THE WAY

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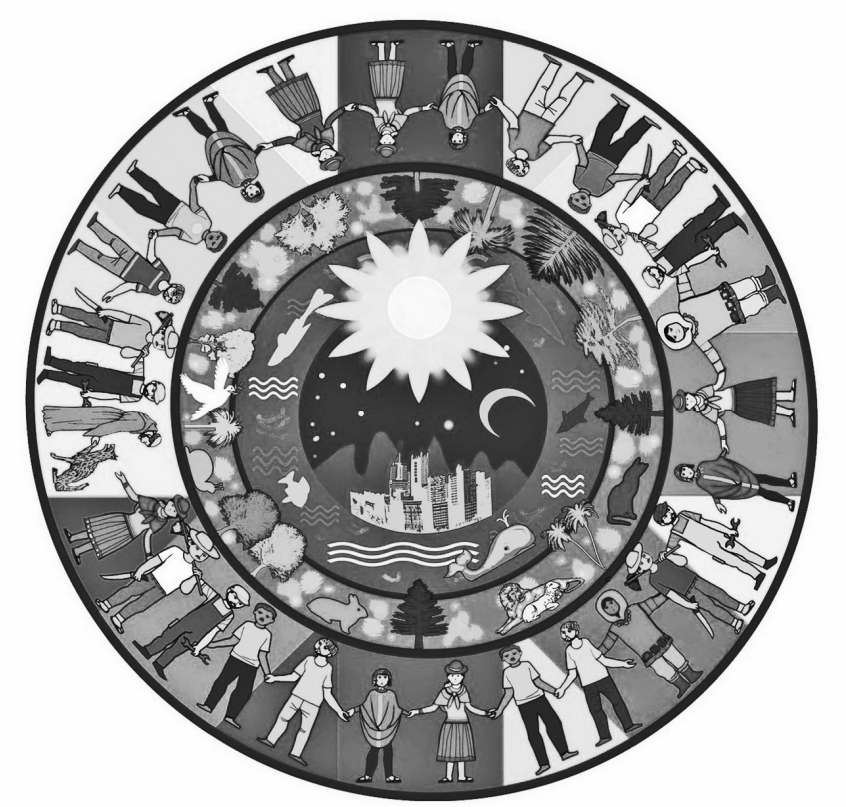
LABOURS OF LOVE



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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

WHETHER AS INDIVIDUALS or communities, we are invited to collaborate with God in our everyday lives. This issue of *The Way* explores the dynamics of that collaboration through labour undertaken, not for reward, but out of love. While motivations from outside can sustain us, only those from within can us give us a lasting sense of accomplishment. Many who have devoted their lives to quiet labours of love have gone unnoticed. However the role they have played in the fulfilment of God's will has often been decisive. While the articles in this issue touch upon varied spheres of human life, they coincide in affirming that love is reward enough.

In his account of the writings of St Francis de Sales, Brett McLaughlin notes that, despite their contemplative character, they are permeated with numerous acts of love. These compose the devout life in which 'contemplation spurs the reader to action'. St Francis de Sales envisions collaboration with God through the image of a beekeeper attending to the work of bees. Such collaboration can only be brought about through silent prayer in which human authenticity emerges and a disposition of spiritual freedom, akin to the Ignatian ideal of indifference, begins to grow.

If the source of God's collaboration with human beings is born in silence, then perhaps this is why it passes unmentioned in the Book of Esther. There, God is waiting to be discovered only as 'a hidden but active presence entwined with human action'. Paul Dominic comments that God's discreet action, and even God's apparent failure, are relevant to our contemporary experience in which the personhood of God is minimised by secular culture. There is an invitation to rediscover this personhood in our everyday lives.

The war in Ukraine has reminded us that even in the darkest moments of history God is present. The violent political ideology of the Russian elite has been met by astonishing acts of compassion and resilience on the part of ordinary Ukrainians. In his article, Eric Clayton gives an intriguing insight into the history of the only Roman Catholic secondary school in Russia, where Jesuits have laboured in 'a spiritual landscape marred by decades of dehumanisation'. Such accounts reveal that collaboration with God is a form of resistance. A similar commitment is demonstrated in Robert Southwell's zeal for the English mission

during the reign of Elizabeth I, which Ian Coleman argues strengthened his poetic voice. Our bulletin on the false imprisonment of the Nicaraguan bishop Rolando Álvarez is a reminder that in Latin America the Church is still on the side of the oppressed.

The concept of 'psychological capital' helps Mukti Clarence to describe how collaboration with God can lead to human resilience. He draws upon it to understand the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, but is critical of the naïve use of psychological theories when they fail to appreciate the gratuitous action of God's grace on the human person. And Gerry O'Neill looks at how Pope Francis's emphasis on synodality in the Church can be reflected in other organizations in order to collaborate with the God by attending to the movements of the Holy Spirit.

As we learn to labour out of love we discover more and more that love is its own reward. This insight is implicit in Thomas Kelly's article, available for free download, that shows how Pope Francis's social commitment developed from that of St Ignatius. He argues that the poor can teach us something through their involuntary dependence upon God. Those who minister to the poor discover that their reward is a mutual encounter of love. One of the principal causes of poverty is the degradation of the human environment. Responding to Peter Saunders (*The Way*, October 2015), Iain Radvan describes how immersing the participants of a conference in ecology prepared them to collaborate with God in nature.

Taking a step back, James Hanvey, in an article reprinted from our sister journal *Thinking Faith*, rebuts the oft-repeated notion that St Ignatius was not a theologian by sketching his theology of human experience. Hanvey concludes that for St Ignatius theology was 'not a speculative endeavour of the intellect but a life that lives in Christ; a love that comes to be—in deeds and not words—for the life of the world'. Each of the authors writing in this issue reminds us that our collaboration with God does not rest upon speculation or ideology but upon responding to the promptings of the Spirit in everyday life. Our labours of love remain forever an affair of the heart.

Finally, I am especially pleased to be reviewing a new Way Books publication in this issue, a set of essays by Rob Marsh entitled *Imagination, Discernment and Spiritual Direction*. This book will be of interest to anyone involved in spiritual ministry and is available from *The Way*'s online bookshop and the editorial office, along with a deep-reading

guide for individuals or groups. An online formation day is being held on 12 May 2023 at the London Jesuit Centre, details of which can be found on their website (www.londonjesuitcentre.org). Although little known outside the United Kingdom, Rob Marsh's long-standing work in retreat-giving and the formation of spiritual directors has truly been a quiet labour of love.

Philip Harrison SJ
Editor

A SPIRITUALITY OF ENCOUNTER

St Ignatius, Pope Francis and Lessons from the School of the Poor

Thomas M. Kelly

AN ENCOUNTER WITH the 'least among us' can be many things. It can reinforce our prejudices; it can lead to objectification of the 'other'; or it can transform how we understand ourselves, our God and our social responsibilities to the world—including our spirituality. St Ignatius of Loyola offers us a foundation to explore the encounter between the poorest and those with opportunity and privilege. Pope Francis extends this Ignatian insight by arguing that not only do the poor need us, but we benefit from an encounter of mutuality with them. Encountering the poor allows us to listen to the will of God and discern our way in this world free of culturally reinforced (and rewarded) constraints. The root of this experience has been repeatedly emphasized by Pope Francis: 'The text of Matthew 25:35–36 is "not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ"'.[1]

Shortly after Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio became Pope Francis, he demonstrated not only a commitment to the poor, but an interest in how they *evangelize* the non-poor.[2] In his first apostolic letter, *Evangelii gaudium,* he states:

> This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church's pilgrim way.[3]

[1] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 96, quoting John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 49.

[2] The term 'poor' refers to human persons suffering under economic and sociological poverty in a variety of ways. The non-poor are not subject to the same limitations on human flourishing.

[3] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 198. Compare *Lumen gentium*, n. 8: 'Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder'.

Francis introduces here a mutual evangelization between poor and non-poor which, if taken seriously, constitutes a fundamental change in Catholic spirituality. No longer are the poor simply the recipients of charity or justice. Now there is a voluntary mutuality by which the prosperous and rich also discover something about themselves and God that only *the poor* can teach. This possibility of the poor evangelizing the non-poor emerges from an understanding of the life of Ignatius of Loyola which is rarely emphasized or deeply explored outside intra-Jesuit conversations on the vow of poverty.

Ignatius and the Poor

It is true that Ignatius was inspired by versions of holiness dominant in his time. But to reduce his actions to only this excludes an authentic intentionality. Ignatius did more than mimic the 'saints' who inspired him. It is clear that many of the stories which make up his *Autobiography* were later crafted by editors with a specific purpose and audience in mind.[4] This does not mean the *Autobiography* is completely hagiographical, nor does it mean we should interpret everything in it as historical fact.

One theme in the *Autobiography* and in the *Spiritual Exercises* is the importance of encounters with the poor, as well as 'actual' and 'spiritual' poverty.[5] It would be reasonable to assert (if we believe that Ignatius made free and authentic choices) that the commitment to poverty inspired by the saints became integral for Ignatius through personal experiences with the poor of his time. If he was merely imitating expectations of holiness, the authenticity of 'poverty' (in all its forms) in the life of Ignatius would be put into question.

There are three elements to the leitmotif of actual and spiritual poverty which appear, both separately and together, throughout the various works of Ignatius. The first is his commitment to direct service of the poor, which he first demonstrated in Azpeitia during the latter part of his convalescence and which continued throughout his life. Second

[4] Barton T. Geger, 'Hidden Theology in the "Autobiography" of St Ignatius', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 46/3 (Autumn, 2014): 'Certainly we miss the forest for the trees when we focus on individual stories to the neglect of wider themes' (32).

[5] This theme is also present through early days of the first companions and later codified in the Jesuit *Constitutions*. See Horacio de la Costa and Edward D. Sheridan, 'On Becoming Poor: A Symposium on Evangelical Poverty', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 8/2–3 (March and May 1976) and Dean Brackley, 'Downward Mobility: Social Implications of St Ignatius's Two Standards', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 20/1 (January 1988).

is the deepening of his commitment to living out the beatitudes by addressing some of the root causes of sinful conditions—what we would call the work of social justice today. Finally, his institutional commitment to both actual and spiritual poverty is embodied by the 'Deliberation on Poverty', dated to the early 1540s.[6] This third element instantiates both the life of poverty (actual) and what one learns from it—total dependence on God (spiritual)—for what would become the Society of Jesus.

Direct Encounters

At the time of Ignatius, the 'poor' were,

> … those with no particular protection, who could in good times live by their labor, but without any margin of security. The poor also included the destitute, the beggars wandering from town to town, charitably moved on from hospice to hospice.[7]

Hospices were poorly maintained city refuges that usually accommodated a person for a night. In many cases they existed to keep those suffering from disease outside medieval towns. Occasionally cities would recognise the 'privileged poor', those who were well known in a town and 'allowed to sleep in the porches of churches and in the streets'.[8] Thus, the poor were the sick, as well as common folk who fell on hard times and sometimes became wandering beggars.

When Ignatius began to follow his vocation, he adopted 'the socially recognised status of a penitent'.[9] Part of this meant giving up his noble clothing in exchange for poor clothing. The story about this, later told in his *Autobiography*, reveals two important insights. After Ignatius approached a poor man to exchange clothes with him, the man was later accused of stealing his clothes and subsequently beaten. When Ignatius heard what happened to the poor man, 'the tears poured from his eyes, tears of compassion for the poor man to whom he had given his clothes'.[10] This response of 'compassion for the poor man' is important. Why did Ignatius react this way and what did his tears mean? This

[6] See 'The Deliberation on Poverty', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, edited by George Ganss (New York: Paulist, 1991), 225–228.
[7] Adrian Demoustier, 'The First Companions of the Poor', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 21/2 (March 1989), 4–20, here 5.
[8] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 5.
[9] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 6.
[10] *Autobiography,* n. 18.

St Ignatius exchanges clothes with a poor man, by Peter Paul Rubens, 1609

experience of tears of compassion is mentioned in the *Spiritual Exercises* as consolation.[11]

Consolation, for Ignatius, is an affective feeling that leads towards God.[12] Perhaps this innocent poor person, unjustly accused and punished, brought him to a deeper understanding of the passion of Christ. The helplessness of this man inspired Ignatius' desire to 'depend only on God while pursuing his pilgrimage; so, he renounced the security of either companionship or financial resources'.[13] As a consequence he experienced destitution, maltreatment and other humiliations.

Root Causes

While Ignatius served in hospices throughout his pilgrimage, he also considered the root causes of different social evils. When he returned home to Azpeitia, he sought to address social and moral issues such as gambling and 'priestly concubinage', and the need for a more dependable and constant provision for poor people.[14] His efforts to end incarceration for debt as well as trying to establish community assistance for the chronically poor were something more than individual ministry. The Martha House in Rome tried to address the causes of prostitution by giving women another skill set to make a living, reconciling them

[11] Demoustier states that the *Spiritual Exercises* names it explicitly in reference to 'spiritual consolation' ('First Companions of the Poor', 6) : 'Similarly, this consolation is experienced when the soul sheds tears which move it to love for its Lord—whether they are tears of grief for its own sins, or about the Passion of Christ our Lord, or about other matters directly ordered to his service and praise' (Exx 316).
[12] Michael Buckley, 'The Structures of the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits', *The Way Supplement*, 20 (1973), 19–37, here 28: 'The good spirit moves in conjunction with the developmental effort of the person; and the affect of his movement within affectivity is courage and strength, consolation, tears, inspiration and calmness'.
[13] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 6.
[14] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 10.

with estranged husbands or offering them the opportunity to embrace religious life. Finally, when the Society of Jesus committed itself to the ministry of education, the inclusion of the poor was essential. Ignatius refused to open a school until it was fully endowed because he desired to educate the poor and rich together for the common good.[15] According to Demoustier, the colleges were situated 'between the service of the great, who had no need of them since their children were educated by private tutors, and the little people, who did not go to school at all'.[16] Because of its social location, this ministry embodied something between private charitable action and a social service.

> The social effect was to facilitate access for the greatest possible number to the new culture of the book and of the written word, without adding new barriers on the basis of social class or class distinctions over and above those that already existed. It was the genius of Ignatius to have refused any such selectivity for entrance into the colleges and to have understood that it was necessary to begin with the lower age groups.[17]

Ignatius first served the poor, but this was later extended to addressing the social structures which marginalised those who were in debt, engaged in prostitution or unable to access an education. While language about structures is anachronistic, it is clear that Ignatius was committed to more than individual charity to the poor.

Listening to God with the Poor

The various elements of the leitmotif of encountering the poor, voluntary poverty and the benefits of spiritual poverty can be brought together through a letter Ignatius wrote to members of the Society of Jesus in Padua. Here the various threads we have seen throughout his life come together—the importance of encountering the poor, and the benefits received when actual and spiritual poverty intersect.[18] Becoming actually and spiritually poor gives us the interior freedom to listen to God.

[15] John O'Malley, *The Jesuits: A History from Ignatius to the Present* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 14.
[16] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 17.
[17] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 18.
[18] Ignatius of Loyola to the members of the Society in Padua, 7 August 1547, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, edited by Martin Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 203–207.

According to the letter, the poor themselves are important to know. Those chosen by Jesus as friends were 'for the most part poor'. It was for the poor 'that Jesus Christ was sent on earth'. Furthermore, 'The friendship of the poor makes us friends of the Eternal King'. When voluntary poverty is assumed, a person receives similar benefits by extension through a preference for the 'precious treasure' of Christ and the Church as opposed to the treasures of the world. Friendship with the poor is both ministry to those who suffer and voluntary assumption of their (involuntary) dependence upon God. This understanding of the dual nature of 'poverty' (encountering the poor and depending on God) benefits the Society of Jesus. 'Poverty enables us in every circumstance to hear the voice (that is, the inspiration) of the Holy Spirit better, because it removes the obstructions that keep it out.'[19]

Demoustier reminds us that Ignatius learnt much through his encounters with those who could depend on no one but God.

> In the school of the poor, Ignatius learnt how to renounce every project properly his own. It was thanks to this humility, which enabled him to recognise what his conversion and experience of the Lord had inscribed in the very depths of his being, that he discerned his true future in the desire to acquire some education and to enter fully into the dynamism of contemporary culture …. The poor person, according to the 'sacred teaching' of the Spiritual Exercises, is the one who is not protected or does not protect himself from humiliations, *and who thus achieves the humility which permits a genuinely free election*. This is the first guideline: the rejection of society's standard as a criterion of decision. Blessed are the poor.[20]

Poverty for the Early Companions

While it is brief, the 'Deliberation on Poverty' gives insight into the discernment process used by Ignatius and his early companions. The first phase of the discernment is titled 'The Disadvantages of Having No Fixed Income Are Also the Advantages of Having Such Income Either in Part or in Whole'. The benefits of having a fixed income included: better maintenance of the Society, less annoying and unedifying begging, more order and peace, more time to do spiritual works, better maintained churches, and more time to study, offer spiritual help and care for their own health. The disadvantages included being less disposed to travel and

[19] Ignatius of Loyola to the members of the Society in Padua, 204–205.
[20] Demoustier, 'First Companions of the Poor', 7.

hardship, being less exemplary of true poverty and self-abnegation, and the possibility that a fixed income might create inequality within the Society itself.[21]

The 'Advantages and Reasons for Having No Fixed Income' included: greater spiritual strength, less worldly avarice, deeper unity, closeness to Christ, increased dependence on God, more humiliations and by this a more faithful imitation of Christ, life in more divine hope, greater edification, greater freedom of spirit to speak of spiritual things, daily encouragement to serve by receiving alms, better exemplification of 'true poverty', greater diligence and willingness to travel and endure. In addition, poverty with no fixed income is more perfect than half-measures and, finally, Jesus chose poverty.[22] Following this second list, the ten early companions chose this latter course and then requested and obtained the papal bull for the formation of the Society of Jesus.

The process used to discern this form of poverty appears to have been communal, and consistent with the First Principle and Foundation and the process for discernment outlined in the *Spiritual Exercises*. It takes as its end the desire to serve God seriously in the world, and constantly refers to the Jesus of the Gospels in his actual poverty. It tries to evaluate material security by asking whether it glorifies, praises or honours God. The standard gospel opposition between love of God and neighbour, and love of wealth and security is operative throughout—as is the avoidance of avarice. Finally, the link between spiritual and material poverty and *dependence on God* is critical for Ignatius and the companions. It seems to be the way they understand the value of Christ's poverty within the historical life he lived.

The link between spiritual and material poverty and dependence on God

Pope Francis: Evangelized by the Poor

Pope Francis approaches the topic of encountering the poor, voluntary poverty and spiritual poverty in a way with many similarities to that of Ignatius, but with a different emphasis. He recognises and includes the main contributions of Ignatius but extends them in how the poor and voluntary poverty evangelize others—that is, how they explicitly teach us about God. In his first apostolic exhortation upon assuming the papacy he extends the importance of the poor and voluntary poverty to the Church

[21] 'Deliberation on Poverty', 225–226.
[22] 'Deliberation on Poverty', 226.

as a whole, not just vowed religious: 'The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church's pilgrim way'.[23] This new approach is inspired by Ignatius but extended to all believers in light of the signs of the times. It is possible to follow the categories used to understand the Ignatian leitmotif, with one addition—how the poor evangelize the non-poor—something already present, albeit only implicitly, for Ignatius.

Encountering the Poor in Mutuality

Pope Francis discusses how we can encounter the poor if we want to learn from them. He emphasizes that we should encounter the poor through the Ignatian dictum of seeking God in all things.

> We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.[24]

The equality of friendship comes first, then the humility to listen and use our position to speak for the poor. If this is done carefully, we may discover something about God. This encounter recognises the inner goodness of the poor and does not stop at meeting their material needs. It engages in dialogue which assumes mutuality and is motivated by the ultimate goal of the human journey: to love others through sharing, commitment and service, and, in this, to love God.[25] What we have received first and freely (God's grace and love) we share freely. The poor receive in this encounter a genuine hope from our freely given commitment that seeks no reward. They are lifted up, need our hearts, feel our affection, and overcome loneliness because they also need love.

There is also a challenging dimension to our encounter with the poor—one that creates discomfort, anxiety and frustration. Francis suggests that, if we allow them to do so, those who suffer through poverty and marginalisation can bring us face to face with our own deepest fears and insecurities—and this is a good thing. Our culture of wealth is afraid of insecurity, uncertainty, anxiety and the vulnerability

[23] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 198.
[24] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 198.
[25] When using the term 'love' I mean the Thomistic definition as the 'effective willing of the good of the other'. See Michael Himes, *Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations about God, Relationships and Service* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1995), chapter 1.

of depending on others for our basic needs. Contemporary consumerist materialism has enculturated this self-sufficiency deeply into our identity as human beings.[26]

Encountering those who suffer through poverty and discovering their and our own vulnerability militates against and liberates us from some of the most deeply held Western cultural ideals. Self-sufficiency, libertarian notions of freedom and a preference for self-interest over the common good all collapse if we are serious about the evangelizing possibilities of encountering the poor. Pope Francis mentions this specifically.

> The Gospel invites us to peer into the depths of our heart, to see where we find our security in life. Usually, the rich feel secure in their wealth, and think that, if that wealth is threatened, the whole meaning of their earthly life can collapse. Jesus himself tells us this in the parable of the rich fool: he speaks of a man who was sure of himself, yet foolish, for it did not dawn on him that he might die that very day (cf. Luke 12:16–21).[27]

What would allow us to learn from those who suffer through poverty and marginalisation? What cultural, economic, social and spiritual defences or 'buffers' hinder us from learning from them? These defences are real, and the encounter can be frightening.[28] Pope Francis is correct when he states, 'To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognize our great dignity'.[29] The question is sharpened. What hinders us from seeking voluntary dependence upon God?

Traditional academic theology, the kind taught at many Roman Catholic universities and seminaries, relies overwhelmingly on the intellect, reason—the mind. While this has been indispensable to the tradition we have inherited, it has never been the complete story. The danger in relying exclusively on the intellect is that Christianity becomes a set of ideas, *rather than a way of being and acting in the world*. St Ignatius was keenly aware of this and encouraged the use of all the

[26] See Robert Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: U. of California, 1985) chapter 6. One need only think of the media preoccupation with the ontologically impossible 'self-made man'.
[27] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 67.
[28] I have taught immersion courses for fifteen years, as well as guided immersion for the Ignatian Colleagues Program of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. The barriers to such encounters usually take the form of analysis and problem-solving the situation of the poor rather than any real possibility of direct encounter.
[29] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 32.

senses to discern the will of God—one's imagination, feelings, intuition, experience and wisdom. Pope Francis continues this emphasis by encouraging real encounters of mutuality with the poor—relationships which can be mutually transformative in their depth. These encounters are very different from short-term service work, for they assume such deep relationships. For Pope Francis, discerning the movements of one's heart honestly by using all of the Ignatian contemplative 'senses' is one way to discover, nurture and allow such encounters to claim us.

Such contemplation extends Ignatius' understanding and allows us to participate in divine compassion. Generosity is necessary for a fully human life and, in this encounter, the poor unlock our isolation from them and their situation. With the proper posture towards this relationship, we can grow in maturity and wisdom as we discern our own vocations. This is ultimately an imitation of Jesus. 'Jesus' whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life.'[30]

And the concreteness of this encounter is crucial. He emphasizes,

> … a poverty learned with the humble, the poor, the sick and all those who are on the existential peripheries of life. A theoretical poverty is of no use to us. Poverty is learned by touching the flesh of the poor Christ, in the humble, in the poor, in the sick, and in children.[31]

Pope Francis sees this encounter as a revelation of Christ when he says, 'In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate'.[32]

All of this encourages a new emphasis on traditional approaches to spirituality as well as the theology that flows from them. Spirituality can be understood as the intersection of three relationships—how we relate to ourselves, how we relate to the world and how we relate to God. These relationships define who we are and what we do. They are set out by Ignatius in the First Principle and Foundation and are critical to freedom understood as the capacity to choose God in a world that prefers the security of riches, honours and pride. Pope Francis suggests

[30] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 265.
[31] Pope Francis, address to the plenary assembly of the international union of superiors general, 8 May 2013, n. 1.
[32] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 96.

that the poor teach us dimensions of our own spirituality that only come from a real, personal and dialogical encounter with them. There are two benefits to entering into relationship with people who suffer in actual poverty. The first is a deeper insight into our limits and the unearned privileges most of us enjoy.[33] The second is the invitation to suffer-with, which is a call to participate in the very life of God.[34]

Dependence on God

An example of an encounter with the poor can be found in the various 'immersion trips' offered between US educational institutions and places of poverty around the world. US participants on immersions to the US–Mexico border or other Latin American communities are amazed at how the poor and marginalised live when their limits and constraints are so clear to us. This is often framed as *they are poor but so happy*, or *I have never seen a people live in such a caring community*. What the participants mean, but lack the language to explain, is to ask how, apart from our material prosperity, it is possible to find joy.

Pope Francis reminds us that the poor 'practice the special solidarity that exists among those who are poor and suffering, and which our

[33] Pope Francis, retreat for priests, 2 June 2016: 'If we start by feeling compassion for the poor and the outcast, surely we will come to realize that we ourselves stand in need of mercy'.

[34] 'Suffering with' is the literal meaning of compassion. See Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill and Douglas Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (New York: Image, 1983), chapter 1.

civilization seems to have forgotten or would prefer in fact to forget'.[35] Seeing and accepting our limits as human beings is the key to dependence on God. This is what the school of the poor has to teach us. This is made more difficult in societies that worship wealth, strive for honours and truly believe that anyone could somehow be 'self-made'.

> Unless we can acknowledge our concrete and limited situation, we will not be able to see the real and possible steps that the Lord demands of us at every moment, once we are attracted and empowered by his gift.[36]

For the non-poor to experience this dependence on God in solidarity, we must allow the actual situation of real poverty to make a claim on us. Can we see and experience the desperation of the migrant fleeing violence? Can we see and experience the powerlessness of people trapped in poverty, victims of racism, marginalisation or oppression? To see and experience is to encounter, but the possibilities of that encounter only emerge when hearts are predisposed to 'suffer with'. To see with the eyes of compassion, and to live out its consequences, is to imitate Jesus.[37]

The 'acknowledgement of our limitations'—moral, emotional, spiritual, physical—can occur for wealthy Western people in a unique way through encounters with those who suffer in poverty and oppression.[38] *Listening* to them, *reflecting* on what they say, *integrating* it into a world view and *acting* upon it concretely are some of the ways to learn from this 'school of the poor'. Praying with our encounters (the reflecting moment) allows the Spirit to make claims upon us in ways that are personal and unique. When such encounters become normative for who we are becoming, the root causes of this suffering become something we must confront.

Ignatian discernment first requires freedom from sources of identity, power and stability that are not of God. Ignatius served the poor and lived in voluntary poverty to be available for what God wanted for him. This availability resulted in spiritual growth when the humility of which Ignatius spoke made it possible to discern with freedom. Ignatius left

[35] Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 116.
[36] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 50.
[37] 'The cry of the poor and the excluded awakens us and helps us to understand the compassion Jesus felt for the people (Matthew 15:32)': Pope Francis, address to the general chapter of the Order of Preachers, 4 August 2016.
[38] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 50.

his bodyguards behind after his first day on pilgrimage. He left his sword and dagger at the altar in Montserrat. He left his fine clothes with the beggar who was punished by those who treated him unjustly. Ignatius rid himself of these sources of identity because they signified his noble status—not God. This status was a barrier for Ignatius. Voluntary poverty was the means to free himself in order to depend upon God and listen to Christ.

Spiritual poverty can be glimpsed when the lives and vulnerability of those who suffer poverty and oppression begin to make a claim on our own. This is what solidarity means. 'Solidarity' is not an idea, feeling or theory but an action for the good of others. It is best summed up by Ignatius in his Contemplation to Attain Love—'love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words' (Exx 230). When an encounter with exploitative labour in factories in Latin America begins to change how we consume, we glimpse solidarity. When encounters with poor and marginalised people on our streets shift the way we use resources or vote, we glimpse solidarity. When the environmental cost of our lifestyles turns other people into climate refugees and prompts a change in our everyday living, we glimpse solidarity. Within these encounters we listen to God's call as it becomes the foundation for considering everything else. For as we relate to those who suffer through poverty and marginalisation, we relate to Christ.

