

STUDIES

in the Spirituality of Jesuits



Jesuit Community: Community of Prayer

Robert L. Faricy, S.J.

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Published by the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,
especially for American Jesuits working out their *aggiornamento*
in the spirit of Vatican Council II

THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States. The purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

To achieve these purposes, especially amid today's pluralistic cultures the Seminar must focus its direct attention sharply, frankly, and specifically on the problems, interests, and opportunities of the Jesuits of the United States. However, many of these interests are common also to Jesuits of other regions, or to other priests, religious men or women, or lay men or women. Hence the studies of the Seminar, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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by

Robert L. Faricy, S.J.

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Editor's Foreword

The present issue of these *Studies* results from two turns of fortune, one somewhat distressing and the other good, and requires some explanation.

Through a combination of circumstances the material from our own busy members which was originally planned for this issue could not be ready when the deadline could be postponed no longer.

The good fortune which balanced this was the arrival from Rome of the paper now printed here on "Jesuit Community: Community of Prayer," by Father Robert L. Faricy, a member of the Wisconsin Province and now a professor in the Gregorian University.

Hence this issue does not reflect the thinking and criticism of our own members to the extent that our previous publications have done this. But it does mirror the planning and investigations in depth of a team of experts in the Roman university, with an American Jesuit included. For the paper is part of a symposium which arose in the following manner.

The board of directors of *Recherches Ignatiennes/Communications*, which functions through the Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis in the Jesuit curia in Rome and sends out articles which other periodicals may reprint, chose "Apostolic Community" as the theme of its four issues for 1976. The board requested four professors of the Institute of Spirituality in the Gregorian University to compose the papers. Consequently Father Gervais Dumeige, a well-known specialist in history of spirituality, devoted his attention to aspects revealing practical ways of realizing St. Ignatius' ideals. Father Maurizio Costa, of the Province of Torino, focused on the concept of apostolic community enshrined in the Society's *Constitutions*. Father Gilles Cusson, of the Province of French Canada, treated the relations between obedience and authority in the context of spiritual discernment. And Father Faricy concluded the series by turning his investigations on the apostolic community as a community of prayer. All four of these professors have published extensively on topics pertaining to the spiritual life, each in his own language.

It is only fair to point out, however, that at times in this present study Father Faricy, like any participant in a symposium, merely touches

on rather than develops some ideas because they have already been developed at length by his colleagues. Unfortunately, most of our readers will not have had the opportunity to read the three preceding papers in the symposium. To translate and publish them here would of course be beneficial. But it is manifestly impossible in the time and space available.

However, we subjoin here the outline of these three papers, because this will supply at least some background helpful for understanding Fr. Faricy's treatment. It may be helpful, too, as a guide to those readers who may wish to consult the other papers on points in which they have further interest.

1. THE SOCIETY OF JESUS AS AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY: Historical and Institutional Aspects--published in French by Gervais Dumeige, S.J.

The rich and many meanings of one word, community

A community "apostolic" in its origin

The apostolic dynamism of the Society

An apostolic formation

The government of a religious body engaged in apostolic mission

Apostolic discernment in a universal mission

The vows in an apostolic order

2. NOTES IN REGARD TO "APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY" IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS--published in Italian by Maurizio Costa, S.J.

I. Apostolic Community

A. "Apostolic"

B. "Community"

a. The universal community and the particular community

b. Dimensions and levels of community

c. Conclusions

II. Relation between "Jesuit community" and "apostolic mission"

III. The characteristics of Jesuit apostolic community

A. Obedience in Jesuit Apostolic Community

B. The role of the superior in Jesuit apostolic community

Conclusions

3. OBEDIENCE AND AUTHORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT--
published in French by Gilles Cusson, S.J.

I. The theology of obedience

The obedience of faith (Rom. 16:26)

The pedagogical regime of the Law

Life in the Spirit

II. Integration of charism and institution by St. Ignatius

Ignatius' fundamental experience

Integration on the personal level (the *Spiritual Exercises*)

Integration on the communitarian level (the *Constitutions*)

Conclusion: his place of integration

III. Obedience, government, and life in the spirit

Religious life and life in the Spirit

To obey and to govern in the context of discernment

Our Ignatian heritage

Conclusion

4. JESUIT COMMUNITY: COMMUNITY OF PRAYER--

published in English by Robert L. Faricy, S.J.

