

Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits



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Jesuit Prayer and Jesuit Ministry
Context and Possibilities

Frank J. Houdek, S.J.

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Frank J. Houdek, S.J.

Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits
24/1: January 1992

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For your information . . .

Things are not always what they seem.

The essay in this issue of *Studies* and a new book most recently reinforced that blinding insight.

Those of us who entered the Society of Jesus before Vatican II most often, I am sure, took it as a matter of course that St. Ignatius had mandated in the Constitutions (at that time still only in Latin) an uninterrupted hour of prayer for all Jesuits. The first part of Father Houdek's essay summarizes briefly what historical investigation has demonstrated over the last seventy-five years about that matter, and it is not what in the past it seemed to be. The rest of the essay may be equally surprising. If the piece as a whole occasions letters to the editor from our readers, I shall be pleased but not surprised. Frank Houdek's previous essay in *Studies* just a year ago, "The Road Too Often Traveled," subtitled "Formation: 'Developing the Apostolic Body of the Society'" (23/1, January, 1991), drew a quite varied response. I hope this one does too.

The new book is *Men Astutely Trained: A History of the Jesuits in the American Century* by Peter McDonough (New York: Free Press/Macmillan, 1991). *Men Astutely Trained* deals with the Society of Jesus in the United States from the days of the immigrant church before World War I to the years before Vatican II. In almost exuberant detail it often looks at the Jesuits in ways that we never looked at ourselves. You may not agree with everything in the book—I do not; but I do think it is a very important and extraordinarily insightful work in many ways. Among its important services is to make clear that the massive changes we have been undergoing for the last twenty-five years have not come upon us simply from Vatican II or from secular influences, but were long in preparation outside and inside the Society of Jesus itself. For Jesuits and for those interested in the Catholic Church in America, this book wonderfully responds to the wish expressed by the poet Robert Burns, "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us / To see oursels as others see us."

But then, who would want things always to be what they seem?

John W. Padberg, S.J.

Editor

Gilles Cusson, S. J.

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Gilles Cusson is director of an Ignatian spirituality center in Quebec and founder and editor of the quarterly journal Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne. Formerly he was a member of the faculty of the Gregorian University in Rome and director of the Jesuit "tertianship" in Quebec. He has had extensive experience in directing retreats, courses, and study sessions in North America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

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Jesuit Prayer and Jesuit Ministry

Context and Possibilities

I. Introduction: Setting the Context

On November 17, 1991, we commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the closing of the Society of Jesus' Thirty-first General Congregation. In an earlier study in this series,¹ Rev. John Padberg, S.J., has clearly documented the achievements of that congregation. As Fr. Padberg points out, this congregation was both radical and revolutionary in many ways: its procedures, the variety of issues with which it dealt, its consistent return to Ignatian sources, its dogged attempts to reclaim something of a pristine Ignatian vision and to adapt that vision to a Church still dazed by the impact of Vatican II.

The congregation planted seeds for a radical reform and renewal of the inner life of the Society of Jesus and through it of many other religious communities. These seeds bore their mature fruit in the Thirty-second General Congregation. In any number of ways, we Jesuits are still trying to sort out and integrate many

¹ John W. Padberg, S.J., "The General Congregations of the Society: A Brief Survey of Their History," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 6, Nos. 1 and 2 (Jan. and March, 1974): 73-108.

Rev. Frank J. Houdek, S.J., is a member of the faculty of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, where he teaches both historical theology and spirituality. He also serves as clergy personnel director for the Diocese of Oakland, CA. His address at JSTB is 1735 LeRoy Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.

of the implications flowing from the vision of GC 31, as well as the developments in the aftermath of GC 32.

In this brief essay I would like to continue that process of sorting and integrating. I would like to examine again the decree on prayer which emerged from that congregation.² First, I will offer some historical reflections on this document on prayer and then turn to some practical suggestions about apostolic prayer which I hope will be helpful for all of us.

A. Ignatius and the Prayer of Jesuits

As most older Jesuits recognize, the document on prayer was truly revolutionary. At the congregation a good deal of controversy and difference of opinion attended its formulation. In both the first and second sessions of the congregation, the delegates were in complete agreement about the necessity of personal prayer. They ran into very wide disagreement, however, regarding the tradition of mandatory prayer in the Society, a tradition that had lasted for well over four hundred years.³ To understand the genesis of this disagreement and to integrate fully the solution offered by the congregation, we must go back to the earliest days of the Society and consider the history of that period.

Much of this history deals with the understanding of prayer embodied in the Jesuit Constitutions. There Ignatius outlines his own mature thinking on the prayer of Jesuits. In Part 4 of the Constitutions, he offers a program of prayer for Jesuits in forma-

² Decree 14, *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 137-45.

³ *Ibid.*, 87f. There exists an extensive bibliography on the subject of prayer in the Society. I include in a brief bibliographical appendix some items for those who would like to do their own further reading on the subject.

tion.⁴ Later in Part 6 he communicates his thinking and desires about the prayer of Jesuits who have completed the elaborate formation which he outlined in the earlier parts of the Constitutions.⁵ It is particularly this latter section that has caused both concern and controversy all through the history of the Society.

