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Friends in the Lord, Then and Now: Simão Rodrigues and Our Life in the Society of Jesus

Christopher M. Staab, SJ

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In the Beginning…

For some twenty years, it has been my privilege to study the writings and hagiography of saints of the Society of Jesus. Some of these men, such as Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), offer us a way of life. Others, such as Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1649) or Isaac Jogues (1607–46), show us that love is stronger than death; while others still, like Francis Xavier (1506–52) or Peter Claver (1580–1654), invite us to explore new frontiers.

While each saint of our order represents a distinctive witness to profound relationship with God, all of them together express, either on the written page or in the example of their lives, two transcendent facts that shape their course on earth: a profound, almost crushing self-awareness of their sinfulness, along with the experience of the crucified and risen Christ raising them into service and beckoning them to follow him.

In my experience, it works best when studying saints or praying alongside them to hold in tension these two realities of sin and salvation and to remember that each saint appeared to do the same throughout his life. This perspective provides an ideal context to appreciate the excellent article in the current issue of Studies by Fr. Christopher M. Staab (umi) entitled "Friends in the Lord, Then and Now: Simão Rodrigues and Our Life in the Society of Jesus." Through the lens of Rodrigues, the author reflects upon the complex relationships among the First Companions of the Society. Furthermore, Fr. Staab invites us to learn from these relationships as each of us today, with his own experience of struggle and sanctity, shares his life with fellow Jesuits as "friends in the Lord." In this way, recognizing the complexities and graces of our paragons can enrich their witness and make our own journeys all the more real as we labor to grow in holiness together.

Of course, we do not accomplish this labor of love in a single day or even after many years but rather in a lifetime that includes our final days preparing to meet the Lord face-to-face. On this note, in a new online only section of Studies called "First Studies," scholastic Taylr Bahr

(UMI) reflects on how the journeys of men missioned to pray for the church and the Society create spaces of new depth and spiritual transformation for themselves and others. Here, inspired by a STUDIES issue written by two such men, the recently-vowed Mr. Bahr brings his newfound knowledge of our tradition to bear upon his novitiate experience accompanying our elders at a retirement center.[1] Regarding this new feature of STUDIES, please look for these sorts of reflections from time to time as a welcomed addition to our online publication, and do engage the authors on the topics they raise.

Certainly, we feel blessed by the submissions we continue to receive and welcome your own proposals as we grow together in knowledge and experience of our common life.

Michael L. Knox SJ
General Editor

[1] E. Edward Kinerk, SJ, and Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, "*Orat pro Eccl. et Soc.*: Reflections on an Essential Mission," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2024).

God, I give you thanks
for the gift of my vocation.
In it I have experienced great consolation
at being placed with your Son in his labors for the Kingdom.
I also have experienced hardship;
sometimes my vocation in the Society of Jesus has not been easy.
As I read the story of Simon Rodrigues's vocation,
a vocation filled with joy as well as difficulty,
help me to embrace the totality of who I am
as a companion of yours, keeping my eyes fixed on you
in the midst of everything I live.

1. What aspects of the lives of Ignatius and the first companions encourage me in my vocation?
2. As I look at my Jesuit brothers and others with whom I have ministered, what causes me consolation? What are the moments of desolation and difficulty that come to mind?
3. Are there aspects of the life of Simon Rodrigues that help me enter more deeply into my vocation?

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Friends in the Lord, Then and Now:
Simão Rodrigues and Our Life in the Society of Jesus

Christopher M. Staab, SJ

Introduction

In the beginning of his "Commentary on the Origin and Progress of the Society of Jesus," Simão Rodrigues (1510–1579), one of the First Companions and founding members of the order, declares that he will "write down many different stories in joyful obedience to your Paternity."[1] His "joyful obedience" is to the then superior general of the order, Everard Mercurian (1514–1580), who had asked him for such an account. Written in 1577, two years before his death, Rodrigues describes the early years of the group that formed around Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). His description of the companions' friendship in Paris, their arduous journey to Venice, and their work in hospitals in northern Italy provides a portrait of a group of men driven by an uncommon desire to serve God.

Moreover, his story testifies beautifully to the communal nature of the Society's origins. Unlike others who wrote of the order's founding, Rodrigues shifts the focus to the bonds of the men and details the communal nature of their inchoate apostolic endeavor. He also shows us how much the men loved and respected each other. In what may be one

[1] Two texts, one in Latin and the other in Portuguese, constitute the critical editions of Rodrigues's account of the Society's origins. For the Latin text, see, *Epistolae PP. Paschasii Broëti, Claudii Jaji, Joannis Codurii et Simonis Rodericii* (*Broët*) (Madrid, 1903), 451–517. For the Portuguese text, see document three in *Fontes Narrativi de Sancto Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu Initiis*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1960), III:5–136. I am following the English translation by Joseph Conwell, *A Brief and Exact Account: The Early Recollections of Simão Rodrigues on the Origin and Progress of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2004). Quotation at *Origin and Progress*, 1; trans. Conwell, 1. Citations refer to the paragraph number in *Origin and Progress* and page number in Conwell's translation.

of the more compelling passages of his recollections, Rodrigues recalls observing from a distance a companion barefoot and begging. Knowing how brilliant he was in his studies in Paris, Rodrigues "could not help but marvel greatly and be deeply moved and filled with emotion that cannot be expressed either in writing or in speech."[2]

Unlike others who wrote of the order's founding, Rodrigues shifts the focus to the bonds of the men and details the communal nature of their inchoate apostolic endeavor

Viewed globally, Rodrigues's life then offers a singularly rich locus for reflection about their lives and ours as inheritors of their communal tradition. As such, his account of the Society's origins reveals the beauty of everything that we love and cherish when we speak of the early companions as friends in the Lord. However, his journey also reveals to us the painful and conflictual aspects that also comprised their lives. He tells us, as if we could not have imagined it ourselves, that at times the companions hurt each other, were petty in their communication, and were men with plenty of contradictions. Furthermore, the geographical distance that separated them, their acute health problems, and their own human weaknesses led to relationships that changed—sometimes not for the better.

The aim of this essay, then, in examining in detail the extant documents of this First Companion has to do with widening our conception of his and our shared life in this apostolic body.[3] Regarding the former, scholars often have characterized Rodrigues as the companion who caused problems for Ignatius by his promotion of excessive or "un-Ignatian" spiritual practices in the scholastic community at Coimbra. Similarly, Jesuit historians have not hesitated to describe him as "moody and reluctant to obey" for his hobnobbing at the court in Lisbon and, as a consequence, neglecting his work as provincial of the

[2] *Origin and Progress*, 54; trans. Conwell, 56. Rodrigues always refers to himself in the third person.

[3] For an overview of all of his extant writings, see Eduardo Javier Alonso Romo, "El legado escrito de Simão Rodrigues," in *Simão Rodrigues, iniciador da Companhia de Jesus em Portugal*, ed. José Carlos Monteiro Pacheco (Braga: Secretariado Nacional do Apostolado da Oração, 1987), 67–88.

Portuguese province.[4] Even more harshly, historian Joseph Conwell (1919–2014) has judged Rodrigues's appointment as the first provincial in the Society of Jesus as a "sorry mistake."[5]

Though recent scholarship from Portugal offers important nuances to these claims, the claims themselves still stand.[6] In short, Rodrigues did seem to have a "different" spirituality, and it does appear that he made significant mistakes as provincial. Yet his extant writings and letters provide us with a privileged window into his vocation, and this perspective can widen our own view of ourselves and our Jesuit brothers whom we call friends in the Lord. In other words, his life story involved struggle, and that story—the story of difficulty in a vocation—merits telling because it reflects our own experience. Finally, then, while we read the accounts of the charismatic origin of this apostolic body to catch glimpses of the Spirit, we might also look for that same Spirit—both in their lives and in ours—in conflict and difficulty.

Certainly, the capacity of Rodrigues to marvel at his friends' love and devotion to God appears clearly in his "Commentary" and often leaves the reader in awe of their fraternal bonds, zeal for service, and perseverance in the face of obstacles and temptations. To deepen our appreciation for this brotherhood, I will detail in the first part of what follows the way that his story describes the companions' life, highlighting the manifold temptations and obstacles they experienced, their devotion to the Eucharist, and their communal prayer, conversation, and discernment. Then, in the second part of the essay, I will outline his Jesuit vocation—a call so fraught with difficulty that his superiors nearly expelled him from the order. As such, I hope to situate the narrative from part 1 in a larger context that involved significant hardship. This

[4] See, Thomas H. Clancy, *An Introduction to Jesuit Life: The Constitutions and History through 435 Years* (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1976), 137.

[5] Joseph Conwell, *Walking in the Spirit: A Reflection on Jerónimo Nadal's Phrase "Contemplative Likewise in Action"* (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2003), 146.

[6] For example, see, Francisco Rodrigues, SJ, *História da Companhia de Jesus na Assistência de Portugal*, 4 vols. in 7 parts (Oporto: Livraria Apostolado da Imprensa 1931–1950); José Vaz de Carvalho, "The Rehabilitation of Simão Rodrigues, SJ," in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Rome-St. Louis, MO: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu-IJS, 2004), 421–35.

framing will reveal that, while the deep, affective bonds that characterized his early experience of Jesuit life fell to the test as he went on in the Society, he persevered largely through faith in a loving God operating in and through this imperfect brotherhood.

I. Becoming Friends in the Lord

A. Temptation, Hunger, and Dirty Sheets

Rodrigues opens his story presenting a brief biographical portrait of Ignatius and of each of the companions, and he interrupts the sequence of these descriptions to describe an experience of his from the Spiritual Exercises. After writing about Francis Xavier (1506–1552) who bound his legs and arms with ropes in penance during his Exercises, Rodrigues recounts his preparation for his general confession. He recalled that after dinner he found himself greeted "with honeyed words and lewd gestures" by a servant girl of the house where he was making his retreat.[7] Where Francis Xavier bound himself with ropes, Rodrigues found himself actually entwined in the arms of a young woman who, the author tells us, sought to drag him to the ground "to commit the shameful crime she has in mind."[8] He, however, pushed her away, and she cried out: "You are really gross, a savage beast."[9] He concludes the paragraph stating that "he was victorious in this encounter and in others no less dangerous."[10] In the next paragraph, he resumes his brief sketches of the men, returning to himself and to how he met Ignatius in Paris.

This story of facing and overcoming sexual temptation constitutes a significant theme in his description of his experience of the Society's beginnings. In his account of the journey that the companions made in 1537 from Venice to Rome, he relates an experience of coming upon a house in Ravenna of which "he was completely unfamiliar."[11]

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[7] *Origin and Progress*, 6; trans. Conwell, 7.

