mass, and I append to the Divine Office the streamlined particular examen as described above.

The 'One Thing Necessary' in Action

When it comes to particular changes in daily life, the possibilities are even more diverse than in our life of prayer. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius speaks only in broad terms:

> One ought to consider … how large a house and how many persons in it one ought to maintain, how one ought to direct and govern its members, and how to teach them by word and example. So too persons such as these should examine their resources, how much they ought to assign for the house and household, and how much for the poor and other good works. (Exx 189.6–8)

Though Ignatius does not intend this as an exhaustive list, his attention to the size of one's household and distribution of one's means to the poor is not accidental. Tithing, or giving one's time and talent to the poor, elderly or unborn are excellent possibilities to consider as an

[18] Timothy Gallagher, *Meditation and Contemplation* (New York: Crossroad, 2008).

area of reform of life. Two other examples have already been given: attention to how one relates to one's adversaries; and rising earlier to begin one's day with prayer. Other possibilities include: modifying or discontinuing the use of alcohol; taking concrete steps to overcome pornography use; initiating reconciliation with a relative; connecting socially with one's fellow laymen, laywomen, priests or religious; expressing love or interest regularly towards a community member who seems to be on the periphery; making an appointment with a counsellor to deal with anxiety or depression; breaking off an unhealthy relationship or taking the first step towards starting a healthy one.

In directed retreats with active Catholic religious, I have found it helpful during the meditations of the Second Week to offer a document entitled *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life*.[19] It is concise and lends itself well to reading during retreat. Part 2 describes nine essential elements of religious life: vows, community life, mission, prayer, asceticism, public witness, relation to the Church, formation and government. Growth in any one of these areas may strike the prayerful religious as the one thing necessary at that point in his or her life.

Growth in the area that we settle on should begin with a tangible step. It is one thing to say, *Maybe I'll try counselling to deal with my anxiety*, and quite another to commit myself to setting up an initial visit with two or three of the nearest counsellors on catholictherapists.org. Connecting more with family members might be a noble goal, but putting their birthdays or anniversaries in one's calendar as a reminder to visit, call or write can lead to a real change of habits.

While it is possible that the Lord might want us to resolve many things after a retreat, I find this to be the exception rather than the rule. He is aware, no doubt, of the steady transformation in our lives that would result if each of us enacted the one thing necessary in prayer and action after each of our retreats!

Beginning Again

Retreatants should not worry about whether the evil one will try to take away the good seed that has been planted during their time with the Lord.

[19] Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccscrlife/documents/rc_con_ccscrlife_doc_31051983_magisterium-on-religious-life_en.html.

He *will* try; there is no question about that. If you do not get a flat tyre on your way home from retreat, you can count on finding a note waiting for you from the most difficult person in your ministry, or having an altercation with a community or family member soon after you walk through the door. If we find ourselves reacting exactly as we would have reacted before the retreat, and then thinking that the retreat must have been a waste of time, there may be subtle pride at work that can easily lead to desolation. What is my image of God and myself if I think that the fruits of my retreat can be so easily spoiled by my first post-retreat sin? We need only to recall that we have entrusted the fruits of the retreat to Mary, pray our retreat prayer and begin again.

Karl Rahner put words to these sentiments well:

> We should have trust in God, we should lovingly do right now what we can, we should begin with our program as soon as possible, and recognize in our love for the Mother of God and the Heart of Christ an assurance that we are still open for the love of God. If we can do that, then love can drive out fear, and we can go forward to meet God with an open heart, thankfully and joyously, calmly and also without a detailed knowledge of our future. Then it will be clear that 'He who began the good work in you is faithful, and will bring his work to completion'.[20]

Mark Yavarone OMV graduated from St Joseph's University in Philadelphia, USA in 1987. He completed a PhD in cell biology and anatomy in 1991 at the University of North Carolina. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest with the Oblates of the Virgin Mary in April 2000, and currently directs Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Centre in Venice, Florida.

[20] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 284.