The outline is the Table of Contents, on page iii above.

We express our gratitude to *Recherches Ignatiennes/Communications* for its service in providing these papers along with permission to reprint.

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JESUIT COMMUNITY: COMMUNITY OF PRAYER

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Introduction: Some Basic Questions

The title of this study suggests some questions. What is the relationship in Jesuit life between community living and prayer, what is the prayer dimension of Jesuit community, and what is the communitarian dimension of Jesuit prayer? Further, what is the meaning of the contemporary renewal of Jesuit life for Jesuit community as a community of prayer? Finally, there are, of course, the two basic questions: What kind of prayer is Jesuit prayer, and what kind of community is Jesuit community?

I. COMMUNITY, CHARITY, AND PRAYER

Let us consider the last question first: what kind of community is Jesuit community? The basis of Jesuit community is the personal faith relationship of each member with the Lord. Jesuit community, in the words of General Congregation 31 of 1965-1966, "is a community of men who are called by Christ to live with Christ, to be conformed to Christ, to fulfill the work of Christ in themselves and among men. This is the foundation and aim of community life in the Society of Jesus."¹

The union of Jesuits in community is, then, an apostolic union in Jesus Christ. We can ask, however, what is the bond of that union? What is it that holds Jesuits together in community?

The answer can be found in the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*:

The chief bond to cement the union of the members among themselves and with their head is . . . the love of God our Lord. For when the superior and the subjects are closely united to his Divine and Supreme Goodness, they will very easily be united among themselves,

through that same love which will descend from the Divine Goodness and spread to all other men, and particularly into the body of the Society.²

The bond of union in Jesuit community is union with God on the part of each member, and from that union with God flows love for one another, "the bond of wills, which is the mutual charity and love they have for one another."³ The *Constitutions* show a clear and intrinsic relationship between union with God and union of love with one another. This relationship is, furthermore, causal. It is the union of love between God and each Jesuit that is the principal cause of the union of love among Jesuits.

But is there not, in the spirit of the Society of Jesus, a great stress on obedience and on uniformity? And are not obedience and uniformity the marks of a totalitarian society rather than a community of love? It is true that the Jesuit spirit does stress obedience as being an important source of union in Jesuit community. In the words of the *Constitutions*, "this union is produced in great part by the bond of obedience."⁴ Jesuit obedience, however, is an obedience of love, not of fear; it is rooted in charity. It extends, ideally, even to obedience in love, it is important toward preserving and increasing unity in Jesuit community. Although it is fundamentally love that unites Jesuits in community, obedience too is a bond of Jesuit unity; and so General Congregation 32 speaks of "our union with God in Christ, from which flows our brotherly communion with one another, a communion strengthened and made apostolically efficacious by the bond of obedience."⁵

In the same way, uniformity in the Society is a means toward union of hearts. The *Constitutions* and the *General Examen* speak of uniformity in external matters, in the manner of living, in the liturgy, in dress, in doctrine, and in judgment.⁶ But this Jesuit uniformity is not a uniformity that is exteriorly imposed from above; it is a uniformity that is the result of a uniformity of wills, of a unity of love. This uniformity is an aid toward unity, but it has its roots in the very unity that it helps to increase; it is rooted in charity. It is a uniformity that comes from interior union, from a unity of hearts. It is not the sameness of prison life, but the expression of freely chosen union in Jesus Christ.

The most profound bond of Jesuit community, then, is love, and this love flows from union with God. Jesuit unity "must be based on the union of each and all with God in Christ."⁷ What precisely is this union with God according to the spirit of the Society of Jesus? St. Ignatius, in his writings, emphasizes not so much prayer as he does union with God, familiarity with God. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, in his own life and also in his intentions for the Society, he saw this familiarity with God as having its vital center in prayer. The Jesuit is to find God in all things, not only in his prayer. He is to be familiar with God, united to God, not only in his Mass, office, and personal and communal prayer, but in everything he does and undergoes. Yet, this familiarity with God is just that: a familiarity. It is a personal relationship with the three divine Persons. Familiarity with God means a personal, conscious closeness to God, and the center of this familiarity is to be found when relationship with God is most personal; and this of course is in prayer.