Even while Ignatius was alive, controversy was rampant among the Jesuits of the early Society about the issue of their prayer. Jerónimo Nadal, to whom Ignatius committed the task of promulgating and commenting on the new constitutions of the order, met considerable concern and disagreement on the issue of prayer as he moved about Europe on his assigned task. This was particularly true in Spain, where a more contemplative and monastic ethos regarding the prayer appropriate to religious dominated the scene.⁶

Even before hearing of this controversy from Nadal, Ignatius had confronted the issue in a succession of letters to various Jesuits who were seeking long hours of prayer for themselves and/or urging that it be imposed on others. Ignatius spared no one who suggested either prescribed or lengthy prayer for Jesuits. He was most emphatic on this point, for example, with a future general of the Society, St. Francis Borgia. In a letter to Borgia, Ignatius urges him to curtail by half the time he gave to prayer and exercises of piety. Ignatius reminds Borgia that

[i]t is certainly a more lofty virtue of the soul, and a greater grace, to be able to enjoy the Lord in different duties [study, estate management, conversations, etc.] and places than in one only [prayer].

⁴ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. with introduction and commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), Part 4, [340-45].

⁵ *Ibid.*, [582f].

⁶ E. Edward Kinerk, S.J., "When Jesuits Pray: A Perspective on the Prayer of Apostolic Persons," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 17, No. 5 (Nov. 1985): 3-9.

We should, in the Divine Goodness, make a great effort to attain this.⁷

A very subtle but real reprimand from Ignatius to Borgia.

We need only recall the celebrated cases of Francisco Onfroy and Andrés de Oviedo to get some further insight into the mind of Ignatius about prescribed prayer or lengthy prayer for Jesuits. Both were Jesuits who had fallen under the influence of the Spanish Franciscan friar Juan Tejada. Generally reputedly a saint, Tejada urged the need for protracted prayer if one hoped to develop any significant relationship with God. Onfroy and Oviedo had come under his spell and were beginning to urge these ascetical practices on other members of the Society. This presented Ignatius with an extremely touchy situation, because, as rector of the college of Gandía, Oviedo was starting to impose his personal ascetical agenda on the scholastics of the college. To combat this situation Ignatius sent a very long letter to Borgia, in which he reprimands Onfroy and articulates his own understanding of the prayer that is appropriate for Jesuits. A number of points in this letter merit close attention and consideration.

Onfroy had sent Ignatius a defense of his position. Point by point Ignatius deals with this defense. His words to Onfroy were quite explicit: "That a meditation of one and two hours is no prayer, and that more hours are required, is bad doctrine and against the opinion and practice of the saints."⁸ At the end of the letter, Ignatius states most explicitly his sense of prayer:

It would be good to realize that not only when he prays does man serve God. . . . at times God is served more in other ways than by prayer, so much so in fact that God is pleased that prayer is omit-

⁷ *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Iesu fundatoris epistolæ et instructiones*, 12 vols., Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu (Madrid, 1903–11; reprinted 1964–68) 2:233–37, letter 466; hereafter this work will be cited as *Epp. Ign.* For an English translation of this work, see William J. Young, S.J., trans., *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 180. Hereafter this work will be cited as *Letters*.

⁸ *Epp. Ign.* 12:653, Appendix 6, letter 3; *Letters*, 210.

ted entirely for other works, and much more that it be curtailed. Indeed, it is right to pray perseveringly and not to faint, but this should be properly understood, as the saints and doctors of the Church understood it.⁹

We should recall that Oviedo was so taken by ascetic practices that in 1548 he asked Ignatius to grant him a seven-year period of complete solitude to prepare for his profession! Ignatius delicately but steadfastly refused this request and used the occasion to remind Oviedo that the appropriate charism of the Society is not protracted prayer but mortification and obedience.¹⁰

One further example will confirm the Ignatian viewpoint concerning prayer. In 1551 a young Portuguese scholastic who was already ordained, Antonio Brandão, addressed a series of questions to Ignatius. His questions betray him as a man with a somewhat delicate or scrupulous conscience. In a kindly fashion Ignatius answers these questions in some detail. Brandão's sixth question is most relevant to this inquiry: What method of meditation that is more in keeping with our vocation should be followed? Ignatius's reply is worth quoting:

Over and above the spiritual exercises assigned for their perfection—namely, daily Mass, an hour for vocal prayer and examen of conscience, and weekly confession and Communion—they should practice the seeking of God's presence in all things, in their conversations, their walks, in all that they see, taste, hear, understand, in all their actions, since His Divine Majesty is truly in all things by His presence, power, and essence. This kind of meditation, which finds God our Lord in all things, is easier than raising oneself to the consideration of divine truths which are more abstract and which demand something of an effort if we are to keep our attention on them. But this method is an excellent exercise to prepare us for great visitation of our Lord **even in prayers that are rather short.**¹¹

⁹ *Epp. Ign.* 12:654; *Letters*, 211.

¹⁰ *Epp. Ign.* 2:54–65; *Letters*, 164–72.

¹¹ *Epp. Ign.* 3:506–513; *Letters*, 240, emphasis added.

In this same reply he also reminds Brandão of purity of intention: that studies, which are difficult and demanding have been undertaken for the love of God and the well-being of the neighbor.