While St Ignatius and Pope Francis have different emphases in their interpretations of how the poor, voluntary poverty and spiritual poverty are essential to our evangelization, there is enough similarity to see connections. Both emphasize that discerning God's will for us requires interior freedom. For Pope Francis, the poor and marginalised of the world are a unique source of this freedom, first for what they teach us (recalling Ignatius) and second, for what they elicit from us (a share in divine compassion). If we encounter the poor in ways that are mutual and life-giving, such encounters can be transformative.

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GOD'S TRICKSTERS

Lessons from Esther for Religious Life

Paul Dominic

THERE ARE FEW PLACES for the book of Esther in liturgy. In spite of the fact that (the Hebrew version of) it is part of the Protestant Bible, none of it finds the tiniest mention in the lectionaries, apart from the Roman Catholic one.[1] This is something very strange, especially if one knows its genre. As '*written* literature with no stylistic traits of oral literature', it was meant to be read publicly, especially on the feast of Purim.[2] Whatever the reason for its omission in the official proclamation of the Word, it is to be hoped that this is not in the line of hostility that made people such as Martin Luther wish the book did not exist.[3] If he found in it too much Judaizing he was not wrong; but, perhaps, he ignored the fact that 'despite certain objections, including its failure to mention God even once (in the Hebrew text), it made its way into the Jewish canon by popular acclaim'.[4]

The primitive Church, holy and apostolic, had its catholic instincts right when it used not only the Jewish canon in Hebrew but also the larger Greek canon used by the Diaspora, even as they added to it certain variety of newly emerging Christian writings of their time (known to us as the New Testament) to form the whole Christian Bible. That early biblical canon includes the whole of Esther as it has come down to us with its Hebrew original and Greek additions (which comprise six chapters). So, giving credence to Esther as part of scripture, it is only proper to read it as it is and for what it is, without any bias as to what a biblical book should be. Incidentally, India appears in the very first verse of the book—which is certainly a matter of pleasure for us in India.

[1] Which has Esther 14:1. 3–5, 12–14 (= Addition C:12, 14–16, 23–25) for Lent, Week 1, Thursday.
[2] See Sidnie White Crawford, 'The Book of Esther', in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), volume 3, 770. Purim, unlike the Passover, did not pass into Christian tradition.
[3] The principle of the Reformation should embrace all scripture. On Luther and Esther see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, translated by Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress. 1969), 188–189.
[4] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 855.

The Story of the Lots

Esther is a story at once entertaining and uplifting, addressing the dispersed Jewish minority oppressed by various political powers. Though a story, in the perennial situation of persecution faced by the audience, Esther appears 'more real than many historical books'.[5] Mordecai, a Jewish captive in the Persian city of Susa, rose to power in King Ahasuerus' court because of his goodness in reporting a plot against the king and so saving him from death. At the same time, Mordecai excited envy and hatred in Haman, the grand vizier, because of his refusal, as a Jew, to show deference to the vizier with a bow, as others did. Infuriated, Haman planned Mordecai's undoing. Turning his ire not only against one man but also against his whole race, Haman poisoned the king's mind against his *bête noire* and argued him round to ordering the genocide of his Jewish subjects. Hearing of this danger to his people Mordecai sent word to his cousin Esther, who had become queen (replacing Queen Vashti, who had been deposed for her refusal to parade her beauty before the whole court when ordered to do so by the king).

Esther responded, at first reluctantly but soon enough with determination, hoping to change her royal husband's mind against all odds. Planning with hopeful prayer, she played slyly on the king's emotions and tried her tricks. Using feminine delaying tactics, she swayed him enough to make him see her perilous condition as one of the innocent victims caught in the murderous plot of Haman. Thus, finally, she turned him against Haman. No sooner said than done! Seeing the king seething with rage, his servants hanged Haman on the same gibbet that Haman had erected for Mordecai.

However the story does not conclude with Esther taking vengeance on the enemy Haman and winning reprieve along with her people. To tell it to the bitter end, Esther did not rest till she had made the king decree the destruction of all the enemies of the Jews. The enduring result was the institution of a feast, Purim, in remembrance and perpetuation of the real victory of the Jews, when their sorrow turned into gladness and their mourning into a holiday. The highpoint of the annual feast was 'sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor' (Esther 9:22). If Haman, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews, and had cast *Pūr*—that is, 'the lot' (9:23, 26)—to crush and destroy them, Esther submitted to her own sad lot and sought, in fear

[5] *Christian Community Bible*, 50th edn (Bangalore: Claretian, 2011), 917.

and trembling, the lot cast by God to turn the hostile world upside down. Those memorable days, therefore, came to be called Purim: the lot first cast was by Haman, human and evil, but it had to give place necessarily to what Esther cast, thanks to the unseen agency of God.

Twin Interpretations: God as Absentee and God as Trickster

This story of tit for tat is smaller and subtler in its original Hebrew version than the later and longer Greek one. Its peculiar character (not shared with any other biblical historical book), is not without import for its interpretation. For one thing, the story as found in Hebrew is obviously secular; void of any religious elements: it has not even a single mention of God, strange as that may be. Almost making up for this lacuna, the Greek version of the story brings in God no fewer than fifty times. Since both the versions are part of the canonical Bible, both ought to lend themselves to an interpretation that can be at once valid and inspiring, but with different emphases.

The context of the story is the situation of the Jews, scattered among foreign peoples and ruled by Gentile powers. The conscientious Jews would certainly face problems in practising their faith, especially in times of enmity with others for reasons not only religious but political or racial—or even merely egoistical, or all of them combined together (as Christians do today in India, Pakistan, China and elsewhere).[6] Whatever their personal reaction to the situation there is an empowering lesson for them in the victorious tale of Esther, who takes the bull by the horns. God not being mentioned in the Hebrew version of the story, it centred round Mordecai and his uncle's daughter, Esther, both of whom believed in God; and it was addressed to believers like them, obviously enough, to activate their faith and excite them to a personal, even social, response.

Hearers of the story, with its victory over viciousness, would certainly be enthused by the initiative taken by Mordecai to thwart the impending genocide planned by Haman; they would be enthralled by the conduct of Esther who comes into her own on the brink of danger and rises to the occasion to carry out her rescue plan. From such a perspective the 'historicised Wisdom tale' of Esther offered them a compelling religious and social message.[7]

[6] 'Today … almost 340 million Christians around the world—or 1 out of every 8—live in a country where they suffer some form of persecution, such as arbitrary arrest, violence, a full range of human rights violations and even murder.' (https://www.churchinneed.org/christian-persecution/, accessed 14 November 2022)

[7] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 869.

When they found themselves caught up in social or political upheavals they would have to know when and how to cooperate with whoever could serve their common good. In the absence of any divine manifestation they would not simply wait but rather assume responsibility for suitable action. Highlighting and urging this theme of personal responsibility, the Hebrew story of Esther hides God. After all, God is ever unseen, even if God's intervention (4:14; 6:13b) is not. In this daily darkness of implicit but unexpressed faith the original story, older and shorter, brings to the fore the deliberate action of Mordecai that sets in motion the drama of Esther in all her daring resourcefulness.[8] It nevertheless embraces the 72-hour fast (4:15–17) expressive of utter trust in God (Ezra 8:21).

The twin truth of God's hidden but active presence entwined with human action may possibly strike some, intuitively taking in the story's series of dramatic reversals (Queen Vashti's dethronement followed by Esther's enthronement; Haman being forced to honour Mordecai publicly rather than destroy him; the gibbet Haman prepared for Mordecai becoming the instrument of Haman's own death), each one related to the other, from beginning till end, in which the good turn the tables on the bad and rejoice in their conquest. In these unsuspected coincidences one may well suspect unseen providence making itself conspicuous: 'a hidden causality behind the surface of human history, both concealing and governing the order and significance of events'.[9]

The hidden, invisible causality will, however, be frustrated unless it is followed by a corresponding visible causality on the human level. For example, the elevation of Esther as queen, altogether unanticipated by her, will achieve nothing for her or her people unless and until she, for her part, decides to act for them when the situation demands. If the coincidences reveal the nearness of God to humans it is incumbent on humans to seize opportunity and achieve their urgent goal. Thus, in the Hebrew version of the story, even though God goes unmentioned, God is inconspicuously present, heightening the ubiquitous truth 'that it is God who controls and directs all the seemingly insignificant coincidences … that make up the plot and issue in deliverance for the Jews'.[10]

[8] See *The New Jerusalem Bible Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: TPI, 1991), 576, no. 38:53.
[9] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 867.
[10] *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 714.

In the Greek version of the story God is mentioned again and again (almost to the point of tedium) but still does not appear to the protagonists as in the narrative of Genesis or Exodus.[11] True, the dream of Mordecai, that begins and ends the story (in Greek), foretelling the initial struggle and eventual victory of the Jews, is understood as a definite action of God. However, even in the dream God does not appear to Mordecai; but the dreamer understands the dream as a divine experience—something sent by God in the first place, and something fulfilled by God at the end. And, in between, Mordecai and Esther turn to their God for saving help, believing rather than seeing, hoping in their invisible God who nevertheless acts palpably. Their hoping against hope in the story's various situations may visualise and symbolize God as master trickster, albeit without visible features, as in mythology (and so above mythology), so that they come to act likewise.[12]

Trickster, like *absentee God*, may not be a biblical or a theological term, but it truly represents one aspect of God: God in relation to people, outsmarting them, despite their own characteristic trickery and cunning, whenever they choose to act contrarily towards God. God appears as the best of tricksters when people try to trick God (as in the story of Eve and Adam in Paradise [Genesis 3]), or attempt to outdo God's chosen (as when rulers such as Pharaoh plot against God's anointed leader [Psalm 2; Exodus 7:7–10:29]). By the same token, when they are tricked by the bloodthirsty Haman and his pliant king Ahasuerus, Mordecai

Esther, *by John Everett Millais, 1865*

[11] See *New Jerusalem Bible Commentary*, 576, no. 38:53.

[12] This is worth mentioning especially to those, such as Joseph Campbell, so enamoured of mythology that they cannot see anything beyond it. Campbell has developed the Jungian archetype of the Trickster in numerous studies of world mythology.

and Esther turn to God the greater, master Trickster, the One who draws straight with crooked lines. As they believe they pray and plan, hoping to turn the tables on their foes. Inspired and empowered thus, Esther, in particular, acts using her divine gifts of charm and beauty, and tricks the king for the deliverance of her people as Haman did for their slaughter.

The Greek Esther: In the World but Not of the World

And so, in the dim light of the distant Greek story of Esther, all Christians, but in particular consecrated men and women, who have to live their vocations scattered across a world that is foreign and sometimes hostile, may see glimmerings of a revived or even strikingly new version of their life. This is especially true if they view Mary, the exemplar of holiness, in terms of Esther.[13] They may find a precedent for such thinking in the parallelism between Esther and Mary made by St Bernard, besides others, who looked upon Mary as *quasi altera Esther* (almost another Esther).[14] Writing on Esther in Renaissance art, one author has recently made a bolder statement: 'Esther is a type for the Virgin', with her radiant beauty equated 'with virtue or moral beauty'—the kind that saves the world, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky suggested.[15]

No doubt, from the biblical text it is clear that Esther, like Mary later (Luke 1:46–52), was (caught) in the thick of the world, Gentile and hostile, but kept herself safe above its contagious contamination. Again, like Mary pondering her response to God in relation to the universal, salvific mission, Esther prayed before going to the king on her limited saving mission thus, in a passage that only appears in the Greek:

> Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! … But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord. You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendour of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien. You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a

[13] See Robert L. Fastiggi, 'Mary as the Model of Faithful Love for Families, Spouses, and Consecrated Persons', *Marian Studies*, 66 (2015), 171–183.
[14] See Cristelle L. Baskins, 'Typology, Sexuality, and the Renaissance Esther', in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, edited by James Turner (New York: Cambridge U, 1993), 40.
[15] Baskins, 'Typology, Sexuality, and the Renaissance Esther', 40, 48. And see Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Granta, 2003), 382.

> filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure …. Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham. O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear! (4:12–19)

Jews, though scattered all over the Persian and Roman empires, lived in a markedly separate way, following their own laws (3:8). Such a principled separation was bound to occasion a backlash against them from the envious and ill-willed such as Haman, who planned their destruction for its own sake, with the unthinking connivance of the king. But, in the imminence of persecution, they had their own shrewdness knowing that their God, 'whose might is over all', can trick the haughty and outdo their cunning and so deliver the humble from the powerful.

Esther and Mordecai gave voice to their faith and asked God to turn the hearts of their enemies against each other and so save them from their downfall (13–14). Mary, for her part, foresaw the victory of such faith (Luke 1:5–55). As consecrated men and women represent their faith in the world, they cannot but recognise this spirit reverberating in the example of Christ. He was not of the world and so he was hated by the world. In the same way, his disciples in the world had to share his lot, as he had chosen them out of the world, to be in the world but not of the world. He warned them to be aware of 'the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod' (Mark 8:15). They had to watch and pray so that they might win out over the temptations of the world. They had to keep energetic in faith and so overcome the world. All this did not mean they should play safe, keeping themselves distant from the world. They were sent to the world as sheep daring to enter into, if not change, the world of wolves.

So consecrated men and women should know that they will not be above attacks of the worldly powers, just as Christ had forewarned his disciples; but, at the same time, they must rest assured of his protection and their safety because of his marvellous encouragement: 'You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.' (Luke 21:17–19) Experiences of this kind among consecrated religious as individuals and societies have been part of their birth and growth, through their own history and that of the wider Church. When consecrated people of today live up to this challenging call they can trace it as far back as the times of Esther or Mary.

Mary Ward (1585–1645), for example, who was inspired to take after Ignatius of Loyola, suffered like him for her new vision of religious life; and the society founded by her also faced opposition and suppression for more than two centuries. She broke new ground, founding an order of consecrated women without the confinements of cloister or distinctive habit. Her religious ambition for her companions (who were nicknamed Jesuitesses) was to found schools and to work with the poor and persecuted, empowering women beyond the gender discrimination of her time. Her love for God and for the group sharing her mission was stronger than death; and so, her chosen successors continued their work as they sought official recognition, which finally came through the good offices of St Pius X in the 1900s. With successive popes acknowledging her novel and holy leadership, she is now on the way to beatification.

So is another woman, named Mary Elizabeth Lange (*c.* 1780–1882), an Afro-Caribbean of refugee parentage who arrived in Baltimore, USA, as an immigrant. Educated herself, she was quick to recognise the lack of education among other immigrants. With the means at her disposal, thanks to her father, she opened a school in her own house. It was a time when slavery held such sway that the state law forbade the education of Black children. Her bold work, carried on for a decade with her friend Marie Magdaleine Balas, attracted the attention of the archbishop of Baltimore, who invited her to make her work permanent and take up the challenge of founding a congregation for the education of Black children. Thus, in 1829, a time when Black people were not admitted into sisterhood or priesthood, she began, in the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first congregation for Black women. She, like Mary Ward, proved herself a Christian Esther.

The Hebrew Esther: Consecrated Life in a Godless Society

The Hebrew story of Esther, which never mentions God, 'may have more direct relevance in our secular culture than stories in which God intervenes directly and miraculously'.[16] For one thing, there is no guarantee till the end of the story that the wish of Mordecai and Esther will be definitely fulfilled. There is suspense and even a measure of doubt about the outcome of whatever they plan. Nevertheless, for the Hebrew author,

[16] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 781.

> … the failure of Esther and Mordecai would not prove the absence of God … since Esther and Mordecai can never be completely sure that they are acting in concord with God. This is certainly theologically ambiguous, but it corresponds with the modern believer's daily struggle to discern the will of God. The best anyone can do, the author of Esther implies, is to act within those circumstances in which one finds oneself and to take advantage of those opportunities with an attitude of hope, … 'an openness to the possibility of providence, even when history seems to weigh against its likelihood'. It is this openness that speaks to the sceptical end of the twentieth century and becomes a posture of profound faith.[17]

Such an outlook may well be the hidden spring of a new and unsettling form of consecrated life. Inspired by the French visionary Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916), a Christian-turned-atheist who found his faith again, it was actually initiated by two like-minded followers, René Voillaume (1905–2003) and Magdeleine Hutin (1898–1989), who founded apostolic-contemplative congregations named Little Brothers of Jesus and Little Sisters of Jesus, in 1933 and 1939, independently of each other, in Algeria.

Cherishing the ideal of living like Jesus at Nazareth they sought to insert themselves among the poor working class and other disempowered groups. Living with the poor, in the manner of the Nazarene, the Little Brothers and Sisters exercise their faith exposed to all possible situations of human weakness, bearing all the trials of the poor, enduring worldly temptations and facing the seeming absence of God. In this stark darkness of faith, they seek to grow strong without the usual supports of faith enjoyed by the common, settled forms of consecrated living.

If they are the same as other congregations in the traditional ideal of vowed commitment, the Little Brothers and Sisters are very unlike them in the practical expression of it; they have no particular, distinctive apostolate apart from immersion in society like Jesus at Nazareth. Their very style of living and working becomes evangelization as their neighbours and co-workers begin asking them (as people asked Jesus) why they live as they do, like the rest of the populace without drawing attention to their status. Their life of consecration is so different from what other consecrated people are comfortably used to that most Catholics, not only lay but religious and clerical, fail to understand

[17] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 781, quoting Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther: Studies in Biblical Personalities* (Columbia: U. of South Carolina, 1991), 242.

their peculiar vocation and so discourage those called to join them. Not surprisingly, therefore, since their entry into India in the 1950s the brothers have been able to count just five Indians among them. Also, incidentally, they cannot boast of even a single Anglo-Saxon in the congregation. The Little Sisters have fared slightly better.

Proper understanding of their mission includes not only their choice of insertion into the thick of secular humanity (who may be both crassly godless and grossly deprived) but also their awareness of the divine mission embracing and penetrating their unadorned and humble work of earning their livelihood and contributing to mundane society. It is a novel, acute form of what happens—should happen—in consecrated living exposed to the constant struggle that Christ himself passed through in the encounter with the evil one. It reveals not only the eschatological but the apocalyptic outlook, which is to say that, in the present time (viewed as the final period of world history), 'the powers of evil make the supreme struggle against God and are finally routed after a dreadful and bloody combat'.[18]

Alert readers will see indications of such an outlook in the story of Esther. For, though the story begins as court rivalry between two high officials, Haman and Mordecai, it turns into a racial conflict, assuming even cosmic proportions, in which the unjustly oppressed turn out victorious against all expectations because of God's intervention.[19] All this happens in accordance with a dream that is fully understood only at the end. When, at the mercy of the Gentile oppressors, the Jews find themselves threatened by 'noises and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth' (Esther 11:5), like a groan or convulsion of nature and society, they cry out to God only to find ready divine visitation that leads them to surprise and victorious repose.[20]

Such an apocalyptic spirit stirs and marks the Little Sisters and Brothers of Jesus as they carry on their humdrum chores, struggling with the temptations, doubts and failures of their workaday world but buttressed by hope against hope. Indeed, it should in some way mark any sort of consecrated life. Without it consecrated life may have a surface propriety but will lack depth and lose its vibrant spirit.

[18] John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1998), 42.
[19] *The Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (London: SPCK and Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 126.
[20] See *New Jerusalem Bible Commentary*, 576–577, nn. 53, 55.

Esther and Mordecai, *by Aert de Gelder, 1675*

Higher Consecration

The apocalyptic story of Esther not only evokes God as the supreme Trickster, whether present covertly or overtly, but also presents its human characters as tricksters. On that level, too, it may be read and reread by consecrated people seeking to divine or plumb their life. The path of these human tricksters may be straight but can sometimes deviate; for, even if they start rightly, they may come to turn aside from the good. Even from this perspective, consecrated women and men may discover, in their pursuit of perfection, something unsuspected but necessary.

Esther and Mordecai believed that God had saved them and their nation according to God's fidelity to them. But they went on to do to their enemies with a vengeance what the latter wished to do to them. If they had had their own sense of goodness and righteousness till they gained their freedom, still they certainly fell short of divine goodness in the end: after their inverted pogrom they observed a day of feasting and gladness (9:17).

Obviously, consecrated men and women can take no part in the glee and glory of violent victors. Conversely, they cannot ignore how such

events occur repeatedly in history and today, uprooting and displacing people, driving them out of their homes and towns and countries, and so reducing many to the luckless state of migrants, refugees, captives or stateless people. Men and women in consecrated life cannot be cut off from these people and continue their cosy religious way of life; they ought to situate themselves not too far from them—near enough to share their lot, especially if that is the divine lot for them.

They need, therefore, to transport their consecration also to centres of the homeless or camps of the stateless or shelters of asylum seekers or even to the front line, like Sister Ann Rose Nu Twang. who knelt before the soldiers of the Myanmar junta with her hands raised, begging them to kill her instead of a group of peaceful protesters. In their very vulnerability, can consecrated men and women reimagine and recreate themselves and their corporate personality in terms of relationship to the people whom they love after God?

Such a response was instigated in a comparable situation in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Two religious orders, the Trinitarians and Mercedarians, came into existence for the sole purpose of rescuing Christian slaves and captives from Muslim powers. The Mercedarians even took a vow of becoming themselves ransom for the captives' release. Though this type of slavery has gone, other forms of persecution and injustice remain. Responding to them has become a vital, if not glamorous, part of the ongoing reform of consecrated life after Vatican II. The old Trinitarians have demonstrated their vitality and updated their charism, creating in 1999 the Trinitarian International Solidarity organization to address the ongoing problem of migrants and refugees, on the eighth centenary of their original foundation. It is not unlike the Jesuit Relief Service that began functioning in 1980.

Politics and Laughter

The story of Esther, in its very human telling, may evoke some amusement in its hearers. There is an interplay of irony and humour throughout. Right at the beginning, the way King Ahasuerus consults his experts about Queen Vashti's obstinacy makes him laughable. What is more laughable is their legalistic approach: they feel that they also, together with the whole populace, have been wronged by Vashti; and they fear that other women will copy her and dishonour their husbands and, of course, the royal officials too, and thus pose a threat to the stability of the kingdom. The king comes across as a puppet monarch who appears

in every scene dancing to others' tune according to his passing mood, making and revoking so-called irrevocable decrees.

> The irony and humour found throughout the book mask, in a pleasant way, the author's very serious intent: to teach Diaspora Jews that it is possible to lead a successful life in the sometimes inexplicable Gentile world in which they find themselves.[21]

From this humorous and ironic perspective, the story of Esther can become a parable of consecrated life and its own world of pompous authority which can go awry and harm others. The lesson is obvious enough. All those who find themselves troubled by internal conflicts and religious politics within their secretive world must grow in peace and even find good cheer. They must have humanity enough, with maturity and humour, not to take seriously the likes of Ahasuerus and Haman in their midst but to wish and laugh their hurts away, knowing that God the Trickster, who befriended Esther and Mordecai, is equally on their side.

St Francis of Assisi demonstrated this divine character and played the trickster after God when he went about preaching a new way of gospel living, claiming with conviction: 'The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me'.[22] Accordingly, as Chesterton appreciated: 'He would go on being a fool; he would become more and more of a fool; he would be the court fool of the King of Paradise'.[23] This was to distinguish the new rule, as Francis intended, from the earlier monastic rules. Still, it is true to say, all consecrated life before or after Francis could not be innocent of the foolishness that knows how subtly to subvert supposed orthodoxy or orthopraxis and to signify the truth beyond customary conformity. For truly consecrated people reflect Jesus as the sign of death and resurrection (John 12:32).

Compared to religious politics, the larger politics of the world is far more dirty, divisive, oppressive and violent. How does consecrated life cope with this? Two lives reveal its best response in the darkness of the Second World War: the Franciscan nun Maria Restituta Kafka (1894–1943) and the Carmelite St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein; 1891–1942). The former was the only religious sister to be formally condemned to death by the Nazis, for displaying the crucifix in the

[21] Crawford, 'Book of Esther', 858.
[22] 'The Legend of Perugia', n. 114, in St Francis of Assisi, *Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis*, edited by Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1973), 1089.
[23] Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *St Francis of Assisi* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008), 57.

hospital of her congregation, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Benedicta, a Jew who left her Jewish faith and learned philosophy (under Husserl), ended up discovering Christianity through the autobiography of Teresa of Ávila, and became a Carmelite in the very year Hitler came to power. She explained her vocation thus: 'Those who join the Carmelite Order are not lost to their near and dear ones, but have been won for them, because it is our vocation to intercede to God for everyone'. She reasoned thus:

> I keep thinking of Queen Esther who was taken away from her people precisely because God wanted her to plead with the king on behalf of her nation. I am a very poor and powerless little Esther, but the King who has chosen me is infinitely great and merciful. This is great comfort.[24]

In the small conflicts of consecrated life that appear big, and also in the bigger ones assaulting all manifestation of faith and Christian life, here is a prayer that may comfort us, with its resonant voice of Esther:

> With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
> with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
> with the pure you show yourself pure;
> and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
> For you deliver a humble people,
> but the haughty eyes you bring down. (Psalm 18: 25–27)

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[24] St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross to Mother Petra Brüning, 31 October 1938, in Edith Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916–1942*, translated by Josephine Koeppel (Washington, DC: ICS, 1993), 32.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL

The Lyrics of the Jesuit Baroque

Ian G. Coleman

> For when shee heard thee call her in thy wonted manner, and with thy usuall voyce, her only name issuing from thy mouth, wrought so strange an alteration in her, as if shee had beene wholly new made, when shee was only named.[1]

ROBERT SOUTHWELL, JESUIT SAINT and martyr, is remembered as a missionary like the more famous Edmund Campion, as well as an accomplished poet. He lived from 1561 to 1595, and so belongs to what one might describe as the second generation of Jesuits, no longer in direct contact with Ignatius of Loyola, who died in 1556, but close enough in date for the memory of the founder and his first companions to be a real and living influence on Southwell's formation—especially since, unlike Campion, he spent most of his years of training in Rome, where such memories would be strongest.

Southwell's dates would, at first sight, place him firmly in the era of the High Renaissance, but the cultural context in Rome was rather different from that of England, France or the Bohemia that Campion encountered. The period of construction of the church of the Gesù, which began in 1568 and was not completed until 1584, overlaps with Southwell's period of formation and must have been a massive and exciting physical presence for a Jesuit living in Rome. The significance of this building, the mother-church of the Society of Jesus to this day, and model for countless Jesuit churches throughout the world, cannot be over-estimated: it practically launched the start of a new artistic era—that of the Baroque.

At the same time, although 'Baroque' is a familiar and well-understood term in art, architecture and music, it is a little more surprising to find it applied to literature. A good case can be made for certain continental

[1] Robert Southwell, *Marie Magdalen's Funeral Tears for the Death of Our Saviour* (London: Charles Baldwin, 1823), 175 (subsequent references in the text). There is no modern edition of *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, but the text of this 1823 edition is freely available online at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark%3A%2F13960%2Ft3hx18c5m.

schools of poetry, notably that associated with the German Jesuit poet Friedrich Spee (1591–1635) and the Frenchman François de Malherbe (1555–1628), but the term is rarely found applied to English writers, with the significant exception, perhaps, of Richard Crashaw (*c.*1612–1649). What sense can there be, then, in using the expression 'the lyrics of the Jesuit Baroque' to refer to Robert Southwell?

The literary critic and scholar Odette de Mourgues, who did think Robert Southwell a poet of the Baroque, offers this characterisation:

> The notion of a certain distortion, of a lack of balance, is in keeping with the original meaning of the word baroque. It also takes into account the sharp contrasts, never reconciled, which we find in baroque poetry.[2]

The focus of her study is principally French authors, who cannot really have had much of an influence on Southwell, but she does consider his poetry, along with that of Crashaw, and the rather more obscure Giles Fletcher (*c.*1586–1623).