II. JESUIT RENEWAL, PRAYER, AND COMMUNITY

*Jesuit renewal, prayer, and community.*⁸ Granted the principle that Jesuit community is a union of love, of the love that comes from familiarity with God in all of a Jesuit's life and especially in his prayer, what recent developments in the Society of Jesus are significant for the prayer-community relationship? Certainly, since the Second Vatican Council, there have been changes in Jesuit life; what is the meaning of these changes for Jesuit community understood as a community of prayer?

A. The Ignatian Charism, and Non-Monastic or Apostolic Religious Life

The general direction of change in Jesuit life can be best described in terms of return to the charism of St. Ignatius Loyola and, also, in terms of an increasing flexibility of structures and a consequently greater freedom and call to responsibility for Jesuits. The return to a more authentic living of the spirit of Ignatius has entailed an important movement away from an excessive monasticism of the structures of Jesuit life. Let us consider this at greater length.

The rise of the non-monastic, apostolic religious life corresponds with the Western world's discovery of the historical dimension of the world, of genesis, of becoming, of evolution, of social development, and of progress. But because much of the tradition of the religious life had been formed in the Middle Ages and in a monastic climate, there was a gradual but strong tendency for the non-monastic religious life to become increasingly monasticized, even in the case of the Society of Jesus. In spite of the fact that the Jesuit spirit is in many ways a reaction against monasticism, a gradual process of monasticization took place in the centuries after the foundation of the Society. No matter what the reasons for this progressive monasticization of Jesuit life, it did take place. Much of the renewal of the non-monastic religious life, a renewal that has been intensive since the Second Vatican Council, has been along the lines of a return to sources and to original charisms. Consequently, the renewal of the Society of Jesus, as well as the renewal of many similar orders and congregations, has been along the lines of a dismantling of monastic structures and a return to a non-monastic, apostolic style of life.⁹

How can the direction of change in that form of apostolic, non-monastic religious life that is found in the Society of Jesus be understood? For one

9 Regarding the non-monastic nature of the spirit of the Society, see: *Constitutions*, [337]; Jerónimo Nadal, *In Examen annotationes*, IV, 61-68, in *Epistolae et monumenta P. Hieronymi Nadal*, V, 156-158. For our purposes here, it seems well to use the terms "apostolic" and "monastic" to describe the non-monastic and the monastic religious life. It is true that one cannot strictly oppose "apostolic" and "monastic." The monastic religious life is also apostolic even in its most contemplative forms. However, the terms "apostolic" and "monastic" can be used as shorthand words for life styles that are primarily monastic and primarily non-monastic, for life styles that are "centered" and "open," "stable" and "mobile." The phrase "apostolic religious life" is used here to stand for the non-monastic, primarily active, religious life. It is true, of course, that there are degrees of monasticism in the religious life. If "apostolic" and "monastic" represent the two poles of religious life styles, then it is true that various religious orders and congregations find themselves at various points on a spectrum between these two poles. Between the Benedictines at the monastic pole and the Jesuits at the apostolic pole, one finds the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and many other families of religious orders and congregations.

thing, the structures of Jesuit life have become much more flexible. Fifteen years ago, it was common in most provinces that all the members rose at the same time, made mental prayer at the same hour, and in general followed a more or less monastic horarium. In most cases, this monastic horarium has disappeared from the Society except in some formation situations. Not only is the daily horarium more flexible, but other structures are much less rigid than they used to be. Structures of government are more flexible, with increasing dialogue between superiors and subjects and greater sharing in decision-making on the part of subjects. Again, apostolic structures have become more flexible, and many Jesuits today are finding themselves in new apostolates. In a general way, the whole of Jesuit life has moved in the direction of less rigidity, of greater flexibility of the external structures of the religious life.