I have chosen these brief examples to make it clear that Ignatius had a keen awareness of the issues and controversies surrounding prayer in the early Society, even before Nadal presented the difficulty to him. These and many other examples from his letters show the very consistent approach that Ignatius took regarding the prayer of Jesuits.¹² This material illustrates the background against which Ignatius composed the Constitutions. It shows the high regard he had for prayer and the other traditional exercises of piety. It also makes quite clear, however, his personal resistance to protracted and prescribed prayer for Jesuits. Though he never formalizes his insight, he actually creates a new vision for apostolic religious life. It's not surprising, then, that many of his early companions did not comprehend this. The paradigm shift was simply too enormous for them to capture. Schooled as many of them were in the contemplative and monastic traditions of their day, they seemed simply incapable of integrating such a radically new vision of apostolic prayer. They could only fall back on what they personally knew and experienced, religious traditions, namely, which mandated lengthy personal prayer for all members of the community. Simply put, Ignatius rejected this tradition and replaced it with a vision of apostolic prayer that allowed the Jesuit to find God in the midst of the most demanding apostolic activity.

It is this vision that Ignatius articulates in Part 4 of the Constitutions, in legislation that is innovative and bold.

[I]n what pertains to prayer, meditation, and study and also in regard to the bodily practices of fasts, vigils, and other austerities

¹² The reader might find it interesting to peruse the following examples in Young's translation of selected letters of Ignatius: (1) letters to Borgia, pp. 83-86, 179-82; 194-211; (2) Letter to Oviedo, pp. 164-72. Additional material may also be found in Kinerk, "When Jesuits Pray," 3-9.

or penances, it does not seem expedient to give them [formed members] any other rule than that which discreet charity dictates to them, provided that the confessor should always be informed and also, when a doubt about expediency arises, the superior.¹³

That there should be no law or prescription about prayer was the law which he left us in the Constitutions!

B. Post-Ignatian Developments

One would think, of course, that this definitive statement in the Constitutions would have put an end to the controversy surrounding Jesuit prayer. Unfortunately, it did not; in fact, the issue was forced into the open at the First General Congregation, which elected Laínez to succeed Ignatius as general. Actually, it was Borgia who precipitated this difficulty when he prepared for the congregation a statement requesting it to mandate prayer for professed members, contrary to the Constitutions which this very congregation had just approved. Borgia's statement did not reach Rome in time to be considered by the congregation. This body did, however, treat the issue of prayer in Decree 97, which simply directs that the prescriptions of the Constitutions are to be observed without any change and that a principle of *epikeia* should be applied to all classes of the Society—professed, scholastics, and coadjutors.¹⁴

Apparently the controversy continued even after the First General Congregation, for it became a part of the agenda of the Second General Congregation, which actually elected Borgia in 1565. There was lengthy conversation about the issue, with both sides marshaling arguments to support their positions. Decree 29 brought the controversy to an end by giving Borgia, the newly elected general, the power to increase the time of prayer "in the measure in which his prudence should judge it opportune in our

¹³ *Constitutions*, Part 6, [582].

¹⁴ GC 1, Decree 97, *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1892–93) 2:177.

Lord, bearing in mind the needs of countries, persons, and the like."¹⁵ Borgia wasted no time in acting on this directive from the congregation. The congregation ended on September 3, 1565; on November 5 of that year he prescribed for some provinces of the Society an hour of prayer in addition to the two examens.¹⁶ Thus we see a new custom or tradition introduced into the Society, one directly contrary to the stated intentions of Ignatius and the express prescriptions of the Constitutions.

Gradually this custom was extended to the entire Society during the generalate of Borgia. A univocal prescription was thus imposed on all members of the Society from the youngest novice to the most stable and mature professed member. Once again one would hope that the issue had finally been settled, even if the settlement distorted in large measure the Ignatian vision. This did not prove to be the case, however; the controversy continued after the death of Borgia and was brought to the attention of the Fourth General Congregation, which was asked to consider again the issue of prescribed prayer. The text of the congregation's Decree 5 makes it clear that some controversy swirled around this issue, some delegates desiring to return to the prescriptions of the Constitutions while others wanted to confirm the tradition inaugurated by Borgia. Decree 5 confirmed the Borgian prescription and turned into law the custom which this general had introduced with the approval of GC 2 in 1565.¹⁷

This law prevailed in the Society without question or serious challenge for almost four hundred years. From time to time various generals found it necessary to reaffirm it, to remind the Society of the necessity and importance of prayer and our prescribed obligation. This repeated exhortation would indicate, of

¹⁵ GC 2, Decree 29, *Institutum* 2:201f.

¹⁶ *Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal S.I.*, 5 vols., MHSI (Madrid, 1898-1962) 4:250. See also Pedro de Leturia, "La hora matutina de meditación en la Compañía naciente," *AHSI* 3 (1934): 47-108; A. Astráin, *De Oratione Matutina in Societate Iesu* (1923), 32f.

¹⁷ GC 4, Decree 5, *Institutum* 2:248f.

course, that a question about the utility of this obligation lingered in the minds of many Jesuits, or that many Jesuits were finding it difficult to devote such prescribed time to their prayer.

C. Twentieth-Century Developments

Reminders of this nature have been especially frequent in the twentieth century. A brief review of this material will provide us with the immediate context for the decree on prayer issued by the Thirty-first General Congregation. Three generals have dominated the twentieth century—Ledóchowski, Janssens, and Arrupe. During this period the Society has held nine general congregations, during which the generals as well as the delegates have offered some noteworthy reflections on Jesuit prayer, reflections which culminated in the work of GC 31. Let us examine briefly some of the statements that preceded GC 31.