[8] *Origin and Progress*, 6; trans. Conwell, 7.

[9] *Origin and Progress*, 6; trans. Conwell, 7.

[10] *Origin and Progress*, 6; trans. Conwell, 7.

[11] *Origin and Progress*, 52; trans. Conwell, 54.

There he began to beg for alms only to find "three elegantly beautiful girls, morally dissolute and with no sense of shame."[12] These women call out to him, and frightened by their advances, he ran down the stairs, and upon reaching the bottom of the steps, "he begins to preach with great zeal as the Spirit moved him."[13] Historians have leapt to conclude that Rodrigues, considered to be a handsome man and "tall, of an olive complexion, with dark hair and a beard, and a distinguished gate [*sic*] which supposedly betrayed his noble origin" was obsessed with sexuality.[14] But from another perspective, the two descriptions of sexual temptation might represent simple honesty rather than "sexual obsession."[15]

This story of facing and overcoming sexual temptation constitutes a significant theme in his description of his experience of the Society's beginnings.

In any case, Rodrigues relates that as they began their journey from Paris to Venice, many temptations came their way and not only of a sexual nature. For example, surprised that Peter Faber (1506–1540) would abandon Paris, one of his professors confronted him: "Are you quitting Paris? Will you leave Paris bereft of your talent? I for one am convinced that you cannot leave here without grave sin."[16] In much the same way, Francis Xavier, upon leaving Paris, learned that he had been "elected a canon of the Church in Pamplona"—a dream job that arrived just as he had begun to make the first steps in his vocation.[17] Rodrigues too faced a similar kind of temptation when his brother and another man tried to get him to change his mind about his decision to remain with his Parisian companions. In the words of the narrator, these two

[12] *Origin and Progress*, 52; trans. Conwell, 54.

[13] *Origin and Progress*, 52; trans. Conwell, 54.

[14] Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 28.

[15] Ricardo García-Villoslada, *San Ignacio de Loyola: Nueva Biografía* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1986), 652.

[16] *Origin and Progress*, 23; trans. Conwell, 24.

[17] *Origin and Progress,* 24; trans. Conwell, 24.

implored that he "not waste prodigally the future in store for him."[18] Yet his resolve remained firm and, like Ignatius before them who resisted the importunate pleas of his brother to not "throw himself away," he continued on his way with his friends.[19]

In addition to such moral temptations, the companions endured all kinds of hardships and obstacles in their many journeys. For example, Rodrigues describes how, making their way through Germany to Venice to meet Ignatius, they felt "worn out from the journey, weakened by their struggles, [and] almost exhausted by the severity of the cold and the snow."[20] He goes on to describe how, while on a journey from northern Italy to Rome, they went "two or three days with almost no food."[21] Thinking they were going to die, they commended themselves to God; but, perhaps as importantly, they also resolved to bring food with them on their next journey! Rodrigues records one of the men saying: "I promise that I shall never again not take when I can enough bread to sustain life and other demanding labors."[22] And he goes on to report that, in that same trek to Rome, "they had a very difficult time on the journey, lots of rain, and muddy roads," which led one of them to exclaim: "if the rains come pouring down, I'll not get any wetter. Even though the streets are muddier, I can't get any muddier."[23]

If their journeys proved difficult, so too did their pastoral endeavors. In serving in hospitals they found themselves, as he tells it, "present to everyone with such care, fervor, joy and happiness," yet also "sweating hard at work."[24] Yet, the living conditions in the hospitals where they had ministered in early 1537, the Incurables and Saints John and Paul, did not afford the most hygienic places to live and

[18] *Origin and Progress,* 31; trans. Conwell, 32.

[19] *Auto.* 12; Ignatius of Loyola, "Reminiscences (Autobiography)," in *St. Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Jospeh A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 17.

[20] *Origin and Progress,* 38; trans. Conwell, 37.

[21] *Origin and Progress,* 49; trans. Conwell, 51.

[22] *Origin and Progress,* 49; trans. Conwell, 51.

[23] *Origin and Progress,* 56; trans. Conwell, 57.

[24] *Origin and Progress,* 42, 43; trans. Conwell, 46.

work; in fact it appears that the companions had to make a quotidian act of *agere contra*, such that "each one tried, in as manly a way as he could, to overcome the movements of repugnance that stirred within them from the stench of the place, the filth, and the sight of the horrible wounds."[25] On this point, they at times shared beds with beggars infected with leprosy and slept in beds of which the sheets "were damp, bloody, and very spotted."[26]

Yet in all of these stories, the reader can imagine Rodrigues smiling as he recalled all that he and the companions endured and recognized that their bonds of friendship grew stronger as they suffered hardship, much as in the life of any novice class today. Indeed, his accounts on the origins of the Society of Jesus reads like an extended commentary on their many journeys. As such, while he does not describe a formal pilgrimage experiment, his descriptions call to mind what novices in US novitiates generally have done in recent decades. In fact, at a later point in his life, Rodrigues seems to have thought much more about this experiment, so much so that sometime in 1545 or 1546, he composed a spiritual and practical guideline for how to do it. Titled "Guidelines for Pilgrims," the text begins with a masterful thesis statement: "the point of the pilgrimage is somehow to attain firmer hope in God our Lord during our labors, and to let experience confirm the care He has for those who take on labors for His sake."[27] One thus learns by experience on a pilgrimage that God's providence "never fails." The document also demonstrates what Rodrigues and his companions learned in Italy—namely, the importance of eating! On this point, the text clearly states that pilgrims "are not to live like angels, but rather to eat and drink and do other natural things."[28] In addition, the pedagogy of the *Spiritual Exercises* appears throughout the text, most obviously in constantly encouraging the one making the pilgrimage to relish all of his experiences

[25] *Origin and Progress,* 44; trans. Conwell, 46.

[26] *Origin and Progress,* 51; trans. Conwell, 53.

[27] See, "Avisos para os peregrinos," *Broët*, 849–59; *Regulae Societatis Iesu* (Rome, 1948), 92–115; translated as "Guidelines for Pilgrims," *The Way* 42, no. 1 (2003): 58–70 at 59.

[28] "Guidelines for Pilgrims," 64.

as bringing him closer to "our pilgrim Jesus Christ."[29] In sum, Rodrigues insists that one pursuing Jesuit life makes the pilgrimage so that he can experience "how help comes during our labors and not during our rest, when we are in need and not when we have plenty."[30]

While these guidelines show a clear appreciation for the formative effect of the pilgrimage, his own missions to Portuguese houses as formator and provincial raised questions in his mind about the experiment. Clear evidence appears in a letter to Ignatius in which Rodrigues wrote that "all of the students that we send on pilgrimage come back sick, and I think it is from the fact that they are unaccustomed to walk so much."[31] He goes on to say that he tried out different forms "both in summer and in winter, but in both times they fall ill. So, if you find a good way to fulfill the Society's Institute and to do it with the health of the brothers, for the love of God, let me know."[32] From experience, then, both Rodrigues and Ignatius found that they could not pass all of their experiences on to future generations of Jesuits.[33]

B. Life-Giving Bread for Their New Communal Life

In addition to the trials of religious life, Rodrigues also recounted stories from those early years that illustrate the importance of the Eucharist for himself and his companions. For example, in the context of describing their journey through Italy, he describes his perception of Italian religious practices: "though it may perhaps seem foreign to my purpose, one should nevertheless be aware that Italy . . . was unfamiliar with frequenting the sacraments."[34] In fact, the people seemed so unfamiliar

[29] "Guidelines for Pilgrims," 65. Not surprisingly, Rodrigues used the verbs "gostar" and "gusto": see "Avisos para os peregrinos," *Broët*, 854.

[30] "Guidelines for Pilgrims," 67.

[31] Document 19, Rodrigues to Ignatius (29 June 1547), *Broët*, 561–63 at 562.

[32] Document 19, Rodrigues to Ignatius (29 June 1547), *Broët*, 561–63 at 562.

[33] For Ignatius's rethinking of the hospital and pilgrimage experiment, see Letter 4080, MHSI, *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris espistolae et instructiones* (*Epp. et instruct.*), 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–1911), VI:201–5.

[34] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 49. In discussing the companions' time in Italy, Thomas Clancy also offers that "the religious situation was deplorable" (*An Introduction to Jesuit Life*, 47).

with the reception of the Eucharist and the practice of confession that if a person frequented these sacraments once a week, "everybody talked about it and wrote to their friends in other places as though something new and unusual had happened."[35] To underscore his point, he tells the story of a priest who brought communion to a sick parishioner. The priest, accompanied by a young boy, made the journey without anyone except the animals recognizing the Body of Christ in their midst. Citing the book of Job—"ask the beasts, and they will teach you" (Job 12:7)—Rodrigues describes how donkeys, perceiving the Body of Christ passing by, ran up to the priest, "threw themselves on the ground on their knees on both sides of the road" and showed reverence to the "most holy sacrament."[36] Then, while the priest visited with the sick person, his attendants dutifully waited outside; and once the man had been "refreshed with the most Sacred Body of Christ," the priest gave the donkeys a blessing, and receiving the blessing, they "returned happily to their usual grazing spot prancing with joy."[37]

Perhaps anticipating his readers' skepticism, Rodrigues points out that many witnesses gave testimony of the event and such testimony "was duly noted in the public records."[38] Though he does not make clear when he first heard the story, he jumps ahead in his narrative to indicate that he heard about it while he was living near one of the Society's colleges in Padua: "since I was there and took considerable effort that the truth of the event might come to light, I have dared to insert its little story here."[39] This "little" story, however, picks up a significant motif in his account of the early Society: the coalescing of the companions' friendship around the Blessed Sacrament. To this point, he reports that as "the Fathers began to talk among themselves about entering upon this way of life they judged that the frequentation of the sacraments should al-

[35] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 49.

[36] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 49.

[37] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 49.

[38] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 49.

[39] *Origin and Progress*, 47; trans. Conwell, 50.

ways be linked with scholarly studies."[40] Furthermore, he characterizes such a way of life as "revolutionary."[41]

The Blessed Sacrament featured prominently in their processes of discernment.

He and his companions famously took a step to formalize this way of life with each other at Montmartre, where they made a vow to travel to Jerusalem before the Eucharist—that "life-giving bread."[42] In a similar way, the Blessed Sacrament featured prominently in their processes of discernment. For example, on one of their journeys, they wondered if it would not be better for them to split up since begging in such a large group presented difficulties. They pondered the question, "and after confessing their sins and receiving communion," they determined not to split up but to take enough money for the journey.[43] Likewise, in a touching memory, the author recalls that before they left France, the place where they came together as a group, "they cleansed their consciences and received the most holy Body of Christ."[44] In sum, Rodrigues portrays the men as especially devoted to the Eucharist, the "life-giving bread" to which they turned for comfort and timely help.