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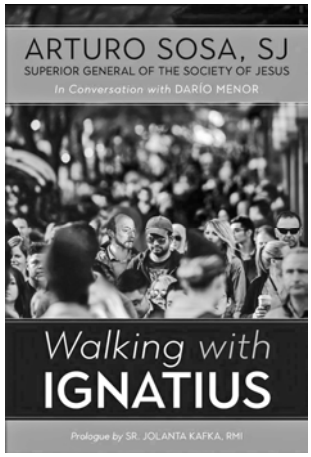
RECENT BOOKS

***Arturo Sosa, Walking with Ignatius: In Conversation with Dario Menor* (Dublin: Messenger, 2021). 978 1 7881 2455 3, pp.288, €19.95.**



This book is written in an unusual way. That is what makes it interesting but this special quality also makes it puzzling on first encounter. It offers profound insights about the religious life and Ignatian spirituality, but it doesn't have a connecting narrative to lead the reader from chapter to chapter. Each chapter is a booklet in its own right.

Dario Menor interviewed Arturo Sosa, the superior general of the Jesuits, on a range of topics, and the book is a record of their conversations. According to Menor the book 'aspires to be a handbook, a set of pages for the reader to dip into for suggestions on how to experience the Ignatian Year 2021 to 2022' (265). This explanation comes in the book's 'Final Thoughts', which would have been better placed as an introduction. I recommend that the reader inverts the advice of the King in *Alice in Wonderland*: begin at the end.

Once it became clear that this is a series of conversations made into a handbook, I could enjoy what it has to offer. The first two chapters present Fr Sosa's understanding of the beginning of his own and St Ignatius' spiritual pilgrimage. Ignatius' ambition to be a soldier was ended by a cannonball just as Sosa's ambition to be a doctor was ended by his tendency to faint on seeing blood. In both cases, the wound was the start of a new journey in search of God. In subsequent chapters, the book acquires a sense of urgency as Fr Sosa addresses some of the world's most pressing contemporary issues.

The first of these is the COVID 19 pandemic and its effects. Sosa believes the pandemic has highlighted the insight of Pope Francis that we are living through a change of era. At the same time, while we are all going through the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. Inequalities have been made worse. Of the effect on the Church he asserts: 'The closure of churches can be seen as a wake-up call from the Holy Spirit so that the community may depend less on the Church being in the building and learn

how to live out the faith in other circumstances' (60). Along the way Fr Sosa offers Ignatian spirituality as an antidote to ideology, because it affirms interior freedom and the discernment needed to make choices in specific situations. It's worth reading the book just for his explanation of this insight.

In the chapter 'A New Dream for the Church' Fr Sosa explains St Ignatius' vision of the Church alongside Pope Francis's development of synodality. He gives a less than convincing response to the challenge put by Menor that, by going in search of the lost, the Pope has provoked 'prodigal son' syndrome among those who stayed at home and were faithful. Even as a teenager, I resented Augustine of Hippo's belated conversion and wondered why I should bother being a faithful young Catholic. It's not clear that Fr Sosa has an answer to that question.

The book then turns to the concerns of religious life in general (Fr Sosa heads the Union of Superiors General) and of the Jesuits in particular. The whole chapter on 'The Society of Jesus Today' gives an overview of the recent history of the Jesuits and the challenges the order faces which will be of interest to those who follow the Ignatian way. Subsequent chapters portray the Church and the Society working with the poor and the young, and to raise awareness of our common home. Fr Sosa describes his own experiences in this area and how they relate to the Society's Universal Apostolic Preferences. The final chapters deal with Jesuit education and Jesuit partners in mission.

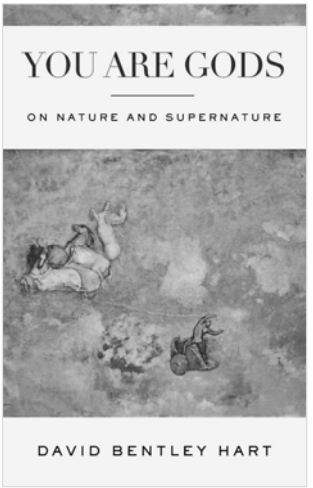
Tucked away on the copyright page is the name of the translator. Beth Twiston-Davies has translated this text with outstanding skill; unlike many Vatican translations, you would think this book was originally written in English.