Mention of Crashaw and Fletcher raises the question of why Southwell should be classed as Baroque, rather than an early member of that more familiar group of English poets known as 'Metaphysical'. The greatest name in this group was the dean of St Paul's Cathedral, John Donne (1572–1631), and he certainly had Jesuit connections: two of his uncles, Jasper and Ellis Heywood were priests of the Society. Jasper Heywood (1535–1598) worked in the English Mission but, unlike Campion and Southwell, was exiled rather than executed when apprehended, and is remembered now as the first translator of the tragedies of the ancient Roman author Seneca into English. Both his dates and style place him firmly in the world of the Renaissance, and four of his own poems found their way into the 1576 collection named *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, a quintessential anthology of Tudor verse.

Donne, however, despite the examples of Campion, Southwell and Heywood, became a bitter and somewhat scurrilous critic of all things Ignatian, penning the notorious satire *Ignatius His Conclave* in 1611, in which he portrayed the Society as a band of demonic subversives, as well the more ponderously anti-Catholic tract *Pseudo-Martyr* in 1610.[3]

[2] Odette de Mourgues, *Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux Poetry* (Oxford, OUP: 1953), 75.

[3] Strangely enough, Giles Fletcher's son Phineas also wrote an anti-Jesuit diatribe. Combatively entitled *Locustae, vel Pietas Jesuitica* (the locusts or Jesuitical piety), it was published, in Latin and English verse, in 1627. Phineas Fletcher is, however, best known for the hymn text 'Drop, drop, slow tears', set to

Donne's poetry, too, parts company with the nascent Baroque, despite sharing many traits with its literary character; this fact, along with his own, somewhat violent break with his Catholic past, is, I think, significant, and we will return to it.

Among the 'Metaphysicals' (a notoriously difficult label to define), it is perhaps the gentler style of George Herbert (1593–1632), whose connection with a contemplative, not to say Ignatian spirituality came to him through the quasi-monastic world of Nicholas Ferrar (1592–1637), which comes closer to Southwell's own poetic voice. However one deals with these slippery definitions, it is certainly fascinating to catch a glimpse of the sheer wealth of interconnections that existed in the English literary world towards the end of the sixteenth century, and one element in this ferment is certainly the Ignatian influence of Southwell and Heywood.

Louis Martz has examined this and other spiritual influences on English writers of the early seventeenth century in his celebrated work *The Poetry of Meditation*.[4] Nevertheless, as I hope will become clear, I do not feel Martz really captures the essence of Southwell's genius in his study. To address this delicate and vexed question of the relationship between Ignatian spirituality, the early Jesuit literary world and the birth of a true Baroque style, we must turn, paradoxical as it may seem, not to Robert Southwell as poet, but rather as the author of a piece of 'poetic prose', indeed a piece of writing which defies easy definition, the work that he published in 1591 under the title *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*.

Robert Southwell, *artist uncertain, 1608*

music by Orlando Gibbons, putting him squarely in the 'Literature of Tears' movement. This particularly vicious strain of polemic seems to betray a concern on the part of both Donne and Fletcher that they would be too closely identified with the Ignatian tradition.

[4] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale U, 1954).

Southwell composed a letter of dedication for this prose-poem (to 'A.D.'—probably Dorothy Arundell, an acquaintance and patron) and, in it, he sets out in detail his reasons for writing in the way he did. It is worth quoting this dedicatory letter at some length:

> Madam, your virtuous requests … won mee to satisfie your devotion in penning some little Discourse of the blessed Marie Magdalene. And among other glorious examples of this Saint's life, I have made choice of her Funerall Teares, in which as she most uttered the great vehemency of her fervent love to Christ, so hath shee given therein largest scope to dilate upon the same: a theme pleasing I hope unto yourselfe, and fittest for the time …. Passions I allow, and loves I approve, only I would wish that men would alter their object, and better their intent ….
>
> This love [of Mary's], and these passions, are the subject of this Discourse. (iii–iv, ix)

There follows a more brief address 'To the Reader', which also sheds some light on the nature of Southwell's project:

> It may be that courteous skill will reckon [this work] … not unfit to entertain well tempered humours both with pleasure and profit; the ground thereof being in scripture, and the form of enlarging it an imitation of the ancient doctours in the same and other points of like tenour. (14)

This florid and somewhat opaque language is characteristic of literary prefaces at this period; Shakespeare's dedications to the earl of Southampton in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are very comparable. But, as well as giving us a foretaste of Southwell's bewilderingly ornate language in the work itself, the addresses quoted above give us three crucial insights into *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*:

1. 'Great vehemency of love' and 'passions' are at the centre of Southwell's 'Discourse'.
2. This theme is 'fittest for the time'; Southwell is aware of the fascination of his contemporaries for 'passions … and loves' and seeks to address that theme.
3. Starting from scripture, he 'enlarges' on it, by imitating 'the ancient doctours'.

We would, of course, love to know which 'ancient doctours' Southwell had in mind, but it may be that he uses this phrase in order not to mention

the principal, and most controversial, influence on his 'Discourse', namely the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius.[5]

For it soon becomes obvious to any well-informed reader of these *Funeral Tears* that what Southwell has produced is, in fact, an Ignatian meditation, and perhaps the most perfect (certainly one of the earliest) examples of such a meditation 'written out', so to speak. In her detailed and perceptive study of Southwell and his works, Anne Sweeney draws a fascinating parallel between the process by which he composed the *Funeral Tears* and his own brief notes in his surviving spiritual diary:[6]

> The effect of the intense self-searching carried out through the diary entries is clearly visible in later English work like *Mary Magdalen*. This reconstruction of a 'real' interiority was brought new to England by Southwell in the shape of his expansion of Gospel characters …[7]

This is useful reminder that Southwell writes about—and addresses—other gospel figures than Mary Magdalen: Joseph, Peter and, most famously, the Christ-child himself all appear and address the reader in his poetry.

In 'The Burning Babe', he presents us with a strange and rather disturbing image of the baby Jesus, a vision or dream in which the child appears to the poet while he 'in hoary Winter's night stood shiveringe in the snowe'. This baby, however, is 'all burninge bright', recalling the Three Holy Children in the burning fiery furnace of Daniel 3, and explains his mysterious and troubling appearance directly to the author:

> The mettall in this fornace wrought are men's defilèd soules,
> For which, as nowe on fire I am, to worke them to their good,
> So will I melt into a bath to washe them in My bloode:
> With this He vanisht out of sight, and swiftly shroncke awaye,
> And straight I callèd unto mynde that it was Christmas-daye.[8]

Mary Magdalen herself figures in two of Southwell's poems, 'Mary Magdalen's Blushe' and 'Mary Magdalen's Complaint', and it is fascinating

[5] Louis Martz suggests St Bonaventure, to whom an extended meditation on Mary Magdalen is attributed; see Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 200.

[6] Robert Southwell, *Spiritual Exercises and Devotions,* edited by J. M. de Buck (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974).

[7] Anne R. Sweeney, *Robert Southwell: Snow in Arcadia. Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape 1586–95* (Manchester: MUP, 2006), 44.

[8] 'The Burning Babe', in *The Complete Poems of Robert Southwell*, edited by Alexander Grosart (privately printed, 1872), 109–110.

to compare these works with the *Funeral Tears*. Mary addresses the reader in both poems, but the second, which relates her reaction to the death of Jesus, is closer in feel to the longer prose-poem:

> Sith my life from life is parted,
> Death come take thy portion;
> Who survives when life is murdred,
> Lives by mere extortion:
> All that live, and not in God,
> Couche their life in deathe's abode.[9]

However, it is also clear that Southwell's verse-style here is, deliberately one assumes, an imitation of the long-established popular song or madrigalian forms of Elizabethan England.[10] In a similar way, 'Mary Magdalen's Blushe' adopts the six-line stanza form of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, as does Southwell's longest and most sophisticated poem, 'St Peter's Complaint'. The stanzas of this last poem that consider the moment when Peter's eyes meet Jesus just after he has denied knowing him must count as some of the most intensely wrought poetry in the English language:

> O eyes! whose glaunces are a silent speach,
> In cipherd words high mysteries disclosing;
> Which, with a look, all sciences can teach,
> Whose textes to faithfull harts need little glosing;
> Witnesse vnworthie I, who in a looke
> Learn'd more by rote, then all the Scribes by book.[11]

Here, there seems a clear connection between this intensity of Southwell's language and that of his successor Richard Crashaw:

> Haile, *Sister Springs*,
> Parents of silver-forded rills!
> Ever bubling things!
> *Thawing Christall! Snowy Hills!*
> Still spending, never spent; I meane
> Thy faire Eyes sweet Magdalene.[12]

[9] 'Mary Magdalen's Complaint at Christ's Death', in *Complete Poems of Robert Southwell*, 62.
[10] Three stanzas of it were, in fact, set to music by Thomas Morley, under the title 'With Love My Life Was Nestled'; see Thomas Morley, *First Book of Ayres* (1600), edited by E. H. Fellowes (London: Stainer and Bell, 1932), 18–19.
[11] 'St Peter's Complaint', in *Complete Poems of Robert Southwell*, 74.
[12] Richard Crashaw, *Poems,* edited by L. C. Martin (Oxford: OUP, 1957), 308.

Mary Magdalen as Melancholy, *by Artemisia Gentileschi, 1622–1625*

Crashaw's poem 'The Weeper', to be sure, takes up the person of Mary Magdalen, but it is 'St Peter's Complaint' which is his starting point. One should note, though, that Southwell's version of St Peter is only one of many from roughly the same period: Malherbe wrote *Les larmes de S. Pierre* in 1596, and—more relevant perhaps as a model for Southwell—the Italian poet Luigi Tansillo had published his *Lagrime di San Pietro* in 1560, poems which were set to music by Orlando di Lasso in 1594. A work written in response to Tansillo's, *Le lagrime di S. Maria Maddalena*, by the Italian Erasmo di Valvasone in 1586 makes it a virtual certainty that Southwell saw himself as part of this lineage, and all of these works can also be seen as part of a wider 'Literature of Tears' which was fashionable at the end of the sixteenth century, and to which we might even add that most evocative of Elizabethan musical works, the 'Lacrimae' pavane of John Dowland.

So, once again, why single out from this list *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*? The answer lies in the difficult task of explaining how this work differs from Southwell's other writings. On the one hand, as we have seen, we have the poems, Renaissance in style and verse-form, often deliberately 'traditional' or even archaic in their language. On the other are a handful of prose works, the *Epistle of Comfort*, printed clandestinely in 1587 or 1588, the *Triumphs over Death* from 1595—both ostensibly written for the encouragement of the persecuted Catholics, but no doubt aiming for a wider audience as well—and *An Humble Supplication to Her Majesty,* circulated in manuscript copies at first. This latter is Southwell's equivalent to *Campion's Brag*, and, while it is not so self-confidently political as the *Brag*, nevertheless it indicates Southwell's determination not to remain silent in the face of the mounting persecution of his

co-religionists. The *Funeral Tears*, however, do not fit in either of these categories. Rather, they are something quite new to English literature: a worked-out and intense prose meditation, but with an organizing principle that is drawn straight from Southwell's poetic art.

Basically, Southwell's disingenuous claim that *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* are 'an imitation of the ancient doctours' turns out to be perfectly correct. What he performs is a *lectio divina* on the gospel narratives concerning Mary Magdalene and her encounter with the risen Jesus. The whole work can be summed up in the movement from 'But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb' (John 20:11) to 'Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her' (John 20:18).

Southwell punctuates and articulates his text, and quotes a small portion of the text of John's Gospel, together with a few other relevant scriptural passages. He seems to use his own translation, although the wording is very close to the Douai-Rheims version—which he could conceivably have known, since the New Testament portion was published in 1582, and then reflects on it. In this process, it seems very likely that he is following exemplars such as Bernard of Clairvaux, whose works were delivered to him, along with a Bible and breviary, during his imprisonment in the Tower of London. Not that he could have had leisure (or even, horrible as it is to imagine, proper use of his limbs) to write in this extremity of suffering, but the fact that Bernard is named indicates, perhaps a personal preference.[13]

However, Southwell goes well beyond the 'ancient doctours' in adopting the technique of colloquy, addressing the persons in the gospel narrative, usually Mary herself or Jesus, but also the angels at the tomb. This style of colloquy within the scriptural text is quite clearly Ignatian, from the famous Note on Colloquies in the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*: 'A colloquy is made, properly speaking, in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority' (Exx 54).

Here are some of the more striking 'colloquy moments' from the *Funeral Tears*:

> O good Iesu, what hath thus estranged thee from her? thou hast heretofore so pittied her teares, that seeing them, thou couldest not refrain thine. (40)

[13] See Philip Caraman, *A Study in Friendship: Saint Robert Southwell and Henry Garnet* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), 87.

> While Marie thus lost herselfe in a labyrinth of doubts, watering her words with teares, and warming them with sighs, seeing the angels with a kinde of reverence rise, as though they had done honour to one behind her: *She turned backe, and she saw Jesus standing, but that it was Jesus she knew not.*
>
> O Marie, is it possible that thou hast forgotten Jesus? (134)

> But though shee humbly fell downe at his feet to kiss them, yet Christ did forbid her, saying: *Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.*
>
> O Iesu, what mistery is in this? Being dead in sinne, shee touched thy mortall feet that were to dye for her sake, and being now alive in grace, may shee not touch thy glorious feet, that are no lesse for her benefit revived? (183–184)

These three extracts give some flavour of the intensely dramatic moments at which Southwell makes a point of interrupting both the gospel narrative and the complex, hypnotic rhetoric he weaves around it—almost as if he were aware of the dangers of excess into which his language, like Mary's grief, might fall. The events of the story punctuate and correct the wanderings of the praying mind and heart, and Southwell's literary style imitates these wanderings with such uncanny accuracy that it is not too fanciful to call it both mimetic and performative. Here, for instance, is a passage from near the very start of the work:

> But not finding the favour accompany him in death, and loathing after him to remain in life, the fire of her true affection inflamed her hart, and her inflamed hart resolved into uncessant teares: so that burning and bathing in love and griefe, she led a life ever dying, and felt a death never ending …. (17–18)

The author forces us to follow his parallelism and chiasmus, almost to the point of tedium. The hypertrophied language that Southwell uses is sometimes labelled 'euphuistic' after the didactic work of John Lyly (*c.*1554–1606) entitled *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, which appeared in 1578; and it is very much a feature also of Southwell's long poem 'St Peter's Complaint'. The excesses of this style, coupled with the influence of the literature of tears, probably explain the pejorative expression 'maudlin' repentance which appears to enter the English language at this period; indeed, it may well be that *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, or rather the cynical reactions to it, actually gave rise to this expression.[14]

[14] The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates this particular use of 'maudlin' as 'around 1600'.

But it cannot be stressed too highly that, unlike in 'St Peter's Complaint', Southwell is knowingly using this excess to build his case—the case for an extended and profound meditative discourse on the inner meaning of this most powerful of gospel passages. The most astonishing example of this comes, not surprisingly, at the point when Mary finally recognises Jesus:

> This water hath better graced thy lookes, than thy former alluring glances. It hath setled worthier beauties in thy face, than all thy artificial paintings. Yea, this only water hath quenched God's anger, qualified his justice, recovered his mercy, merited his love, purchassed his pardon, and brought forth the spring of all thy favours ….
>
> In the meane time reare up thy fallen hopes, and gather confidence both of thy speedy comfort, and thy Lord's well being.
>
> *Iesus saith unto her, Marie; She turning, saith unto him, Rabboni*. (171, 173)

There then follows the passage from which my very first extract is taken, closing with the motto 'wholly new made, when shee was only named'. This contains, in essence, the whole journey that Mary makes through the work and which, by extension, and with reference to a name taken in baptism, becomes the journey of every Christian: when we are named by our Lord, we are, in fact, new made. What is left unstated, but is perhaps implied, is that Mary is baptized by her own tears.

I hope that it is now clear what parallels between Southwell's technique in *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* and other ornate and expressionistic artworks of the period allow us to talk about Baroque lyric in this context. Odette de Mourgues' evocation of 'a certain distortion, of a lack of balance' in the citation above certainly describes the prose style which Southwell weaves around Mary, in imitation of her own mental 'lack of balance'. 'But alas, why doe I urge her with reason, whose reason is altered into love?' (32) is how his 'narrator' characterizes the excesses of the Magdalen, and we might well look to the exuberance of the ceiling of the Gesù or Bernini's famous sculpture of the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (both admittedly much later in date) for visual equivalents of this 'lack of balance'. The aim of the artists in all three cases is the same: through the sense of disorientation that is created, either by a *trompe l'oeil* visual effect, or by Southwell's verbal 'lack of balance', the reader or spectator is drawn mimetically into the scene, in this case, into the 'labyrinth of doubts' that Mary feels.

This is, indeed, a powerful literary technique—and it is wholly different from the approach of the Metaphysical poets. A good pair of terms to use here are 'distortion of perspective' and 'analysis of perspective'. The mimetic art of Southwell is completely alien to the fine poise of Donne, and even somewhat removed from what must be, despite its accomplishment, the rather decadent approach of Crashaw. A trivial, but revealing example of this can be found by considering how the two later poets deal with eyes and eyesight. First, from Donne's ravishing love-poem 'The Ecstasy':

> Where, like a pillow on a bed,
> A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
> The violets reclining head,
> Sat we two, one another's best,
> Our hands were firmely cimented
> With a fast balme, which thence did spring,
> Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
> Our eyes, upon one double string … [15]

The eyes of the lovers meet, but this moment is captured by the poet in a typical metaphysical 'conceit'—their eyes send out beams of light. The metaphor is a scientific one, albeit limited by the imperfect understanding of Donne's time; the poet 'analyses' the gaze of the lovers, finding an 'objective' explanation for their inability to take their eyes off each other.

By way of contrast, from Crashaw's poem on Mary Magdalen, 'The Weeper', again:

> And now where're he strayes,
> Among the Galilean mountaines,
> Or more vnwellcome wayes,
> He's follow'd by two faithfull fountaines;
> Two walking baths; two weeping motions;
> Portable, & compendious oceans.[16]

The imagery used here for Mary's eyes, though certainly inventive, verges on the ridiculous—the distortion of language has gone awry. We can recognise the imagery as Baroque, but rather more in its pejorative sense, of bizarre excess; Crashaw has distorted the perspective of the ever-weeping eyes so we find ourselves repelled rather than drawn in

[15] John Donne, *Poems*, edited by Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford: OUP, 1912), 51.
[16] Crashaw, *Poems*, 312.

Detail from* Lamentation over the Dead Christ with the Three Marys*, by Bergognone, 1515–1520

by its intensely 'subjective' expressivity. Southwell's style, by contrast, uses this apparent excess to construct a bridge (perhaps for the first time) between Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* and the Baroque art of the hyper-real, that art by which the observer or reader becomes part the work itself. In this, he establishes a similar path to that of the sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini some fifty years later.

Robert Southwell is, in the end, an enigma. Many commentators have struggled to define the essence of his literary style: for Pierre Janelle, it lies in an acute sense that Southwell had of his 'apostolate of letters',[17] and certainly this explains the many points in his poetry where he takes up and imitates the Elizabethan *milieu* of his contemporaries—sometimes quite overtly, as in 'Dyer's Phancy Turned to a Sinner's Complaint', a simple rewriting or parody of a love-poem by his contemporary Nicholas Dyer.[18] In fact, the phrase *Fancy turned to a sinner's complaint* could almost be taken as Southwell's motto throughout his 'apostolate of letters'.

But others have seen in the poetry more of a dark premonition of Southwell's martyrdom; two fascinating articles in this vein are Gary Kuchar's analysis of Southwell's powerful 'A Vale of Tears',[19] and Geoffrey Hill's influential 'The Absolute Reasonableness of Robert Southwell', a piece which serves as a preface to a whole vein of Hill's poetry (mostly to be found in his collection *Tenebrae*) deeply influenced by what one might term the 'Southwell myth'.[20] Louis Martz, meanwhile, sees Southwell as the founder of a school of meditative poetry which

[17] Pierre Janelle, *Robert Southwell the Writer: A Study in Religious Inspiration* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 34 following.
[18] *Complete Poems of Robert Southwell*, 96.
[19] Gary Kuchar, 'Southwell's "A Vale of Teares": A Psychoanalysis of Form', *Mosaic*, 34/1 (2001), 107–120. To my mind, an even better candidate for such analysis would be the chilling 'Love's Gardyne Greife' (*Complete Poems of Robert Southwell*, 92).
[20] Geoffrey Hill. 'The Absolute Reasonableness of Robert Southwell' in *The Lords of Limit* (New York: OUP, 1984).

overlaps with, but is not quite the same as, the Metaphysical poets.[21] To a greater or lesser extent, all of these authors are affected, understandably, by the appalling manner of Southwell's end—a gruesome or glorious martyrdom (depending on your point of view); and it is entirely fair, I think, to see in much of the urgent and overwrought imagery of his poems a foretaste of that tragedy.

But none of this quite accounts for *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*. It seems very likely that the work was conceived in Rome, long before Southwell was submerged in the nightmare of the English mission; certainly it bears none of the hallmarks of the social and political engagement of much of his poetry and other prose works. Two little details from Anne Sweeney's account shed considerable light on this area.[22] First, there is the fact that Southwell was, during his time in Rome, made prefect of studies of the newly formed English College, and secretary to its Jesuit rector Alfonso Agazzari. This was a role of considerable importance, especially in what was a situation of some ambiguity and conflict as to the orientation and aims of the college. Secondly, there is a very moving reference to the Jesuits on the English mission from the pen of the superior general of the Society, Claudio Acquaviva, who considered them 'lambs to the slaughter', and had already specifically refused Robert Persons's request that Southwell be sent into England in 1584, only to accede (one imagines, reluctantly) the following year.

Southwell was a bright star in the Roman firmament; Acquaviva clearly considered him to be a valuable asset, intellectually and spiritually, to both the Roman College and the nascent English College. And it should be remembered that two of his teachers, other stars in this same firmament, were giants of the Society of Jesus: Robert Bellarmine and Francisco Suárez. Southwell himself, however, like Robert Persons, his English Superior, apparently thought only in terms of his mission and likely martyrdom back in his home country.

What would have become of Southwell's zeal and his art if he had lived? Asking this most unanswerable of questions brings us right up against the whole edifice and ideal of the Jesuit Baroque. Claudio Acquaviva's instinct seems to have been that Southwell, along with his immensely gifted Jesuit compatriots, had a role to play in the work of re-evangelization, through preaching and writing and teaching—in

[21] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, especially 179–210.
[22] Sweeney, *Robert Southwell*, 63, 88.

Southwell's case, a role that was artistic as well as polemical or theological. The instinct of the English Jesuits themselves seems largely to have been orientated towards the return to a missionary activity at the sharp end—a return that bordered on the suicidal.

If Southwell had lived for another twenty or thirty years, his unique and distinctively Baroque voice, a voice of the Roman and cosmopolitan aesthetic would certainly have rivalled Donne's and Herbert's—perhaps even that of John Milton who, strange as it may seem, stayed briefly at the English College himself during a continental tour in 1638. Like Shakespeare—but unlike Campion, Heywood and Donne—Southwell was an outsider. He owed nothing to the disputatious theological atmosphere of Oxford and Cambridge, and this, as well as his European outlook, should be borne in mind when we consider not only the pejorative tag 'maudlin', but also the fact that, while Donne clearly idolizes women in his love lyrics, he never places the 'loves and passions' of a woman, and a 'fallen woman' at that, at the centre of his writing—indeed, at the centre of the whole question of what faith in the Risen Jesus really means.

The significance of *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, then, turns out not only to be one of the creation of a new style and genre in English literature, but the opening of a door into the world of the European—and specifically Jesuit—Baroque, precisely because it does not really move in the same, somewhat narrow perspective of Southwell's poetry. The tragedy for us—perhaps for England as a whole—is that the grinding gears of history, between the dark police state of Elizabethan England, and the heartless renewal of the Bull *Regnans in excelsis* in 1588, by which Sixtus V declared Elizabeth deposed and all her Catholic subjects traitors, ensured that this door was forever slammed shut.

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A PRAYER OF LAMENTATION

The History and Uncertain Future of the Jesuits in Tomsk, Russia

Eric A. Clayton

BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2022, the Society of Jesus ran the only Roman Catholic secondary school in all Russia—Tomsk Catholic School in Siberia—and Thomas Simisky, a Jesuit of the US East Province, was its executive director. I interviewed Fr Simisky in January 2022; we exchanged e-mails throughout the following month. Despite the darkening clouds on the horizon, one thing remained clear: The school was thriving, a place of interreligious dialogue and learning, where young minds were formed in the Ignatian tradition.

But since that fateful day—the day on which Russian forces marched into Ukraine, setting off a conflict in which peace still feels so far away—the fate of Tomsk Catholic School has become uncertain. Fr Simisky could not remain in Russia, and the role of the Jesuits in this country that was once so important to the global Society's survival is unclear. This article was conceived as a celebration of new beginnings and new opportunities. It has become a testament to what has been lost. Still, understanding what Tomsk means in the wide-ranging history of the Society of Jesus in Russia is important. And, as we will see, the Jesuits and the Russian people have rebuilt from ruined relationships in the past.

From the earliest days of the Society until the present, the Jesuits have had a fickle relationship with Russia and its people. And yet, that relationship has proved essential: to the survival of the Society, and to the spiritual rebirth of a burgeoning community in Siberia and beyond. How did this come to be—and why? What sustained this relationship? In these pages I hope to situate the Jesuit presence in Russia in general, and the Jesuit mission in Tomsk in particular, within the larger Ignatian tradition, and to explore how this mission embodied essential lessons of Ignatian humanism. The context in which I began to write may be different from the one in which this article is being read, but the future is still unfolding. What that means for the Ignatian imagination in Tomsk is yet to be seen.

Tomsk Catholic School

The Hope That Was

Tomsk Catholic School is part of the Catholic Community of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God, Queen of the Rosary. Tsar Alexander I permitted the formation of this Catholic enclave in 1806, and Jesuit missionaries arrived in 1815.[1] From 1816 until 1820, the Jesuits of Tomsk, under the leadership of Marceli Kamieński, travelled 'throughout the vast region … administering the sacraments to the Catholics they encountered, instructing them, and distributing religious publications to them'. In 1820, the Jesuits were expelled from the Russian empire. It was not until 1992 that the Society of Jesus again 'obtained official permission to exist in the Russian Federation'.[2]

A lot happened in the intervening years. The Society of Jesus cautiously returned to the global stage, traumatized by a 41-year suppression in which it had very nearly ceased to exist. In Russia, mistrust of the West became personified in literature and culture through the depiction of Jesuits as wily, villainous characters, embodying the worst of Western influence. Following on from the Second Vatican Council—which opened new horizons in interreligious dialogue—the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus clearly stated: 'to be religious today is to be interreligious in the sense that a positive relationship

[1] History of Tomsk parish, at https://catholic-tomsk.ru/history (in Russian), accessed 29 March 2023.
[2] Marek Inglot, *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression: The Society of Jesus in the Russian Empire (1773–1814)*, edited and translated by Daniel L. Schlafly (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's U, 2015), 81, 204.

with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism'.[3]

For the Jesuit–Russia relationship, so often paralyzed by worry over proselytizing and conversion, this reorientation changed the approach and perception of any future Jesuit mission. The 1918 and 1929 Soviet laws suppressing religious expression—and their subsequent unravelling with the fall of the Soviet Union—created a great spiritual hunger among the people. The mission of the Jesuits in Tomsk, who officially returned to ministry in Siberia after an absence of nearly 200 years, blended the old and the new. 'There are probably 400 parishioners in our parish', Fr Simisky noted in early 2022. But the parish itself 'geographically is larger than the country of Poland'.[4]

It is not hard to draw a parallel between the Jesuits of Tomsk and the early Jesuits: 'With the early Jesuits, it was really only in mission lands that you'd see them running parishes. [This] is definitely mission territory.'[5] Contrary to the popular belief that the early Jesuits were solely foot soldiers of the Catholic Reformation, 'most Jesuits were not engaged in converting unbelievers to the faith, or even heretics to orthodoxy, but were labouring with Catholics for their "progress in Christian life and doctrine"'.[6] This was familiar language to the Jesuits of Tomsk who, cognisant of historical missteps and the national role of the Russian Orthodox Church, spent much of their time deepening the already existing Catholic faith and identity of parishioners, old and new alike.