Co-relative with the increasing flexibility of the external structures of Jesuit life has gone an increasing freedom for the individual Jesuit. The individual Jesuit is more free, at least in an exterior way. Since he is more free, he is called to a greater responsibility; and this is true especially in the area of the spiritual life. Today, the vast majority of Jesuits are personally responsible for their mental prayer, for how they live their poverty, and in many other areas. What has been happening is this: as the structures of the Jesuit life have become more flexible, there has been a greater call to and a greater need for interiorization of the previously external structures of the religious life. The contemporary call to members of the Society is to live the Jesuit life more from the heart, to interiorize the spirit of Jesuit life, and in a more personal way to live in a spirit of total giving of self to God rather than in a spirit of conformity to external structures. This increasing freedom and new call to responsibility are, of course, partial and indirect causes of some of the elements of crisis in the Society today. Since renewal began, there have been many defections from the Society, there has been some loss of hope in the religious life, vocations in many regions have dwindled and--in some cases--there has been an increase in worldliness. These elements of crisis are not at all desirable, but they are the price one pays for freedom. If a Jesuit is freer and therefore more responsible, he is also

more free not to take responsibility. He is freer to make compromises, especially in the area of the spiritual life, and to dishonestly justify his compromises in the name of progress or renewal or the new theology or freedom itself. This does not mean that the direction of change is somehow wrong. It means, rather, that the direction of change calls Jesuits to greater responsibility and, at the same time, to greater honesty.

III. THREE IMPORTANT AREAS OF THE RENEWAL

The process of moving from overly monastic structures to a lived renewal of the apostolic charism of the Society has been, and is, a broad one, touching all areas of Jesuit life. There are three areas, however, which are particularly important: the apostolate, community, and prayer.

A. The Apostolate

The monastic apostolate is, traditionally, a centripetal apostolate. The monastery gathers in to itself. It is a stable center that attracts people and projects. The whole idea of the monastic apostolate is that of a center. Non-members of the monastic community come to this center to be renewed and then go out to renew the world; but the members themselves of the monastic community generally remain at the monastery, because that is their apostolic *center*. Traditional apostolic activities for monastic congregations are, therefore, schools, publishing, and retreats. On the other hand, the apostolate of properly apostolic communities (non-monastic communities) such as the Society of Jesus is centrifugal; it is the members themselves of the apostolic community who radiate out into the world. It might be said that the monk is "called" and that the Jesuit is "sent."

B. Community

The monastic community creates its own environment, and it controls that environment so that it is conducive to contemplation and to living in monastic community. The apostolic community has a centrifugal apostolate. Where an apostolic community has a school or a university, the educational apostolate will not be undertaken in the same way that it would

be undertaken by a monastic community. An apostolic community will be much more involved in the whole community around the school or university; its members will participate in other religious and civic activities in the area, and there will be more contact with the outside-school milieu of the student.

This process of the renewal of the apostolate of the Society is going on now. It does not necessarily mean that old apostolates must be dropped and new apostolates be begun; it simply means that overly monasticized apostolates must be adapted to the apostolic way of life.

Another important area of Jesuit renewal is that of community living. With the disappearance of the monastic horarium has gone the disappearance of the sometimes subtly monastic structures of community life. The disappearance of a monastic framework for community living has led to the search for new emphasis on shared prayer and on concelebration, greater distribution of responsibilities among the members of the local community, and the new importance of community meetings.

In the context of the return to a more authentically Jesuit spirit of apostolate and of community, there has taken place a gradual reformation of Jesuit obedience. The obedience proper to the Society should be and is increasingly *apostolic* obedience. The classic monastic practices of "small permissions" and of explicit commands even in small matters are proper to the monastic life; in the apostolic life, these practices tend to stifle apostolic initiative and freedom; and they become picayune, reducing Jesuit obedience to a certain rigid formalism. Apostolic obedience is an all-pervading obedience to one's mission as that mission is indicated by religious authority. It is an obedience to being sent by the Church acting through Jesuit superiors. The Society, in demonasticizing religious obedience, is finding that religious obedience is not less important, but more important, often more difficult, and always not simply a matter of practices but an entire and absolutely essential dimension of Jesuit life.

C. Prayer

The contemporary renewal of prayer in the Society is, in part, a result of the renewal of the structures of Jesuit life. Rigidity and formalism

have disappeared to a large extent from the exterior structures of Jesuit life; and, as the need has been recognized for an increase in interiorization of the religious life, the primacy of personal relationship with God has been more and more emphasized. This relationship with God, in and through Jesus Christ, is the heart and center of the Jesuit life; and it is more and more recognized that the heart and center of personal relationship with God is prayer.