The book has one very distinctive Ignatian feature in its structure. Each chapter concludes with a framework for prayer and reflection. This includes an extract of an Ignatian text, prayer points, a list of bible texts with questions for reflection and finally tips for spiritual conversation. For this Benedictine reader, the structured approach is appealing as it turns each chapter into a moment of prayer. While this book isn't *lectio divina* it is definitely *lectio spiritualis* and the prayer structure that concludes each chapter makes that clear. Menor's description of the book as 'pages to dip into for suggestions on how to experience the Ignatian Year' could be extended to 'pages to dip into for spiritual reading and prayer'.

Christopher Jamison OSB

Walking with Ignatius may be purchased from the Way Ignatian Book Service. Please go to https://www.theway.org.uk/bookservice, or contact the editorial office.

David Bentley Hart, *You Are Gods: On Nature and Supernature* (Collegeville: U. of Notre Dame, 2022). 978 0 2682 0193 7, pp. 158, $25.00.



Pope Francis has often spoken of the need to recapture a *holistic* model of God and creation. The Second Vatican Council stressed this oneness or monism of God's creation: there is no division between the supernatural and the natural realms. The whole of creation has, from the very beginning, been imbued with divine grace. Vatican II's approach was authentically biblical and patristic. The fathers of the council were also building on the work of a generation of creative Roman Catholic theologians, such as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar and Karl Rahner. By encouraging this holistic vision of Christianity, Vatican II successfully vanquished a particularly pernicious form of theological dualism—a victory that was one of the Council's central achievements.

But, as David Bentley Hart argues in *You Are Gods: On Nature and Supernature*, the optimism of the immediate period after Vatican II, when it seemed that such dualistic theology had been defeated, was short-lived. Hart states in this collection of his essays that there has in recent years been a disturbing and unwelcome revival in Catholic circles of a 'two-tier' theology. Predominant in two-tier Catholic theology prior to the Council was dualism: a mistaken division between God and creation, God and history, grace and nature, theology and anthropology. According to Hart, this tradition proposes to seal the divine off from creation.

The author sees such a dualistic approach as having implications for our understanding of what it means to be human. He argues that it construes God's relationship with the world in minimal terms, as the 'rescuing' of humankind from the corruption of sin, and the salvation of a spiritual elite by virtue of God's grace—and traces this negative view of God's involvement with the world to a misreading of both St Paul and Thomas Aquinas. While, in much patristic theology, grace restored nature to its true condition, in two-tier theology it came to be perceived as the giving of a new nature. For Hart, this dualistic exaltation of the spiritual and denigration of the material is radically misleading and damaging.

Why has this reversion taken place? Hart is convinced that it stems in large part from a deep psychological pathology and defensiveness caused by fear of too much engagement and compromise with the 'modern world' and a longing for the security of a hierarchical system in which 'God' and 'the world' are seen as distinct from each other. The great irony of this is that, as Hart points out, it falls into the trap of the very modern secularism it claims to repudiate. The legacy of the whole Enlightenment tradition is dualistic: it asserts that the metaphysical and empirical realms are radically opposed.

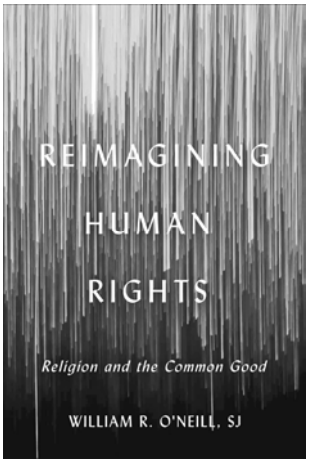
Hart is an Eastern Orthodox theologian, and he turns to the rich spiritual resources afforded by the East for an answer to theological dualism. For it is here, in the Byzantine-Greek patristic tradition, that we find a radically monistic vision of Christian metaphysics clearly spelt out. Eastern Orthodox thought doesn't perceive the flesh as corrupt, nor does it see sin as intrinsic to human nature. It doesn't view the incarnation as contingent upon the Fall. Instead, in this tradition the incarnation was intended by God from the very beginning as part of the fulfilment of the divine plan. Hart insists that 'God is all that is'—there is no separation between nature and grace (xviii). This strand of Eastern Orthodox thought stems from the doctrine of *theosis* (divinisation) developed by the Greek Fathers. It maintains that human beings are, at the very centre of their being, 'deiform'. Hart follows St Athanasius of Alexandria in arguing that God became human precisely so that humans should become God.