Most importantly, though, this seemingly small Jesuit presence in an otherwise very large country embodies the first of the Universal Apostolic Preferences taken up by the global Society of Jesus in 2019: a desire to show others the way to God. No trickery, no forced conversions, but rather genuine accompaniment that invites the would-be believer on a journey to the Divine. Arturo Sosa, superior general of the global Society, wrote, 'We resolve to collaborate with the Church in experiencing secular society as a *sign of the times* that affords us the opportunity to renew our presence in the heart of human history'.[7] There may be few better case studies than the Jesuit mission in Russia to prove the point.

[3] GC 34, decree 5, n. 130.
[4] Thomas Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.
[5] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.
[6] John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U, 1993), 70.
[7] Arturo Sosa, letter to the whole Society, 'Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019–2029' (19 February 2019), n. 2.

A Historical Sketch

The story of the Jesuits in Russia cannot be told apart from the story of the Jesuits in Poland. Despite initial setbacks, the Society of Jesus found 'success in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth', beginning in 1564 and 'became the most dynamic element in the confrontation with the Reformation movement … from education to court preaching'.[8] The Polish king Stefan Batory, recognising the importance of Jesuit schools, 'founded and endowed a college at Polock in 1579, which would become the center of Jesuit life throughout the suppression era'.[9]

Education, though, was only one focus of this first generation of Polish Jesuits. Crucially, they sought the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church with Rome—a priority of Pope Gregory XIII, and one that would irrevocably tarnish the image of the Jesuits in Russia. In 1604, Kasper Sawicki SJ converted Dmitrii the Pretender—who claimed to be the long-lost son of Ivan IV and thus the rightful heir to the Russian throne—to Catholicism.[10] Sawicki 'and another Polish Jesuit accompanied the Pretender's army to Moscow during the Time of Troubles'. Their crusade ended poorly. 'Grandiose plans to establish a network of Jesuit schools in Russia as the first step to bringing the whole realm into union with Rome collapsed with Dmitrii's death in 1606.' More than forty Jesuits were killed during the conflicts that followed. This was just another episode in the centuries-long struggle by which 'Russia had felt compelled to protect its faith, its people, and its homeland from what it saw, with considerable justification, as a Roman Catholic assault'.[11]

This series of tragic events makes what comes next all the more surprising. Bowing to political pressure from the Catholic monarchs of Europe, Pope Clement XIV issued the 1773 papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*, which suppressed the Society of Jesus worldwide. Owing to the nature of the brief and the desires of the Pope, the Church relied on local leaders to enforce the suppression. Catherine the Great, ruler of the Russian empire at the time of the suppression, saw an opportunity

[8] Daniel L. Schlafly, introduction, in Inglot, *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression*, vii; Stanisław Obirek, 'Jesuits in Poland and Eastern Europe', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 138–139.
[9] Schlafly, introduction, ix.
[10] History of the Jesuits in Russia, at https://catholic-tomsk.ru/sj-in-russia (in Russian), accessed 29 March 2023.
[11] Schlafly, introduction, iv, x.

to strengthen Russia while simultaneously opposing her geopolitical adversaries—and break with decades of anti-Jesuit sentiment.

After the First Partition of Poland in 1772, Catherine found herself with 201 new Jesuit subjects, as well as their educational endeavours. The tsarina was determined to continue Peter the Great's legacy, transforming Russia into a modern state, bolstered by an educated citizenry. 'She saw her new Polish Jesuit subjects not as traditional national or religious enemies, but as potential contributors to her realm: educators, men of learning, and loyal citizens.' For this reason, Catherine proved prophetic in her 1779 response to the papal nuncio in Poland—inspired in part by what she saw at the college at Polock: she refused to suppress the Society, unknowingly predicting what other rulers would learn through hard experience: 'the example of other countries shows that no one can replace [the Jesuits] … who have devoted themselves to the education of youth, and consequently the public good'.[12]

Subsequent years would prove the wisdom of Catherine's words, and subsequent popes would slowly, quietly affirm the re-emerging Society of Jesus. 'In 1783, Pope Pius VI approved the Society in the Russian empire in an oral declaration', empowering the Jesuits to reorganize and expand the scope of their apostolates, primarily in teaching and missionary work. In 1801, Pope Pius VII gave public approval of the existence of the Jesuits in the Russian empire, in large part thanks to Gabriel Gruber, who would go on to be elected general in 1802.[13]

Importantly, though, the story of the suppression-era Jesuits in Russia is not one of simple survival but of flourishing. The Society began its first Siberian mission in 1811, with an eye towards 'restoring their own missions in China'. 'The establishment of a forward position in Irkutsk, the Russian city situated close to the Chinese border, seemed to have a promising perspective for the future.'[14] It was during this missionary outreach into Siberia that the Jesuits first arrived in Tomsk. 'The greatest paradox in Jesuit history is that it was Russia which not only saved the Society from total suppression, but also protected and fostered it for decades.'[15]

All good things come to an end. While Catherine ruled pragmatically, leveraging religious sentiment—and in so doing, the Jesuits—to serve

[12] Schlafly, introduction, xi, vii.
[13] Inglot, *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression*, 71, 246.
[14] Inglot, *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression*, 81; Anna Peck, 'Between Russian Reality and Chinese Dream: The Jesuit Mission in Siberia, 1812–1820', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 87/1 (January 2001), 81.
[15] Schlafly, introduction, x.

her modernising vision, her successors did not always share her goals. Her son, Paul I—himself attracted to the Catholic faith, as well as an admirer of Pope Pius VI—'granted them extensive privileges and encouraged their work … as allies in his defense of traditional values'.[16] He even discussed with Father General Gruber the possibility of reuniting the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and was instrumental in the papacy's official sanctioning of the Society in Russia in 1801.

Alexander I initially supported the Jesuits but would eventually be responsible for their expulsion from Russia in 1820. Several factors led to this sudden change of attitude: 'Alexander was displeased by [the Jesuits'] opposition to the Russian Bible Society … and his later educational reforms', two of the tsar's pet projects.[17] Additionally, a wave of nationalism that led to increased influence of the Russian Orthodox Church coupled with the global restoration of the Society of Jesus meant the ground was shifting beneath the Jesuits; they were again seen as a source of foreign influence. The conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism by a high-profile Russian student at the Jesuit college in St Petersburg was the final straw. The Jesuits were expelled.

The next chapter of relations between the Society of Jesus and the Russian people is best told through literature, and it is a chapter in which the Jesuits themselves are absent. 'In the nineteenth century, there is a debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles. The Slavophiles want to have these homegrown Slavic traditions, particularly in government but also in religion.'[18] In this project, the Jesuits made good villains.

> Like the image of Catholicism as a whole, the Jesuits are very useful to Russian writers. The figure of the Jesuit is a part of the bigger picture in which writers depicted European society, Western morals and their infringement on Russia society. The Jesuit can be molded to represent whatever the author wishes to oppose, to his idea of what Russian society and culture should be. This is made easier by the fact that, from the 1820s, Jesuits were exclusively outsiders to Russian society. In this way, they could be used as shadowy figures to be defined in whatever manner the writer wished.[19]

[16] Inglot, *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression*, 3.
[17] Schlafly, introduction, xiii.
[18] Cameron Bellm, personal interview, February 2022.
[19] Elizabeth Harrison, 'The Image of the Jesuit in Russian Literary Culture of the Nineteenth Century', *Modern Languages Open*, 1 (2014), at https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/article/10.3828/mlo.v0i1.38/, accessed 28 January 2022.

False Dimitry, *by Nikolay V. Nevrev, 1876*

Why does this matter? Literature both reflected and moulded culture. Cameron Bellm, a poet and scholar of Russian literature, drives the point home: 'It's hard for me to think of a place where literature is taken more seriously. Russian writers … were prophets. They were the voice of the generation.'[20]

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 did little to improve the standing of the Society of Jesus in Russia. Laws enacted in 1918 and 1929 effectively suppressed religious expression throughout the Soviet Union until 1988. In celebration of this thousandth anniversary of the Russian conversion to Orthodoxy, proscriptions against religion were slowly lifted in line with Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*. The eventual fall of the USSR and the new constitution of the Russian Federation led to more acceptance of religious practice. The 1997 'Law of the Russian Federation on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations' clarified the separation of Church and state, and recognised the special role played by the Orthodox Church throughout Russian history.[21]

Nonetheless, decades of religious suppression left 'what Patriarch Aleksii II called a "spiritual vacuum" in which "the moral level of the

[20] Bellm, personal interview, February 2022.
[21] Daniel L. Schlafly, 'Religious Minorities in Russia: Help or Hindrance to Development of Civil Society? Roman Catholics', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 20/4 (2000), at https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol20/iss4/3, accessed 19 January 2022,

people [fell] catastrophically"'.[22] This 'spiritual vacuum' had left Russian communities particularly vulnerable to consumerism and materialism. 'What's happened in the post-Soviet period has been this explosion of capitalism that many people privately find soulless', Bellm reflects. 'They're looking for something with more depth, more meaning': more humanity.[23]

At this critical juncture, the Jesuits officially returned to Russia. No longer consorting with tsars or preaching at court, these Jesuits stood on the shoulders of men such as Walter Ciszek who, rather than advising the ruling powers, was imprisoned by them—all for the love of the gospel and the people of Russia. Stripped of their schools and in much reduced numbers, the Jesuits of the early 1990s could no longer hope to convert an entire population by decree—if such a thing was ever even possible. Rather, in the ashes of the Soviet era, these Jesuits focused on reminding people of their inherent human dignity.

Ignatian Humanism

Thomas Simisky thought of the communist atheism that the Russian people endured for seventy years as a deep wound. 'It really was very dehumanising', he said. For him, an Ignatian humanism means recognising 'that we were created by God in God's image. And that was exactly what was negated during those years. People were not able to develop fully.'[24]

For some, the idea that Christianity might embrace humanism sounds anathema. But 'in its widest sense, humanism describes those attitudes and beliefs that attach central importance to the human person and human values'. This makes perfect sense within the Ignatian tradition; St Ignatius of Loyola trusted God to reveal Godself through the full range of human experience: desires, dreams and desolations. The Spiritual Exercises are the fruit of Ignatius' own prayer, grounded in his own humanity. The early Jesuits met during their education at the University of Paris and, not long after their formal recognition as a religious order, found themselves—quite unintentionally—managing and working within schools. 'For Jesuits, there was never anything like

[22] Daniel L. Schlafly, 'Roman Catholicism in Post-Soviet Russia: Searching for Acceptance', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 21/4 (2001), at https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol21/iss4/1, accessed 19 January 2022.
[23] Bellm, personal interview, February 2022.
[24] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.

a flight from the world'; from the outset, Jesuits were thrust into the heart of humanity.[25]

It is typical in the Ignatian tradition to speak of finding God in all things; in other words, all of creation has the potential to reveal something of its Creator. God is active, too, still labouring within the world, co-labouring with humanity to bring about God's dream for all of creation. Discerning the signs of the times helps us discover our unique role within God's design. To that end, 'no enterprise, no matter how secular, is merely secular. We live in a universe of grace. From the Jesuit perspective, therefore, it follow[s] that holiness and humanism require each other'.[26] An Ignatian humanism lifts the gaze of humanity to what might yet be—the act of contemplation—while keeping the holy grounded in what readily is—a world in need of action. As a result, everything, to borrow an oft-quoted Jesuit mantra, has the potential to be for the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

When Fr Simisky stood in front of his classroom in Tomsk, he was not simply imparting technical skills or knowledge. 'Our goal as educators is to help students recognise the human dignity within the classroom'—theirs and that of their classmates. 'If I'm looking at eight kids in front of me, I'll think, *Hey, each of them was created by God. They have their gifts, their talents, their human dignity. How do I help them discover that?*' That exploratory path into the heart of their humanity is an inherently spiritual journey, and one Fr Simisky eagerly embarked upon. 'How do we figure out who they are, what their gifts are, recognising that their gifts are from God? How do we refine these gifts?' The whole point, Fr Simisky stressed, is to refine those gifts so as to be of service to others, 'to be able to love God and to love neighbour': to reach their full, human, God-given potential.[27]

To Siberia with Love

The Jesuits were tasked with running Tomsk Catholic School and parish by the local ordinary, Bishop Joseph Werth of Novosibirsk—himself a Jesuit, formed in secret during the Soviet era—in 2014: a nod to both the Jesuits' historic role as educators and the bicentennial of the

[25] Donald Modras, 'The Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits', in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader: Contemporary Writings on St Ignatius of Loyola, the Spiritual Exercises, Discernment, and More*, edited by George Traub (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 11, 10.
[26] Modras, 'Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits', 10.
[27] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.

Society's global restoration.[28] The school itself was started by laypeople—a desire on behalf of the community 'that children could experience the Christian life'—in 1993, two years after the parish was reconsecrated as a Catholic church.[29] During the Soviet years, the parish campus was put to a variety of non-religious uses, including as a vegetable store, planetarium and club.[30] When the church was returned to the community at Easter, 1990, in need of repairs, Tomsk Catholics considered their prayers answered.

Though the school began as an outgrowing of the local parish, the student body—at least before the war in Ukraine—was only 20 per cent Catholic. That was a trend that was celebrated, and teachers of all faiths were also made welcome. In this simple act echo the words of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus—and those words are worth noting again: 'to be religious today is to be interreligious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism'. Taken in tandem with an Ignatian humanistic approach, it is clear 'that non-Catholics, non-Christians, even nonbelievers, conceptual agnostics

Parish church of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God, Tomsk

[28] Michael Desjardins SJ, personal interview, February 2022.
[29] History of the *gymnasium*, at https://catholic-tomsk.ru/gymnasium (in Russian), accessed 21 February 2022.
[30] History of Tomsk parish.

and atheists can be living in the divine presence and serving as instruments of grace' simply by the very nature of their humanity.[31]

This approach is a far cry from the ill-advised attempt to convert all of Russia through an impostor ruler and the building up of a network of Russian Jesuit schools. It also shifts the emphasis from an increase in educational institutions to an increase in individuals affirmed in their God-given humanity. This is a faith embraced as a result of a personal experience of the divine, not from royal decree. 'If you're a human being, this is for you', Fr Simisky said. 'You're in. You don't even have to be Christian.'[32] And yet, the Christian story animates all that the Jesuits do, as it did for St Ignatius in his life and his writing of the *Spiritual Exercises*. 'My new motto has become, "Preach the Exercises always; when necessary, use words"', Fr Simisky wrote in a February 2022 article published in *America* days before the invasion. He was riffing on the oft-quoted, 'Preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words'.[33]

Simisky, while in his role as executive director of Tomsk Catholic School, recognised that after an absence of nearly 200 years, the Ignatian tradition was almost nonexistent. Students and teachers alike were unfamiliar with Ignatian terminology: the Examen, finding God in all things, being women and men for others, and more. This made for an interesting challenge in a school that claimed an Ignatian mission and identity. 'One easy entry that makes sense to all is *cura personalis*—care for the whole person', Fr Simisky wrote. 'The State was god and the center of communist creation. Ignatian humanism, indeed all of Catholic social teaching, prioritizes the dignity of the human person, created in God's image.'[34] This, he believed, was a necessary step in healing those seventy years of deep, spiritual woundedness—and foundational to the Jesuit mission of education.

What did it mean to 'preach' the Exercises in Russia? Fr Simisky put it like this:

> To be able to walk with people through this lens of the four Weeks of the *Exercises*, to go from gratitude to service while recognising all along the importance of the [human] person. And for us, certainly

[31] Modras, 'Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits', 15.
[32] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.
[33] Thomas Simisky, 'The Jesuits Run Russia's Only Catholic Secondary School, Where Love Is Shown More in Deeds than in Words', *America* (17 February 2022).
[34] Simisky, 'Jesuits Run Russia's Only Catholic Secondary School'.

> as Christians, the person is Jesus. To be able to recognise that we are with Christ through whom we have been created, through whom we are redeemed, and to be able to help others to be able to see that, that redeeming love that is present with us now.[35]

This was the foundation for the school's Ignatian identity.

The Athens of Siberia

Tomsk, Fr Simisky said, had a well-known nickname: the Athens of Siberia. It is a university town, home to Siberia's first university—Tomsk State—as well as five others. 'People [came] from all over; there's a certain openness to it. There's a certain cultural and intellectual life.'[36] One might draw parallels with St Ignatius' own background and studies, his meeting of the early companions at the University of Paris, their immersion in culture and academia.

> Because of their Renaissance culture and upbringing, Ignatius and the early Jesuits believed in the power of education …. It had been commonplace assumption of the humanists that good literature led to virtue.[37]

As a result of Tomsk's international appeal, Fr Simisky found himself ministering to students from all over the world: Ghana, Nigeria, India, Colombia, Ecuador, Germany and more. 'So many of them were struggling with Russian. They kept asking me if I'd celebrate Mass in English.' And so, despite his intention to do everything in Russian so as to master the language, Fr Simisky committed to celebrating an English Mass at the Tomsk parish. 'It's tough to be far from home. A Catholic Mass is a place where you can come and feel at home if you're Catholic. Hopefully, even non-Catholics can feel at home.'[38]

Nearly 500 years later, the echoes of St Ignatius and his early companions could be heard in the ministries of the Jesuits at Tomsk. They continued 'laboring with Catholics for their "progress in Christian life and doctrine"'. They found themselves performing two foundational roles of the Jesuit life: missionary and educator. They existed at the heart of interreligious dialogue, free to listen, learn and share, while

[35] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.
[36] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.
[37] Modras, 'The Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits', 13.
[38] Simisky, personal interview, January 2022.

embodying the founding charism of the Society: the Spiritual Exercises. And they worked for reconciliation—the restoration of relationship between humanity, creation and God—in a spiritual landscape marred by decades of dehumanisation. At least, they did so for as long as they could.

The development of the Ignatian humanistic tradition not only guided the Jesuits of Tomsk but guides the global Society of Jesus. This Ignatian humanism, as seen in the mission at Tomsk, is captured in these words of Fr Sosa about the call to share in the life and mission of Jesus Christ:

> At the heart of this call is the love of the One and Triune God who is not paralyzed in the face of the world's situation but who sends Jesus to take on our humanity and give his life in order to open the gates to divine life and love for all human beings.[39]

Now, in the wake of war, death, trauma and so much loss, what the Jesuits tried to do at Tomsk, who they tried to be and why, is more important than ever. With the future uncertain, we hold the people of Russia and Ukraine in prayer, lament all that has been lost—lives, futures, hope—and we cry out in the words of the Psalmist:

> How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? (Psalm 13:2–3)

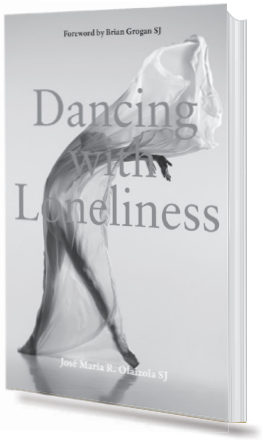
Eric A. Clayton SJ is the award-winning author of *Cannonball Moments: Telling Your Story, Deepening Your Faith* (2022), a meditation on the intersection of personal storytelling and Ignatian spirituality. He is the deputy director for communications at the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, where he co-hosts the weekly podcast *AMDG: A Jesuit Podcast* and writes the weekly reflection series, *Now Discern This*. Learn more about his work at ericclaytonwrites.com.

[39] Arturo Sosa, letter to the whole society, n.8.

New books for 2023

Dancing with Loneliness

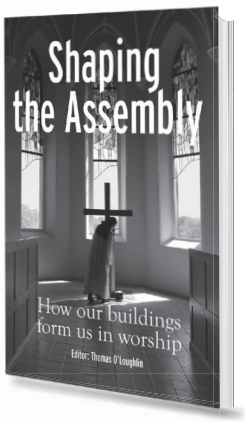
José Maria R.Olaizola SJ
160pp £11.95



Celebrated author José María R. Olaizola SJ says that if we can accept loneliness as a normal emotion, we can learn to listen to it and embrace it as a creative emptiness within which something new and life-giving can develop. In a perceptive, imaginative and down-to- earth style, Olaizola conveys his wisdom through literature, poetry, cinema and personal anecdotes.

Shaping the Assembly

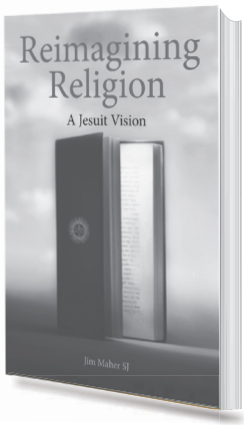
How our buildings form us in worship
Edited by Thomas O'Loughlin
264pp £23.00



Every religion has used buildings as part of their worship, from Newgrange to classical temples right up to contemporary churches built of steel, concrete and glass. This book brings together liturgists, pastors, architects, artists to address the question of how space affects us in worship.

Reimagining Religion

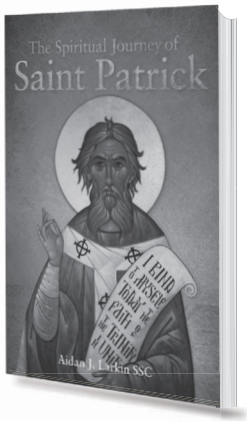
A Jesuit Vision
Jim Maher SJ
192pp £18.95



This book reimagines Christianity in a modern guise by highlighting how spirituality and religion complement one another. It draws out the importance of living, not in splendid isolation, but in relationships with others, with our planet and with God.

The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick

Aidan J. Larkin SSC
176pp £12.95



Aidan Larkin argues that the writings of Patrick, rich spiritual and theological content and well-versed in patristic theology, merit the saint's inclusion among the Church Fathers. He encourages us to recognise and engage with Patrick's deep spiritual legacy to the Church.

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AUTHENTIC SELFHOOD FROM SILENCE

Francis de Sales's Dextrous Invitation into Contemplation

Brett McLaughlin

> Authenticity means being true to oneself as an ultimate ideal, rather than (like sincerity) as a condition of being true to others.[1]

UPON ENTRANCE TO A UNIVERSITY, students are expected to compose essays that manifest their distinctiveness. The proper expression of one's authenticity is indeed an essential qualification—alongside high marks. The sociologist Joseph E. Davis notes that adolescents now emerge as astute craftspeople in constructing their own narrative and image—from witnessing others on social media. What becomes imperative is that young people have a *supreme authenticity*, raising them above their peers.[2] The pursuer of authenticity seeks the quintessence of his or her personhood; it is widely considered the centrepiece of moral diligence, the only means to personal truth. Because society has often developed unthinkingly and conformed, the seeker of authenticity readily embraces alienation from the social order; all social and cultural structures are prone to be discarded.

Arriving at one's own personhood before God summons the subject to a far less predictable path. The approach to meeting God in silent prayer and authentic selfhood cannot be conducted independently or arbitrarily, according to many spiritual writers. The Augustinian Martin Laird posits that no individual can discover inner solitude, nor guide the perfection of his or her own virtues alone. He admits it is a paradox that the interior journey must be facilitated by a spiritual guide

[1] Peter Tomlinson, review of Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, in *Essays in Criticism*, 24/4 (1974), 417–422, here 417.
[2] Joseph E. Davis, 'How to Be Yourself: The Studied Art of the College Application Essay', *The Hedgehog Review*, 23/3 (2021), 76–77.

or text.[3] Laird cites David Foster Wallace's famous 2005 commencement address: most persons only know their own 'default setting', their method of making decisions and virtues by which they negotiate the world.[4]

The Trappist Thomas Merton characterizes this dynamic in terms of the false self; human beings are predisposed to play with 'masks'. Each person is called to collaborate with God in the construction of the authentic self, 'the only true joy on earth', entering in union with God out of love. The true self incorporates both the 'glory of God' and 'the missions that are God's supreme gift to His sons'.[5] The necessity, therefore, for fulfilment is external spiritual guidance as well as receptivity to God's loving shaping of the subject.

I would like to examine here how Francis de Sales's *Introduction to a Devout Life* and other writings offer particularly effective such guidance, gently orientating readers to contemplative silence before God. A distinctive quality of Salesian spiritual writing is its frequent use of illustrations from scripture and nature, which enables it to be readily accessible to all. The recurrent references to humans as bees and God as the beekeeper allow the believer to envision how God cares for the human subject. And de Sales makes use of many Old Testament situations and predicaments to explain the forms of prayer and how to refine it. The result is a text that is both erudite for learned Christians and rapidly grasped by those of less education.

De Sales leads the Christian into a silence before eternity, free from anxieties and humdrum concerns. With his view of the soul, he guides the one who prays through the love God has for him or her, away from useless thoughts. He sets forth specified meditations for the Christian, yet does not abandon the task of easing him or her into silence. Perhaps uniquely among contemplative theologians, de Sales also presses the person praying to incorporate contemplation into the active life. The resolutions from prayer are to be diligently applied, and meditation should fill the will: 'Meditation produces pious motions in the will, or affective part of our soul …. In these affections our hearts should open themselves and expand as much as possible.'[6] Meeting with God is

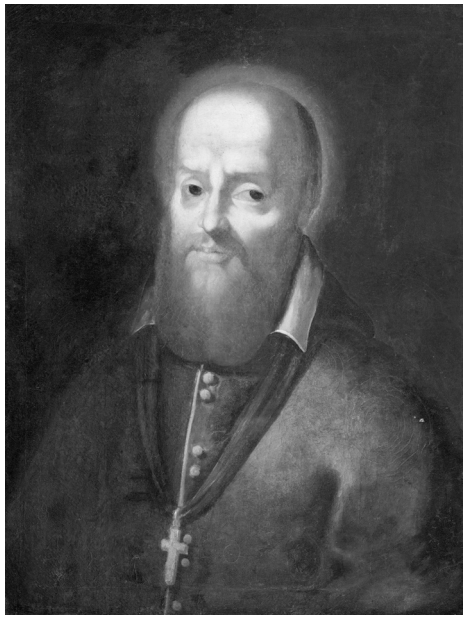
[3] Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (New York: OUP, 2006), 5.
[4] Martin Laird, *An Ocean of Light: Contemplation, Transformation, and Liberation* (New York: OUP, 2019), 7.
[5] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 32, 34.
[6] Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, translated and edited by John K. Ryan (New York: Harper, 1952), 46–47.

thus the formation of selfhood by way of God's presence. Moreover, devotion is to be shared and repeated; the solitude of the heart may be perennially recalled. De Sales commends the Christian contemplative who steadfastly returns to silent presence with God, the true conduit to authenticity.

The Invitation to Silence before Eternity

Perceiving the average Christian's ambivalent relationship with quiet, Francis de Sales deftly guides individuals into the invitation to silence. The bishop of Geneva is utterly certain of the universal call to solitary communion with God. He proposes a series of contemplations in which those who pray consider their own soul and the love God has for them. Much like a contemporary spirituality writer, de Sales also addresses the issues of distracting thoughts, as well as overcoming anxiety.

De Sales's firm conviction of the universal call to devotion forms a crucial background to his spiritual writings. For him, no particular occupation or time of life orientates the person to devotion. The theologian Andre Ravier notes that the interior call of each individual to receive and respond to the love of God arises from a central tenet of the Hebrew tradition and gospel: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'.[7] Devotion is the ideal way of acting on the love for God and neighbour. Ravier explains that, for de Sales, devotion is the opposite of *devotions*. Devotion demands the attentiveness of charity; it opens the Christian to adherence to the entirety of the commandments; it is charity aflame. Whereas it may



Francis de Sales, *artist unknown, seventeenth century*

[7] Matthew 22: 37, and see Deuteronomy 6: 5.

be practised in a different way by individuals in different walks of life, devotion persists as a potentiality available for all.[8]

The Excellence of the Soul

The initial movement or consideration of devotion is that of the value and excellence of the individual's own soul. De Sales holds that the soul has the capacity to know both the temporal world and the realm of eternity, including heaven, angels and the 'most high sovereign and ineffable God'. The soul 'knows the means of living well in this visible world, that it may one day be associated with the angels of heaven and enjoy God for all eternity'. De Sales asks his reader rhetorically why the soul should fixate on anything other than God.[9] Even a brief reflection on the soul indicates to the subject his or her sense of the heavens and eternity.