What directions is the renewal of personal prayer taking at the present time in the Society?

For one thing, mental prayer is approached, more and more, with greater simplicity; the Lord's teaching that we should pray with childlike simplicity seems to be taken with greater seriousness. As Jesuit life has become more flexible in its structures, it seems that mental prayer itself is becoming less structured, more free, more personal, more loving, more of an interpersonal relationship with God.

Another direction that the renewal of personal prayer seems to be taking is that of greater maturity of response, a response made in interior freedom. The place of the cross, of renunciation of detachment from selfishness and egoism, seems to be more stressed now in Jesuit life than it was, say, ten years ago; and this emphasis on renunciation is partly a result of the need that is felt for a greater interior freedom so that one may respond more freely, humanly, to the Lord in prayer.

A third direction of renewal in mental prayer is that of greater personal responsibility on the part of the individual Jesuit for his own personal prayer. It is possible that this fact, that personal prayer is now more and more a personal responsibility for one's relationship with God, is the factor most responsible for progress on the part of many in the spiritual life.

Finally, in the area of prayer in general, there is a greater sense of the need for redemption, of the need for God's help, of the fact that all Jesuits are sinners and all need to be saved. The current crises in the Society--lack of vocations, defections, worldliness, polarization and tensions--have in some cases given rise to discouragement and to a crisis of hope in the Society. On the other hand, these same crises, for many

Jesuits, seem to have resulted in an increased sense of the need of God's help, in a greater humility, and in a greater hope in God for the future of their religious life and for the future of the Society.

The conclusion seems clear. The Society in recent years has been returning to a more apostolic and more authentic way of religious life. This return to a fuller living of the Jesuit charism has had several results; among them is the fact that, with the absence of monastic and quasi-monastic community structures, the need is increasingly felt by many Jesuits for increased bonds of community. What monastic structures provided, it is felt by many, must now somehow be substituted for so that Jesuits may have closer community bonds and more community support. Because of the close relationship between prayer and the union of hearts that forms community, many Jesuits--especially younger ones--have found much help in concelebrations and in informal groups for shared prayer and shared spiritual reflection. It seems likely that, in the future, Jesuits will participate even more than now in such prayer activities that have a strong communitarian aspect. And there seems to be no question but that non-monastic community prayer goes far to strengthen the bonds of charity in Jesuit community.

As Jesuit life becomes more in accord with Jesuit spirit, so too the particular characteristics of Jesuit prayer are becoming more considered, more discussed, and more in evidence. What are the chief characteristics of prayer according to the spirit of the Society?

IV. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUIT PRAYER

I would like to consider six principal characteristics of Jesuit prayer. It is Trinitarian and apostolic. It is daily. It includes examination of conscience. It also includes discernment of God's will. And it is a prayer of loving relationship with God that flows over into the fraternal love that is the bond of community.

A. Trinitarian

The prayer of St. Ignatius was a Trinitarian prayer. In his prayer,

Ignatius sometimes was in relationship with the Trinity, sometimes with Jesus Christ, and at other times with the Father or the Holy Spirit. His prayer was in the pattern of his experiences at Manresa and La Storta; it was not a kind of speculative contemplation, but an intensely relational prayer, and a prayer of love ordered to apostolic action in companionship with Jesus. Just as the prayer of Ignatius had a strong Trinitarian orientation, so does the prayer proper to the Society of Jesus.¹⁰ This does not at all limit Jesuit prayer; rather, it gives it the broadest possible scope and framework.