Certainly the general who most strongly supported the tradition introduced by Borgia was Fr. Ledóchowski. Beginning very early in his generalate and continuing throughout his long tenure, he urged fidelity to the integral hour of mental prayer that was the cornerstone of the Borgian tradition. During his first years as general, Ledóchowski addressed an exhortation to the whole Society on the end of our vocation. There he forcefully stressed the need of prayer if we are to pursue our vocation fruitfully. He also reaffirmed our obligation faithfully to fulfill all the legislated exercises of piety and those legitimated by longstanding tradition.¹⁸

The Twenty-seventh General Congregation was convened under his direction. The goal of this meeting was to adapt the law of the Society to the new Code of Canon Law. It was also an opportunity for the Society solemnly assembled to reflect on matters important to its life and work. John Padberg has remarked about this congregation, "It was also among the most important

¹⁸ *Acta Romana* 3 (1919): 112-16.

in reinforcing in the Society the clarity, the order and, sometimes to a degree, the somewhat mechanical rigor which seemed to characterize many of its pronouncements in the years to come.¹⁹ What did this congregation have to say about prayer? Two decrees deal with this subject: Decree 41 reaffirms the prescriptions from GC 4 about prayer for novices. It prescribes an hour and a half of prayer for novices daily, but in particular cases allows this time to be either increased (but never beyond two hours) or curtailed.²⁰ Later Decree 52 addressed the issue of prayer for all Jesuits, mandating an integral hour of daily prayer for all Jesuits, along with the two examens and a quarter of an hour of spiritual reading to prepare for the prayer of the next day. For those not obligated to recite the Divine Office, it recommended an additional period of spiritual reading. Finally, the congregation directed all to participate in the communal prayer of the Litanies.²¹ Thus in solemn assembly the Society almost canonized the Borgian tradition: prescribed and lengthy prayer for all members of the Society. This decree does not advert to the Constitutions; it cites only the earlier congregations which accepted the tradition inaugurated by Borgia.

A few years later Ledóchowski left no doubt about his mind in this matter. In a brief response in February 1926, he categorically reaffirmed the universal obligation of an integral hour of mental prayer for all Jesuits. He stated that doing one's prayer while hearing confessions (that is, in the intervals between penitents) is a completely unacceptable practice and violates the Society's intention in mandating an integral hour of prayer.²² Obviously, he would allow neither discretion nor mitigation in the matter of prayer.

¹⁹ "General Congregations," 62.

²⁰ GC 27, Decree 41, *Acta Romana* 4 (1923): 42f.

²¹ GC 27, Decree 52, *Acta Romana* 4 (1923): 45.

²² *Acta Romana* 5 (1924): 140.

Some years later he felt a need to exhort the Society again about this same issue. He addressed the whole Society in July 1934 on our daily exercises of piety. He devoted a very lengthy section of this exhortation to morning mental prayer, once again making the points that we would expect: Ignatius's concern about the necessity of prayer, the historical development of the legislation about prayer, the examples of the great men of the Society and their devotion to prayer, attention to the dispositions for prayer—especially interior recollection—and the value of dwelling upon the mysteries of the life of Christ in our daily prayer.²³ More than any other writing of Ledóchowski, this exhortation exemplifies his deep personal commitment to promoting and protecting the Society's tradition of a daily hour of mental prayer. Again, the document makes no mention of discretion, discernment, or spiritual direction and allows for no mitigation or individuation of this tradition. It simply reaffirms the prescriptions of GC 27.

In 1937 Ledóchowski announced the convocation of the Twenty-eighth General Congregation, citing his failing health and his need for a vicar-general to assist him; among the agenda of the congregation was again the issue of Jesuit prayer. Once again the congregation underscored the tradition of the daily hour of mental prayer in its decree on the spiritual life.²⁴ This should not surprise us, since it was Ledóchowski himself who had laid out the agenda for the congregation when he convoked it.²⁵

On September 15, 1946, John Baptist Janssens succeeded Ledóchowski as general. He was to govern the Society for eighteen years and to shape its spirit in the post-World War II era. Just three months after his election, Janssens sent a letter to the whole Society on cultivating the interior life. The letter comprises an exhortatory part and a more practical second part. The first part

²³ *Acta Romana* 7 (1934): 835–44.

²⁴ GC 28, Decree 22, *Acta Romana* 9 (1938): 25.

²⁵ Padberg, "General Congregations," 62–65.

rehearses the Society's tradition about the interior life from Ignatius to the present. The second part offers some practical suggestions for improving one's personal prayer. Though he does not reaffirm the obligation of an hour of daily mental prayer, he presumes it. In the course of the letter, he answers an objection regarding the emotional stability of younger Jesuits: Are they up to an integral hour of mental prayer a day, and should we not mitigate this obligation for them? He contends that the very practice of mental prayer will bring them to a better mental and emotional balance, and concludes, therefore, that there is no need to alter this tradition! So, very early in his generalate, he communicated his mind on this important issue.²⁶

Because of failing health he summoned the Thirtieth General Congregation ten years after his election to choose a vicar to aid him in governing the Society. In addition to electing a vicar, the congregation passed a number of decrees dealing with the interior life of the Society. These decrees were heavily influenced by an allocution to the delegates delivered by Pius XII in the early days of the congregation. This papal intervention shaped the decrees and gave them a more ascetical and disciplinary form than they would otherwise have had.