De Sales next gestures those who pray towards an evaluation of their generous, yet sometimes wayward, hearts. He states unequivocally that the heart cannot hate God; it 'has a most noble will'. De Sales here concurs with Augustine, that the heart lingers on various objects of the visible world, but may only rest in God alone.[10] He presents the subject with the obvious question: do its various affections for different objects not simply end in anxiety? De Sales sketches how the heart often follows its desires and seeks a host of creatures to satisfy them. But God is immeasurably patient. 'Like the dove which went out of Noah's ark, that it may return to Himself from whom it proceeded', we are destined to find ultimate rest in God. De Sales gives the analogy of the Prodigal Son's meals among the farm animals; why should this son linger over such food when a feast is prepared at his father's house?[11] The human person is orientated towards eternity, whereas the visible world remains transitory. De Sales charges Christians to recall how their souls are meant for eternity, and to take courage.[12]

The Love of Christ

De Sales prods the individual to consider the depth of love that Christ holds for each person, employing the image of the nursery.

[8] Andre Ravier, *Francis de Sales: Sage and Saint*, translated by Joseph D. Bowler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 176–177.
[9] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 222.
[10] Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Sarah Ruden (New York: Modern Library, 2017), 1:1.
[11] Luke 15: 16–32.
[12] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 222–223.

> An expectant mother prepares the cradle, the linen, the swaddling clothes, and even a nurse for the child that she hopes to bring forth …. So also our Lord … since He designs to bring you forth to salvation and to make you His child, prepared all that was necessary for you upon the tree of the Cross.

For de Sales these are the graces by which Christ strives to attract the soul and bring it to perfection. His love is to be imbibed and imprinted on the memory; God has conceived of 'a thousand means of salvation, even as many as if there had been no other souls in the world to think of'. De Sales cites the example of St Paul for this same singular consideration: 'I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2:20). Christ lived and died on behalf of the one who prays: 'He thinks of each as though He did not think of all the rest'.[13] The bishop of Geneva thus sets forth the attractions by which God entices the creature into silent presence.

Given the Lord's disposition towards each Christian, de Sales offers his own tender encouragement of the individual into mental prayer. He calls it a 'prayer of the heart', taking the life and passion of Jesus as its focus. De Sales anticipates that the one praying will absorb some of Christ's own spirit and receive replenishment, growing in imitation of Christ. He also deploys a series of earthly metaphors to great effect.

> He is 'the light of the world'. It is, therefore, in Him and by Him and for Him that we must be instructed and enlightened. He is the tree of desire, in whose shade we must refresh ourselves. He is the living fountain of Jacob, in which we may wash away all our stains. In fine, little children, by hearing their mothers talk, lisp at first and learn at length to speak their language. So also by keeping close to our Savior, by meditation and by observing His words, actions, and affections, by the help of His grace, we shall learn to speak, to act, and to will like Him.[14]

Prayer orientates our understanding to the light of God, motivating our will via God's love.

Distraction and Anxiety

De Sales labels the discursive mind and its distractions *simple thought*. Simple thought is spawned by deliberation over an array of different

[13] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 225.
[14] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 87.

things. He compares our scattered thoughts to flies stopping and resting upon flowers.

> So it is with our understanding, passing from one thought to another. Even if these thoughts be of God, if they have no aim, far from being profitable, they are useless and detrimental and are a great obstacle to prayer.[15]

Study is similarly a hindrance to prayer, in so far as the subject seeks only to 'speak accurately' about a topic. For de Sales, this is like beetles feasting upon beautiful roses.[16] He thus addresses mental activities that may disrupt prayer, later suggesting techniques to manage them.

In his *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, de Sales carefully escorts the person praying away from those preoccupations that lead to anxiety. He acknowledges that this anxiety only wearies the mind and dulls the soul; rather than exciting the Christian towards prayer or works, anxiety actually withholds zeal. He advises Christians to remain especially on their guard for this situation:

> And to help you be vigilant in this, remind yourself that the graces and benefits of prayer are not like water welling up from the earth, but more like water falling from heaven …. We must keep our hearts open and wait for the heavenly dew to fall.[17]

Although the person ought to enter into prayer to give praise, a secondary reason is just to remain present before God. De Sales writes, 'Ordinarily, we take great delight in doing this because it is very beneficial for us to speak to such a great Lord; and when He answers us, He pours out much balm and precious ointment'. The Lord may just 'take us by the hand'; one should not be too concerned about what to say or how to listen. De Sales proposes, 'just stay there, let yourself be seen, and don't try to be too hard to do anything else'; there is no need to become anxious as to how to act.[18] De Sales regularly encourages silent contemplation, preserving the one praying from worry about proper dialogue.

[15] Francis de Sales, 'Sermon for the Third Sunday of Lent', in *The Sermons of St Francis de Sales on Prayer*, edited by Lewis S. Fiorelli (Rockford: Tan, 1985), 2.
[16] De Sales, 'Sermon for the Third Sunday of Lent', 2.
[17] Francis de Sales to Mademoiselle de Soulfour, *c.*1605–1608, in Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal and Francis de Sales, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, translated by Peronne Marie Thibert (New York: Paulist, 1988), 100–101.
[18] De Sales to Mademoiselle de Soulfour, 100–101.

The mystic also steers the subject away from frustrating distractions, which he names *useless thoughts*. The prudent selection of the proper length of prayer is a vital tool to counter distractions. He declares that 'you must, first of all, so regulate your prayer exercises that their length does not weary you nor irritate those with whom you live'. A series of short prayers offered over the course of the day may effectively unite the believer's heart with God. The person can conduct abbreviated prayers, that last no longer than a half-hour grace before meals, and the examination of conscience is incorporated into the sequence. De Sales especially exhorts his reader to dismiss 'sad, gloomy thoughts' that wear down the soul.[19] Thus the discursive mind may be tamed and allow the subject to sit in silence.

Exploring Contemplation in Salesian Spirituality

Levels of Prayer

De Sales details four levels of the soul that correspond to different levels of mental prayer. Ever the ingenious illustrator, here he brings up the vision of Solomon's Temple. The first level of the soul matches the court of the Gentiles; it gives us knowledge from the senses, such as vision. The second, the court of the Jews, allows knowledge by reasoning; while the third level, the court of the priests, is knowledge attained through faith. 'The fourth, the *Sancta Sanctorum*, is the highest point of our soul, which we call spirit, and so long as this highest point is always fixed on God, we need not be troubled in the least'.[20] In mental prayer there is a first level of meditation and a second of contemplation. The third level is ejaculations, 'short but fervent aspirations', while the final is modest attention to the presence of God. Much like his tone in spiritual accompaniment, de Sales delivers a straightforward discourse on interior depth and equivalent styles of prayer.[21]

Inspirations

In Salesian spirituality, the Christian receives divine movements in *inspirations*, that lead the person to virtue, love and 'everything that may help us on our way to eternal happiness'. Recalling the Song of

[19] Francis de Sales to Madame Villesavin, July–August 1619, in *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 178.
[20] Francis de Sales, 'Sermon for Palm Sunday', in *Sermons of St Francis de Sales on Prayer*, 23–24.
[21] De Sales, 'Sermon for Palm Sunday', 24.

Songs, de Sales deploys the language of betrothal and marriage. God first presents an encouragement to greater charity by way of inspiration. Human beings next respond with pleasure or ambivalence. Only after these first two steps do they fully consent to the divine movement. De Sales remarks that this sequence is a mirror image of the fall into sin via temptation, consent and the practice of vice.

Overall, we are supposed to take pleasure in inspirations. Delight is a positive sign, according to de Sales. The consent and the delight combine to indicate gratitude for divine favour. The bishop of Geneva urges Christians: 'Attend calmly to His proposals, think of the love with which you are inspired, and cherish the holy inspiration. Consent to the holy inspiration with an entire, a loving, and a permanent consent.'[22]

Recollection

A personal review of one's emotions towards God is important from time to time. De Sales inquires, 'Does your heart delight in the remembrance of God? Does this remembrance leave an agreeable sweetness behind it?'[23] The attractiveness of such emotions is important. De Sales wonders whether the Christian is drawn into love of God when divine thoughts arise in everyday concerns. He hopes that such love for God might seize the heart. Drawing on the metaphor of the spouse returning from a voyage, de Sales expects that the wife's heart will be absorbed in her husband's return.

> It is the same with souls that love God well; let them be ever so busy, when the remembrance of God comes near them, they lose almost the thought of all other things, so joyful are they that this dear remembrance is returned.[24]

De Sales regularly returns to the love of God as a focal point, in his own experience and spiritual direction.

Similarly, Christians should ponder Christ's love, through which he accepted suffering, as being the love he has for every human being. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and Calvary for the sake of humanity. De Sales writes, 'It is certain that the Heart of Jesus beheld your heart from the tree of the Cross, and by the love which He bore towards it,

[22] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 66.
[23] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 217.
[24] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 217.

obtained for it all the good you shall ever have'. He points to Jeremiah 1:5: God has known each person and called him or her into life. He spurs Christians to *imprint* this love of God into their recollection; we must recall all those moments that God has drawn us to Godself.[25] The *reciprocity* of divine love remains essential.

Union

Harvey Egan sums up Salesian spirituality as always returning to loving union with God. De Sales has a host of images to convey this to the Christian. Those persons in love with God will allow themselves to sink wholly into God like an enormous rock in a pasture, which, 'though not forced down', will 'so work itself, sink down, and press itself, into the earth where it lies that at length it is found buried, by reason of the effect of its weight'.[26]

According to Egan, the apex of union with God for de Sales is *inhesion* or *adhesion*, so called 'because by it the soul is caught up, fastened, glued and affixed to the divine majesty, so that she cannot easily loose or draw herself back again'.[27] The one who prays becomes so united to God that only a heart-rending power might disconnect them. Adhesion delivers the Christian to moments of brief *transport* or extended *rapture*. Egan underlines that Francis de Sales remains steeped in the kataphatic mystical tradition. Divine love requires knowledge; contemplation cannot proceed without some representations or conceptions, and de Sales continues to propose visible mysteries to ponder.[28]

Taking Contemplation into Active Life

Throughout de Sales's discussions of prayer and devotion, loving actions permeate the text. *Introduction to the Devout Life* spurs the reader from contemplation to resolution for action. De Sales is clear that meditation should permeate the will, leading to imitation of Christ, repentance, love of neighbour and a host of other virtues. But the Christian cannot merely *rest* in these affections or feelings generated. De Sales commands:

[25] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life,* 225.
[26] Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, translated by Henry Benedict Mackey (Westminster, Md: Newman, 1945), 283–284.
[27] De Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, 291.
[28] See Harvey Egan, *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2010), 271, 273–274.

'turn them into special resolutions for your individual correction and amendment … desire is worth little unless you proceed to some practical resolution'.[29] The Christian is to rectify his or her own shortcomings, as well as be animated by love of neighbour. Salesian devotion must necessarily carry energy forward into decision-making and the performance of Christian acts. In no way does Salesian spirituality permit quietism; solitary devotion alone is not sufficient for justification. The effective and devout Christian is prompted to continual practice of charitable deeds.

Solitary devotion alone is not sufficient

Sharing Devotion

Devotion must be transmitted to and encouraged in others in a most loving manner. De Sales appreciates that individuals must have enjoyment of their devotion to God, and the devotion in itself should be appealing and agreeable to others.

> The sick will love your devotion if they receive care and comfort from it; your family will love it if they see you more attentive to their well-being, more gentle in handling affairs, more kind in correcting, and so on; your husband will love it if he sees that as your devotion increases you become more warm and affectionate toward him; your relatives and friends will love it if they see you more free, supportive of others, and yielding to them in matters that are not contrary to God's will.[30]

For de Sales, the life of prayer must be rendered enticing to others, primarily through charitable acts.

Humility

Humility should be cultivated, and is a pivotal Salesian virtue. Wendy M. Wright observes,

> Especially, he emphasises inward humility that he carefully distinguishes from a feigned self-abasement meant to attract praise or sympathy. And he counsels that life itself and the particular conditions of one's 'state in life' will no doubt supply all the humbling experiences one could ever invent for oneself.[31]

[29] De Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 46.
[30] De Sales to Madame Brûlart, in *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 104.
[31] Wendy M. Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition* (New York: Orbis, 2004), 79.

Humility enables the gentleness towards one's neighbour, and the requisite acts of love.[32]

Freedom and Indifference

The properly devout Christian maintains a spirit of freedom amidst the transformations of daily life. Although they delight in consolations, de Sales expects that free-hearted Christians should be able to receive *hardships* with peacefulness. Joy is an essential attribute of the free individual.

> The effects of this freedom are a great inner serenity, a great gentleness and willingness to yield in everything that isn't sin or an occasion of sin; it's a flexible disposition, able gracefully to do the virtuous or charitable thing.[33]

Harvey Egan calls Francis de Sales 'the teacher of *holy indifference*', by which one is to seek God's will and distances oneself from self-will. This involves profound trust and surrender. 'Central to Francis's vision is that "God's will is God's love", and that one must love God for God's sake, not for one's own … the will must rest in God and not in its own contentment.'[34]

Francis de Sales maintained a fervent vocation to summon persons of all occupations, into silent companionship and authentic personhood before God. Throughout his directions, De Sales's focus stayed with the unification of the individual's heart to God. *Staying with God* is persistent exhortation, illustrated through many ingenious examples. But de Sales always remained aware that devotion necessarily included both stillness and loving, generous acts. True devotion must end in swift, prudent performance of the good. The silent encounter with God remains paramount, yet it must be matched by selfless actions.

Brett McLaughlin SJ is a US Northeast province Jesuit, studying in the doctoral programme in systematic theology at Boston College. His book reviews of contemporary christology have been published in *Theological Studies*.

[32] See de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*, 97–98.
[33] De Sales to Madame Brûlart, in *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 138.
[34] Egan, *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 273.

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THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Mukti Clarence

IT HAD BEEN NINE YEARS since I was ordained priest, in the province of Jamshedpur, India. I spent three years in rural parish ministry, four years doing doctoral studies in psychology and one year teaching after my ordination. I landed in Lebanon for my Jesuit tertianship in October 2021, with the feeling that my prolonged adolescence in the Society of Jesus was coming to an end and a new mature period of responsibility and accountability could begin.[1] In my doctoral studies I had explored the concept of psychological capital, and the experience of my thirty-day retreat was a kind of déjà vu. The wide-ranging emotions I encountered on retreat felt very close to the characteristics of psychological capital, and I found in the Spiritual Exercises many shared aims.

Psychological Capital

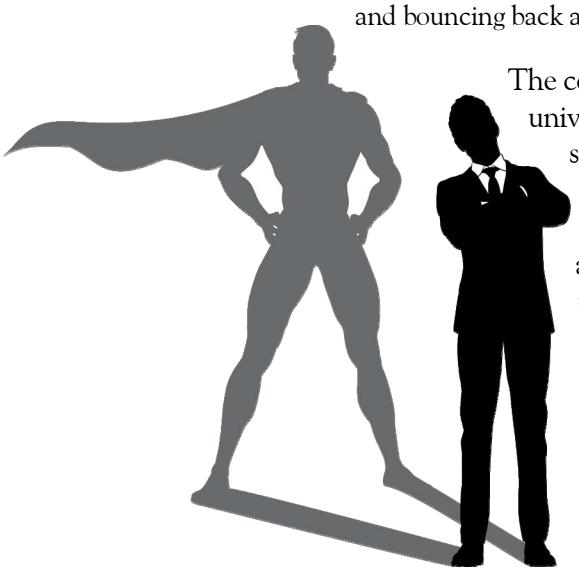
Psychological capital is an important construct in positive psychology, coined by Fred Luthans, professor emeritus of management at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA.[2] It characterizes an individual's inner strength, goodness, perspective and dynamism.

> [Psychological capital] is an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to

[1] In Jesuit formation tertianship is a year of spiritual training at the end of the period of academic studies. I am thankful to Fr Dany Younes, tertian instructor, Fr Nawras Sammour, superior of the tertianship community, and my eight companions who accompanied and supported me in my long retreat to have the spiritual experience of a lifetime.

[2] Positive psychology is a discipline of psychology which focus on the importance of positive experience, emotions and human strengths such as happiness, gratitude, forgiveness and character strength and their positive impact on human flourishing. See Phyllis Zagano and Kevin Gillespie, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Positive Psychology', *The Way*, 45/4 (October, 2006), 41–58.

succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success.[3]



The construct of psychological capital is personal, universal, theory-based, state-like (that is, more susceptible to change than deep-seated 'trait-like' characteristics are), measurable and open to development.[4] I will explain a little more about the meaning and the implications of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism (for which Luthans often uses the acronym HERO)[5] from the point of view of psychology and about the way they are defined as components of psychological capital, before exploring how they interact with the Spiritual Exercises from my own experience.

Hope

Hope is one's capacity to determine one's goal and explore strategies to achieve it. It encompasses goals, paths and power or agency: 'reaching specific goal-related outcomes through the use of agency and pathways thought'.[6] Hopeful people proactively explore other alternatives to meet the goals when the primary way does not work. 'Hope is a cognitive state that helps individuals become more realistic about their desired goals through self-determination, perception and energy.'[7]

Efficacy

Efficacy (confidence) entails the belief that one has the ability, skill and knowledge to marshal all the resources available—cognitive, conative or affective—to complete a given task. Those with a high

[3] Fred Luthans, Carolyn M. Youssef and Bruce J. Avolio, *Psychological Capital: Developing the Human Competitive Edge* (New York: OUP, 2007), 3.

[4] Carolyn M. Youssef-Morgan and Fred Luthans, 'Psychological Capital and Well-Being', *Stress Health*, 31/3 (2015),180–188, at 186. And see Fred Luthans and Carolyn M. Youssef-Morgan, 'Psychological Capital: An Evidence-Based Positive Approach', *The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour*, 4 (2017), 339–366.

[5] Fred Luthans, 'Psychological Capital: Implications for HRD, Retrospective Analysis, and Future Directions', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 23/1 (Spring 2012), 2.

[6] *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*, edited by Shane J. Lopez (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 488.

[7] Bharat Chandra Sahoo and others, 'Psychological Capital and Work Attitude: A Conceptual Analysis', *Journal of Organisation and Human Behaviour*, 4/2–3 (April and July 2015), 18–28, here 19.

level of efficacy set ambitious goals for themselves, do well in difficult situations, are motivated, make efforts to reach their goals and persist when they are challenged before giving up. Six traits are closely associated with efficacy: confidence, command, adaptability, personal effectiveness, positive attitudes and individuality.[8]

Resilience

Resilience involves the ability to bounce back or recover from setbacks. It is the positive energy of individuals which fights against adverse events to recover from failure. It works through the three dimensions of control, coherence and connectedness.[9] A person who is resilient possesses the characteristics of objectivity, conviction, adaptation and evaluation. Resilience also involves the process of positive adaptation to different adversities and risks.

Optimism

Optimism refers to having a positive but realistic perspective. Optimistic people have internal stability and believe that they can control their situation. Optimism places emphasis on cognitive skills, reflecting a reasoned judgment that good will predominate over evil. It is a kind of explanatory or attributional style: while encountering positive events or experiences, people with an optimistic mindset adopt internal, stable and global attributions, and while engaging adverse events, they use external and specific attribution.[10]

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Research has shown that in the workplace individuals with greater psychological capital tend to do better in job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and well-being.[11] Psychological capital is also

[8] See Sanjyot Pethe, Sushama Choudhari and Upinder Dhar, 'Occupational Self-Efficacy: Constituent Factors', *Management and Labour Studies*, 25/2 (April 2000), 92–98.

[9] See John W. Reich, 'Three Psychological Principles of Resilience in Natural Disasters', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 15/5 (2006), 793–798.

[10] The concept of 'attributional style' and its internal–external, stable–unstable and global–specific dimensions were originally developed by Lyn Y. Abramson, Martin E. P. Seligman and John D. Teasdale. 'The internal–external dimension refers to the extent to which an individual feels a specific event is caused entirely by one's self versus entirely by others. The stable–unstable dimension refers to the extent to which an individual believes that the cause of an event will never again be present versus always being present. The global–specific dimension refers to the extent to which an individual believes an event is caused by something that only influences the particular situation versus influencing all situations in one's life.' (*The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer [Oxford: Blackwell, 2007], 2568)

[11] See Fred Luthans and others, 'Positive Psychological Capital: Measurement and Relationship with Performance and Satisfaction', *Personnel Psychology*, 60 (2007), 541–572.

associated with finding more meaning in life and enhanced ethical and moral behaviour, academic performance, teamwork and problem-solving; counter-productive behaviours such as cynicism, intention to quit and absenteeism are reduced.[12] Developing psychological capital is an evidence-based, tested and tried technique to transform a person into a more productive and committed individual. Psychological capital is thus both desirable and achievable. Many training programmes and interventions are conducted to increase the psychological capital of individuals in different walks of life for the good of their professional and personal development. The results have been very encouraging.

It might be argued that promoting psychological capital does not pay heed to the will of God but only to human fulfilment. But there is established research showing that people with greater psychological capital are also more ethical and spiritual. The Spiritual Exercises foster the same qualities of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism. They also remain a fount of personal resources promoting positivity (consolations) and combating less positive emotions (desolations).

My Tertianship Retreat

One of the essential aspects of Jesuit tertianship is to make the thirty-day Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. I entered into my long spiritual journey with fear and unease about whether I would succeed in completing the retreat. It was true that I had made my first long retreat when I was in my novitiate and just nineteen years old. Nonetheless, the experience of that long retreat had become dimmed and fuzzy over the years.

In my tertianship retreat, I realised the reflective nature of the Spiritual Exercises. I discovered the efficacy of different methods of prayer and ways to experience God in meditation, contemplation, examination of conscience, discernment, election, silence, daily eucharist and adoration, with the guidance of my spiritual director. I understood clearly that no one could enter into the retreat without generosity or a deep desire to experience God's presence in his or her life.

The Spiritual Exercises offered me a time to discern God's will and a *modus* to live a life of holiness and committed discipleship. My experiences showed me how the Exercises awaken the conscience of the

[12] See David Vilariño del Castillo and Esther Lopez-Zafra, 'Antecedents of Psychological Capital at Work: A Systematic Review of Moderator–Mediator Effects and a New Integrative Proposal', *European Management Review*, 19/1 (2022), 154–169.

retreatant to seek the greater good, hear God's word, grow in freedom and live a value-driven life. The Spiritual Exercises helped me to experience a movement both forward and deeper towards the conversion and commitment of my life. Walking through the pages of the Bible during contemplation and meditation enhanced my dialogue with the Lord. I affirmed three particular effects that the Spiritual Exercises had on me.

First, I experienced the Exercises as a tool to remove obstacles in my life which I recognised and knew when I entered the light of God: disordered attachments, sins, misconceptions about God, self-centredness, lack of generosity. The secret of the Exercises here is the grace for which we ask and the colloquy that gives us the freedom to speak with God. *Second*, I had personal experience of the motives of different spirits. I could easily relate this concept to mindfulness, awareness, the power of now and examination of conscience exercises. During all these practices, I recognised the inner movements of the spirit and got in touch with my affectivity. This required a lot of focus and, for that reason, silence was very important. *Third*, I appropriated the teaching of the Church (of the truth of faith) personally: I do not believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the World because of the 'word of the Samaritan woman' (John 4) but because I saw it myself (Exx 57).

Psychological Capital in the Spiritual Exercises

Every thoughtful retreatant desires to live a meaningful and integrated life. Many retreatants claim that the Spiritual Exercises give them the opportunity to grow in familiarity with God, recognise their vocation and purpose in life, and equip themselves to respond to their vocation in the best possible manner by embracing the *sensus Christi* (the way of Christ).[13] There is consensus among scholars of Ignatian spirituality that the Spiritual Exercises serve as an instrument to help retreatants become what God wants them to be as happy, moral, efficient Christians. Consequently, a claim can be made that the Spiritual Exercises and psychological capital function in the same way. Both prepare people to live their lives optimally. Moreover the characteristics of psychological capital—hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism—may themselves be attained through the Spiritual Exercises.

[13] See George T. Tade, 'The Spiritual Exercises: A Method of Self-Persuasion', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 43 (1957), 383–389.

Hope

According to both the Spiritual Exercises and the wider Christian tradition, the meaning of hope includes having faith in Christ's resurrection and moving forward with trust in Him.[14] It is both metaphysical and practical. To acquire hope, one must be faithful to the Lord and his message of establishing his Kingdom on earth (Luke 4:18–19). The ministry of Jesus (healing, teaching, table-fellowship) illustrates how he was hopeful: Jesus knew his aims in life and did everything to achieve them.

Similarly, the Spiritual Exercises focus on the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23), which presents the aim of life to every retreatant: 'Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls'. The Exercises offer consolations that increase hope; retreatants who experience increased hope discern how to live a life of holiness and choose what God wants them to be. Consequently, the Spiritual Exercises unfold both goals in life and strategies to achieve them, and this is the meaning of hope.

Efficacy

An important objective of the Spiritual Exercises is to instil confidence in retreatants through seeking and finding their desire in life. This confidence is rooted in the discovery that God wants to give them more. The director's role involves building confidence among retreatants (see Exx 7–10). The Exercises focusing on election, such as the Two Standards, Three Classes of Persons and Three Kinds of Humility, fill retreatants with energy and efficacy because they encounter their newer selves with purpose, which in turn makes them confident in life. The general confession, the colloquy, contemplations and the examination of consciousness likewise help them to recognise the grace of God and give them the confidence to live a life worthy of their calling. Experiencing their relationship with God more confidently enables retreatants to become more confident in their professional and personal lives as well.

Resilience

The Spiritual Exercises help retreatants recover from negative experiences and events in manifold ways. One of these is the general confession, which heals them and helps them bounce back to normality. It enables them to experience God and God's blessings in their lives. Spiritual

[14] Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1996), 4.

directors hear, suggest and evaluate progress, showing retreatants the right path gently with their experience and expertise; their being present is very valuable in itself. The discernment of spirits (Exx 313–336) teaches retreatants how to achieve success and respond to challenges that come in hidden forms. It encompasses awareness, self-scrutiny and introspection, which are pathways to resilience. The complete contemplations and meditation of the Third Week bring special blessings of strength to face the trials of life and persistence in accomplishing its goals.

Optimism

The exercises of the Fourth Week, in particular, including the Contemplation to Attain Love, are meant to foster optimism among retreatants. They focus on Gods' love. Experiencing God's active presence in this world and the invitation to collaborate in God's mission touch retreatants' hearts with optimism. In the First Week, while meditating on sin, St Ignatius wants us to seek the grace of tears because of God's love, and gratitude rather than guilt for the sins themselves; this perspective justifies optimism. There is a direct relationship between optimism and the experience of consolation because optimism increases the attitude of faith, love and charity. For Ignatius, consolation is to experience centredness on God, and this experience fosters joy, peace and reconciliation, as optimism does.

The grace of tears because of God's love

***

In my own retreat experience, I found that each week of the Spiritual Exercises increased one specific dimension of psychological capital: the First Week enhanced hope, the Second Week efficacy, the Third Week resilience and the Fourth Week optimism.

The First Week

Week One of the Spiritual Exercises helped me to increase my hope in three ways. *First*, through meditation on God's love and care I came to know the unconditional love of God, which has saved me despite my fragility and waywardness. If God had to judge me, I would not be alive. I realised that I needed to live my life more justly. After my general confession I experienced divine energy within and a sense of change towards my proper relationship with God, humans and nature. I promised to live a purposeful life with hope.