But they did not limit this appreciation for the Blessed Sacrament to private devotion. As men who came together to help others, they shared with others what they found in the Eucharist. For example, after ordination to the priesthood and while awaiting passage to Jerusalem, the companions dispersed and "established their domiciles in hospitals or in places considered more appropriately suitable," where they exhorted the people "to frequent reception of the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist, which had almost fallen into disuse, as if buried in eternal oblivion."[45] And upon completing their deliberations in 1539, their superiors missioned Rodrigues and Paschase Broët (1500–1562) to

[40] *Origin and Progress*, 19; trans. Conwell, 21.

[41] *Origin and Progress*, 19; trans. Conwell, 21.

[42] *Origin and Progress*, 16; trans. Conwell, 17.

[43] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

[44] *Origin and Progress*, 33; trans. Conwell, 33.

[45] *Origin and Progress*, 66; trans. Conwell, 65.

Sienna, where they began to reform a convent, ministered to nobles, preached on Paul's epistles, and encouraged young people in reception of the Eucharist. On this point, prefiguring the Society's Universal Apostolic Preference for Journeying with Youth, Broët and Rodrigues "with special zeal" sought out young people "in whom there is much hope."[46] And in his telling, "this plan turned out so well that in a very short time the talented and respected young people caught on fire" as the companions promoted frequent confession and that the youth "nourish themselves much more frequently on the food of the most holy Eucharist."[47]

Despite these references, however, his extant correspondence seems to contain no mention of the Eucharist other by allusion to the experience at Montmartre. In the first, from August of 1546, he recalls to Martín de Santa Cruz (d. 1548) that it was "on the 15th of this month, which is the Assumption of our Lady, in which day in a certain manner this Society had its beginnings, since on that feast in Paris in Montmartre, for two or three years in a row, we confirmed by a vow to follow this way of life."[48] Then in the second, dated twenty years later, in a heartfelt letter to Nicolás de Bobadilla (1509–1590), Rodrigues begins with the words, "on the eve of our Lady of August, coming to say mass, commending your reverence to God our Lord, and having this whole morning reflected on that day that we were together in Montmartre and its vineyards."[49] In that letter, he assures Bobadilla, whom he likely had not seen for many years, that "whether you are here or far away, I have you present in my heart."[50] And in concluding his missive, he offers this beautiful image: "it consoles me greatly to think that we shall all find ourselves (and now it is not far off) before the One who called us together at Montmartre."[51] Indeed, it seems that Rodrigues never forgot the day in which he and the others bound themselves in vows before the sacramental body of Christ in Paris, and that he considered the day so

[46] *Origin and Progress*, 94; trans. Conwell, 87.

[47] *Origin and Progress*, 94; trans. Conwell, 87.

[48] Document 13, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (13 August 1546), *Broët*, 546–47 at 547.

[49] Document 94, Rodrigues to Bobadilla (20 August 1566), *Broët*, 734–35 at 734.

[50] Document 94, Rodrigues to Bobadilla (20 August 1566), *Broët*, 734–35 at 734.

[51] Document 94, Rodrigues to Bobadilla (20 August 1566), *Broët*, 734–35 at 735.

important that when he wrote on or near it, he could not help but recall his friends and their place in his vocation.

C. Friends Who Discerned Frequently

Not surprisingly, the devotion of the early companions to the Eucharist connected to the conversations and discernments that formed a central part of their common life, as apparent in how often Rodrigues refers to communal prayer and communal "commending to God" of concrete questions. Noting this, one commentator considers the protagonist of his story not Ignatius but rather the group itself.[52]

For example, Rodrigues explains that, as they discussed their common desire to serve the Lord in the Church, "they began to talk about the time when they would leave the confines of Paris."[53] These conversations appear prayerful and unhurried, as Rodrigues opines that "it seemed fitting that they should first commend to God for a time an undertaking that was both serious and arduous and involved great difficulties."[54] This spiritual conversation, as we would call it today, involved "a long discussion" that in turn led them to bind themselves "by a vow of poverty, of chastity, of sailing to Jerusalem, and on their return, with God's help, of working with all their might for the salvation of their neighbor."[55] Furthermore, Rodrigues points out that their stay in Jerusalem would fall subject to future discernments in the Holy Land where "they would commend the matter once more to God."[56]

Regarding that discernment, they decided to follow the majority opinion with the important stipulation that they would do so "without breaking the group."[57] This tells us that as early as 1534, the men had com-

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[52] See, Eduardo Javier Alonso Romo, "Estudio Introductorio," in *Simón Rodrigues: Origen y progreso de la Compañía de Jesús*, ed. Alonso Romo (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2005), 15–43 at 37.

[53] *Origin and Progress*, 12; trans. Conwell, 13.

[54] *Origin and Progress*, 12; trans. Conwell, 13.

[55] *Origin and Progress*, 13; trans. Conwell, 13.

[56] *Origin and Progress*, 14; trans. Conwell, 14.

[57] *Origin and Progress*, 14; trans. Conwell, 14.

mitted themselves to an apostolic project in which they would remain together. And as for the vow of poverty made at Monmartre, he clarifies that "they were not bound by poverty while they were studying in Paris," which points to the thoughtfulness and realism that informed their conversations.[58] Yet as deliberate as these vows seem, it does not appear that all of the companions felt wholly content with them. On this point, Rodrigues notes that some came to it "more ardently and some less inflamed according to the measure of Christ's gifts," thus suggesting, albeit with some elegance, that differences of opinion marked their general agreement.[59]

As early as 1534, the men had committed themselves to an apostolic project in which they would remain together.

The story that Rodrigues tells also helps us to see that their vows at Monmartre signaled only the beginning of ongoing conversations about the apostolic life in common that they wanted to live. For example, after describing their vows and the rest of that day in August of 1534 that they spent "near a spring,"[60] he indicates that "the Fathers began to talk among themselves about entering this way of life."[61] And in discerning the particular way of life that they felt God calling them to live, they spent time together and made use of the sacraments, whereby "every Sunday and on the major feasts of the year they would cleanse their consciences and receive the Body of Christ."[62]

In addition, the companions seem to have employed communal discernment practices in order to figure out how to travel together. On this point, Rodrigues describes with some detail how "they began to discuss a few matters" upon reaching the city of Meaux, France, where they all gathered after leaving Paris.[63] They needed to make an important decision: should they travel "begging alms from door to door . . . or

[58] *Origin and Progress*, 13; trans. Conwell, 13.

[59] *Origin and Progress*, 14; trans. Conwell, 14.

[60] *Origin and Progress*, 18; trans. Conwell, 18.

[61] *Origin and Progress*, 19; trans. Conwell, 21.

[62] *Origin and Progress*, 19; trans. Conwell, 21.

[63] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

would it be easier to keep enough money to get to Venice (for they found that they still had a little)."[64] They also wondered how they should travel together, for instance, to "go in two groups, or two by two."[65] With these concrete questions before them, they initiated a process of election whereby first "they commended the question to God," then confessed their sins and received the Eucharist.[66] As a result, they resolved to "go by foot as previously determined, that in place of alms they should take as much money as they thought necessary for the trip to Venice, and that they would not divide into groups."[67] By contrast, he relates that the companions decided not to take money on the other journey he describes in detail—the arduous one in early 1537 that took them from Venice to Rome which he specifies as "the first time they made the journey in poverty."[68]

These communal discernments continued as they wondered how to best spend their time in northern Italy awaiting passage to Jerusalem. Again, Rodrigues indicates that in Venice "they began to discuss what they should do until the time came to board ship."[69] Similarly, after being ordained in Venice in 1537, they decided to prepare for their first masses by withdrawing "in twos and threes to secluded spaces far from people and to spend time in meditation and prayer."[70] Notably, Rodrigues specifies that during this period of prayer and recollection they "first began to practice obedience voluntarily" to one in the group, "taking turns one after another."[71] He also reports that all of them were "so obedient and submissive to the one in command that they seemed more bound by vow than by sheer freedom."[72] Another important detail

[64] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

[65] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

[66] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

[67] *Origin and Progress*, 30; trans. Conwell, 31.

[68] *Origin and Progress*, 48; trans. Conwell, 50.

[69] *Origin and Progress*, 42; trans. Conwell, 45.

[70] *Origin and Progress*, 61; trans. Conwell, 61.

[71] *Origin and Progress*, 63; trans. Conwell, 63.

[72] *Origin and Progress*, 63; trans. Conwell, 63.

in this rehearsal for religious life appears in that Ignatius, whom they always treated with "special reverence . . . obeyed just like all the rest."[73]

Finally, Rodrigues describes the deliberations of 1539 in much the same way that he characterized these previous discernments. For example, he mentions that "for three months" they "commended themselves very carefully to God," and he indicates the decisions they made, although he does not mention any difficulties they may have encountered.[74] Note too in his description of this discernment his sense that the men brought all of their previous experience to bear on the matter at hand. Specifically, he states that the companions learned through the many decisions they made, "taught by experience of the ongoing years."[75] And although Rodrigues does not specify the content of that experience, it surely engaged the practice and familiarity they had in praying and discerning together.

D. Reflecting to Draw Some Profit

While the account that Rodrigues gives of the Society's origins adds great detail to our understanding of the early years of the companions' lives, one wonders about the relative absence of Ignatius from his writing. We can explain this in part by the fact that Rodrigues structures his narrative around two journeys, both of which Ignatius did not make with them. In any case, the near absence of any mention of Ignatius reminds us of the communal origins of the Society. In short, their bonds mediated for them their experience of God's will, which came to them as a community and in this way made them aware from early on of the uniqueness of their experience.

At the same time, his recollections at times feel like the kind of stories that Jesuits tell each other about their early years in Jesuit formation. A Jesuit reader can easily hear, for example, in the quote "I cannot be wetter nor can I be muddier," something that one of us might share when we too found ourselves in circumstances so chal-

[73] *Origin and Progress*, 63; trans. Conwell, 63.

[74] *Origin and Progress*, 91; trans. Conwell, 85.

[75] *Origin and Progress*, 91; trans. Conwell, 85.

lenging that we could only smile. From this perspective, it seems that nostalgia may have inflected his storytelling to some extent. Yet even more strongly does his narrative reveal awe—awe at what God had done with and for them.