In any event, the congregation treated the spiritual life of Jesuits in its tenth decree. It reaffirmed the obligation of a daily hour of mental prayer for all Jesuits. It allowed some discretion, however, as to when this prayer should be done. The congregation also allowed the possibility in particular cases of breaking the hour of prayer into two half hours to be done at different times during the day.²⁷ This proved to be the first mitigation of the law on prayer in almost four hundred years.

²⁶ *Acta Romana* 11 (1946): 147-76.

²⁷ GC 30, Decree 10, *Acta Romana* 13 (1958): 307f.

D. The Decision at the Thirty-first General Congregation

Vatican II was still in progress when Fr. Janssens died. GC 31 was summoned to elect a successor and to begin immediately to deal with the ramifications of the council. The congregation elected Pedro Arrupe on May 22, 1965. His vision was to shape the Society for the next twenty years. A fruit of this congregation was the Society's current legislation on prayer—the legislation with which this article started. Let us look briefly at this legislation and then turn to some practical suggestions to deal with its implications.

We should recall that GC 31 met in a two sessions, the first session running from May 7 to July 15, 1965, and the second lasting from September 8 to November 17, 1965. The issue of prayer was discussed in both sessions and the discussions were often angry and heated. Battle lines were drawn in the first session, with one group of delegates urging the Borgian tradition without any mitigation and a second group wanting to abrogate that tradition and return to the "no law on prayer" regulations of the Constitutions. Neither side apparently had enough votes to prevail over the other. The delegates were at a stalemate when the first session ended.

Fortunately, there was more than one historian among the delegates. Fr. Miguel A. Fiorito, S.J., a delegate from Argentina, was carrying on research on Ignatius's own legislation on prayer. Under the direction of Fr. George Ganss of the Missouri Province, he circulated the results of this research to the delegates during the two-month period between the sessions of the congregation.²⁸ Once in possession of this information, the delegates reached a compromise during the second session of the congregation. Alerted to what Ignatius had done, they were better able to integrate the Ignatian vision with the Borgian tradition. Our cur-

²⁸ Miguel A. Fiorito, "La ley Ignaciana de la oración en la Compañía de Jesús," *Stromata* 22 (1967): 3-89, trans. Aloysius A. Jacobsmeyer, S.J., and George E. Ganss, S.J., in *Woodstock Letters* 97 (1968): 149-224

rent legislation on prayer is the result of this integration. It should be noted that the Holy Father addressed the delegates after they had accepted a text of the document favoring a return to the prescriptions of the Constitutions. The Pope's allocution emphasized the Society's need for prayer and asceticism. In light of his allocution, the delegates returned to the document on prayer and eventually approved a compromise between the Constitutions and the Borgian tradition.

What does this decree on prayer do? It changes the question of prayer from an issue of law to one of discernment. In the first place, it makes it very clear that the congregation does not wish to impose indiscriminately upon all Jesuits a precisely defined universal norm for the manner and length of prayer. It then urges the adaptation of our rule of an hour's prayer 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 presupposes in the Constitutions.²⁹ The document maintains in delicate balance and tension the vision of Ignatius and the tradition of Borgia. It recommends a working norm of one hour of prayer daily for Jesuits, but encourages personal responsibility and prayerful discernment about everything that concerns the spiritual life of the Jesuit. This is indeed a truly admirable compromise.

II. Some Helps to Understanding GC 31 on Prayer

A. The Problem for Post-GC 31 Jesuits

What then is the problem? Put simply, the problem is one of integration. After working for almost twenty years with Jesuits, I am convinced that we have not yet integrated the vision given to us by GC 31. Too many Jesuits still feel guilty or depressed about the poor state of their prayer. Too many still feel pressure from their ministry and find available too little time or energy to

²⁹ GC 31, Decree 14 on prayer, in Padberg, *Documents*, 137-45.

devote to prayer. Too many still experience a gnawing fear that there is something seriously amiss in their relationship with God. Let me elaborate on the difficulty and offer some practical suggestions to resolve it.

In a recent prize-winning work, Parker J. Palmer offers the following observation:

Contemporary images of what it means to be spiritual tend to value the inward search over the outward act, silence over sound, solitude over interaction, centeredness and quietude and balance over engagement and animation and struggle. If one is called to monastic life, those images can be empowering. But if one is called to the world of action, the same images can disenfranchise the soul, for they tend to devalue the energies of active life rather than encourage us to move with those energies toward wholeness and holiness.³⁰

This is a telling remark for many reasons, and it deserves our attention as a reflection on the current state of personal spirituality among American Jesuits.

For most if not all of us, the model of Jesuit prayer and spirituality inculcated in the novitiate, in our scholastic formation, and in our early priestly life was simply constructed out of monastic models which indeed did set excessive value upon the inward search, silence, solitude, retirement, and withdrawal. Who can forget the formation houses in the woods and the months and even years of seclusion and withdrawal from "the world"? Clearly the active virtues, the outward act, pastoral interaction, engagement, animation, and struggle suffered from silence in such settings. Denigration and trivialization of these values followed naturally from the overemphasis given to the values that are inherent in a monastic style or model of Jesuit formation for ministry. A kind of spiritual schizophrenia was the result, because we allowed our spirituality to be normalized and judged by "monastic criteria" and categories that have little or nothing to do with what lies at

³⁰ Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1990), 7.

the very heart of our Jesuit vocation to active priestly ministry. We experienced the disenfranchising of our very souls, because the very energies given to us by God for our holiness and wholeness had been dramatically and drastically devalued.