Second, I became more aware of myself as a forgiven sinner. I reflected on my brokenness and sinfulness. I acknowledged that my sin has caused disorder in creation and disfigured humanity. Also, my sin has

kept me away from my responsibilities and influenced me to act on hatred. However, I experienced that the God of mercy beckons me to grant me healing. God is like the Father of the prodigal son, waiting for me in order to forgive my sin. I had no words but to tell God to accept me as a servant (Luke 15:18–19). During this week, I pondered on returning from my sinful state. I sought freedom from the shackles of sins and shortcomings. I remained steeped in God's care and love all through the week. The repeated meditations on gospel passages helped me to feel God's love and forgiveness. I felt that I could rise above my smaller selves and experience the power of hope with grace.

Third, I meditated on the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23). This gave me a sense of ultimate direction and purpose. I recognised that I have a goal in life and now what is required of me is to strain every nerve to achieve that goal. Experience of this truth opened my eyes to faith and gave me hope by suggesting the reason for my being and call. I understood that whatever diverts me from the Principle and Foundation is a distraction and an obstacle. Likewise, I learnt that looking ahead, having faith in God who promises me life everlasting and forgives all my sins can determine the course of my life.

The Second Week

The dynamic of the Second Week offers exercitants the self-confidence and capacity to say, *Yes: I can fulfil the Principle and Foundation, pay the cost of discipleship and remain loyal to the Lord's friendship*. The exercises of the Second Week include the contemplations on the Call of the King, the Two Standards, Three Classes of Persons, the Three Kinds of Humility and the public life of Jesus, as well as the Election. Everything comes down to shifting our emotional centre (heart) into the right place in the Second Week.

The exercises on Jesus' apostolic life uncover his love, values, freedom and dreams. I experienced a very intimate relationship with Jesus, which strengthened me to have courage and endurance in my life. I felt Jesus more closely than ever before (Exx 104), which resulted in the grace of generosity, reinforcing my sense of efficacy. Meditations such as the Two Standards, the Three Classes of Persons and the Three Kinds of Humility aroused in my heart the conviction and firmness to follow Jesus at all costs. The triple colloquy presents honouring the trinitarian God and Mother Mary as the fount of grace and the blessings of persistence. Contemplating the Election or discernment so as to live a life of holiness brings about consolation, which entails a feeling of peace, surrender and

love helping the retreatant to go the extra mile for the Lord. I found that the rules for the discernment of spirits of the Second Week are very beneficial. They nurtured me and showed me the correct path. Following the rules, I experienced confidence internally (efficacy) to continue my spiritual journey with consolation and understating my desolation.

The Third Week

Exercitants during the Third Week receive the strength of resilience from the passion of Christ while seeking the grace of sorrow and confusion (Exx 193). Contemplating the passion of the Lord, I experienced His deep love towards me. The Third Week focuses on remaining with Christ's sacrificial love and His suffering as His close friends, which promotes an attitude of resilience in facing the challenges of the world and personal suffering steadfastly. On the one hand, I went through emotions of sorrow myself. On the other hand, I experienced, perceived, loved, wanted, encouraged and belonged to the Lord, making me feel healthier in my mind and soul and energized to return to my life with more vigour and commitment. In this week of my retreat there were rigorous prayer sessions and guidelines for meals. They were helpful for me to go deeper into interior anguish and intimate love of my Lord. The realisation that the Lord has suffered for me personally and saved me from my sins through his blood stirred me morally and spiritually, enhancing my goodwill and commitment to my ultimate goal.

Throughout the Third Week, the thought of the Lord's passion enabled me to express my commitment and fidelity towards His love firmly. Jesus dies to teach me a lesson about faith. And to experience this faith, conversion is imperative for me to realise that I am His child. It is my responsibility to rise up with resilience to struggle against my personal demons and the demons of the world in the name of God, since I am a child of God. It is expected that I give witness that evil can be defeated by good through love, sacrifice, fidelity and even death. Jesus, with his death on the cross and dedication to his mission, defeated forces of sin and human self-centredness through his redemptive love. What does Jesus want from me in the end? He wants me to become more like him and learn to be merciful, compassionate and humble, and to overcome the fear of suffering and death day by day.

The Fourth Week

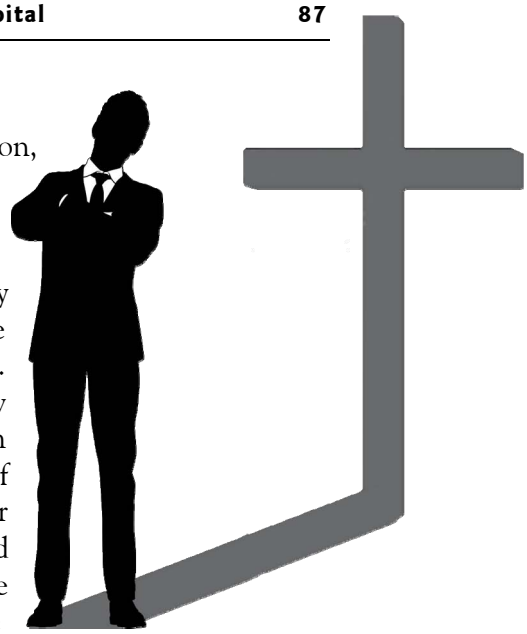
The Fourth Week enabled me to grow in optimism through the grace of this week: a union with Christ as Christ is in union with me. I

experienced the everlasting relationship with Christ in his resurrected spirit with triumphant joy and optimism. The meditations on the risen Lord and His apparitions focus on themes of victory, delight, dispelling fear, good news, and the belief that Christ and his Spirit are with me, and He is my Saviour. Therefore, I am safe in following my Lord. There is no place of fear in the world-view of Jesus. I experienced inner peace, cheerfulness, confidence. There was a strong feeling within me that I should remain victorious over the frailty of my human nature and sinful conduct with the Lord's assistance. I felt assured that I, too, shall rise from the dead; I should not fear death, but I must understand what it means. It refers to a path leading to eternal life. If I wish to experience continuing optimism and the company of my Lord in this world and after my death, I will have to respond to His call and remain His disciple and ready to take up my cross. There is no resurrection without the cross. My Lord appeared to His disciples alone because He wanted to increase their faith, joy and optimism; therefore, He did not appear to those who persecuted Him. Through his resurrection appearances, Jesus consoled his disciples, restored their faith and united them with strength and courage.

I am his disciple too. I have personally experienced, seen and heard him during my retreat. My mission is now to be his witness in loyal companionship with him and love towards my neighbours. Since the goal of the Society of Jesus is to help our souls and the souls of our neighbours 'in attaining the ultimate end for which they were created' (*Constitutions*, Preamble IV. 1 [307]), my life must be undividedly apostolic and religious. This intimate connection between the religious and apostolic aspects of the Society ought to animate my whole way of living as a Jesuit, praying and working, and impress on it an apostolic character.

The Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230–237) elicited my gratitude and love to my Lord, which led to an experience of optimism and joy, and dedication to living a life of discipleship, committing myself to work for Him on this earth (Exx 23) with the assurance that He is with me till the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). I experienced what God gives me through the gifts that I share in God's creation. Every good gift is a reflection and extension of God's self. All good things come from God. I come from God and I am united with God. Apart from God, I have no existence. I experience a union and oneness with God in such a way that I am related to God like the sun's rays to the sun and like water to a fountain.

A Life of Conviction



I always wanted to live my life with conviction, belief in gospel values and a Jesuit ideal, knowing in the end that these are the only source of my lasting peace and joy as a Catholic priest. I have often talked to my spiritual guide about how to attain this grace and taken this intention in my daily prayer. During my retreat I experienced tangibly how to live a life of conviction. I felt the wisdom of St Ignatius when he said that the success of the Spiritual Exercises depended on how far we get rid of our inordinate attachments and learn to seek to do God's will (Exx 169). The retreat opened my eyes to the inordinate attachments in my life. God's will for me became the constant content of my prayer, meditation and contemplation. The method that the Spiritual Exercises gave me to find answers with undivided attention in solitude was astonishing. It was a kind of soul-searching exercise in introspection that culminated with an *aha!* moment.

I experienced my thirty-day retreat as an intervention or training programme in which I was formed to live a flourishing and abundant life. I could correlate some of my retreat experiences with my positive psychology training and study of psychological capital. I am confident that the Spiritual Exercises have helped me develop my hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism as well as faith, hope and charity. However, as a Catholic priest, I recognise the limitations of psychological capital with respect to grace and redemption. Psychological capital fails to see that God, in God's goodness, can choose to bestow grace gratuitously on anyone. God does not have to look at the merit of any individual. And psychological capital has no divine authority to grant redemption, whereas the Spiritual Exercises have the potential to give us both grace and redemption irrespective of our worth. Too much reliance on people's own efforts can prevent us from seeing the way of God. At times God's ways are not our ways.

Mukti Clarence is a Jesuit priest of Jamshedpur Province in India. He teaches at XITE College and holds a PhD in psychology.

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LAUDATO SI' AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES REVISITED

Iain Radvan

A FEW YEARS AGO, Dr Peter Saunders wrote an article for *The Way* on *Laudato si'* and the Spiritual Exercises, explaining how it was possible to integrate the Pope's message of ecological conversion in *Laudato si'* into a giving of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

> I believe that the presence of God in nature was something that Ignatius took for granted in the Spiritual Exercises. In his time nature was something of which ordinary people were more aware in their daily lives than they are today.[1]

Just as the Exercises have been given a broader scope of application in relation to social justice, beyond what St Ignatius probably foresaw, so the Exercises can be an instrument for exercitants to experience a new loving relationship with Earth.

> The question I have in giving the Spiritual Exercises now is: if an exercitant completes the Exercises without an increased awareness of the need to care for the earth and the poor, has the process been effective in today's world? I do not think so any more. Ignatian spirituality is about being 'contemplatives in action' and 'finding God in all things'. Caring for our planet is part of a Christian's journey.[2]

Saunders outlined how the themes and texts of *Laudato si'* could be incorporated into the material over which the exercitant prayers in each Week of the Exercises. While the adaptations he suggested would be significant, Saunders envisages a more radical adaptation: by developing a retreat 'in which [the participants] spend part or all of the retreat

[1] '*Laudato si'* and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 54/4 (October 2015), 118–128, here 120.
[2] Saunders, '*Laudato si'* and the Spiritual Exercises', 122.

walking in the wilderness'.[3] He suggested, in practical terms, that part of a thirty-day live-in retreat could be spent in nature.

This proposal was put to the test with the design and presentation of the International Ignatian Ecospiritual Conference in May 2022. This was not to be a new version of the Twentieth Annotation; instead, Saunders created a short retreat 'in nature' based on the full Exercises. Following on from the earlier success of online retreats for ecological conversion, Peter, Helen Lucas and myself, with the help of others in the organizing team, created a five-day conference based on the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises.

As Saunders recognises,

> The Spiritual Exercises are not a theological course; they are a journey into the heart of the person and of God in that person. If we are going to help people to appreciate God's presence in nature then we have to invite them to experience it.[4]

This conference was built on the theological understanding that God is to be found in nature; that God is intrinsic to every created thing; that God reveals Godself to humans through nature as well as through the history of God's chosen people recorded in the scriptures. Towards the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in the *Contemplatio*, Ignatius invites the one making the Exercises to experience the world in a new way, 'to look how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them being; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals giving them feeling; in people giving them understanding' (Exx 235). As Teilhard de Chardin explains, 'Christ has a *cosmic Body* that extends throughout the universe'.[5] Earth is the Body of the Cosmic Christ.

While this event was billed as a conference, what we had in mind from the start was a programme much more like a (preached) retreat. Each day would begin with prayer, then the key speaker would present for about half an hour, then the participants would share their responses to what they had heard (online or live as they were able) in small groups, 'hubs', led by a hub facilitator. After this they would be given a spiritual exercise to take with them into a local natural area (a garden, park, beach or bushland). The day would end with spiritual conversation, sharing in

[3] Saunders, '*Laudato si'* and the Spiritual Exercises', 123.
[4] Saunders, '*Laudato si'* and the Spiritual Exercises', 125.
[5] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Cosmic Life*, in *Writings in Time of War*, translated by René Hague (London: Collins, 1968), 13–71, here 58.

their 'hub' how they had felt moved while in nature. As the participants met in the same 'hub' each time over the five days they would build up trust and confidence in each other, allowing for deeper sharing.

So how was this retreat-like conference structured in relation to the Spiritual Exercises? Each day's theme took up one or more aspects of the Exercises. The opening, which occurred in the late afternoon before Day One, functioned as preparation for the whole experience. Various authoritative speakers orientated the participants towards an ecological conversion: Fr Arturo Sosa, the general of the Society of Jesus, Fr Quyen Vu, the provincial of the Australian Province (which sponsored us very generously), and Fr Xavier Jeyaraj, secretary for Social Justice and Ecology for the Society of Jesus in the world.

> This is an opportunity to explore our deep interconnectedness with all creation through mindful encounters with nature, reflection, sacred listening and prayer … this ecological conversion is an invitation to experience Christ present in all Creation. [Arturo Sosa]
>
> As Christians committed to following the Call of the King [Exx 91–98], discerned in the Spiritual Exercises, we are draw into [Jesus'] mission to hear and respond to the Cry of the Earth. [Quyen Vu]
>
> When we are truly aware, we are privileged to see, listen, touch and feel the sacred presence of God in creation, and if attentive, we can hear the deeper cry of nature for healing and the cry of the poor for justice … this is a sacred moment for us to see creation with the eyes of God who created, sees, and cares for every bit of creation. [Xavier Reyaraj][6]

[6] Quoted in part in 'Australian Province Hosts International Ignatian Ecospiritual Conference', Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (12 May 2022), at 'https://jcapsj.org/blog/2022/05/12/australian-province-

In the presentation of the first full day, the focus on Pope Francis's *Laudato si'* functioned as an adaptation of the Principle and Foundation: Saunders provided the theological groundwork for the ideal relationship humans should have with Earth. With his personal stories and images he also aroused wonder and awe for the marvel of creation, and a sense of gratitude for Earth's care for humans.

> Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (*Laudato si'*, n.92)

The second day's talk functioned as a First Week reality check: Dr Leslie Hughes pulled no punches in acknowledging how critical climate change has become and naming human actions as responsible for it. Hughes described it as a 'climate emergency'. She pointed out the repercussions of climate change on the most vulnerable in our global community. Her talk also served to draw the participants into a Third Week experience, challenging them to feel with Earth in its helpless suffering. 'This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.' (*Laudato si'*, n.2)

> For human beings … to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in the climate, by stripping Earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands, to contaminate Earth's waters, its land or its air and its life—these are sins …. To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and against God.[7]

The following three days' presentations and prayer experiences invited the participants into a school of discipleship with Earth (a Second Week experience). Sherry Balcombe, an Australian First Nations elder, introduced them to indigenous spirituality, and in particular, to the practice of *dadirri*, deep listening to Earth.

hosts-international-ignatian-ecospiritual-conference/. Video available at https://godinnature.org.au/god-in-nature/keynote-speakers.

[7] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, address in Santa Barbara, California (8 November 1997), in *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, edited by John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham U, 2012), 95–100, here 99, quoted in *Laudato si'*, n.8.

> It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions… For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors there, a sacred space. (*Laudato si'*, n. 146)

Tony Rinaudo, who spent many years working in Africa for World Vision, told of the story of his years of fruitless efforts at regenerating desertificated land until he discovered, in response to desperate prayer, how Earth itself showed him the way. With the local people in Africa he helped develop the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration project which transformed the landscape.

> 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. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil … breaking down waste. (*Laudato si'*, n. 140)

Pedro Walpole, global coordinator of Ecojesuit, a worldwide Ignatian advocacy network, introduced the participants to the *Laudato si'* Action Platform, which is a model of action for communities to follow in companionship with other Ignatian and Jesuit groups.[8] In his keynote talk Walpole outlined six actions we can be taking as individuals and communities:

- seeking political accountability;
- a just transition to clean energy;
- adapting to agroecology and food security systems;
- transparency for climate finance and accountability for loss and damages;
- supporting Indigenous peoples and biodiversity;
- protecting oceans and small island states.

We organisers would not have been content with this intellectual content alone, important as it was. This informative input provided a challenging perspective which the participants then took into their

[8] For the Action Platform see https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/.

contemplation in nature each afternoon. Wherever each participant was, whether alone or in a group, all were invited to spend up to two hours in contemplation in nature. They took with them a specific spiritual exercise we provided that helped them to engage with nature.

In creating an 'Ignatian' programme for this conference, the intention was that the participants would have a personal sensory experience of nature (which would at the same time put them in touch with God). We wanted them to experience intimacy with Earth in a concrete way. Ignatius instructs in the Exercises that for contemplation one should see, hear, smell, taste and touch (Exx 106–7, 115, 121–5); in our case this was to occur not through the 'inner senses', but the outer ones. In this way we hoped the participants would experience the loving presence of God in and through the beauty of their natural surroundings, and discover a new respectful relationship with God's gift of Earth. The participant would be relating to Earth and to God directly, not through a speaker or text only. 'It is more appropriate and far better … for the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his/her Creator.' (Exx 15) Each day then ended with the participants meeting in their local hubs to share their experience.

A new respectful relationship with God's gift of Earth

By the last day the participants had been thoroughly immersed in nature, they had shared their sorrows, desires and discoveries in their small groups, and they had been inspired to believe that change was possible. On the afternoon of this day, as an exercitant can experience in the Fourth Week, they were feeling hopeful and energized. They met specifically to voice their intentions for action, either in their own behaviour or in joining a body that acted for Earth. They were responding to the unspoken question of Ignatius, *what will you do now for the Body of Christ, for Earth who is suffering and wounded?* (compare Exx 53)

Besides the content and flow of the conference, another way in which it was Ignatian and retreat-like was how it invited the participants into a listening mode through their interaction in the hubs. These groups were not for discussion—to find solutions, for instance—but offered opportunities for each person to listen to his or her own heart and speak from the heart without concern for judgment from the others. This enabled them to become vulnerable to themselves and to others, sharing their experience in nature and their response to the input. These were listening groups, as spiritual direction can be, which allowed them to hear the wisdom of the Spirit through each other. The hub facilitator

had the vital role of guiding the group sharing so that people would feel safe, and not become sidetracked into talking only from the head.

Overall, we organizers felt that the conference succeeded as we had intended it to. The morning prayers set the right disposition, the speakers had been heard in the heart, and the hub groups were indeed spaces for deep listening and processing. The participants reported back in ways that indicated an ecological conversion, a change of heart in their relationship with Earth, a new found sense of having a place within a community of like-minded people, and an increased determination and passion to care for God's gift of Earth.

Of the 170 registered participants, around 40 responded to a survey we sent out after the conference, and their responses were most encouraging:

The contemplative process was powerful—enabled space for shared reflections to be digested and touch one's own experiences and longings.

I wanted to be educated and moved. Each successive day deepened my understanding and clarity of how I can move forward practically.

The Hub experience is what brought it all together for me. Sharing/hearing opinions, actions and reactions, was both encouraging and affirming. Just brilliant!

[I now have] an informed mind and a converted heart on ecology saturated with Ignatian spirituality to be and to do something significant.

[I have received] renewed enthusiasm and direction for action. A deepening spiritual openness to the gift of God in creation.

[I intend] to add more actions to my home/personal regime, e.g. using a soap saver; more thoughtfully collecting/reusing water; more rigorously avoiding plastics, etc. I also would like to use some of the conference materials, when they become available, to share with my local parish.

It was a conference that was like a retreat for me. I feel very grateful for the experience.

I think the most valuable thing I will take away is a sense of hope—we have an environment in crisis but we have a God who has not forsaken us and passionate people here and around the world who are prepared to learn how to live differently, to work towards solutions for change and healing towards others, especially those on the margins most affected by climate change and to our damaged earth!

The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are a remarkable tool for transformation. Through them people have found healing and renewed sense of identity and purpose in life in greater harmony with God. In this model of the Exercises Peter Saunders has adapted the original dynamic to draw participants into a process of conversion to Earth. Drawn by God's Spirit, the participants orientated themselves towards Earth in love, Earth that is the Body of Christ. 'The director should give serious consideration to how he or she will adapt the Exercises in a way that invites the exercitant to contemplate in the context of caring for the earth.'[9]

A new website was set up after the conference providing access to the full conference sessions, to the prayer sessions, the keynote speakers, reflections, the spiritual exercises in nature, plus additional resources. It can be accessed at: https://godinnature.org.au/. The organisers acknowledge the tremendous professional work of Anthony Costa who was our digital manager https://ministrydigitalmedia.com.au/. We also acknowledge the elders of the First Peoples of Australia, past, present and emerging, who for some 60,000 years have cared for the sacred land and waters where this conference was hosted.

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[9] Saunders, '*Laudato i*' and the Spiritual Exercises', 128.

SYNODALITY AT WORK

Gerry O'Neill

> If we want to speak of a synodal Church, we cannot remain satisfied with appearances alone; we need content, means and structures that can facilitate dialogue and interaction within the People of God ….[1]

THE GROWING DESIRE for the Church to be more synodal as it journeys together as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God is a wonderful opportunity for the Church to be energized and guided by the wisdom of the *magisterium* and of the *sensus fidei*. In such a journey together the Church lives in the creative tension generated by the interface of conventional and subversive wisdom as it moves forward in ways that remain faithful to our tradition while, at the same time, finding creative ways to express the essence of that tradition; as the evangelist puts it, 'No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins' (Mark 2:22).

The concept of synodality comes from a Greek word—*synodos* meaning to 'journey together'. It is a somewhat cryptic term that is associated only with Christianity. For this reason it is important that those using the term are familiar with its meaning and its application to the self-understanding and practice of the Church today. In the mind of Pope Francis it is the way forward for the Church, and he cautions the faithful that without its application the Church will, like a fish, rot from the inside out.

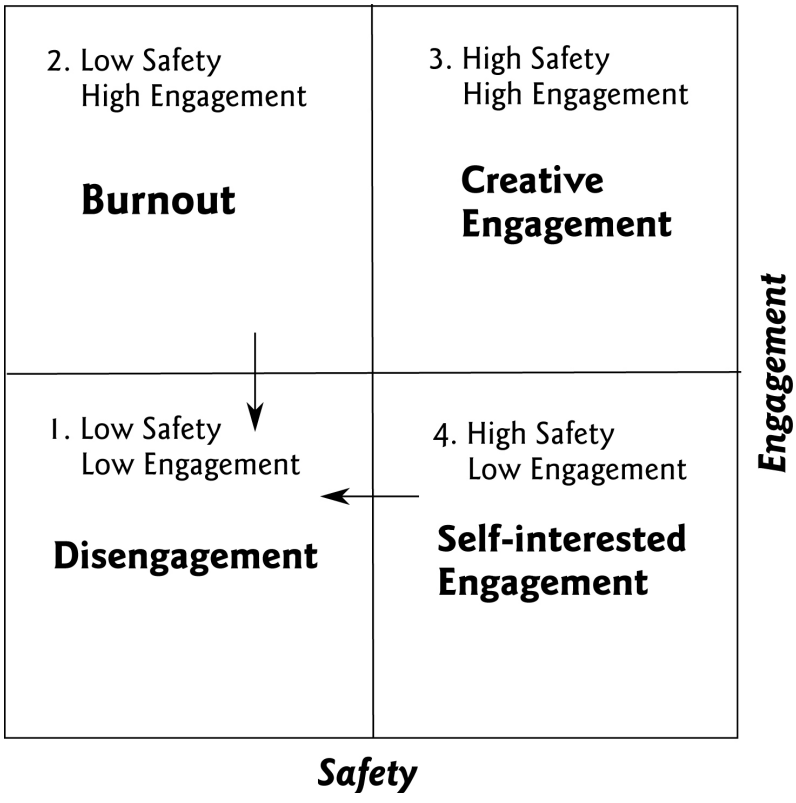
Francis initially planted the seed of synodality in 2014 when he told the Argentinian paper *La Nación*, 'I was rapporteur of the 2001 Synod and there was a cardinal who told us what should be discussed and what should not. That will not happen now.'[2] The word *synodality*

[1] Pope Francis, address for the opening of the Synod on Synodality (9 October 2021).
[2] Joaquín Morales Solá, 'Poder, política y reforma: a solas con Francisco', *La Nación* (5 October 2014).

was not mentioned as such, but the path towards a more synodal Church had been opened.

I would suggest that *synodality* is more poetic language for what is termed *collaboration* or *synergy* in the secular world. The journeying together that it depicts is a powerful metaphor for a pilgrim Church and a community that is able to name challenges and opportunities, and manage respectful, robust and creative dialogue around these matters. It is a concept capturing the understanding that, in a fast moving and complex world, communities need to exercise the talents of all people to act creatively and with agility in order to respond most intelligently to the demands of that world and the imperatives of their deepest identities. Recalling the road to Emmaus story in Luke's Gospel (24:13–32), journeying together always includes the presence of God, even though that presence is not always recognised. It is the brooding presence of the Holy Spirit with us as we walk the path of true discipleship which makes *synodality* a distinctively Christian concept.

I would like to offer here a simple framework to examine how we might embrace greater synodality in different organizations, especially



workplaces, that espouse a Christian vision of reality and reach out to the world as they continue the healing mission of Jesus in pursuit of that vision. The framework offers an insight into how to develop a more synodal approach within organizational cultures. The horizontal axis refers to the level of *psychological safety* that people experience in their workplace and the vertical axis refers to their level of engagement in their work together.[3] The journey towards greater synodality, in this framework, is premised upon having more individuals who inhabit *quadrant three* of the framework. It is the space of creative engagement where new life and greater productivity will emerge. From a structural point of view this would require that the horizontal axis moves downwards and the vertical axis moves left so that more and more people inhabit a space of safety, engagement and high creativity.

The Quadrants

It may be useful to view the four quadrants independently first, to see where people are in the framework currently and to explore how greater movement to quadrant three might best occur in an intentional and planned fashion. It is important to note that it is unrealistic to think that they will always remain in quadrant three. There needs to be some movement between quadrants to ensure that everyone has opportunities to contribute creatively to the organization and to build sustainability into the work culture.

Quadrant One—Disengagement

Here people are experiencing both a lack of psychological safety and low levels of engagement within the workplace. If this situation is not addressed they may well leave the organization, or stay but remain a drag on its success and their own well-being. Finding ways to encourage engagement is really important. It may mean that, in the first instance, work needs to be done on employee self-esteem. Most conflict in the workplace emanates from poor self-esteem.[4] Time spent on formation and professional development activities may be particularly helpful for

[3] On psychological safety see Amy C. Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2019), xv: 'In a psychologically safe workplace, people are not hindered by interpersonal fear. They feel willing and able to take the inherent interpersonal risks of candor.'

[4] Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1987), 109.

those in this quadrant. Such activities might include: a gift discernment process; revisiting the organizational vision and building greater understanding of and commitment to it; providing mentors who are able to walk with them as they grow in confidence and competence in more collaborative engagement. There is, of course, no guarantee that everyone will move into the creative space but it is more likely to occur if the organization helps make itself a more hospitable and valued place for all.

Quadrant Two—Burnout

Employees in quadrant two represent a real challenge for any organization. They experience low levels of trust and yet are highly engaged. In this scenario their engagement is likely to be disruptive, serving neither their own best interest nor the goals of the organization. Indeed, as the level of safety declines for such staff it is likely that their dysfunctional engagement will increase. This can lead to a vicious circle leading to burnout. In this instance the pattern of engagement needs to be influenced so that it becomes less negative for the individual and the organization. The invitation to enter a more creative space will fall on deaf ears if they do not feel safe. If their engagement can be transformed into more constructive activities it may offer them a glimpse and experience of belonging. This is a high energy group but its energy needs to be aligned with both the vision and mission of the organization. The key is to identify anyone who has entered quadrant two early so that the goal of transformation remains realistic. If and when this happens, it provides all colleagues with the assurance that their community is a place of forgiveness and healing.