Before concluding part 1 of this essay, let us return briefly to the quote that opened the essay. There, Rodrigues marveled at one of his brothers who begged in the streets of Ancona, Italy, but he added the observation that "the Father used to make that kind of reflection in similar situations, and he drew much fruit from them."[76] With this in mind, then, we might conclude that the account that Rodrigues offers represents more than an origin story; it communicates awe at what the Spirit brings about in our companions. To draw fruit from his narrative then entails marveling at how God works in the lives of our own companions and collaborators.

II. Vocation in the Society of Jesus

In part 2 of this essay, we turn to the extant letters that we have from Rodrigues to provide an overview of his mission in a nascent apostolic order for many years finding its way.[77] These letters reveal in dramatic fashion his love for the Society and his apparent affection for his own way of doing things. And we will consider how, as the documentary evidence suggests, his work in Portugal caused difficulties serious enough to place him at the center of the first crisis that shook the order.[78]

A. Early Years (1540–1553)

In his early missives, one detail stands out: Rodrigues missed his friends. To this point, he lamented to Ignatius from Lisbon that "a man cannot but complain of not receiving on more occasions news from you,

[76] *Origin and Progress*, 54; trans. Conwell, 56.

[77] On this point, as it relates to how historians have criticized Rodrigues, see Philip Endean, "Who Do You Say Ignatius Is?: Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19, no. 5 (1987): 19–21.

[78] John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 31.

so desired by us, especially since we do not neglect our duty to write to you by all the ways that we can."[79] In another letter, again still awaiting news from Rome, he reminded Ignatius "to not forget me," and he closed expressing an even greater desire: "If anyone came to Castille, I would very much like to be given permission to go and visit him, or if anyone should come here, however it seems better to you."[80] Then, writing several months later, he acknowledged receipt of a letter, but for him "it was so short that it hardly said anything at all."[81] Furthermore, he closed by stating, "I am shocked that you would not write to me."[82]

Shocked, saddened, and longing to see his friends: Rodrigues struggled to adjust to his new life in an apostolic order. At the same time, documentary evidence of his early years in Portugal suggest that he kept very busy. To this point, he and Francis Xavier arrived in Portugal and began to work in much the same way that they had done in northern Italy, by begging daily for food.[83] Nevertheless, at the king's insistence, they limited their begging to two days, accepted food from the court, and "found themselves spending most of their time at the royal court."[84] At the same time, in the words of Rodrigues, "the confessions are so numerous, and of people of quality, that we do not have time to hear them all."[85] On this same note, he explains that their apostolic success was such that that they wondered whether King John III, perhaps the most influential supporter of the early Society, would allow them to sail east to the Portuguese colonies as originally planned: "Master Francis and I are somewhat concerned that we may be prevented from

[79] Document 2, Rodrigues to Ignatius (15 May 1547), *Broët*, 520–23 at 520.

[80] Document 3, Rodrigues to Ignatius (26 May 1547), *Broët*, 524–26 at 524.

[81] Document 4, Rodrigues to Ignatius (1 September 1547), *Broët*, 526–28 at 527.

[82] Document 4, Rodrigues to Ignatius (1 September 1547), *Broët*, 526–28 at 528.

[83] See George Schurhammer, *Francisco Javier: su vida y su tiempo*, 4 vols. (Pamplona: Compañía de Jesús, Arzobispado de Pamplona, 1992), I:789.

[84] Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 27.

[85] Document 7, *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii aliaque eius scripta (Xavier)*, Second edition, 2 vols. (Rome, 1944–1945), I:231–33 at 232; English translation identified as document 9 in *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1992), 29.

going. . . . It seems that the King does not wish this."[86] As it turns out, the king found a way to continue their ministry both in the court and abroad by having Rodrigues stay and Xavier set sail.

Shocked, saddened, and longing to see his friends: Rodrigues struggled to adjust to his new life in an apostolic order.

Though this was a significant change of plans for Rodrigues, it seems likely that he knew the importance of the king to the Society. In addition, as early as 1540, Rodrigues, Xavier, and Ignatius had already begun to think of erecting a college to form men who wanted to join their way of life.[87] But as much as he wanted to make himself apostolically available, this change of course seems to have affected him deeply. For example, in subsequent letters, he suggests that he interpreted this change as a rather harsh judgment from God on his life. On that note, in the same letter to Ignatius in which he narrated the details of Xavier's departure, he commented that "I, because of my sins, have always been deprived of realizing my desires, for not being worthy of such good as Master Francisco, and I feel his absence terribly."[88]

Seven years later, a similar sentiment surfaced in a letter in which he informed Martín de Santa Cruz about King John's slowness to organize a mission to Ethiopia. Enthused with this project, Rodrigues wrote that "my desire is great to end up in those lands";[89] but with the king's sudden lack of interest in the enterprise, he felt disconsolate. Not knowing what to make of the king's sudden coolness toward the project, he mused that "these are judgments of God to whom no reason has been given (having so many reasons for this to be carried out) except for me being in the middle," suggesting that he blames himself.[90]

[86] See Document 6, *Xavier*, I:226–31 at 228; trans. Costelloe, 27.

[87] See Document 4, *Xavier*, I:219–23 at 221; trans. Costelloe, 21.

[88] Document 2, Rodrigues to Ignatius (15 May 1541), *Broët*, 520–23 at 523.

[89] Document 32, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (15 August 1548), *Broët*, 600–604 at 601.

[90] Document 32, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (15 August 1548), *Broët*, 600–604 at 601.

In any case, he penned a letter several months later petitioning Ignatius to send him either to India or to Ethiopia. The content of this letter feels like a manifestation of conscience, and the tone of it intimates that he felt trapped. In it, he assured Ignatius that any other Jesuit missioned to Portugal "will do more than I, for I can do nothing more."[91] Finally, writing almost ten years after Xavier set sail, he gave instructions for making a journey to Rome in which he wrote that "it seems to me that you will reach in going to Rome that which I lost in leaving there."[92] One wonders here what he lost when he left Rome, arrived in Portugal, and did not set sail for the east with Xavier.

But along with expressing the doubts that circulated in his thoughts and in his prayer about why his superiors did not send him to the East, Rodrigues's letters testify to his zeal and indefatigable work in structuring, governing, and leading a new apostolic enterprise. As I mentioned above, he served as provincial of the Portuguese province, and in that role he sent men to India, Congo, and Brazil.[93] In addition, his initiatives resulted in the expansion of the Society into so many parts in Europe.[94] Regrettably, however, human enslavement facilitated this expansion, as Rodrigues confirms in a letter to Martín de Santa Cruz that "some 10 black men will be working in construction in the college."[95] Slavery was a part of the life of the early Society, an aspect of our history that requires further study and reflection.

In any case, problems surfaced regarding his leadership in the rapid growth the Society experienced in Portugal. He refers obliquely to this when he wrote to Ignatius imploring him "to not believe anything

[91] Document 34, Rodrigues to Ignatius (9 October 1548), *Broët*, 607.

[92] Document 47, Rodrigues to John Cuvillonio (28 December 1549), *Broët*, 626–30 at 627.

[93] A note that a scholastic apparently wrote that appears at the end of his letter gives the names of Jesuit students missioned to Congo and India; see document 22, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (15 December 1547), *Broët*, 567–69 at 568.

[94] For his description of this, see document 18, Rodrigues to Francis Xavier (24 March 1547), *Broët*, 559–61 at 559.

[95] Document 23, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (December 1547), *Broët*, 569–71 at 571.

that they say or write about me . . . because they are all temptations."[96] In that same missive he wrote that "it grieves me that you would give credit to letters written by others who are deceived,"[97] while he assured Ignatius, against a spurious claim, that "I did not tear up your letters without seeing them."[98] On the latter point, not only did he refute the claim, but he went so far as to instruct Ignatius how to improve his correspondence: "for the love of God our Lord, that in the letter that you would write, relate some things of life there, and briefly; and that Ferron not write [the letter] because he is infinite in his letters, here we have no need of words, only works written in few words."[99]

While we have no clear sense of the issues that drove complaints about him, we do know that, as early as 1545, Ignatius wanted him out of Portugal.[100] To one such request, Rodrigues responded with an elegant evasion, indicating that, while he did not enjoy his mission, he considered it crucial to the future of the order, exclaiming that "I am held here for the good of others."[101] And while much good did come to the Society through his contact with the Portuguese crown, such support brought problems likely associated with efforts on the part of Ignatius to micromanage the mission.[102] To this point, when Rodrigues argued in one letter that "it is necessary to have the freedom and the authority to do here what we believe is most opportune," he makes a clear pitch for what today we might call subsidiarity.[103]

But perhaps the most well-documented point of tension involved the selection of candidates and their formation at the house of studies that opened in Coimbra in 1542.[104] While his letters evidence his pride

[96] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (18 & 24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 531.

[97] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (18 & 24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 532.

[98] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (18 & 24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 532.

[99] Document 17, Rodrigues to Ignatius (20 January 1547), *Broët*, 557–58 at 558.

[100] See, for example, letter 84, *Epp. et instruct*. I:302–303.

[101] Document 10, Rodrigues to Ignatius (10 August 1541), *Broët*, 537–39.

[102] O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 72.

[103] Document 11, Rodrigues to Ignatius (18 March 1546), *Broët*, 540–44, at 541.

[104] Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, "Jesuits in Portugal," in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture*, 705–44 at 708.

in the house, his references to the college almost invariably include allusions to others' doubts about the formation of the men. For example, he wrote in 1543 that "those in Coimbra live with such great example, that you would be shocked at the good odor that they have and give"—an affirmation he followed immediately by addressing an apparently circulating concern: "Do not believe anything that they tell you or write about me . . . I am not mistaken when it comes to things that concern the Society."[105]

In the following years, Rodrigues continued insisting that the scholastics lived exemplary religious lives, reporting that "there is so much fervor in the house that it would be impossible to describe."[106] He went on to compare the spiritual zeal of the scholastics to a kind of Pentecost, recounting that "it was to see a shadow of the fervor that Christ our Lord gave to the apostles on the day of Pentecost."[107] But for other companions, this situation seemed far from a descent of the Holy Spirit. On this point, in a detailed description of macabre practices, Martín de Santa Cruz, writing to Peter Faber, made clear that the situation had gone out of control.[108] To illustrate, he related how two scholastics brought a skull to their classes so that during the lesson they could contemplate the head of the dead person.[109]

In the same vein, he also recounted stories of scholastics going out to beg and preach in coarse and ill-fitting clothes, which caused much consternation in the city. On one such occasion, a small group of them walked in the street ringing a bell and shouting "sinners, stay away from sin, because you will all die," which led some religious to question the underlying theology that suggested preaching fear of God before love

[105] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (18 & 24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 531.