You Are Gods has much to recommend it. The author is highly effective in his attack on two-tier Thomism, and his argument that the Gospels are shot through with non-dualist imagery is sound. Hart's claims also chime with much of the mystical and contemplative tradition, in which God is not 'out there' but is to be found at the very core of all reality. However, he fails to develop the point that such a rich incarnational Christology is also found within Catholic thought, particularly in the Franciscan and Scotist tradition, and that the remedy to the dualist revival is to be found not only in Eastern Orthodox thought but in the theology of Vatican II itself.

Although some might criticize Hart for minimising the impact of sin and the necessity of the Cross, others will see his work as a timely corrective to the dualistic trend within Catholic theology. David Bentley Hart brings to this elegantly written book his customary verve, theological acumen and ability to communicate difficult ideas. In the wake of Pope Francis, he does a sterling job of defending a key Vatican II insight.

Jonathan Chappell

William R. O'Neill, *Reimagining Human Rights: Religion and the Common Good* (Collegeville: Georgetown U, 2021). 978 1 6471 2035 1, pp.192, $44.95.



Citing the French poet Paul Valéry (1871–1945), William R. O'Neill describes 'this work' as 'a flawed, humble beginning, more abandoned … than finished'. Human rights, he argues, are like a language game, accommodating theoretically an infinite number of narratives within the parameters of finite sensible grammar. Nurturing human rights amounts to providing the space for new—especially formerly suppressed—narratives to be told and heard. Such work is never finished; rather, it is 'abandoned into a future with hope' (201).

O'Neill shows that, as in the language game, rights narratives may be varied but, like human language, retain a family resemblance that allows for anamnestic solidarity. When told and heard, narratives of suffering such as those from Nazi concentration camps, apartheid South Africa and the Rwandan genocide form a common repertoire of tales that allow humanity to remember. Thus is human worth or dignity (on whose grounds rights are had) 'exhibited performatively as we *play* the language game' (83).

If this book's various arguments were individual beads, they would be held together by a string with two entwined threads. In a witty manoeuvre, O'Neill makes the criticism of the US philosopher Richard Rorty (1931–2007)—that 'the "emergence of the human rights culture" seems to owe "nothing to increased moral knowledge, and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories"' (49)—yield to O'Neill's own argument. The first of the threads, then, is what ought to be appropriate human response to such sad stories. And the appropriate response is 'outrage'. O'Neill repeatedly goes back to the political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), whose remark that to 'describe the concentration camps *sine ira* [without outrage] is not to be "objective" but to condone them' (18). The same applies to other heart-rending accounts of human tragedy.

The second thread is memory. Once outraged by what has been, we remember so as never to allow it to happen again. The logic of remembrance (*anamnesis*) is self-implicating, says O'Neill: 'we cannot get the memory right *sine ira*', and, with the mark of Cain thus imprinted on our history, 'we say, as must, "never again" again and again' (32). Readers familiar with

the historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson (1936–2015) and his 1983 classic, *Imagined Communities*, will appreciate the contrast between the centrality of *anamnestic solidarity* in human rights, as proposed by O'Neill, and *forgetting* as a necessary part of the fictional narratives on which modern nations are based, as observed by Anderson. 'Having to "have already forgotten" tragedies … turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies', says Anderson.[1] In such genealogies, excluded persons are expected to accept in silence the narratives that expel them from humanity and rob them of rights. O'Neill's book turns this logic upside down. In pursuit of rights, what the dominant power hides is revealed, and 'what it has silenced or rendered unpronounceable' is pronounced (50).

The book's central arguments are made in the first chapter, by far the longest and, because probably intended for academic peers, the hardest to get through. Of the 63 pages covered by the chapter, 17 are taken up by a whopping 353 notes. Yet it could hardly be done differently. Here O'Neill builds on wisdom from the old and the new, liberally draws from Western and African traditions, and, in the end, demonstrates the case that human rights can find roots in different cultures and religions while retaining their universal, non-relativist appeal.