Leaders need to be alert to the role of the prophetic voice within a Church organization. It is easy to label dissenting voices as negative influences and characterize their input as quadrant-two behaviour, but synodality needs its prophetic dimension which may emerge as robust internal critique. Careful discernment is needed to distinguish between negativity and loyal dissent, which has the capacity to speak honestly of failings and yet offer the hope of new beginnings. It is the prospect of hope and new life that distinguishes between true prophecy and a false prophet who can only tear things down.

Quadrant Three—Creative Engagement

The main mistake made with quadrant three people is to take them for granted. Employees who are creatively engaged with each other and their

organization need to be affirmed and valued for who they are and what they do. Highly engaged, creative people will make mistakes. They are better able to learn from their mistakes if their strengths and contribution to the organization are recognised on a regular basis. This requires a culture and leadership stance that routinely reinforces excellence.

If the number of employees in quadrant three falls too low it presents a pressing problem. Too few staff are carrying the burden of creativity and this becomes self-defeating if it continues for too long. In this case, the organization may lose its most creative people or, even more likely, they will unconsciously move into quadrants one or four in an act of self-preservation. One way to plan against this happening is to encourage quadrant three people to identify and mentor staff who are ready to step into the creative quadrant.

Quadrant Four—Self-Interested Engagement

In some sense this is the most difficult quadrant to turn around. It is the lowest-energy group and one of its main characteristics is self-absorption. The little energy people do have is often focused inwards and not on the vision or goals of the organization. It can lead to an organizational orientation of *maintenance* over *mission*. When this situation takes hold it may be recognised by a sense of entitlement, low energy levels, recurrent conflicts and little capacity for generativity.

The leadership consultant Steven Covey tells the story of the goose and the golden eggs to describe such circumstances. The goose (organization) grows fat and unhealthy as it continues to feed itself at the expense of its golden eggs—mission.[5] Pope Francis makes a similar observation in his first publication as Pope: 'I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security'.[6] A truly effective organization will balance mission *ad intra* with mission *ad extra* so that organizational goals are achieved in an ongoing and sustainable fashion. More than this, the spirit of the organization is echoed and finds expression in its apostolic activity when outreach is motivated and sustained by a community that is immersed in its own spiritual depth.

Goals are achieved in an ongoing and sustainable fashion

[5] Steven Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 52–54.
[6] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 49.

Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills

A key attitude in synodality is that all people count and have something to contribute to the success of an organization. This understanding of the human person's need for agency is consistent with Christian anthropology and the core value of *subsidiarity*. It is easy to agree with this as a noble sentiment, but it is much harder to give it practical effect in a busy work environment. The exclusion of many from important conversations is often not an intentional decision but a lack of understanding of the talents that reside among employees.

One way to overcome this organizational bias is to conduct regular audits of staff profiles and of the different talents they bring to the organization. In a mission setting this could take the form of a gift discernment process based on a reading of 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 on the variety and unity of gifts. Not only is this likely to unearth hidden talents and affirm employees, but it carries the added bonus of enabling leaders to invite participation in important conversations or projects on the basis of talent rather than role or availability.

Self-knowledge is most important in the capacity to work maturely and interdependently with others. If we are unaware of our own limitations and prejudices it may be that we see those traits and challenge them in others. In a more reflective culture there is much more scope for greater self-awareness and consequently more capacity for working collaboratively with others.

A deep knowledge of and commitment to the inner logic of the organization is essential to move towards synodality. The response to external opportunities and threats must be framed within the identity of the organization itself so that authenticity is not trumped by relevance. It is seductive to become a child of the times and, in so doing, lose touch with one's essential meaning. In the turbulence of

rapid change our tradition, founding stories and aspirational documents anchor our stability and ground our growth. It is clear that sound organizational formation is an important component in a community that values both continuity and change.

Every form of social engagement demands discipline and specific skills. Here are some of the skills required to support successful synodal engagement. It is not an exhaustive list and other skills will emerge as a community journeys together towards more creative engagement:

- empathic listening—an ability and willingness to listen to the other with ears, eyes and heart, especially when views are being put forward that are alien to one's current thinking;
- speaking with boldness and a sense of humility—it is important to speak with passion about important issues but also in the realisation that a personal view is always limited and may be enriched by different views;
- summarising—it is good to pause from time to time and summarise what has been said; this provides an opportunity for clarification, affirmation and capturing key points already made;
- synergizing—taking the time to see connections, patterns and emerging innovation;
- direction—gauging the mood in the group and bringing it to the surface; discerning the presence of God in what is being said and proposed;
- revisiting the flame—integrating our ideas and decisions with our deepest identity.

Letting Go

Letting go of old attitudes, knowledge and skills that may have served us well for a long time is also a critical element in developing new ways of being in the world. It is not easy. Scripture itself teaches us that letting go of our image of messiahship and even our image of God are important steps on our journey to a more mature, inclusive and intelligent faith. Ironically, it is often in the letting go, when we feel most vulnerable, that our faith deepens and matures. When Peter denies Jesus, saying, 'I do not know the man', he is speaking a truth (Matthew 26:72–73). He cannot know Jesus truly until after he has had time to reflect upon the

cross and resurrection. Only then is he able to lead the Church. Similarly, it is very easy to deny synodality before one has fully experienced it or come to understand its real power for problem-solving and creativity.

It may be useful to outline some things that need to be let go so that synodality can flourish in our organizations. Again this is not an exhaustive list but it may serve to whet the appetite for this important conversation to take place.

- A leadership style that is grounded in control, not creativity: it is important for designated leaders to share their vulnerability and *not knowing* so that greater responsibility falls on the group.
- The comfort of certainty for the adventure of ambiguity: it is more likely that creativity will emerge from active engagement with tension rather than avoiding it for the comfort of the group.
- The belief that conflict is *bad*: it needs to be reframed as the genesis of new life when it is confronted and managed well. Its joint resolution also serves to build greater group cohesion.
- Agendas that place the most important questions under *Any Other Business*: recognising and prioritising them is crucial.
- A sense of security in being *right* needs to be replaced with security based in the confidence that *together we can do this*.

There is an old saying—*a rut is a shallow grave*. However, a rut can also be a very comfortable place. Inertia sets in and the comfort of staying put often overrides the motivation to get out of it. In the Roman Catholic Church today the desire for change is becoming more powerful than the comfort of staying put. We may have just reached a tipping point. If we refuse the promptings of the Spirit for change at this time and remain in the comfort of business as usual we may just be digging our own grave.

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Thinking Faith

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Theology as a Way of Living

James Hanvey

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY BOOKS written about Ignatius of Loyola and many more about his Spiritual Exercises. Few have been written about his theological vision. Hugo Rahner begins to open up this dimension on Ignatius for contemporary students in the 1950s, yet Hans Urs von Balthasar's observation that Ignatius as a theologian has still to be appreciated continues to be true. This is understandable, because Ignatius is not a formal theologian. The *Spiritual Exercises* is a sort of practical, experiential theology that leads to a converted and consecrated freedom in action, not a treatise on Christology, ecclesiology, grace and nature. The same is true for the *Constitutions* of the Society; and we can see how much this theology is his life in Ignatius' letters and Spiritual Diary. Everything in these writings reveals an immanent living theology which is applied to the realities of persons, places and circumstances. Hence, the danger in trying to extract a formal theology lies in forgetting that it is a lived theology first. However, the other danger is that we forget that Ignatius has an objective vision which is tested within the tradition of the Church.

Neither the *Spiritual Exercises* nor his other writings sanction a pure subjectivism, which is the danger in the contemporary vogue for therapeutic spirituality. Here, strongly influenced by psychoanalytic and person-centred practice, the subject's self-referential experience is the dominant hermeneutic. The risk in so much of the contemporary 'spirituality industry' is that it becomes secularised anthropology, whereas Ignatius always offers an uncompromising 'theology'. Understanding this is important for correcting another misinterpretation of Ignatius, namely, voluntarism. Where this has been part of Jesuit spirituality and culture it has owed more to the prevailing rationalism and suspicion of strongly affective and mystical dimensions of Ignatian spirituality than it has to an authentic appropriation of the sources.

The Exercises and, indeed, the whole example of Ignatius' life, certainly expect the subject to spare nothing in the service of God and

God's Kingdom, but this flows from an inexhaustible gratitude for what one has received from the Divine Majesty at such cost. The determined ordering of all one's energies in the service of Christ, and the desire to participate as completely as possible in the work of salvation, require a disciplined asceticism of love for God and for neighbour, but this 'freedom' is far from the indifference of a stoic self-mastery, though it may teeter on the brink of this distortion.

The subject's life, the interior drama of desires and freedom, and the struggle and the discipline of realities that both circumscribe us and offer new possibilities are all present, but Ignatius sees them in relation to God, who is actively present at their centre. The whole work of the Exercises is to give us a new point from which to see the world in all its astonishing diversity and, especially, to see the way in which the Son is present in its midst, 'labouring and working' for its healing. That work is to bring all things under the sovereignty of the Divine Majesty so that all created things, and especially the glory of God's creation, the human person, can enjoy the plenitude of life.

God as the Source of Our Freedom to Be and to Act

In this sense, the world for Ignatius is radically theocentric. But it is precisely because we are so completely and radically grounded in God, 'Our Creator and Lord' that, far from restricting or losing our freedom, we come to possess it. In contrast with the many forms of freedom that are offered to us, it is a freedom which allows us to be 'disposed' in the redemptive work of Christ and the building of the Kingdom. Such freedom comes through our search and desire for it, but it is always a gift. It is not the freedom of the autonomous, self-made and self-making individual of contemporary culture. It is not the liberation of the Enlightenment or modernity or even postmodernity.

Rather, it is a freedom which can only be discovered in relationship of 'handing over', of precisely not belonging to self but living in and through the other who is Christ and the 'other' that we discover in the form of a world that needs to be healed—this incarnate, redemptively active Christ who is 'in' our world.[1] It is signalled at the very beginning

[1] See Galatians 5:1, 13–24 which is critical for understanding the freedom sought in the Spiritual Exercises. It is a freedom which comes as a 'grace' and is the work of the Spirit signifying the new life of Christ. It is a creative, generative freedom, ordered to the works of love, especially the service of neighbour. Notice, too, how for Paul it becomes the touchstone for discernment. The Pauline criteria also help us to correct what might be a tendency to see the effects of consolation and desolation largely in terms

of the *Spiritual Exercises* in the notes or annotations, where the idea of a 'retreat'—a withdrawal and seclusion—is the material expression of our desire to gain favour in the sight of the Divine Majesty, that we may be more disposed to service of our Creator, and be united with Him (Exx 20).[2]

In the Principle and Foundation, the grace of this relational freedom is also described as an active grace which encompasses every aspect and circumstance of our life (Exx 23). It becomes an unchanging prayer which orientates every prayer of the Spiritual Exercises: the exercitant prays that all his or her 'intentions, actions and operations may be purely ordered to the praise and reverence of His Divine Majesty' (Exx 46). It is a stunningly simple but profound prayer. It is the prayer of our whole life, placing us under the sovereignty of God and His Kingdom.

None of this excludes the rich insights into the dynamics of the human psyche and our relationships which are illuminated in the contemporary human sciences. It does mean, however, that we come to understand ourselves and our world—social and material—through God, not apart from God. Implicitly, therefore, Ignatius will always challenge our latent or implicit secularisation. This is why, though the Ignatian vision and practice has an extraordinary freedom to engage with the whole of human reality, it needs always to be vigilant and rooted—in affect, intellect and acts—in God (Exx 237). Without this groundedness, even the gift of freedom becomes the occasion of a conversion to the secular, that is, the world in which I am the centre, that I endeavour to create either without reference to God or where I use God to legitimate my creation.[3]

I think Ignatius learnt this in his experience at Loyola during his convalescence, when he began to understand the captivity and allure of worldly dreams. It would have been easy to 'baptize' them but not fundamentally change them in a neat transference from the earthly to the heavenly King. Alert to this danger, he discovered the evangelical tools of service in the rules for discernment, especially of the Second Week of the Exercises, and the profound, searching examination and call of the third mode of humility, which should surely be the interior

of the interior life of the individual. Paul makes it clear that the 'fruits' of desolation and consolation often go beyond our own individual inner life to have consequences on the community and the life-giving potential of our relationships. There is also recognition of the problem of 'freedom' and especially of its works within the Exercises. This has to do with disputes with Protestantism (compare Exx 369).

[2] Note the progressive deepening of the movement described. This threefold pattern of the grace desired, which is ultimately the grace of being with Christ in his redemptive work, is repeated in several different forms in the course of the Exercises: Exx 95–98, 104, 135 following and especially 147 and 165 following.

[3] Compare the Parable of the Three Classes of Men, Exx 149 following.

norm of every member of the Society and the touchstone of the daily Examen (Exx 136–148, 165–168). These exercises embody a deep and constant inscription of the way of Christ that shapes our actions as well as our desires. In them, the meaning and the form of power is transformed. They describe the strange new world of God's activity, not ours; each day they teach us about the apocalyptic struggle for the Kingdom and the true nature of Christ's Lordship.

Ignatius gives us the means of living in a world in which God 'labours and works' for our salvation, upholding it and working for its good.[4] The source of our action is not a naive, humanistic optimism but a profound, Christian realism. What these tools give us is not a scholastic or academic theology; it is not a theory, but a theology that is lived and experienced. In this sense, too, our theology becomes a daily action, shaping and making our lives. The 'lived theology' of Ignatius is our living the reality of the Incarnate and Resurrected life in our history.

A theology that is lived and experienced

In this sense it is, of course, the active life of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the dynamic and open horizon of Ignatius' vision of the world and the desire to be sent into it is a profound experience of the Spirit and its mission to reconcile all things in Christ (Colossians 1:13–20). In this way, Ignatius' lived theology is the grace of entering into the dynamic salvific economy of the Triune God; our learning to live in and express the *Amor Amans*—the Love Loving—that is God's self. This is the heart of the apostolic life.

Prosaic Language and the Mysticism of Experience

The writings of Ignatius betray little poetry or rhetoric. They do not have the intellectual fluency of a speculative theologian, the engaging personal élan of a Teresa, or the '*lámparas de fuego*' (lamps of fire) that one catches even in John of the Cross's theological commentary on his poetry. For Ignatius, language itself is not the experience; it is merely an instrument to communicate reality. Ignatius does not offer us a literary mysticism. There is no esoteric vocabulary which only the initiated can decipher and interpret.

[4] Exx 237. This is a description of the activity of the salvific economy by which God's providence is understood as the outpouring of his Love—a Love which is now seen to have the form of Christ. The attributes of God—justice, goodness, mercy—are understood as real acts in creation, and therefore manifestations of the Kingdom. Through the grace of the union of service and companionship we are also enabled to participate in these attributes and make them our actions. It is part of the 'realised eschatology' that belongs to the Exercises and allows us to see that Jerónimo Nadal's gloss on Jesuits as 'contemplatives in action' might be better understood within this scriptural category rather than as an attempt to reconcile the active and contemplative forms of religious life.

Ignatius is not a fluent writer but it is not only this: he knows words can excite and draw us into their own world. They have a special resonance and weight but only because they are firmly rooted in a vivid and normative experience. So we find an oddly limited and repetitive vocabulary that is worth attending to in two ways: first, it is ostensive, in the sense that it points to an experience; it names the theological-spiritual landscape that Ignatius knew and mapped. It strives after a minimalist accuracy, partly out of respect for the reality, and party not to draw attention to itself.

Second, it is always concrete and grounded. It names, locates and orientates us whenever we encounter it. In its own way, it is the language of sincerity and directness—there is no rhetorical dissimulation—and, paradoxically, its combination of minimalism and concreteness, precisely because it disciplines speculation and description, produces a sense of dynamism and encounter. It is essentially a language of living relations and processes, a language of the heart's deepest desires and the intellect's ordering of them into expressive, incarnated truth. In the sparest way, it expresses the engagement of the whole person situated in the external and interior worlds.

Its restraint also serves another purpose: it creates space for us. It allows us to make these words our own through the experiences and relationships they direct us to and allow us to have. It is not that Ignatius is only 'a tongue-tied mystic'; he uses language to point us to the concrete reality of encounter from which language should not distract and with which it should not create its own relationship. His words are not the words of a narcissistic author which direct us back to the authorial centre and control. They are governed by an apostolic pedagogy. Ignatius gives us our freedom; his words do not take us over and they always open up the experience, they allow us to re-encounter it, they never substitute for it. The words are always a means, never an end.

I think a clue is given in instruction to the director in the Spiritual Exercises. His or her task is to test the truth and facilitate it but not get in the way, not draw attention to him- or herself (Exx 15). This creates a new style in which the speaker is only a facilitator. From it we learn how to make language itself an apostolic instrument rather than a rhetorical display. This may help us understand why reading Ignatius is an odd experience. The imagery is spare, direct, clear, concentrated and strong. It is rarely abstract and always personal. The habitual ways in which Ignatius speaks of God—'The Divine Majesty', 'The Creator

and Lord', 'The Eternal King', 'The Divine Goodness'—are not primarily metaphysical titles or abstract categories. They are the linguistic sites of a personal relationship, the fountains of an ever-present, experiential encounter. Such spare language and imagery remain remarkably consistent in all his writings and we can glimpse its glowing affective intensity in texts such as Ignatius' Spiritual Diary. We find it again in the *Constitutions*, where we stumble over language which is so familiar from the *Spiritual Exercises* but well embedded into their baroque structure.

We could easily dismiss this as some sort of automatic linguistic piety or genuflection. It is not, however, a naïve language but one that is personal and self-aware; it is performative. When we come across those titles of 'The Creator and Lord', the 'Divine Majesty' etc., or we are invited to consider things before this God whom we have come to know in such names, the language serves to locate us in an experience. We are reminded and relocated within the fundamental orientations of our life of service. The primary relationship from which we live is invoked. We are called to integrity of decision and action by being made accountable to the God we meet in the relationship of redemption and salvation. In other words, it is a language of accountability before the King in whose service we are enlisted.

Such a complex text as the *Constitutions* is dynamic and experiential. It lives out in its structure the preparatory prayer of the Exercises; it is always orientating itself to God. Having mapped out the place where we should be—in discernment with our superiors, in our studies, building up the unity of the Body and so on—it invites us 'to keep always before us, first, God'.[5] What it discloses is a way of seeing the world and God's action in it that is at first curious until we understand what it is attempting to do. We can stumble over images which clearly come out of a pious, religious, medieval imagination, but we are not on some quaint, historical tour. Rather, we find ourselves in a dynamic world of creative process and drama; the words and the structures are all struggling to do justice to the God who is salvifically active in all things; who has summoned us into his world, the energy and *kairos* of the gospel. In this sense, we inhabit a landscape that is both old and completely modern in its breadth and conceptuality. In other words, as we have already observed but now grasp in his characteristic voice, Ignatius is alive to the luminous energy of the Divine economy.

[5] *Formula of the Institute*, n.1.

Some Key Themes

There are many aspects of Ignatius' vision and practice that merit close study. His understanding of the Trinity or the Incarnation, the struggle of the Kingdom of the Enemy and the Kingdom of Christ, or the Rules for Thinking with the Church, have in various ways received attention. It would require much greater scope than this limited essay affords to treat these themes and others as they deserve.

There is one aspect, though, which has not received much attention, yet in part it may account for the modernity of Ignatius's thought. It is the extraordinary relational way of thinking and seeing that marks the Ignatian vision; the refusal to distort these into some logical form or process and the determination to try to comprehend the vitality of our interconnectedness. It is a wisdom but it is not detached. Rather it is an 'active wisdom' that is alive both to the unity and the creative diversity of our relational realities. This relational way of seeing things is undoubtedly grounded in his own mystical experience of a Trinitarian God: a God who chooses to be intimately related to the world as both Creator and Lord. The relational structure of Ignatius' theology is immediately apparent in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Spiritual Diary, the letters and the *Constitutions*, even when parts may have been written by his secretary, Polanco.

The human person is never considered except in and through a nexus of relationships. We are never allowed to stand outside these relationships on our own; there is no sovereign self, exercising a contemplative grasp of the whole from some vantage point outside the material, historical and existential process of life. Indeed, it is part of the illusion of sin to think that we can exercise such independence. In fact, Ignatius understands that sin is itself a web in which we are caught whether it be in the primal

history of the fall of the angels or in the active malignity of evil that seeks to delude and ensnare us, 'so that no province, no place, no state of life, no individual is overlooked' (Exx 50, 141).

This is not just a colourful medieval mystery play in which we are given a part. It is an engagement with the *mysterium inquitatis* that cannot be reduced to a projection of our own subjective woundedness. We can only begin to understand the extent of our entrapment—epistemological as well as psychological and existential—when we allow ourselves to stand in our relationship to Christ. Christ suddenly casts a light that exposes the way in which evil spins its own relational reality; it has a history, it creates its own determining structures from which we cannot break by our own strength or intelligence. In this, Ignatius takes us into the apocalyptic understanding of the gospel, but he never allows us to stand lost outside the saving relationship with Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. It is a mark of our healing when we come to appreciate the truth of our dependence, our connectedness. But this connectedness is a living experience of being sustained and cared for, of being upheld and carried even when I want to deny or break away from this truth. Our 'conversion' is one of mind and will when we come to understand all creation—natural and supernatural—'interceding … for me' (Exx 60). That action of intercession is not a trivial act—it is the movement of life itself, of being which expresses its goodness in this act of life-giving generosity even when I wound it.

What Ignatius opens up for us is the unity between the act of creation and redemption and the gift or grace of participation. He invites us to understand our connectedness as gift and through that to express our own restored connectedness in gratitude—which is a loving reverence and self-gift. That work of intercession belongs to all created things in their goodness but it also discloses that it is a profoundly relational mark of being itself. Even more than this, it participates in the salvific economy of the Triune Life. It locates me in a community: it is the community of creation and also of the Church—the concrete community in which I live in history, but the community that also intercedes and carries me—the *ecclesia* of the heavenly court that also 'labours and works' for my salvation and the restoration of creation. There is an intimate and profound *communio* here between the Church and creation which is discovered in their salvific mission and being.[6]

[6] Added to the Exercises are the Rules for Thinking with the Church, and their controversial test (Exx 365), 'What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines ….'

When I begin to understand and sense that this grace lives in all things, then I am ordered in a joyous self-emptying of loving service to the world. Already, I have begun to see that at the heart of all these relations is Christ. To follow Him is not to leave the world, but to enter more completely and intensely into its life, its woundedness, its struggle against emptiness, falsehood and death. To step into this new world of relationship and commit myself to it is not to restrict my freedom but to discover it. But it is only discovered in and through the Person of Christ.

Again, this is no abstract or theoretical relationship or possibility, but one that is real, concrete, personal and immediate. The relationship that I am called to is that of 'companion'; it is one of love that 'labours and works' with Him to restore all the broken relationships which prevent life. It is not an exaggeration to say that the whole of what Ignatius (and the Society of Jesus) understands by mission—notwithstanding the ocean of words that has been expended upon the theme—is contained in the Gospel of John:

> For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16–17)

It is because we live that experience of Love and are drawn into it through our relationship with the Son that we become the bearers of the message of life to the world in the words and deeds given us by the Spirit, who is the Lord and Giver of Life. Indeed, for Ignatius our whole life is to be sent, to participate in this mission of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that is at the heart of all our relationships and orders them in this dynamic of reciprocity—the response we make to God's self-gift in our 'take and receive all' (Exx 234).

Clearly these 'rules' arise out of the controversies of the time, especially around Protestantism. In emphasizing the Hierarchical Church as the ultimate arbiter of truth the Exercises intend us to understand our relational indebtedness within the economy of grace. It is important to see that these rules are about maintaining an undivided Kingdom and an undivided Church. The obedience is not just to a hierarchy but to 'Christ our Lord' and 'the one Spirit' who hold sway 'for the salvation of souls'. But one should not simply read the *Spiritual Exercises* within this historical context alone. Within the text, there is clearly an integrated sense of the *communio* of being—part of the restoration which Christ brings about as Head of Creation. An Ignatian understanding of the Church has also to see it with the *communio* of being, integral to the mediation of the redeemed and sanctified life. In this sense, Christ as head of His Church and of Creation is also the active Truth which informs the whole economy. Christ has epistemological importance and our companionship with Him has epistemological significance for us, which is not only worked out in terms of the created world and ecclesiology.

The final great active moment in which Ignatius asks us to find ourselves is the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the Exercises (Exx 230 following). It is not contemplation in the sense of an intellectual exercise; it is a performative act of loving self-gift. Only in that offering, in which we are both giving and being given being—the graced indwelling *kenosis* of the Spirit of Love (John 14:21, 15:8–17)—can we really experience the life that is God's life, the life that is the life of all life.

Yet the Contemplation to Attain Love is not only the end to which all our Exercises have been leading, it is also the daily reality in which we live. There is a sense in Ignatius, something we have learnt through the Exercises, that to live in this God, to be taken in God's mission to the world, is also to go on growing. Indeed, there is a relationship between our practice of the ministry and works of God's love in the world and the deepening of our capacity to receive this life in ourselves. Here, living this grace increases our capacity and aptitude for it and there is no limit to this growth. With this comes a growth in our ability to judge or discern things correctly because we come to see them more and more in relation to God and God's salvific plan. Our mind and heart become healed and our will becomes strengthened and attuned to do what is right—what generates that new life of the Kingdom. Love 'sets things in order'; in loving we come to develop a 'compassio' with the things of God.[7] This is the source and shape of our mission and the gift of discernment. We have already indicated the relational nature of wisdom in Ignatius, but now we can recognise that it comes as gift of the Spirit active in our lives: not just understanding but of knowing how to love. It is the Spirit, the astonishing grace-filled generosity of God, that continues to pour into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

So, Ignatius understands that theology is this: not a speculative endeavour of the intellect but a life that lives in Christ; a love that comes to be—in deeds and not words—for the life of the world.

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[7] Ignatius' sense of this finds more formal theological expression in St Thomas Aquinas, who says from the habit of charity the spiritual man will have a sense of what is a right judgement, what is in accordance with God's salvific purpose. See *Summa theologiae* 2.2 q.60.1. a.2; also, 2.2, q.45, a.2c.

BULLETIN

Bishop Rolando Álvarez: Prophetic Voice of Latin America Today

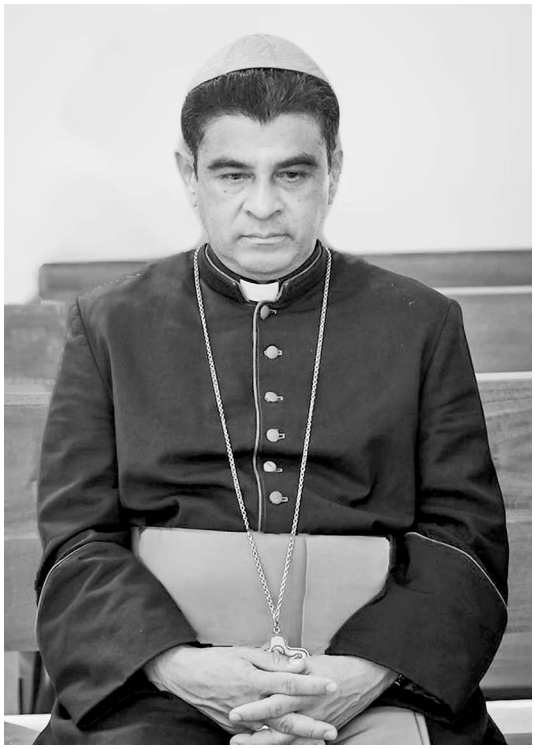
On 10 February this year, Monsignor Rolando José Álvarez Lagos, bishop of the diocese of Matagalpa and apostolic administrator of the diocese of Estelí, was condemned to a 26-year, 4-month prison sentence in Nicaragua. He has been a prophetic voice against the regime of President Daniel Ortega, who has governed the country for more than two decades. The sentence against the bishop was rejected by the bishops of Latin America and the European Parliament. In the same way, Pope Francis and the president of the Episcopal Conferences of the European Community, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, expressed pain and concern for the situation in the country.