B. Influenced by the *Spiritual Exercises*

Further, the prayer proper to the Society is strongly influenced by the *Spiritual Exercises*, and particularly by the meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards. This means that it is a prayer of companionship with Christ, a prayer of teamwork with Jesus; and this companionship and teamwork is ordered to apostolic activity. It is true that there is a distinction between what we might call "formal" prayer and apostolic action; nevertheless, there is no separation or division between them; they are two sides of one coin. Jesuit prayer is apostolic prayer. This prayer, apostolic along the lines of the meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards, is a prayer of union with Christ in battle, fighting to build the Kingdom. This aspect of Jesuit prayer is stressed especially by Jerónimo Nadal, the classic interpreter of St. Ignatius' ideas on Jesuit life. He writes:

Christ came to conquer the world Now, you see that man's life is an ongoing war, a being "in the field," a soldiering against the enemies. We are in combat, and we fight armed with God's grace and with his help. *His is the strength in Christ with which we fight. It is Christ who fights, and we in him.*¹¹

C. Integrating Prayer and Action

Since the prayer proper to the Society is an apostolic prayer, ordered to laboring with Jesus Christ for the Kingdom, it implies a certain unity of life, an integration of prayer and action around a personal relationship with Jesus. In his personal prayer and in his Mass, a Jesuit will be totally present to God, present with all his worries, apostolic concerns, relationship with people, putting them all in God's hands and drawing

strength for combat. In his other activities, the Jesuit will find God in all things--not in a speculative or simply esthetic contemplation, but in *those very activities themselves* carried out in union with Jesus. The Jesuit is called to be, in the traditional phrase, "a contemplative in action."

The direction of Jesuit prayer and the direction of Jesuit action are the same direction. The spirit of the Society is not one in which man's upward impulse of worship and praise and consecration to God is expressed only in prayer, and in which his forward impulse toward helping others, toward involvement in the world, is expressed only in apostolic action. There is no conflict between a "vertical" direction of prayer and a "horizontal" direction of apostolate. The vertical and the horizontal, prayer and apostolic action, are two modalities of one relationship--union with Jesus toward the building of the Kingdom. The "upward" of prayer and the "forward" of apostolate come together in synthesis in the one relationship between the Jesuit and Jesus, who is both the God of the "upward" and the God of the "forward."

This relationship with Jesus, which is intimate, loving, and action-oriented, is the center of Jesuit spirituality. It is the central relationship around which all a Jesuit's other relationships are organized and sustained; and union with Jesus is what gives all other relationships their meaning. The centrality of union with Christ in Jesuit spirituality calls for daily Mass and personal prayer; it demands certain daily privileged times of particularly intense and personal encounter with God. This is not precisely because it is necessary to find something in prayer to give to others apostolically; it is not to gain fruits in prayer than can be handed over to others. It is, rather, because the familiarity with God that is the center of the spirit of St. Ignatius is a *personal* familiarity, and so it calls for frequent periods of intense personal intimacy in which the Jesuit is completely and consciously united with God.

D. The Question of Methods and Duration

St. Ignatius never established a method of prayer for members of the Society, nor did he fix a length of time that could be divided into shorter

periods; he avoided a universal rule for all Jesuits. Later legislation by General Congregations was more specific, and the 31st and 32nd General Congregation give us a precise but flexible decree.

The General Congregation wishes to remind every Jesuit that personal daily prayer is an absolute necessity. But . . . [it] does not intend to impose on all a precisely defined universal norm for the manner and length of prayer. Our rule of an hour's prayer is therefore to be adapted so that each Jesuit, guided by his superior, takes into account his particular circumstances and needs, in the light of that discerning love which St. Ignatius clearly presupposed in the *Constitutions*.¹²

This flexibility and adaptability to individual needs and circumstances is, certainly, Ignatian. And it in no way mitigates the necessity for a substantial amount of time to be spent daily in personal prayer on the part of every Jesuit. The purpose of this daily prayer is, in the words of the 31st General Congregation, the "intimacy with Christ [which] forges a union of our life of prayer and our life of apostolic work. Far from living two separate lives, we are strengthened and guided toward action in our prayer while our action in turn urges us to pray."¹³