If they survive the first chapter, readers will find the rest of the book an easy read. Each subsequent chapter places the book's arguments in a concrete situation. In the second chapter, O'Neill takes human rights away from 'transcendental' foundations worked out as it were in pure reason and places them 'on the modest bedrock of our lives: what [Archbishop Desmond] Tutu calls "holy ground"' (96). In the third chapter, he demonstrates the possibility of rooting 'faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person' (113) in a particular—in this case, Roman Catholic—religious tradition. Here, the universal applicability of rights is demonstrated without imposing underlining dogmas on those with whom one does not share the tradition. This is the rightful duty of religion in the public square: 'Catholic social teaching integrates the civic virtues of liberal respect and communitarian recognition in an ethics of anamnestic solidarity of becoming neighbor to those "stamped with a special mark by affliction"' (182).

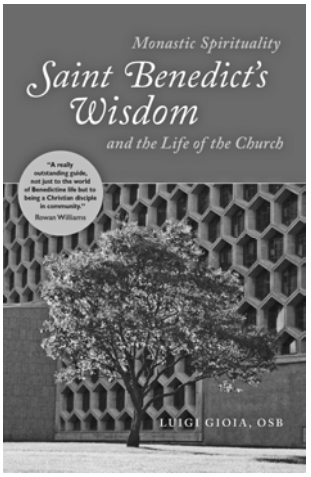
In the last chapter, O'Neill draws from experience to apply his arguments to the situations of race and mass incarceration in the United States, migration and refugee policy, and ecological responsibility. With the authority of first-hand observation and scholarly analysis he, for example, declares: 'The women I serve in the federal prison would not be incarcerated if they were white' (163).

[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006), 201.

'Abandoning' the book with a one-page conclusion, O'Neill bequeaths to the student of human rights the fruit of personal experience and mature scholarship such as can only be produced in the second half of one's lifetime career.

Festo Mkenda SJ

Luigi Gioia, *Saint Benedict's Wisdom: Monastic Spirituality and the Life of the Church*, translated by Barry Hudock (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2020). 978 0 8146 8808 3, pp.232, $24.95.



Recent commentaries on the Rule of St Benedict have moved away from analysis of the text towards attempting to apply St Benedict's teaching to lay readers. Rowan Williams has demonstrated this in some of his recent publications, and he is acknowledged as a major inspiration behind the present book, originally published in Italian in 2017. Two editions of this English translation, with slightly different titles, were published in 2020.

Luigi Gioia seeks to unearth the spiritual teaching of the Rule that enlivens Benedictine communities. A central theme running through the book is that the Rule is a manual of 'sapiential' wisdom. Nowadays 'sapiential' is frequently applied to the teaching of theology in a monastic context, although an attempt is also made here to associate the teachings of Vatican II with this genre. 'Sapiential' theology encompasses *lectio divina* (the meditative reading of scripture) and listening to the word of God. St Benedict orders the framework of prayer and work in his Rule according to wisdom's guide, and Gioia uses Proverbs to demonstrate the fruits of monastic work: bread, wine and beef laid on the table—although, of course, the Rule demands abstinence from meat.

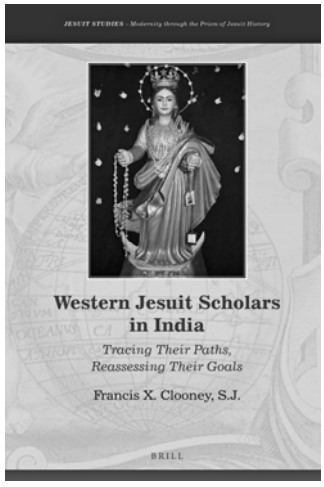
A favoured definition of the author is that *opus Dei* (the work of God) is not so much about the recitation of the Divine Office in a monastic choir, but is rather a definition of God's work on our behalf. The author's commentary on the Rule can be particularly insightful as, for instance, in his thoughts on the twelve steps of humility. A valiant but strained attempt is made to relate Karl Barth's theology to that of the Rule, although it is followed by some useful advice on formation, and later on how the Benedictine speciality of 'listening' reveals the dynamism within God's word, a centrepiece of Barth's theology (119). Chastity is discussed primarily in terms of self-knowledge. There is the occasional unusual detail: St Benedict's oratory is

called a 'hall' (95)—perhaps the translator's preference. The book is not simply focused on the wisdom of the Rule for monks, but how the presence of such a monastic spirituality might enrich the Church's life generally. Gioia thus volunteers some of his earlier theological investigations to expand the theme that 'the Christian spiritual life must be necessarily trinitarian' (114). He is unhappy about spirituality existing in a vacuum and repeats the axiom that there can be 'no spirituality without theology' (115, 117).