What is happening in Nicaragua? From 2018, the government has kept 206 people in prison, victims of cruel and inhuman torture; this is recognised as a political crime by the European Parliament. Among them was Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who was detained on 19 August 2022 under house arrest, which impeded him from leaving his residence. The bishop was accused by the national police of propagating fake news and organizing violent groups to destabilise the state of Nicaragua. This was a false accusation without evidence. For this reason, since 9 September 2022, the parliament has condemned the detention of members of the Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua and has demanded his immediate liberation. The European Parliament demanded full respect for freedom of expression, religion and belief and denounced the arbitrary detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez. In spite of this the judicial process against the bishop continued.

The detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez took place in the context of the repression of the defenders of human rights, journalists, farmers and students who had expressed disagreement with the government of President Daniel Ortega. At the same time, the Nicaraguan government has used the judicial system to repress and limit respect for the democratic spaces of the country. Among other actions, the government expelled the apostolic nuncio, Monsignor Waldemar Stanisław Sommertag, on 6 March 2022 along with eighteen religious of the order of the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Additionally, the Nicaraguan authorities closed new Catholic Radio stations, withdrew

Catholic subscription news channels, and prevented processions and pilgrimages. The detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez, victim of an anti-democratic government, brings to light the hundreds of victims who, like him, suffer persecution in the defence of the life and liberty of all the sons and daughters of God. This sentence puts the Latin American Church once again on the side of those persecuted for wanting to construct a better country and a better society.[1]

Luis Orlando Pérez Jiménez SJ

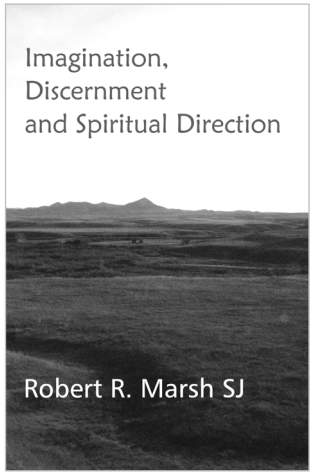


Monsignor Rolando José Álvarez Lagos

[1] Sources: 'Nicaragua. Monseñor Rolando Álvarez enviado a juicio', *Vatican News* (10 January 2023); 'Nicaragua. Obispo Rolando Álvarez condenado a 26 años de prisión', *Vatican News* (11 February 2023); 'Moseñor Rolando Álvarez', *ADN Celam*, at https://adn.celam.org/tag/monsenor-rolando-alvarez/; 'Nicaragua: el Parlamento Europeo reclama la liberación inmediata del obispo Rolando Álvarez', *Noticias Parlamento Europeo* (15 September 2022).

RECENT BOOKS

Robert R. Marsh, *Imagination, Discernment and Spiritual Direction* (Oxford: Way Books, 2023). 978 0 9047 1752 6, pp. 114, £10.



Rob Marsh has been a leading light in the Ignatian spirituality movement in the United Kingdom over the past decades. His work has been a hidden labour of love. Through this collection that labour will bear lasting fruit. It will be of interest to spiritual directors, those who have made the Spiritual Exercises or anyone who seeks to deepen his or her understanding of discernment. If one were to describe the overall intention of Rob's work it would be to recover our awareness of the personhood of God in human experience. Such an awareness has been obstructed by the emphasis of modernity upon individualism, scepticism, the supremacy of human action and the faithless split between public and private spheres.

It was at the origins of modernity that St Ignatius sought to rectify this distortion through an approach to discernment that, rather than cultivating introspection and self-reliance, placed the human being face to face with God. His insight is recorded succinctly in the 75th Annotation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which is the touchstone of this collection of essays. St Ignatius invites the one making the Exercises to consider how God is looking at him or her. We begin prayer, discernment and spiritual direction by letting God look upon us face to face and allowing ourselves to be moved by God's personhood.

While some describe discernment as an art and others as a science, Rob would undoubtedly call it both. His nuanced, relational approach encourages the director and directee to discover the seams of human experience in which God's dynamic personhood is most active. It can be summed up by his well-proven maxim: 'Stay with the movement, avoid the counter-movement' (20). Just as the structure of the Ignatian hour of prayer enfolds an encounter with the Lord, so too does the hour of accompaniment foster the same encounter. Its effectiveness depends on the faith of the director. As Rob comments on the formation of spiritual directors: 'Our first goal in teaching

is, then, to get our trainees to believe that God *is* real' (79). With this disposition, and an appropriate framework, and focus the time of spiritual conversation can become a living encounter with the Lord.

The selection of essays provides the reader with a rich panorama of the spiritual life. In one Rob uses the film *American Beauty* to illustrate Ignatius' trust that God could be relied upon to transform even the messiness of human desire: 'Ignatius learned to trust attraction enough to let it be the place where God continued to create him' (12). In another he offers a parody of C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, in which the eponymous anti-hero—a devil with an administrative position in Hell—instructs his nephew how to incite pride in the spiritual dryness that characterizes Lent instead of delight in God's mercy: 'It will let her feel she is following in the Enemy's own peculiar footsteps but with a little care she won't spend much time thinking about Him at all' (55). The eloquent range of Rob's cultural reference is not mere coincidence, for he detects in the background noise of our culture a yearning for the presence of God he seeks to incorporate in our awareness.

Imagination is the theme that brings together the essays. Actively it creates a bridge between ourselves and God's personhood in our human experience, passively what has been imagined comes to move and affect us: 'Our participation in imagined reality influences who we are and how we choose to create and chose to act' (94). It is one of the sites where the movements that we receive as a consequence of God's personhood can be experienced. Although Rob does not look towards the future, he has commented elsewhere that, rather than an ideological project or a social vision, the pathway to salvation is discernment. The imagination is surely the place where that God's plan for us will be realised, if only we are able to trust what God is evoking and dispose ourselves to receiving and being transformed by what we discover.

The final essay brings together the themes of virtual reality, ecology and angels. It narrates an experience in which Rob visited a battleground in Montana, where an indigenous tribe surrendered to their pursuers after a long flight from their homeland. Before knowing this history he attends to the spirit of the place. He invites us to become reverent before such experiences, since the movements created by that spirit are evoked by the personhood of God, and in spite of modernity's discouragement:

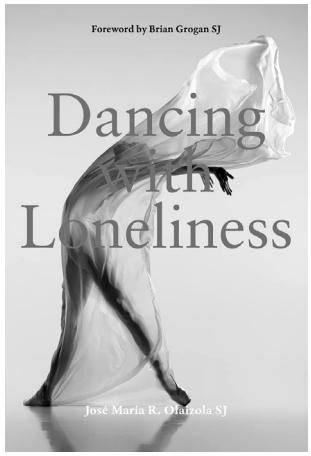
> How do I place my feet upon this prairie? How can we know what to do? How can we have the will to do it? Only by listening slowly to the heart; only by waiting on the whispers of angels; only by standing still and vulnerable, long enough to be touched by the spirit of the place. (98)

This is a sentiment echoed by his friend and colleague Paul Nicholson in the foreword when he says that the essays in the collection invite us 'to stand still, and vulnerable, in that place where the work of the Spirit of God can be recognised and a response given' (xx). In helping us to recover the personhood of God, this hidden labour of love will bear fruit not just for each one of us but for the Church and the world.

Philip Harrison SJ

Imagination, Discernment and Spiritual Direction may be purchased from the Way Ignatian Book Service. Please go to https://www.theway.org.uk/bookservice, or contact the editorial office.

José Maria R. Olaizola, *Dancing with Loneliness* (Dublin: Messenger, 2023). 987 1 7881 2624 3, pp.160, £11.95.



The author of this perceptive and at times moving book, José Maria R. Olaizola, is head of institutional communications for the Society of Jesus in Spain. He is a prolific writer; a recent listing of his publications catalogues 23 titles to his name—all in his native Spanish. Now, written with equal fluency, comes his first book in English. (There is no suggestion that a translator has been at work.) Many of us are conditioned by texts reflecting a dominant Anglo-American culture and for us this fresh voice from the Hispanic world will be wholly welcome. That said, some of the appeals made in these pages to assumptions widely held in Spain will escape readers elsewhere. 'Not every Asturian is affable', writes Olaizola opaquely (97).

The book, with its upbeat title, characteristically begins in song. The Spanish singer Joaquín Sabina invokes 'that untimely lover called the loneliness' (13). There is, it seems, something unwelcome yet yearned for in the experience of loneliness, a condition that is universal, yet each is lonely in his or her own way. Olaizola does not underestimate the magnitude and complexity of the task he has taken on in setting out to capture the essence of such a paradoxical dimension of our humanity.

Much has been written about loneliness—if more memorably in poetry than in prose—and we wonder whether this book will have anything new to say to us. It does. Olaizola uses the hallowed image of the dance as a metaphor for our human interaction. Equally effective is his frequent reference

to scenes from films to make his point. Olaizola is a sociologist who well understands the social determinants that shape our experience of loneliness in all its guises.

Four parts provide a loose framework for Olaizola's reflections. In a text that, so to speak, plays tunes, this structure is best seen as a symphony in four movements. Part one maps 'The Human Archipelago'—the chain of islands, separate but interconnected, that makes us who we are. An early chapter entitled 'Anything for a Cuddle' engages head-on with the perception that no life is lonelier than that of the celibate. To which common assertion Olaizola's response is a robust 'complete nonsense' (19). Here is a writer who does not duck the difficult.

In part two Olaizola probes the reasons for our loneliness. In doing so he acknowledges his debt to the prophetic figure of Zygmunt Bauman, who has taught us to see how today we all live in a 'liquid society'. Lost in cyberspace, we must ask whether the addictive power of social media relieves or exacerbates our loneliness. Many in our time have learned that instant communication forbids rather than fosters deep and lasting relationships. Not least for children, Olaizola suggests, smartphones are less of a blessing than a bane.

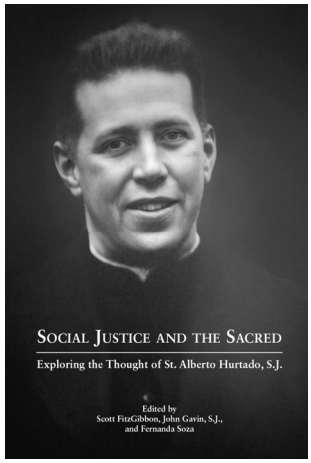
Part three of this study, entitled 'Tango for One', invites the reader to see how the Gospels touch on different types of loneliness and to recognise—and experience—the transformative nature of the meetings with Jesus recorded by the gospel writers. Olaizola is steeped in the Ignatian tradition and, drawing on that deep well, his comments on the narrative of the Prodigal Son—a lonely lad if ever there was one—are very powerful.

The fourth and final part of *Dancing with Loneliness* invites us to seek for the manner of relationships by which we may be led from loneliness 'into a graceful dance' (127). Five elements are seen as essential to that transformation: gratuitousness, generosity, acceptance, freedom and perspective. Each of these elements Olaizola discusses in turn, though he recognises that teasing them apart is an artificial exercise; for they are all one, all aspects of love, 'which is what we're really talking about' (117).

Reading a book on your own is necessarily a solitary experience. A book about loneliness, even a book with as many nuggets of wisdom as this one, is no cure for loneliness if read all by yourself. *Dancing with Loneliness* comes over as a text best read together—a good choice perhaps for a parish reading group. Such a group might reflect on a question that surprisingly goes unasked in a book published very recently. What are we to say about the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent scourge of loneliness that befell us?

John Pridmore

***Social Justice and the Sacred: Exploring the Thought of St Alberto Hurtado SJ*, edited by Scott FitzGibbon, John Gavin and Fernanda Soza (Philadelphia: St Joseph's U, 2021). 978 0 9161 0109 1, pp. 212, $35.00.**



In the English-speaking world, the Chilean Jesuit saint Alberto Hurtado is perhaps best known for founding Hogar de Cristo, that 'Home of Christ' which has become an extensive network of social services for the poor in Latin America. However, that work was but one of his many creative pastoral responses to acute social problems in Chilean society in the first part of the twentieth century. This new collection of essays from St Joseph's University Press sheds light on the range of bold apostolic ventures realised by Hurtado. It also demonstrates, as its title felicitously indicates, the deep experience of God that guided Hurtado in everything he did. Indeed, the sacred and the work for social justice were not two distinct realities for this Jesuit, but one harmonious and dynamic movement that compelled him to work tirelessly for the gospel.

This collection situates the reader with a biographical summary of Hurtado's life and a fine collection of photographs of him. Each of the chapters, written by scholars familiar with the vast collection of his extant writings, presents fascinating studies of the man from many different perspectives. In addition, much-needed historical context is provided to understand the particular situation of Chilean society in the first half of the twentieth century.

Taken as a whole, the book offers a clear portrait of Hurtado's years of Jesuit formation, his doctoral study in education and his lifelong concern for workers, youth and the poor. Across these essays, a common theme emerges. Each author seems to have been impressed by the sheer volume of the work accomplished by Hurtado in a life that was cut short at the age of 51 by pancreatic cancer: eleven books published in sixteen years, the founding of the journal *Mensaje*, the organization of a labour movement (ASICH) that would introduce Catholic principles on issues of labour and, of course, the social work for the poor, Hogar de Cristo. All of this was in addition to his teaching, retreat work and ministry as a priest.

On that last topic, one of the most central to Hurtado's identity, it is fascinating to discover that the Chilean Jesuit understood the priesthood as a ministry of concern. For Hurtado, the priest engages in ministry because

he finds himself gripped by a holy discontent. Indeed, Hurtado appears in these pages as a prophetic figure compelled, even tormented, by God to work tirelessly for the poor. And this came at no small cost to him. As the prophets were before him, the reader will discover that in his own home—his Jesuit home—he was often ridiculed for how he lived his Jesuit life.

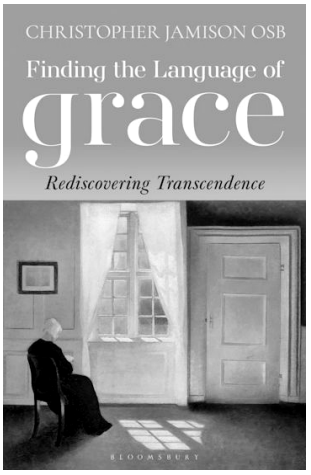
In some ways, Hurtado seems to have been ahead of his time, and many of the essays in this collection seek to comprehend in what way he may have been a forerunner of the social justice movement and the preferential option for the poor, the two central concerns that characterized the Latin American Church after the Second Vatican Council. In one such study, his thought is analyzed to see in what ways he himself moved from a rather individualistic conception of charity into a wider, more expansive understanding of the work for social justice.

Another intriguing perspective, all the while recognising that Hurtado was formed as a Jesuit at the very crossroads of theological developments, is that he exemplifies an 'integrated Christianity'. Such a perspective seems to allow the fullness of the man to emerge since his life was marked by his reception of the sacraments, his faithfulness to his religious vows, his deep personal prayer, his priesthood and the work for social justice. Perhaps an even stronger perspective is offered by Hurtado himself. For the Chilean Jesuit, the great apostle is not the activist, but the one who knows Christ intimately, knows the gospel, and knows the men and women to whom Christ's message will go.

The pages of these essays trace that intimate knowledge of Christ and of Chilean society that guided Hurtado, and perhaps it is this point that they leave the reader to consider all that there is yet to know and understand about this great Jesuit saint. For example, these fine essays invite further study of his theology of work, his understanding of issues of labour, and his profound reflection on poverty. In addition, further exploration of his understanding and praxis of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola would be most welcome since that great Ignatian text, though surprisingly never mentioned in these essays, hovers in the background of all of them. Such a study would further the scholarship on Hurtado and help all of us integrate—as he did—the work for social justice with a felt sense of God's presence.

Christopher Stabb SJ

Christopher Jamison, *Finding the Language of Grace: Rediscovering Transcendence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022). 978 1 3994 0271 2, pp.160, £14.99.



BBC Radio 4's *Start the Week* began this year with a programme on 'awe'. There was some surprise that people have an experience of awe, of 'being amazed at things outside yourself' two or three times per week.[1] That said, this surprise wasn't taken any further in considering the source or meaning of these experiences, noting only their effects: a greater 'oneness with others', a lessening of the ego and a sense of mystery in the face of the universe. The discussion revealed something of the challenge that Christopher Jamison's book tries to address:

> Public language today has a focus that is almost exclusively commercial and practical: used to sell us something or to persuade us of something or to increase our technical understanding. This transactional language can engulf us so completely that many people find it difficult to speak publicly about the ultimate but mysterious dimensions of life …. The challenge is to revitalize the language of transcendence for our present time. (2)

Jamison suggests that the original language of grace is the language of trust, whereas the original language of sin is the language of mistrust. He writes:

> It is all too easy to foster mistrust as the answer to contemporary problems. Mistrust of what is alien: foreigners; other religions; refugees. Mistrust of what is familiar: politicians; business leaders; the media. Mistrust of the past and of the future. (141)

He suggests, by contrast, that it is the language of singers and poets (referring to Stormzy as well as St Teresa of Ávila and Gerard Manley Hopkins), of silence, of reading and writing, and of listening and speaking, which are 'the creators of the language of grace [which] offer an alternative path. It is the much more demanding path of trust building' (141).

The Roman Catholic Church is currently walking the synodal pathway, towards a two-step gathering of synods in 2024 and 2025. This process of listening and speaking, of silence, and of reading and writing has, for some, fostered a deeper path of trust—while for others it has increased a sense of

[1] Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder* (New York: Penguin, 2023), 26.

mistrust. The challenge for the Church is one which was well expressed in 1994 at the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: 'Does our prayer remain a secret except to ourselves or do we talk about our experience of God, including its difficulties, with others …. Do our communities remain mysterious to all … or are they open and welcoming to those who seek us?'[2]

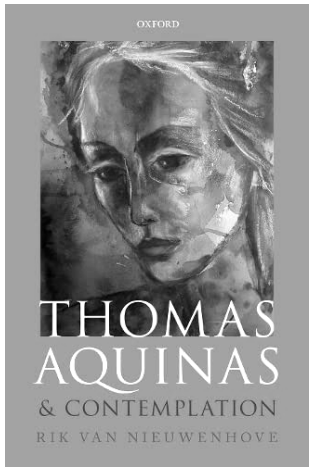
The Church, and our world, need to find ways of enabling this experience of trust, expressed in the language of grace, to be rediscovered. In the world of prison, where I celebrate Mass on a Sunday morning, the struggle between trust and mistrust is critical—where silence is rare, and where reading and writing are precious extras. There is one hymn sung heartily, even by those who cannot read and write, which both expresses and in its expression reveals the transcendent presence of God:

> Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
> that saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now am found;
> was blind, but now I see.

This experience of grace, both personal and communal, expressed in word and song, does, indeed, foster a greater trust, a deeper 'oneness with others', a lessening of the ego and a sense of mystery in the face of God's presence. It is an awesome experience.

Simon Bishop SJ

Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *Thomas Aquinas and Contemplation* (Oxford: OUP, 2021). 978 0 1928 9529 5, pp.240, £72.00.



This book reminds us how far our understanding of contemplation today has diverged from the high medieval view of Thomas Aquinas. Rik Van Nieuwenhove, associate professor of medieval thought at Durham University, expounds that view with admirable clarity. For Aquinas, contemplation is 'consideration of truth', which includes the philosophical sciences as much as theology. Though it can be contemplation of God, it need not be. For humans, as opposed to angels, it involves the process of reasoning, because our knowing works from created things, not by direct access to the divine: it does not

[2] GC 34, decree 10, n. 295.

bypass or supplant the use of reason. In fact, it is primarily intellectual, associated with the crowning act of the rational process, which is a simple intellective insight into truth (*intuitus simplex*). This is not a feeling, and involves the feelings only secondarily. Perhaps most remarkably in the context of spirituality, it is not prayer. It is a speculative type of knowing as opposed to a practical one, and Aquinas regards prayer as practical, not speculative.

One might wonder if Aquinas is really interested in contemplation as an activity of faith, or merely seeks to make it part of the human process of knowing. Where does he situate the contemplative prayer of the desert and monastic tradition, for instance? Van Nieuwenhove rejects Adrienne von Speyr's criticism that Aquinas 'contemplates, as it were, with pen in hand', merely intellectualising, arguing that he has the spiritual life of the Christian very much at heart. But he has other concerns as well which, in typically Thomist fashion, he seeks to reconcile in one 'architectonic' structure. Most pressingly, Aquinas wants to justify the position of the Dominicans in the University of Paris, against those contemporaries who argued that they should be secluded in monasteries and getting on with prayer. He regards this as reductive: contemplation has God as its final goal, and prayer is the most important activity of the Christian life, but it is charity which brings us to God (charity seeks the love of God for God's sake) not contemplation itself. Contemplation belongs in the non-theological study of metaphysics as much as in theology, nor does it require the disciplines of monastic prayer.

Aquinas draws a clear distinction between the realm of faith, which has its source in revelation, and the pursuit of truth through natural reason. All things in creation come from God and are made for God, but they can be meaningfully understood without reference to God. Faith shows how things relate to God in a unified teleological order. Faith enlarges and extends our understanding of the reality that we see, but it does not show us a different reality. There is both continuity and distinction. Thus, contemplation is not essentially different within and outside faith, yet faith enlarges its perspective and brings it to its fulfilment in relation to God.

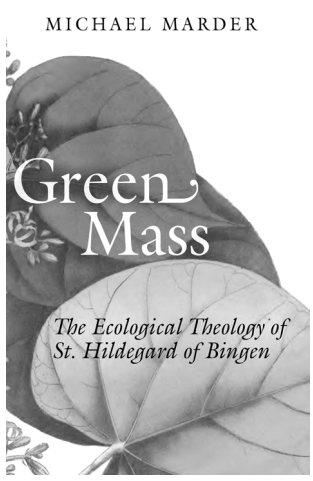
Van Nieuwenhove is critical of those who read Aquinas in too exclusively Christian terms. He rejects the 'charismatic' reading, where contemplation requires the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the 'illuminist' reading, which requires direct grace from God (against Aquinas's contemporary Bonaventure); and the 'sapiential' reading, which interprets contemplation in affective terms, as a kind of knowledge accompanied by the savour of God. In each case, he argues that these ignore the careful distinctions that Aquinas draws between what we know by natural reason and what we know by faith.

Much of this book is aimed at Thomist scholars and debates, but for anyone who thinks that contemplation is valuable, van Nieuwenhove

convincingly raises the question of how contemplation is to be understood as more than a narrowly religious activity. Aquinas encourages us not to consign contemplation to the religious ghetto. Contemplation is for everybody, and not in the sense that is reducible to the activity of 'contemplative prayer'. Everyone already contemplates, in the ordinary process of knowing. Faith draws out the moment of insight in ordinary knowing and raises it to the contemplation of God. The gifts of the Holy Spirit make contemplation a participation in the life of the Trinity, which engages the whole person, intellectually and affectively. Contemplation is not an alternative kind of knowing, but the crowning act of all kinds of knowing.

Edward Howells

Michael Marder, *Green Mass: The Ecological Theology of St Hildegard of Bingen* (Stanford: Stanford U, 2021). 978 1 5036 2884 7, pp.184, $24.00.



This is an extraordinary work of ecotheology. Not only is it a book, it is also a meditation at the meeting point of materiality and spirituality, a resonance chamber of Peter Schuback's musical compositions, and an invitation to encounter the present world through medieval mindsets. Marder explains,

> The book … deviates from the usual structure of academic works. The experimental method I have done my best to follow in these pages is thinking with Hildegard, without the demand to reconstruct anything like her authentic and authoritative thought (149).

The cellist and composer Peter Schuback, similarly, writes,

> Working on, interpreting, or creating music with Hildegard of Bingen both poses demands and charts a path to freedom …. In this work of mine it became crucial to keep, in some way, Hildegard's voice as an extension of time, given that time is always a sort of extension …. In no way have I tried to interpret Hildegard's work, but have made my own music based on the enormous and important material she still gives to the world. (153–154)

Recordings of his compositions are available for streaming and download at the Stanford University Press website: www.sup.org/greenmass.

Michael Marder is Ikerbasque Research Professor in philosophy at the University of the Basque Country, Vitoria-Gasteiz. His work spans the fields of environmental philosophy and ecological thought, political theory and phenomenology, with books including *The Philosopher's Plant* (2014), *Dust* (2016), *Heidegger: Phenomenology, Ecology, Politics* (2018), and *Pyropolitics in the World Ablaze* (2020); he is a pre-eminent writer whose publications should be read and reflected upon.

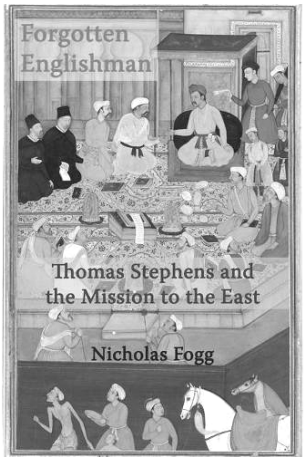
Green Mass is a meditation on *viriditas*—greenness, plantness, vegetality—about which Augustine, Gregory the Great and Abelard's Heloise all knew, but which for Hildegard, in her own individual and creative way, took on 'a unique ontological and metaphysical resonance' (ix), a type of *phytophonia* (plant sound) in our ever-increasing desertification of a world. It is an invitation to listen to the desert, 'to the growth of the desert beyond boundaries' as Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback writes in her foreword. 'How a vagabond little flower grows within and despite the reinforced concrete that today arms the world against the life within itself' (x).

The work, in which we become aware of the way in which thoughts grow like living plants, opens with a 'Prelude' ('serving as an invitation to a space which is to be a gathering and a gathered listening' [1]) and is divided into 'Verges' (including 'choices about branching roads and where they lead' [9]); 'Analogies' (beginning with individual voices trying to find their own space; the second and larger part is like an individual turning that 'seeks an eternity in its diminishing listening' [29]); 'Resonances' (which form 'a dreamlike state of uncertainty' [51]), 'Missives' (the central chapter in which completely different individuals seek contact but do not actually achieve it); 'Ardencies' (the longest chapter, and my favourite because it is the most challenging, on contradictions seeking mediation and ending with a possibility); 'Anarchies' (by stark contrast with 'Ardencies' one of the shortest chapters, presenting different fragments set against each other, circulating freely in a space that has neither limits nor directions); and 'Kisses' (in which the desire for understanding can lead to points of contact, for example between theology and ecology). It ends with a 'Postlude' (where memory is central but ultimately dreamlike and questions remain unanswered), and each chapter is introduced by different styles of music.

As a work of philosophy, *Green Mass* addresses an area which has been under-studied: that of plant life and plant-thinking. It is free of footnotes or endnotes. There is no bibliography apart from a brief list of Hildegard's works in English translation but there is, thankfully, a comprehensive index.

Luke Penkett CJN

Nicholas Fogg, *Forgotten Englishman: Thomas Stephens and the Mission to the East* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2021). 978 0 8524 4852 6, pp. 362, £15.99.



Thomas Stephens SJ (1549–1619) is a rare example of a sixteenth-century English Jesuit (a contemporary of Henry Garnet, Robert Southwell and so on), whose mission did *not* bring him back to England but rather took him to India. Between his arrival in Goa in 1579 and his death forty years later, Stephens mastered the Konkani and Marathi languages of the western coast in India, compiling the first Konkani grammar and composing the *Christu Purana,* an epic poem narrating the life of Jesus Christ in the style of Indian epics.

Fogg's book seeks to build a vivid picture of the worlds that Stephens inhabited and travelled through: the recusants of Elizabethan England and the seminaries of Europe; the Portuguese ships that opened up the Age of Exploration; the first European colonies in India; as well as the wider world of Jesuit missions to the East: the towering figure of Francis Xavier; the Jesuit mission to the Mughal court; the Jesuits in Japan and so on. While it is not easy to keep track of Stephens's own movements amid the rich detail and primary accounts Fogg quotes, one can nevertheless sense the complexity of the Church's experience of inculturation in the early modern period.

Kensy Joseph SJ