Because of this, many in our ranks often walk as splintered and conflicted men, torn in two directions, in neither of which they run along smoothly. We learned our early lessons too well; and the allure of retirement, silence, and solitude remains very strong. Rather than nurturing and empowering our spirit, however, this allure or enticement has generally served to elicit a good deal of shame and guilt before God, because we seldom feel adequately responsive to it.

We also experience the allure of the opposite reality, to be men of action and interaction, of engagement and animation and struggle. Because this dimension of our personal mystery and reality lies so deeply at the heart of who we are and who we are called to be as Jesuit ministers, this attraction is powerful and demanding for us. Sadly and strangely, the more we yield to it, the more we feel distanced from the very God who authors this mysterious reality within us. We experience the polarity and tension between work and prayer, interiority and action, eschatology and incarnation, contemplation and action. Often, in the midst of very fruitful and satisfying ministry, we feel a kind of foreboding anxiety about all the “spiritual exercises” that are left undone! And we find ourselves debilitated and disenfranchised by a tension that simply should not be. And let us not deceive ourselves about these issues. I am not indulging in a form of exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. This is a story Jesuits all over the country have repeated to me countless times—good men of dedication, commitment and devotion, and yet conflicted by tensions that sadden and weaken and frustrate them. All of this, I suggest, stems from a false dichotomy between spirituality and ministry, prayer and action—a dichotomy suffered by all too many Jesuits, and one which we continue to promote by the models of spirituality still considered normative in the majority of today’s formation programs.

B. Some Helps in Understanding How to Implement the Decree on Prayer

Is there a way out of this dilemma for us, a way for us to integrate more happily and more fruitfully the vision given us in GC 31's document on prayer? Is there a more fruitful, honest, satisfying, and appropriate Jesuit spirituality that can carry us into the decade just begun and allow us to live more peacefully with ourselves and more authentically before our God and our people? I surely believe there is and I would like to offer some hints as to how it can be discovered and integrated into our Jesuit lives.

I am going to suggest a variety of clues to help us understand the implications of the document on prayer. They are drawn from material that describes "priestly spirituality." Though the material refers in large measure to priests, I do not in any way mean to exclude Jesuit Brothers from this consideration; I use it rather as descriptive of ministerial spirituality and thus applicable to the entire membership of the Society—the ordained as well as the non-ordained.

It is interesting to note that well over twenty-five years ago Vatican Council II provided us with some clues about this. Throughout the documents of the council, there are intimations that a more authentic and integrated spirituality was available for us. The document on the priesthood (*Presbyterorum ordinis*), however, drew these intimations together into a cohesive and intelligible portrait. The third chapter of the document is especially informative for our purposes. First, it notes that it is by their entire ministry that priests are being directed toward perfection of life. Clearly, this means that the fathers of the council presupposed no inherent dichotomy between spirituality and ministry. They were, out of their enlightened experience, pointing us to the arena or forum in which appropriate Jesuit spirituality could be cultivated and nurtured.

This extraordinary insight is elaborated in the rest of this third chapter. We are told that the sincere and tireless exercise of our ministry in the Spirit of Christ makes appropriate priestly holiness or spirituality available to us. The council repeated this point over and over again in a variety of ways that only emphasize how deeply the bishops of the council were convinced of it. Probably the final section of the third chapter of the document states most powerfully this new vision of priestly spirituality. It is important enough to cite it in full:

For their part, priests, who are already involved in and distracted by the very numerous duties of their office, cannot without anxiety seek for a way which will enable those to unify their interior lives with their program of external activities. No merely external arrangement of the works of the ministry, no mere practice of religious exercises can bring about this unity of life, however much these things can help foster it. But priests can truly build up this unity by imitating Christ the Lord in the fulfillment of their ministry. . . .

. . . Therefore priests attain to the unity of their lives by uniting themselves with Christ in acknowledging the Father's will and in the gift of themselves on behalf of the flock committed to them.

Thus, . . . they will find in the very exercise of pastoral love the bond of priestly perfection which will unify their lives and activities.³¹

I can only say that this is a truly bold and enlightening reflection on a more authentic and appropriate priestly spirituality, and it does have considerable application to Jesuit spirituality. What the bishops urge in this document simply does away with the artificial dichotomy between ministry and spirituality. They state unambiguously that it is in ministry—yes, in ministry—that life and prayer and activity are unified and nurtured and strengthened! It is in the very reality of ministry that our Jesuit spirituality is enhanced and deepened.

³¹ "Presbyterorum ordinis," *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966), 562.

Archbishop Guilford Young, who prepared the English translation of this document in the Abbot edition and wrote the commentary on it in the same edition, has completely captured the intention of the council when he remarks,

This unity of action and spirituality is not achieved in gluing the external works of his ministry to his interior life by mere practices of piety, although, of course, they help considerably. . . . Plunged into a diversity of problems and duties in today's world, the priest surmounts the area of tension between action and spirituality in the serene polarity of giving himself, united to Christ, in the service of his people.³²

I realize, of course, that this document was written more specifically for members of the secular clergy than for religious, who have their own particular charism. In no way do I intend to assimilate the members of the Society to the secular clergy. This we clearly are not. Even so, I feel this document has some relevance and provides some clues that may be helpful for us in implementing the prescriptions and the spirit of the congregation's teaching on prayer.