[106] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53, at 549.

[107] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 549.

[108] Document 114, Martín de Santa Cruz to Peter Faber (August 1545), in *B. Petri Fabri primi sacerdotis e Societate Jesu Epistolae, memoriale et processus* (*Faber*) (Madrid, 1914), 342–50.

[109] Document 114, Martín de Santa Cruz to Peter Faber (August 1545), *Faber*, 342–50, at 343.

of God.[110] Finally, he concluded his letter telling the story of a newly arrived scholastic—himself the brother of a scholastic—who tied himself naked to a column in the plaza and said five times "Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins was tied to a column in the house of Pontius Pilate, forgive the sins of this town."[111]

Nevertheless, Rodrigues adamantly defended the men whom he received and the way he exhorted them to live as "fools for Christ." Here, in one of his testier rebuttals to Ignatius's complaint that he was receiving men without examining them well, Rodrigues wrote to Santa Cruz: "you can tell Father Master Ignatius what I write: I say that those that disturb and cause division will be received wherever the Society of Jesus is, since the enemy disturbs all, and even in paradise there was division."[112] More than defend himself, he went, as he would do, on the offensive, questioning Ignatius as regards the kind of men whom Ignatius himself admitted. For example, he commented on Francisco de Villanueva (1509–1557) who "was always ill from his kidneys," reminded Ignatius of John Codure's brother, whom he saw as "corrupted from within because his breath always stinks," and derided another younger Jesuit, Rojas, who "goes about more broken than a man of the age of 50."[113] Clearly, Rodrigues took issue here not with the ailments of these men but with the judgment of Ignatius in admitting them: "I cannot understand how you accept persons that are not at all apt for so many labors as ours."[114]

The situation in Coimbra reached a crisis point when Santa Cruz and Francisco de Estrada (1519–1584) tried to instill a different spiritual program in the college. According to Rodrigues that program lessoned the amount of physical mortification the men were doing, so much

[110] Document 114, Martín de Santa Cruz to Peter Faber (August 1545), *Faber*, 342–50, at 346.

[111] Document 114, Martín de Santa Cruz to Peter Faber (August 1545), *Faber*, 342–50, at 350.

[112] Document 26, Rodrigues to Martín de Santa Cruz (20 January 1548), *Broët*, 578–84 at 581.

[113] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 533.

[114] Document 6, Rodrigues to Ignatius (24 January 1543), *Broët*, 529–34 at 533.

so that, as Rodrigues declared, "it was considered a great evil even to speak of mortification."[115] Such an approach contradicted Rodrigues's vision of the Society. For him, the Society's "foundation" (*fundamiento*) was "abjection and contempt for the world" and that "to be a disgrace to the world was the rock upon which the Society was founded."[116] Though Santa Cruz and Estrada likely believed in the importance of abnegation and mortification, they seemed to have introduced aspects of discernment, challenging the scholastics to consider that not everything the saints did in their ascetical practices was what God wants of them now. Something of these differing approaches to formation can be gleaned in how Rodrigues contrasted their ways of thinking: "if I tell them that St. Francis did such and such things, the good Estrada responds that Francis was a saint and he did things because of particular inspiration."[117] The implication seems to be that Rodrigues wanted the scholastics to imitate the saints in their ascetical practices, whereas Santa Cruz and Estrada asked the men to consider if God was inspiring or moving them to undertake such practices. These conflicting styles of formation created confusion in Coimbra and, what was worse for Rodrigues, cooled the fervor of the men.[118]

The situation in Coimbra reached a crisis point when Santa Cruz and Francisco de Estrada (1519–1584) tried to instill a different spiritual program in the college.

But Rodrigues maintained his approach, criticizing his Jesuit brothers for taking a view, which in his words was "pleasing to the flesh," and finding fault with how they carried out their apostolic lives.[119] All of this had the effect of isolating him from the community, despite evidence that even Peter Faber found the ascetical practices

[115] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550.

[116] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 548.

[117] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550.

[118] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550. According to Juan Alfonso de Polanco, there were, at the beginning of 1547, a total of 115 students in Coimbra, 92 of whom were scholastics. See, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae et rerum Societatis Iesu historica* (*Chronicon*), 6 vols. (Madrid, 1894–1898), I:252.

[119] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550.

of the scholastics excessive.[120] These disagreements dismayed him, so much so that he wrote that the opposition he felt from his Jesuit companions was "more mortifying to me than any spiritual practice."[121] Yet he stood firm and implored Ignatius to write an admonitory letter to the men.[122] This request resulted in Ignatius sending in 1547 his masterful letter to the scholastics in Coimbra—perhaps the best-known letter of the entire Ignatian correspondence.[123]

In short, as Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576) tactfully observed many years later, referring to Rodrigues's spiritual governance, "the same plan or method of proceeding desired by Father Ignatius was not being observed, especially as regards government and some matters related to spiritual progress."[124] Sensing the chaos, then, Ignatius seems to have worked harder to get Rodrigues out of Portugal, which he did in 1552 by appointing him provincial of the newly created province of Aragón. When after some time, however, Rodrigues complained of poor health and begged to return home to Portugal, Ignatius relented, while ensuring, as Rodrigues himself had requested, that he would have no governance responsibilities.[125] Yet upon arriving in his home province, no Jesuit community permitted him to enter.[126] In response, Diego Miró (1516–1590), the provincial superior who succeeded Rodrigues, in

"I see no other way of dealing with these things properly, dearest brother, than for you to come here to Rome."

[120] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550.

[121] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 550.

[122] Document 14, Rodrigues to Ignatius (Beginning of 1547), *Broët*, 547–53 at 551.

[123] Letter 169, *Epp. et instruct*. I:495–510; in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2006), 165–74.

[124] Polanco, *Chronicon*, I:487; *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits: Selections from the* Chronicon *of Juan de Polanco, SJ,* trans. John Patrick Donnelly SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2004), 109.

[125] Document 51, Rodrigues to Ignatius (26 October 1552), *Broët*, 637–40 at 638.

[126] Rodrigues seemed to know that he would not receive entry into any of the houses and so, in his words, "to not cause a scandal," did not seek residence in any community; see document 52, Rodrigues to Diego Miró (25 March 1553), *Broët*, 641–42 at 642.

consult with six or seven other Jesuits, decided, sadly, it best that Rodrigues—one of the First Companions and the first provincial of the first province of the Society—live *extra domum*.

Running out of options to bring Rodrigues to Rome, Ignatius penned a series of some of the most trenchant letters in his corpus. In the first, he told Rodrigues that "I see no other way of dealing with these things properly, dearest brother, than for you to come here to Rome."[127] In that same missive, he implored Rodrigues to trust him: "no matter what may be said, I will look out, as I should, for your consolation and reputation, to God's glory."[128] In the next, he enjoined him, "within eight days after seeing this letter you are to set out and come directly here."[129] Finally, Rodrigues did arrive in Rome at the end of 1553; but had he not left Portugal as instructed, Ignatius certainly would have admonished him for disobedience, having already authorized Diego Miró to dismiss him from the order.[130] In sum, Ignatius judged his Parisian companion "not only to be incorrigible but a source of great scandal to others in the Society with whom he has dealings."[131]

B. A Jesuit Trial and Years of Exile (1554–1572)

Though Rodrigues obeyed Ignatius's directive to return to Rome, the drama continued. Principally, he and Ignatius agreed on an adjudication of his role in the conflicts in Portugal, and over the course of two

[127] Letter 3417, *Epp. et instruct*. V:73–74; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 424–25, at 424.

[128] Letter 3417, *Epp. et instruct*. V: 73–74 at 74; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 424–25 at 425.

[129] Letter 3547, *Epp. et instruct*. V:189; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 431–32 at 431.

[130] Letter 3605, *Epp. et instruct*. V:270–71; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 435–36.

[131] Letter 3584, *Epp. et instruct*. V:233; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 436–37 at 437. Ignatius used the same language of "incorrigible" in part 2 of the *Constitutions* where he wrote that one would be dismissed from the Society "because he is judged to be incorrigible in some passions or vices that offend his Divine Majesty." See *Constitutions* 210, hereafter *Const*.; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1996), 96.

months Rodrigues heard testimony and represented his own version of the events. To this end, Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1519–1575) and Melchior Carneiro (1516–1583) outlined, before a four-judge panel comprised of Martín Olave (d. 1556), Juan Alfonso de Polanco, Manual Miona (1477–1567), and the French Jesuit Ponce Cogordan (d. 1582) Rodrigues's errors in governance. At the end of the trial, Rodrigues's Jesuit peers found him guilty of grave violations against the vow obedience, and they drew up a formidable list of penances of which Ignatius imposed only one: Rodrigues would not return to Portugal.[132] While Rodrigues accepted this judgment, he sought exemption shortly thereafter from the Holy See no longer to obey his Jesuit superiors and to be given permission to live in a hermitage.[133] Though he received this exemption, it was rescinded at Ignatius's insistence and after Rodrigues himself made another confession of guilt.[134] Finally, Ignatius and Rodrigues agreed upon a solution amenable to both of them: Rodrigues would travel to Venice and await passage to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Though that pilgrimage never materialized, Rodrigues remained out of Portugal and, over the next eighteen years, resided in multiple communities in Italy and Spain. For the first ten years, he lived in Venice, Bassano, and Padua, and then he spent the following eight years in various communities in Spain, including Montilla, Córdoba, Toledo, Murcia, Sevilla, Madrid, and Alcalá.[135] As such, Rodrigues seems to have spent nearly two decades as a kind of nomad in the Society, moving

[132] For the texts that describe this process, see, "Rerum Harratio ad Rodericium Spectantium," in *Scripta de Sancto Ignatio de Loyola* (*Scripta*), 2 vols. (Madrid, 1904–1918), I:673–700.

[133] For the brief that exempted him from living in the Society and permitted him to live "in aliquo heremitorio," see "Breve Raynutii Cardinalis, Poenitentiarii," *Scripta*, I:689–91.

[134] For the letter from the Portuguese ambassador to the Pope arguing against his exemption and the brief by Cardinal Capri revoking it, see, "Legatus Regis Portugalliae in Urbe" and "Breve Cardinalis Carpensis," *Scripta*, I:691–94.

[135] Following, Eduardo Javier Alonso Romo, "Francisco de Borja y Simão Rodrigues: dos coetáneos frente a frente," in *Francisco de Borja y su tiempo: Política, Religión y Cultura en la Edad Moderna*, ed. Enrique García Hernán and María del Pilar Ryan (Valencia–Roma: Albatros Ediciones–Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011), 269–84 at 279.

from house to house as he looked for a place to settle. From this perspective, he lived, as the Jesuit historian André Ravier (1905–1999) put it, a "languishing life."[136]

Rodrigues seems to have spent nearly two decades as a kind of nomad in the Society, moving from house to house as he looked for a place to settle.