The last part of the book measures the monastic vocation against two papal documents, Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013) and the homily that Pope Benedict XVI gave on the inauguration of his Petrine Ministry (2005). In order to experience the joy of the gospel, the author believes that monks need to ensure that they are themselves to be evangelized first, and in the living out of their monastic life they should not mistake the means for the end. The same is true of the Church itself, Gioia argues, if it is to have an authentic Christian identity. In a post-modern world, he continues, the witness of Christian community life 'speaks by itself'. He concludes that the essence of the Benedictine life is threefold; engagement in the work of God, a deep appreciation of the love of Christ, which he also insists should be the focus of the Church itself and, finally, the priority Benedictines give to communion over mission which he stresses is 'the most important means of evangelization' (223).

Geoffrey Scott OSB

Francis X. Clooney, *Western Jesuit Scholars in India: Tracing Their Paths, Reassessing Their Goals* (Leiden: Brill, 2020). 978 9 0044 2473 9, pp.338, €115.00.



Frank Clooney SJ is a name well known among scholars of South Asia across the disciplines, from philosophy to history to the social sciences. He has spent his academic career deeply studying Hinduism, interreligious dialogue, and that historical and ongoing project of translation and discourse between Christianity and Hinduism with which Jesuit missionaries have been associated since the sixteenth century and which has been advanced by the generations since. Clooney is a US Jesuit, who was on the faculty for many years at Boston College, and for over fifteen years now has held the Parkman Chair at Harvard Divinity School.

While Clooney is not a historian, but rather a scholar of comparative theology, his work is very historical in that he engages with the intellectual work done by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit missionaries such as Robert de Nobili (chapters 1–8), Jean Venance Bouchet (chapter 9), Joseph Bertrand (chapter 11) and William Wallace (chapter 12), each of whom feature prominently in this volume. This book is not a monograph, but rather a collection of Clooney's essays and lectures composed across his long career that spans four decades; thus, readers will also derive a sense of the evolution of Clooney's own thought and intellectual concerns over time.

Far from giving a hagiographical treatment of the Jesuit missionaries he studies, Clooney provides us with a critical, finely textured, yet sympathetic analysis of their thought. He does this by remaining close to the texts they wrote and those Indian texts with which they engaged, and by reading them with sensitivity to the cultural and historical context. Some thematic highlights running through the book include the ways the Jesuits sought to take the Thomistic thought from the Tridentine European Christianity of their times, and appropriate some of its tools and premises, such as the presumption that religion is rational and can be discussed and debated on the basis of universal human logic. Clooney also treats how the Jesuits regarded the theory and practice of caste distinctions, the theological belief in reincarnation, and how Jesus Christ was explained (Christology) in light of Hindu and Buddhist notions of divine embodiment. In many places he steps back to assess the intellectual worlds of Europe and of Asia interacting, and places that in relation to contemporary practice of interreligious dialogue. Some of the chapters also raise the possibility that the missionary theologians and their Indian religious interlocutors can teach us some lessons relevant to Jesuit education, Ignatian spirituality and living in a pluralistic society today.

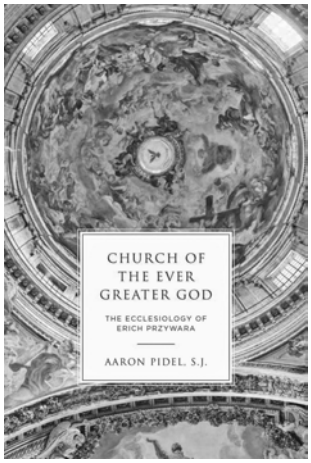
While this book is not light reading, it should hold interest for a variety of readers. Clooney presents complex theological and philosophical concepts with a clarity and good organization that render them more accessible to non-experts. His chapters are nicely signposted and the central arguments are hemmed in by robust introductory and concluding remarks. Those with a historical interest may find this book a fine introduction to the remarkable intellectual work western missionaries accomplished in India. Theologically curious readers will, through historical examples, be introduced to some of the ways two robust religious 'worlds'—Christianity and Hinduism—found grounds on which to dialogue, debate, converge and diverge. For readers who may have encountered some of these same missionary figures in biographical or hagiographical work, these chapters will shed much more light upon the inner workings of their minds, in how they apprehended India, Indians and Indian religion, and how they saw themselves and their

mission in the subcontinent. All of this is achieved by Clooney's considerably deep dive into their writings.