Some fifteen years ago the Carmelite Fr. Ernest Larkin undertook a study on priestly spirituality for the Conference of Bishops here in the United States. After countless questionnaires, innumerable interviews with both priests and bishops, and extensive historical and theological research on the Catholic tradition of priestly spirituality, he came to exactly the same conclusion that the council had. He stated again unequivocally that the arena and forum for priestly spirituality is in ministry. He emphasized to the bishops that it is in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, of pastoral care and administration, of personal pastoral encounter with his people that a priest finds his most authentic expression of personal spirituality. He provided for us further confirmation of a paradigm shift regarding the reality of priestly spirituality. His reflections give us another perspective from which to consider our own Jesuit spirituality.

³² *Ibid.*, 530.

We find further confirmation of this important shift in the new Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983. Canon 276 deals with the personal holiness of the priest. It declares that clerics are especially bound to pursue holiness because of their role as dispensers of God's mysteries in the service of God's people. It states further that we pursue this holiness first of all by faithfully and untiringly fulfilling the duties of pastoral ministry. In other words, the Code is placing the priest's encounter with the living God in his ministry. The preeminent arena for us to meet the God whom we love and serve and worship is in the ministry we offer to those whom we serve as Jesuits. There is simply no other way to read this canon and the conciliar theology of priestly spirituality on which it is based. This means that God becomes available and present to us in a preeminent fashion in our priestly service. How wonderfully similar this sounds to the Ignatian ideal: that we find God in all things and especially in the mission and ministry given us by obedience!

III. Some Practical Ways to Integrate GC 31 on Prayer

A. Introduction

By urging and emphasizing this point, I in no way intend to denigrate the ordinary and traditional means to find union with God: prayer, meditation, self-reflection, examination of consciousness, hearing the Word, Eucharistic celebration and sacramental life, priestly support and fellowship in community. I do mean, though, that all of these are ancillary and supportive to the central place of encounter with God which is in our Jesuit ministry. I want to be very careful here. In no way am I advocating unreflective or uncritical activism. I think we do need a rhythm of self-reflection, liturgical prayer, and contemplative quiet if we are to be sensitive and alert to the action of God in our life and ministry. This rhythm provides the alertness and sensitivity to God who reveals love and presence in our work for the Kingdom.

Clearly, the document on prayer from GC 31 presupposes such a rhythm, and I clearly support this presupposition.

I would like now to spell this out more specifically in a practical fashion. I believe that there are dimensions or moments of ministry that we experience over and over again and that are especially revelatory of the loving presence and action of God. On a daily basis these experiences are available to us. Unfortunately, too many Jesuits either misunderstand or misinterpret these experiences and actually find ways to avoid them or anesthetize themselves against their full impact. They challenge or invite us in ways that are strange or frightening, joyful or thrilling, anxious or exhilarating. Very often, because we do not understand them, we simply miss the very gracious and loving action of God in our experience of ordinary Jesuit life and ministry. And thus we continue to create artificial dichotomies between work and prayer, contemplation and action—dichotomies which often leave us notably confused about ourselves in relationship to our God. What, then, does all this mean for our life and prayer and ministry as Jesuits?

From interaction and conversation with Jesuits around the country, I know that these experiences of Jesuit ministry are part of the life and ministry of all Jesuits. I sense that they are specific to ministry and to Jesuit ministry. They form, I believe, the warp and woof of Jesuit spirituality as we are called to live it and integrate it at the beginning of this new decade and into the twenty-first century.

B. Practical Helps for Jesuit Prayer

Let me outline at least a few of these experiences of life and ministry that are revelatory of the loving presence and of God. I cannot give a complete catalogue of such experiences, but what I offer will be typical of what most Jesuits experience in their ministry.

The Experience of Community

I mean to discuss first the two experiences of community that characterize Jesuit ministry—personal pastoral encounter and liturgical celebration. Both of these experiences deserve our consideration and reflection. In the first place, I know that most of us have periodically come into contact with our God as we engaged in a personal pastoral encounter. What do I mean by that? Simply, I refer to the experience of being trusted or loved beyond what we have any right to expect or demand. I mean, of course, those wonderful moments in which someone communicates to us a truth about himself or herself that has never been spoken before. I speak of pastoral encounters in which secrets of the heart are given to us in love and trust. I ask you to reminisce about your own life of ministry and recall those precious events in which another stood before you in the raw nakedness of his or her humanity. All masks were put aside; truth was spoken as it had never been articulated before. The young man with AIDS, the unfaithful husband or wife returning to his or her senses and commitment, the young couple in the first blush of love seeking guidance about marriage, the newly pregnant young woman sharing with you the thrilling announcement of new life, the young man seeking information about the Society because he has been taken by the quality of our Jesuitness—all these and so many others like them exemplify pastoral encounters in which you are trusted or loved beyond your wildest expectations. Too often, I fear, we miss the mystery of these encounters in our busyness. Because of lack of reflection—examination of consciousness—we fail to penetrate the revelation that these encounters embody and thus to perceive them as the gift they really are. We forget that in no way do we deserve such love and such trust. We don't recognize that these gifts come to us only because of the presence and love and action of God's Spirit in the other. We miss the *kairos*, the moment of grace and the revelation of God in the pastoral encounter; and for this reason our prayer and our spirituality are the poorer.