And so, while the preceding description of his account of the Society's origins suggests warm bonds between him and his companions, his experience in mission seems one of conflict and loneliness. Most seriously, an affective distance opened between him and Ignatius because of doubts that Ignatius had about Rodrigues's commitment to religious life in the Society. These doubts clearly pained Rodrigues, as he wrote to Ignatius: "I have heard the news that your reverence has doubted that I would obey and that you would see, in fact, by my works how I obey; nevertheless, for so many years now and in so many different occasions, I do not disobey."[137]

While Rodrigues must have found this mistrust between himself and his friend and superior extremely challenging, it continued with the next two superior generals. In another of his more heartfelt letters, something akin to a written account of conscience, Rodrigues wrote to Diego Laínez (1512–1565), superior general from 1558 to 1565, declaring that he wanted to give him "an account" of his current state. Alleging ill health, he claimed that he no longer could support living in Italy and admitted that he could live in Spain but requested to live in a monastery in Portugal, pleading that "if there is anything that I could be advised about, please freely tell me."[138] A week later Laínez responded simply that "I am content for you to go to Spain; you can choose any part that you like," not entertaining his desire to retire in Portugal or offering any insight about Rodrigues's place in the Society.[139]

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[136] André Ravier, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Maura Daly, Joan Daly, and Carson Daly (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 315.

[137] Document 60, Rodrigues to Ignatius (23 July 1555), *Broët*, 662–63 at 662.

[138] Document 92, Rodrigues to Diego Laínez (23 June 1564), *Broët*, 730–32 at 731.

[139] Letter 2086, Laínez to Rodrigues (30 June 1564), in *Epistolae et acta Patris Jacobi Lainii* (*Laínez*), 8 vols. (Madrid, 1912–1917), VIII:63.

Two years later, writing from Cordoba, Spain, Rodrigues made the same request to the new superior general, Francis Borgia (1510–1572). Rodrigues prefaced that request by telling Borgia that "I do not do anything, and I am always weighted down with things . . . and for this reason I have thought of São Fins [an ancient Benedictine monastery that the college of Coimbra acquired in 1548] to be ideal for my retirement, of which I desire."[140] Note that, along with the request, the letter conveys his struggles and sadness at being so far from his home and so out-of-place in Jesuit life. In any case, Borgia must have denied this request because only the next general, Everard Mercurian, allowed him to return to his native country.

Regarding Rodrigues's requests to retire, Jesuit historiography has tended to interpret them as the petulant, self-seeking demands of Jesuit who always looked to get his way. For example, in the epigraph for his study of the *Constitutions*, Thomas Clancy (1923–2009) includes Rodrigues in a group of "certain old Jesuits whose end did not fittingly crown a life devoted to the service of their Risen Lord."[141] While Clancy's judgment has merit, Rodrigues himself would have admitted that he struggled as he aged. On this point, he wrote later in life that "I find myself with my hands full of nothing, and I am old, rotten, wretched, and miserable."[142]

Conclusion, Final Years, and Reflecting to Draw Some Profit

Today, Jesuits read, study, and contemplate prayerfully the texts that describe the founding moments of the Society because these texts represent a charismatic moment that continues to inspire. Paraphrasing James Baldwin, the great force of these early documents lies in that we carry them with us.[143] As such, they constitute a part of the story of the

[140] Document 93, Rodrigues to Francis Borgia (9 December 1565), *Broët*, 732–33 at 733.

[141] Clancy, *An Introduction to Jesuit Life*, 135.

[142] Document 78, Rodrigues to Gulielmo N (3 October 1562), *Broët*, 699–701 at 700.

[143] James Baldwin, "White Man's Guilt," in *James Baldwin: Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 722–27 at 723.

entire Ignatian family and help us discover how God continues to place us with his Son in his mission in the world. And for that same reason, all of us wonder about our own cannonball moments and, in cases of disappointment, look as did Ignatius returning from Jerusalem for a backup plan.

While the account that Simão Rodrigues offers of the Society's origins and of his own vocation may never occupy the place in Ignatian studies that the "Autobiography" does, his memoirs complement those of Ignatius in that they reflect certain experiences common to us all today. For example, we all have gone on pilgrimage and found deep companionship in sharing the sacraments, and we have experienced grace in spiritual conversations and discernments. Likewise, we have felt the wonder and goodness of God who has called us to this life with so many remarkable companions, as he did for Rodrigues and his friends in Paris. In calling to mind these charismatic stories of our vocations, we remember the deep affection that we have for our Jesuit brothers and for all those we have met on the way. And as we continue our mission, new stories emerge, revealing to us the creative work of the Spirit among us.

At the same time, we also hold within ourselves histories of tension and conflict. For instance, we know first-hand the pain of misunderstandings and the breakdown of relationships. And while we may not have faced dismissal, we may have struggled with thoughts of leaving the Society. The First Companions themselves experienced these painful realities, and we must consider this, too, as we tell the story of our origins. Unfortunately, however, our recovery of Ignatian sources to this point often has led us to see the First Companions as men only of passion, singular generosity, and freedom—a view that often stands in stark contrast of the realities of life in our communities today. See, for example, the commentary of Joe Veale (1921–2002), who wrote in his typically incisive style that "our zeal is often listless, measured, balanced, prudent, staid, sedate, and unimpassioned. We lack the passion of the first few generations of the companions."[144] Given the history we just reviewed, Fr. Veale's assessment does not represent the complexity

[144] Joe Veale, "Renewing Jesuit Life in the Spirit," in *Manifold Gifts* (Oxford: The Way Books, 2006), 190–99 at 193.

of the lives of the First Companions, nor does it do justice to our lives. And so, the story of Simão Rodrigues reminds us that our vocation has difficulty as well as passion; errors of judgment as well as zeal; and listlessness along with creativity.

The story of Simão Rodrigues reminds us that our vocation has difficulty as well as passion; errors of judgment as well as zeal; and listlessness along with creativity.

Yet historians of the early Society have effectively dismissed the difficulties that Rodrigues experienced on mission by arguing that he "remained in the camaraderie of Paris, Venice, and the first months in Rome."[145] In fairness, he may in fact have remained stuck in one existential or relational place where he struggled to make the adjustment to new companions, new communities, and changing ecclesial situations. But who among us has not nostalgically returned in the imagination to a time and place that in retrospect seems to have brought us more fulfillment? Finally, we do not need to explain away difficulties in life but rather simply to accept them as part of our own graced history.

On that note, the reader certainly has noted the importance of correspondence to this argument, and the extant letters from the early Society can help us find more a nuanced analysis of our past. Such a study reveals, for example, a document from the early months of 1548 in which Ignatius told Diego Laínez that he wanted to resign as general and give the office to him.[146] Note that here, Ignatius did not write in jest, as he perhaps had done in writing to Bobadilla in 1543 that he wanted to offer him "willingly and with the greatest joy of my soul the charge I hold."[147] In fact, Ignatius even repeated his sincere request three years later, when he wrote in 1551 to all the members of the Society that his brothers consider "another person be elected who can carry out my

[145] Ravier, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, 106.

[146] Letter without number, *Epp. et instruct*. XII:228–29.

[147] Letter 74, *Epp. et instruct*. I:277–82; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 94–98 at 97.

present office of governing the Society better, or less poorly, than I."[148] And so, we have within a span of only three years two extant letters in which Ignatius asks for relief from his office, indicating that our sainted founder, like Rodrigues, also found his mission difficult—an awareness that just might provide us today with some comfort.

To this point, consider that in the last series of his extant letters, which he had addressed to Everard Mercurian, Rodrigues lamented the state of the Portuguese province—a province that consisted of 484 Jesuits.[149] He reported that "within its doors there is a disconsolate feeling, and on the outside people are scandalized and disedified."[150] In his view, then, the selection of superiors and rectors in the province would determine "the destruction or the salvation of the Society."[151] Then, he went on to present in another letter the "root and origin" of all of the problems in the Portuguese province as "the bad approach that the superiors had with their strange ways of proceeding, and a big part of this problem and perturbation belongs to P. Luís Gonçalves [da Câmara]."[152]

While we might see in these passages outsized hubris, a simplistic catastrophizing, and evidence of his decades-old grievance with Gonçalves da Câmara in which Rodrigues always seemed convinced of his own way of proceeding, so did he love the Society. Indeed, the pal-

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[148] Letter 1554, *Epp. et instruct*. III:303–304; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 329–30.

[149] Silva Gonçalves, "Jesuits in Portugal," in *The Mercurian Project*, 708. The author also indicates that, in 1574, 51 Jesuits left Portugal for the missions.

[150] See Document 109, Rodrigues to Everard Mercurian (3 September 1577), *Broët*, 761–63. Rodrigues likely refers here to the "unmitigated disaster" the Portuguese suffered in Alcázarquibir where King Sebastian, in part encouraged by Jesuits, sought unsuccessfully to revive a Mediterranean crusade in Northern Africa. As a result of the defeat, Jesuits "fully recognized . . . that their own stock had tumbled seriously" with the Portuguese crown and in Portuguese society at large. See, Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 83–88.

[151] See Document 109, Rodrigues to Everard Mercurian (3 September 1577), *Broët*, 761–63 at 762.

[152] See Document 111, Rodrigues to Everard Mercurian (11 May 1577), *Broët*, 766–69 at 767. For more on the context of this letter, which responded to Mercurian's request for an account of the province, see, Vaz de Carvalho, "The Rehabilitation of Simão Rodrigues, SJ," in *The Mercurian Project*, 430–31.

pable concern and passion that these letters express demonstrate that he never stopped exercising *cura apostolica*. Without a doubt, the Society—its mission, its members, and its preservation and increase—meant everything to him. From this perspective, he both resembles us and offers us a model for our own lives.

First Studies

A Home of Love: Reflections on My Journey with Jesuits at the Colombiere Center in Clarkson, Michigan

Taylr J. Bahr, SJ

STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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FIRST STUDIES

A Home of Love:

Reflections on My Journey with Jesuits at the Colombiere Center in Clarkson, Michigan

Taylr J. Bahr, SJ

In the early months of 2024, during my first year of novitiate, and sent on hospital experiment to the Colombiere Center, Clarkston, Michigan, I had the true privilege of accompanying fellow Jesuits missioned to pray for the Church and the Society of Jesus. Soon afterward, upon my return to the novitiate, I read the summer edition of STUDIES, with articles by E. Edward Kinerk (UCS) and Joseph A. Tetlow (UCS), together proposing '*Orat Pro Eccl. et Soc.*,' the mission of 'praying for the church and the Society', to be a complex, life-giving, and essential mission among Ours.[1] Having just served at a Jesuit infirmary, I felt a personal connection to these articles.[2] They transported me immediately back to my recent experiences with Jesuits who have received this very mission and, more than this, inspired me to prepare this reflection.