E. Including Examination of Conscience

A further characteristic of Jesuit prayer can be seen from the importance attached to the examination of conscience from the earliest beginnings of the Society. This examination of conscience, in the Jesuit tradition, is not a psychological introspection in which the Jesuit is turned in on himself; still less is it a more or less morbid period of self-depreciation. It is, rather, a facing God in honesty. The Jesuit examination of conscience is facing God; in his light, our actions, thoughts, and motivations are illuminated, shown up. The self-understanding that is aimed at by frequent examination of conscience is a self-understanding-in-relationship with God, a rational self-understanding. At the same time, it is an apostolic understanding of self in the sense that it is the Jesuit's service of Christ our Lord that is called into question, that is brought into the light of Christ so that it may be purified. This honesty in facing God is an honest facing of oneself while, as it were, looking God straight in the eye. It is an insurance against self-deception,

against the dishonest justification of compromises in the service of all Jesuit prayer, not only of the examination of conscience. It is an honesty that leads to that humility and abnegation of self which is the condition of openness to God in prayer. The prayer of the Society is a prayer that listens to what God has to say in the concrete circumstances of one's life, a prayer that is attentive and docile to God's guidance. The foundation of openness, listening, attentiveness, docility, in prayer is a certain kind of humility; it is the humility that acknowledges our need of redemption, our powerlessness to save ourselves, our nothingness that waits to be filled by God. And that humility is a function of a certain honesty in loving and prayerful union with God.

F. Prayer of Discernment

Another characteristic of Jesuit prayer is that it is a prayer of discernment. In recent literature on Jesuit spirituality, much attention has been paid to both personal and communal discernment. It is enough here to say that the basis of both personal and communal discernment is personal prayer, and that the aim of discernment is to know what God is asking in some particular set of circumstances. Discernment involves a kind of loving-thinking with God, an affective "tuning in" on God's wave-length in the prayerful consideration of particular decisions to be made, of particular lines of action to be followed out. This kind of seeking to know God's will in concrete circumstances through prayerful searching is much more than a method. It is a whole dimension of Jesuit prayer. It is that integral aspect of prayer according to the spirit of the Society that seeks the conformity of the Jesuit's judgments with those of Jesus Christ. The prayer proper to the Society is more than a simple contemplative being-with Jesus Christ. It is apostolic prayer, ordered to action, and so it necessarily involves a conforming of one's judgments and decisions and whole manner of approaching reality with the intentions that are in the heart of Christ. This discerning dimension of prayer that seeks to conform the Jesuit's will with God's will is an overall dimension of all Jesuit prayer, and it is one of the factors that make Jesuit prayer apostolic. It will not only influence the lines of action taken by the

individual Jesuit, but will also give form to communal deliberations of groups of Jesuits. Even when no step-by-step formal procedure for communal discernment is followed, every group decision taken by Jesuits will have, in its background and as its basis, the discerning prayer of the members of the group.

G. A Prayer of Love

Finally, Jesuit prayer is loving prayer, prayer that accepts God's love and that returns that love. Moreover, the love in a Jesuit's prayer will overflow into his relationship with other people and, especially, into his fraternal relationships in community. And this is the most important thing that can be said about Jesuit community as a community of prayer, that love flows from prayer to community and that love is the bond of both.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Decree 19, "Community Life and Religious Discipline," no. 2, in *Documents of the Thirty-First General Congregation* (Woodstock, 1976), p. 63.
- 2 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* [671].
- 3 *Ibid.*, [821].
- 4 *Ibid.*, [659].
- 5 Decree 11, "The Union of Minds and Hearts," no. 5, in *Documents of the Thirty-Second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Washington, 1975), p. 76.
- 6 On uniformity, see *General Examen*, [81; also 47]. See also *Constitutions*, [401; also 257].
- 7 Decree 11, "The Union of Minds and Hearts," no. 6.
- 8 This section appears in a different and more general form in Robert L. Faricy, *Spirituality for Religious Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), ch. 7.
- 9 This footnote was kept in the text, on page 120 above.
- 10 See Nadal, *In examen annotationes*, IV, 80-83, in *Epistolae et monumenta P. Hieronymi Nadal*, V, 162-163.
- 11 *Ibid.*, page 295, from *Exhortationes complutenses* (Alcalá, 1561), *Platica 3^a*.
- 12 Decree 14, "On Prayer," no. 11, in *Documents of the Thirty-First General Congregation*, p. 43; repeated and quoted in Decree 11, no. 36 of the 32nd General Congregation (in *Documents of the Thirty-Second General Congregation*, pp. 89-90).
- 13 Decree 14, no. 4, of General Congregation XXXI.

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