For a scholarly audience this book will urge historians to a more careful assessment of missionaries, taking them on their own terms and holding back from sweeping assessments based on their connection to the colonial endeavours of European states. Clooney's essays here, alongside recent work by scholars such as Ines Županov (*Disputed Mission,* 1999; *Missionary Tropics,* 2005; *Catholic Orientalism,* 2015) and David Mosse (*The Saint in the Banyan Tree,* 2012), also shed light on the policy of *accomodatio*, pioneered by Robert de Nobili and continued by his successors: that it was not merely a project of the simple translation of symbols and customs from a European to an Indic idiom, but involved complex intellectual arguments to present Christian truths accurately in a culturally recognisable form in south India. This pushes back against the frequent and inaccurate interpretation of *accomodatio* as resembling a postmodern celebration of cultural diversity several centuries before its time. This is a fine collection of essays, embracing the breadth of Clooney's long career of scholarship, and delivered with a clarity and accessibility all readers can appreciate.

Brent Otto SJ

Aaron Pidel, *Church of the Ever Greater God: The Ecclesiology of Erich Przywara* (Collegeville: U. of Notre Dame, 2020). 978 0 2681 0777 2, pp. 324, £50.00.



The German Jesuit Erich Przywara (1889–1972) has come to be regarded as one of the most significant Roman Catholic theologians, a mentor to both Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). Przywara is probably best known among academics for having presented the *analogia entis* (analogy of being) as a formal principle of Catholic theology early in the twentieth century. In particular, his fierce debate with Karl Barth (1886–1968) on this subject remains widely discussed among theologians today. Despite the ongoing interest in *analogia entis*, however, other areas of Przywara's thought have been relatively neglected in English-speaking scholarship, and this book is the first major study of Przywara's ecclesiology in English.

It is recommended not only for those who study Przywara but for any serious reader who is concerned with the future of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pidel clearly demonstrates how Przywara's ecclesiology is shaped by the Ignatian reverence for the 'ever greater God' and the metaphysical principle of the analogy of being, which defines a sound relationship between the Creator and creature as one marked by an ever greater dissimilarity in any similarity between them.. According to Pidel's reading of Przywara, he sees the analogically sound stance of the Church as threatened by 'growing insensibility of the Divine Majesty and of the centrality of service' (196), both of which are significant for Ignatian spirituality. Pidel argues that Przywara's Ignatian and analogical vision of the Church can work as a corrective to this imbalance, from which the post-conciliar Church allegedly suffers, and that Przywara's vision can help the Church retrieve reverence for the Divine Majesty while actively engaging with missionary efforts (in other words, turn upward and outward at the same time). Thus, this book presents a clear thesis with thought-provoking suggestions.

Pidel also uses Przywara's ecclesiology as an interesting lens to interpret the fruits of Vatican II critically. In particular, he addresses the important question of how to achieve a healthy balance between the 'hierarchical Church' and 'organic communion'. For Przywara, ecclesial hierarchy does not mean centralised bureaucracy but 'a kenotic current emptying into the extracovenantal sphere … only a "suspendedness" between hierarchy and organic communion makes for a "living Church" transparent to a "living God"' (194). According to Przywara's intuition, as Pidel notes, 'reverence for the hierarchical Church goes hand in hand with an orientation *ad extra*' (197).

Based on these ideas, Pidel suggests that Pope Francis's vision of the Church as 'field hospital' is a selective and creative appropriation of Przywara's ecclesiology, and thus these two Jesuits share a more or less similar vision for the Church. On the other hand, Pidel does not provide further insights into how exactly the Church today could realise Przywara's (and Pope Francis's) vision. He comments that 'only time will tell' whether this vision, 'as opposed to cascading hierarchy, will ultimately prove more conducive to turning the Church upward and outward' (198). Especially since the closed culture of the ecclesial hierarchy itself has been severely criticized in wake of the sex abuse scandals today, the hierarchy as a 'kenotic current emptying into the extracovenantal sphere' is yet to be achieved. We could certainly agree with Pidel that Przywara's vision will work as an inspirational guide for us, but we also have to admit that we are a long way from realising it.

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