In his article, "Praying for the Church and Society: Jesuit Beliefs and Practices," Tetlow suggests that the average American thinks little about her or his physical death, but often holds a mindset of denial, "turning the graveyard 'cities of the dead' into what look like golf cours-

[1] E. Edward Kinerk and Joseph A. Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.: Reflections on an Essential Mission," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2024).

[2] In more recent years, various titles and descriptions have been given, among Ours, for the official residences where members of the order are sent on mission to pray for the Church and the Society. In this reflection, for the sake of universal understanding, I apply the traditional title of infirmary, while leaving other terms, used by various cited authors, such as 'retirement homes', etc., to stand.

es," all the while making every effort to prolong life.[3] American Jesuits, he continues, not immune to these same attitudes, may need to be "stripped" of them and, though unlikely tempted to have their bodies "deep frozen," might still grapple seriously with the desire to "… use any therapy to put off our deaths." In other words, Tetlow recognizes that death is something American Jesuits, like all people, must prepare for, and ultimately embrace.

His words began to both inspire my prayer and connect to my experiences at the Colombiere Center. I began to ponder the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it became all the more apparent to me that death is an inextricable part of life, and that, as Jesuits following our Lord, it is clear that He invites us to follow Him to the end, until death, our final step to new life. I then thought of the incredible experience of accompanying four Jesuits in their final days, namely: John F. Libens (1939–2024), Dennis T. Glasgow (1951–2024), Albert J. Fritsch (1933–2024), and Bradley M. Schaeffer (1949–2024), and how the life and death of each of these men, in one way or another, inspired me. I felt—and still feel—all Jesuits are thus called to, as it were, die well, not denying or ignoring our mortality, but, as all Christians, embracing it, as a part of our journey with God. Ultimately, and despite my age, all of this prayer, experience, reading, and reflection, together, led me to ponder my own death, and challenged me to ask: what will it mean for me to die well as a Jesuit?

To begin to answer this question for myself, and perhaps for some others, I bring my lived experience on experiment at the Colombiere Center to my still recent introduction to the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* and their *Complementary Norms*, drawing particular insight from part six, chapter four, which details help to be given to dying members of the Society and the suffrages offered after death.[4] In doing so, I arrive not at clear principles or directives, but rather three basic suppositions about dying well as a Jesuit. First, that the journey from life to death and

[3] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 41.

[4] Since most Jesuits, but with some exceptions to be sure, die in their elder years, I will reflect upon this question of dying well predominantly in the setting of the contemporary Jesuit infirmary.

new life for a Jesuit is, as it was throughout his life, a journey deeply rooted in both personal and communal prayer. Second, this journey is best made through, as it were, the doorway of a supportive and intentional community. And, finally that, along this journey, experiencing the grace of divine and fraternal love is essential. By way of certainty, I conclude that these suppositions share one important truth that roots them all, namely, love. To die well as a Jesuit is to die reaching out to God in love, being supported in love, and encircled by fraternal love.

I. Dying at Prayer

As a Jesuit reaches the latter years of his life, prayer itself, that ongoing conversation with God, becomes his primary and final mission, as he is assigned to pray unceasingly for the Church and the Society of Jesus.[5] Though perhaps limited by infirmity, each man is invited to rely on the strength of his love, his love for God and neighbor, that once propelled him through the mission field and now must principally reach out in prayer. This is not thought to be a weakness, but a new strength for the Society, and a new opportunity, for each man, to all the more grow in his religious life as he prepares to meet God, to die well. Interestingly, Tetlow suggests that Jesuits, in general, are not known for excellence in prayer, and yet, my limited experience has shown me that this makes prayer, as our final mission, all the more fitting, precisely because it is often something Jesuits may struggle with.[6] Being in formation myself, I understand more and more that formation, in certain ways, never ends, and prayer, no matter our age as Jesuits, is a gift that continues to develop. During my time at the Colombiere Center, I observed that many Jesuits had all the more deepened their ability to speak with God. Rather than relying on past mental and physical strengths that had seen them through years of apostolic activity—activity they had so naturally relied upon for some spiritual nourishment—new physical limitations, and deteriorations in health, seemed to open, in them, new opportunities

[5] *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: A Critical Edition with the Complementary Norms*, ed. Barton T. Geger (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2024), 423, Complementary Norm 244.3.

[6] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 38. Tetlow notes exceptions to this claim including Baltasar Álvarez (1533–1580), Louis Lallement (1588–1635), and others.

to more intently hear God's voice in their lives, and to more fully turn to Him in all things. It seemed to be that, in fact, many of the men I met were, as a result, men of ever deepening love in God.

Prayer, in Jesuit infirmaries, as it is in all houses of the order, is prescribed, in the *Constitutions* and the *Complementary Norms*, to be, at times, communal and, other times individual, but my experience at the Columbiere Centre taught me that its practice takes many forms. For some men, their prayer manifested itself in more formal devotions and prayers, such as praying the rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours. Other men were content letting God look upon them before the Blessed Sacrament in the house oratory. Still others found great life in Eucharistic adoration. While, in the evenings, one Jesuit, would discretely sit and pray with companions experiencing extreme physical suffering. The important thing I learned is that there is usually not a clear so-called "right" or "wrong" way for those in the infirmary to pray, for each man's authentic prayer is equally grace-filled and good.

Albeit brief, and limited, for more than three years, I have been a Jesuit, and during that time observed that the often intense and broad obligations of apostolic life make scheduled common prayer difficult. Nevertheless, Tetlow explains how the "apostolic character" of the Society not only "permits" common prayer but essentially asks for it.[7] The highest form of this communal prayer, that prayer which brings such grace to our apostolic efforts, that brings us together to the truest presence of Christ with us, is, of course, the Eucharist.[8] Seeing men at the Colombiere Center gather for Eucharist, I witnessed, and experienced myself, a unity of hearts and minds, a communal dimension solidified and supported each day, making these men seem as "one companionship totally dedicated to Christ's mission in today's world."[9] This unity among brothers, as companions in the Lord, was something tangibly felt as the body and blood of Christ was shared. Despite their individual differences, they were one in the Lord. As if each man was drawn out of his individual self, and all his personal matters of health, as if dying

[7] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 56

[8] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 40.

[9] *CN* 227.1; ed. Geger, 418.

to self for his companions, I witnessed men finding Jesus in each other's preaching, earnestly offering the sign of peace to one another, and providing assistance to those among them with mobility issues. At communion, they witnessed to their communion with one another, and prayed and served one another.

During my time at the Colombiere Center, I observed that individual prayer was just as important to elderly Jesuits preparing to meet the Lord as any other form. The examination of conscience, held in the highest importance for Jesuits as an essential practice, contributing to discernment, purity of heart, and familiarity with God's workings throughout the day, was no less present among these men.[10] As in their earlier years of more active ministry, the Jesuits appeared faithful to praying the Examen, continuing to see God at work in their day, when they failed to notice Him, when they fell short in loving others, and where and how God may be personally calling them to greater love. Indeed, Tetlow suggests that, "Stripped of busyness, … [Jesuits] are challenged to know how simple, mild, and intimate 'God's will' has been all along."[11] It was apparent to me that many elderly Jesuits found in prayer that God simply desires for them to love and to be loved. By way of example, Albert J. Bischoff (1927–2025) naturally comes to mind as one of many men at the Colombiere Center who had an unmistakable love for God and his Jesuit brothers—a love fueled by a constant awareness of God's presence and care in and through an examined life of prayer.

Interestingly, Tetlow also makes brief reference to the old established Jesuit practice of pondering death, proposing that, from time to time, elderly Jesuits might try it.[12] This was, in fact, a refrain I heard from a few different men at the Colombiere Center. Contemplating final earthly moments, and the coming encounter with God, put life, for them, in perspective, and helped to reveal how much God has given. Moreover, this practice led to even deeper gratitude, often inspiring them to give in return, and to particularly give themselves generously to prayer. It appeared to me that in praying on one's death, and in turn,

[10] *CN* 229; ed. Geger, 419.

[11] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 52.

[12] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 41.

one's life, different Jesuits saw how good God has been and, even despite personal weakness, how undeservedly merciful and loving He is. This generosity in prayer, fed from the depths of personal prayer, for friends and benefactors, the dead and the living, along with all matters of the common good, is clearly something our founder desired of each of us, but never had I seen it so evident as among the elderly Jesuits I served.[13] Talking with the Lord about one's physical death, led many to a kind of freedom, then from freedom to gratitude, and from gratitude to deeper prayer for all God's labors.

Though I highlight here some forms of communal and personal prayer I shared in at the Colombiere Center, in practice, I feel there is no "right" way for a Jesuit to pray as he approaches the end of life. I hold this view since, it seems to me, each man I accompanied had a unique and beautiful prayer life, shaped by his personal relationship with our Lord. As Tetlow notes, each man's prayer, "… emerges in our retirement homes in conversations, homilies, and in the way that some sit for long periods in the chapel, attentive only to the gracious God who, we believe, founded our Society."[14] Or, as the *Complementary Norms* point out, the better prayer is the prayer in which God more abundantly communicates Himself.[15] This assertion is applied in the context of the elderly among Ours by the celebrated Jesuit André de Jaer (1925–2016) who recognized that, for a Jesuit near his death, "… praying with and for him in whatever way will be helpful …," is the better prayer.[16] At the Colombiere Center, when a man might have been especially struggling with his health, his Jesuit brothers would often pray especially for him at Mass. When my then superior, Bradley M. Schaeffer, or Brad, had a cardiac episode on Holy Thursday in the dining room, his Jesuit brother, Timothy P. Kesicki (UMI) wasted no time in putting together a simple, yet beautiful, prayer service, lifting Brad up to the Lord, as he later died that night. The so-called better prayer was, in other words, the prayer of greatest love that responded to the need of the moment.

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[13] *Constitutions.* 638; ed. Geger, 283.

[14] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 44.

[15] *CN* 225.2; ed. Geger, 418.

[16] André de Jaer, *Together for Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2001), 104.

All this being said, ultimately, like all things, prayer is a gift. It pours out from the heart, in an act of surrender, putting one's trust in divine love. Communion with God is not a result of one's physical or material condition, or even one's capacity to speak. In fact, I believe prayer can often be most profound when we find ourselves bereft of any resource and in a state of complete reliance on our Lord. Though one could argue that diminishing cognitive and physical faculties among elderly Jesuits seems to make any emphasis on their life of prayer less important, to do so, in my opinion, totally misses the mark. Elderly Jesuits, often being slowly stripped of their autonomy through the natural process of aging, are instead all the more left in the hands of God, letting Him hold them in a sacred communion. From my perspective, this communion was especially apparent among some of the men at the Colombiere Center struggling with memory loss or different levels of dementia. Despite these conditions, and facing real physical limitations, many of these Jesuits became visibly closer to Our Lord Jesus in His suffering, more reliant on the divine hand at work in the people around them, trusting God and His presence in their healthcare providers, activities director, and assistants, as well as their Jesuit brothers, thereby bringing to life the words of St. Paul, "the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings." [17]

Tetlow clearly states that the Jesuit infirmary is "… not a spirituality center or a residence for Jesuits working in various ministries," rather, it is a house of prayer, where each man is invited to pray according to the various customs of Ours.[18] In my experience, this idea of it being a house of prayer is not some abstract theory, but the reality. The Jesuits at the Colombiere Center fervently pray, in common and in private, aloud and in their hearts. They seek to examine their lives and to continue to grow in faith. They support one another by prayers, and they share each day, as they can, in the prayer for the world, which is the Eucharist. They pray for their brothers who have died and those alive celebrating a birthday. In these ways, and so many others, prayer for elderly Jesuits is a mission, rooted in love, and is a labor of love. My

[17] Rom. 8:26 (NABRE)

[18] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 55.

experience, at the Colombiere Center, therefore, emboldens me to take Tetlow's observation one step further, to say that the Jesuits assigned to pray for the Society and Church are invited to live together in a house of prayer, and a home of love, where each is, in prayer, drawn to deeper love, offered opportunity to give themselves in love, and prepare to pass on to God in love, who is love Himself. To me, this is a key supposition in dying well as a Jesuit.

II. Dying in Community

Love, we believe, "ought to show itself in deeds over and above words."[19] As an elderly Jesuit struggles with infirmity, and faces death, it is the manifestation of love and care, among his brothers and caregivers, in community, that I have seen offer enormous support. For most Jesuits in the United States, their community, when dying, is their local infirmary. Long before such facilities took their present form, however, it was identified that a dying Jesuit needs particular support. Often suffering physical illness, impaired mental health, and even attacks of the devil, the *Constitutions* stipulate that, "… the sick man needs help from fraternal charity."[20] Note here that the 'help' needed is 'fraternal charity'. Or, to put it another way, for the Jesuit to die well, amidst any infirmity of body or soul, he is prescribed brotherly love. This sacred balm I have experienced living in the community of the Colombiere Center, both in word and in deed, to the great benefit of all there.

In this sense, Tetlow wisely acknowledges that, if elderly Jesuits are to pray together as friends in ways that will last, they need "to learn to listen to one another."[21] Words shared do matter, and I discovered that meaningful conversations among the men at the Colombiere Center are a large part of building up fraternal love. I was told that, under the guidance of former provincial, David Fleming (1934–2011), efforts were made for the infirmary to truly be a community, with an authentic

[19] Ignatius of Loyola, The Spiritual Exercises, literal trans. in David L. Fleming, SJ, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), §230.

[20] *Const.* 595; ed. Geger, 266.

[21] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 51.

community spirit, that together shape the daily lives of Jesuits and their various caregivers.[22] I witnessed men, of advanced age and experience, regularly participating in faith-sharing sessions, providing each man the opportunity to express how God was working in his life, how he might be struggling physically or spiritually, and how he felt invited by God to grow as a person. I witnessed the community gather in mutual support after the unexpected death of Brad Schaeffer, offering one another the sacred space to process and heal amidst the loss of a brother and superior. Finally, I witnessed older Jesuits, amidst their own infirmities, care for one another in ways as simple as picking up weekly activity cards from the tables in the dining hall and as profound as staying by the side of a dying brother.

At the Colombiere Center, I witnessed community in action and the intentional efforts to create a space of fraternal charity, or brotherly love, which provided elderly Jesuits the freedom to share their spiritual life, share in community activity, and be supported amidst their infirmities. For the Jesuit, authentic, real community is a community of Love, and it is that circle of love and support that I saw prepare the hearts and souls of Jesuits that approached death. Community life is, of course, an essential aspect of our Jesuit life, but, perhaps, all the more pressing at the end of life, when spiritual conversation, prayer, daily support and encouragement, regularity of life, and fraternity, make a home where a man best meets God, and is better disposed to die well.

III. Dying in Friendship with God and My Brothers

One of the simplest, yet most profound, examples I witnessed of true fraternity, or friendship, in the Society was at the breakfast table in the Colombiere Center. Each day, long-time friends would gather, reminisce, joke with one another and, informally, share life. Another such example, albeit more dramatic, are the wakes and funerals I attended of Jesuits who died during my time there. When living members of the

[22] David Fleming, SJ, *Living and Dying as Jesuits: A Missouri Province Statement* (Missouri Province Jesuits: 1984), 15.

community spoke of their recently deceased brothers, the term "best friend" was sometimes used, prayers were said, tears were shed, and words about the deceased were offered with what seemed to be a very genuine Christian Love. Attending these wakes often brought me great consolation, a sense of confirmation in my vocation, and even a vision of how I wanted to die as a Jesuit. The first memory, of morning breakfast, taught me how important friendship is in the last years of a Jesuit's life and, the second, at a wake or burial, showed me God's love. Intimate friendship with God and neighbor, or rather, God and brother Jesuit, seemed to me to be two clear realities that helped the Jesuits I knew to die well.

Each of us, in our different stages of Jesuit life, are on a unique and collective journey towards deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. At the Colombiere Center, I witnessed, however, an often-palpable grace, among many elderly Jesuits who, by their present circumstances, were uniting with Jesus Christ in profound ways. Tetlow puts words to my experience stating that, "retirement is being spiritually stripped" and "the reality is that now, in retirement, we are taken down to our truest identity."[23] He goes on to suggest that gone are the ideals of "the American male" thinking of himself wholly in terms of his 'job', position, or function.[24] This, of course, I have witnessed, journeying with elderly Jesuits who seem to all the more focus on their truest source of identity, their all, their Lord. The men at the breakfast table were not talking about work, but sharing life, and the priority for all before the coffin was that the dead Jesuit is loved by his friends on earth and in heaven, and through these friendships, grows closer to God.

What a profound reality, finding one's truest self as a man belonging to Jesus so often most fully as one approaches death. As a young Jesuit, I can be tempted to try and wrap up my self-knowledge and assert the intimacy of my relationship with the Lord, but reading Tetlow's words, and serving elderly Jesuits, I have come to understand that true interior freedom, and my relationship with Christ, is accomplished in God's time and not mine. Understanding my relationship with God,

[23] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 38.

[24] Kinerk and Tetlow, "Orat Pro Eccl. Et Soc.," 39.

in the Society of Jesus, is not an immediate, one-time revelation, but a deepening one, that often deepens and grows right up to the end of a Jesuit's life. This I understood more as I accompanied elderly Jesuits who faced, not only the loss of titles or roles, but of health. Tetlow writes of this too, citing the powerful example of our past general, and servant of God, Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991) who, reflecting on his own infirmities, declares that,

> "More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I wanted all my life from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands."[25]

Witnessing elderly Jesuits who, like Arrupe, have come to know and to feel themselves in the hands of God, in the hands of Love Himself, at the end of life was, for me, pivotal to my understanding of how a Jesuit can die well. Seeing the effects of infirmity was sometimes heart-wrenching, but seeing a man reach out to God with deeper freedom and love, inspiring.

Though we, as Jesuits, have no spouse, or children, to journey with through old age, infirmity, and death, I do believe we are blessed with both our relationship with the Lord and our brothers in the order. I think back again to those dear friends both around a breakfast table and then a coffin. At the Colombiere Center I witnessed, in many ways, the grace intimate friendships brought to Jesuits. It is not easy, as I was often told, to age, and elderly Jesuits, living together in an infirmary, seem to most benefit from a space that allows them to speak freely about both their bowel and spiritual movements, along with their thoughts, feelings and, perhaps, on occasion, their deaths. This profound and honest kind of friendship is perhaps best known when they feel "… a generous love for one and all…and are true brothers and friends in Christ."[26] A feeling

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[25] Pedro Arrupe, "Message to the Society of Jesus"; cited in GC 34, d. 6, no. 29; in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st-35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 568.

[26] *CN* 146.3; ed. Geger, 395.

of friendship that supports the elderly Jesuit, particularly as he faces death, and perhaps leaves him with the consolation that the Sufi poet, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273), describes when he writes that, "Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes. For those who love with heart and soul, there is no such thing as separation."[27]

This sort of love—with heart and soul—is a mark of love in intimate friendship. This I have seen in my journey with elderly Jesuits and again, is perhaps most poignantly experienced by many of them in their last moments of life. There, and then, our tradition affirms the importance of intimate friendship, of brotherly love, in death. A doctor's care is to be assured, men assigned to sit alongside him offering encouragement, prayers are to be offered, sacraments administered and, after his passing on to God, masses said, and burial given.[28] Never left alone, feeling supported by the love of God and his brothers, the Jesuit, I believe, dies well.

Conclusion

Turning back to my question, 'what will it mean for me to die well as a Jesuit?', I affirm that it will indeed involve three suppositions, namely: while at prayer, supported by my community, and encircled by fraternal love. By no means yet a scholar of our history or our rule, these observations come from a heart and mind touched by profound experiences and informed by my intellectual effort to grow in a deeper knowledge of our *Constitutions* and *Complimentary Norms*. Serving in the infirmary, I witnessed, men at prayer. I witnessed men supporting each other, amidst their infirmities, as a community. I witnessed men, true brothers, finding often their truest selves, amidst joys and sufferings, in love and support they offered one another. In this space, this home of love, they fulfilled their mission of prayer for the Church and the Society of Jesus and grew, together, in readiness to meet the Lord face-to-face. Prayer, community, and fraternal love, these three propositions for our infirma-

[27] Alexander Brown, "Goodbyes Are Only for Those Who Love," *The Minds Journal*, published November 17, 2016, last updated November 4, 2024, https://themindsjournal.com/quotes/goodbyes-are-only-for-those-who-love-with-their-eyes/.

[28] *Const.* 595–598; ed. Geger, 266.

ries, are for me now aspirations, for when I, as a Jesuit, one day prepare to die well, that is, to die in love, in God.

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