A second experience of community common to our Jesuit and priestly ministry is that of liturgical celebration. I am sure that most of us take liturgical celebration very seriously. We work at homiletics and try to focus our own inner attention in preparation to lead other in liturgical prayer. We probably work with liturgical planners to create celebrations that are meaningful, prayerful, and beautiful. We bring considerable care to liturgical environment: flowers, vestments, church decorations appropriate to the various liturgical seasons and feasts. We hope that all of this will conspire to facilitate a prayerful liturgical celebration for our people.

I submit to you that often it happens that the celebration transcends all of our preparation, our liturgical talents and gifts, and even our own desires and personal expectations. The worshipping community knows the presence of God in the event of worship. There is a kind of exuberance or exhilaration that is larger and more thrilling than the music or the homily. Our word has a power that humbles us. We have sung those songs before and they never had this effect on the community. Or there is a kind of prayerful silence that embraces the congregation in a deep and sublime way. We are afraid to move or breathe, lest we shatter the silence of God's loving presence. This happens in strangely different settings: sometimes it is with a small congregation, and at other times it is with much larger gatherings. Often it can happen at a major liturgical celebration, but it certainly does happen in "ordinary time." Whenever it happens, this kind of celebration powerfully reveals the presence of God to us and others.

Not only in public prayer but in administering the sacrament of reconciliation do we also experience the presence and love of God. So many Jesuits have said to me that this is a situation in which the minister of the sacrament is often helped as much as or even more than the penitent. We are simply touched in this sacrament by the love, mercy, forgiveness, and presence of God.

This experience of liturgical celebration powerfully confirms the truth of the Gospel statement "When you gather in my name, I am present in your midst." Again, I ask you to recall and reminisce on your own experiences of liturgical celebration in which the presence of God was so clear and palpable. I can only tell you of my profound belief that this is indeed the visitation of God, that such liturgical celebration nurtures and strengthens our best Jesuit prayer and spirituality. It is in such celebration, such profound experience of a worshiping community, that we encounter our God and deepen the awareness and consciousness that belong to us specifically as Jesuit ministers. Reclaiming this awareness of the presence and gift of God in liturgical celebration is, it seems to me, one of the more important ways to enhance our Jesuit spirituality and develop the prayerfulness that Ignatius encouraged.

The Experience of Emptiness

A second experience of Jesuit ministry that reveals the action and presence of God is what I have styled the experience or reality of personal emptiness. This is probably a much more widely felt human experience, but it is particularly common, I think, to Jesuit ministry. I can describe it as a kind of episodic burnout in which one feels rather completely devoid of enthusiasm, energy, verve. There seem to be no resources left. One simply cannot be the person, the man, the Christian, or the Jesuit that people expect him to be. There is simply nothing left to give to anyone. If the phone rings one more time or someone else rings the doorbell or knocks at his door or there is another ministerial expectation of him, such a Jesuit thinks he is going to scream. It is a bone-weary, spirit-burdened emptiness.

Too often we have viewed this experience as something to be avoided or as an event to be denied or anesthetized by another drink or a little more television or another evening out. We look for easy Band-Aids that do not really deal with the soul-weariness that we feel. On a personal note, I too have known this experi-

ence from time to time and have tried a variety of stupid and/or inappropriate remedies to deal with it. I too have failed to reflect that God can be found in such emptiness, particularly if it is the result of spending oneself in ministry.

I have learned in my own life and from many other Jesuits that this emptiness really betokens our deep native desire and yearning for God. We have tried in so many ways to fill the emptiness and have discovered that all were completely ersatz and counterfeit. Avoidance, denial, rationalization, or escapist behavior simply did not work. We have to enter the emptiness and search the yearning and the desire which it betrays. It is, I believe, the "shape" of the desire and yearning which will reveal to us WHO will fill the emptiness and satisfy the desire which we sense. It is, in a way, like assembling an all-white jigsaw puzzle. We have no picture or plan to guide us in completing the puzzle. It is only the shape of the empty spaces that tells us almost infallibly the contours of the piece we are seeking to fill the spaces and complete the puzzle. So I believe that this sense of emptiness really masks a desire and yearning whose shape and composition and substance will reveal to us the face of God, who really satisfies all our deepest desires. This is something of what Augustine was suggesting in his famous "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O God." Accordingly, this is a kind of emptiness that we avoid at some risk to our prayer and spirituality.

There is an especially poignant dimension of this emptiness that particularly deserves our attention, a reality that seems to lie at the root of much of the flagging morale so common today among priests in general and some Jesuits in our day. Here I refer to the reality of loneliness as it is felt within the celibate priesthood. As Henri Nouwen pointed out over ten years ago, "The loneliness of the minister is especially painful; for over and above his experience as a man in modern society, he feels an added loneliness, resulting from the changing meaning of the ministerial

profession itself."³³ This kind of reflection, as we all know, says much to many younger Jesuits today.

Today's society is one in which loneliness inflicts upon us one of the most debilitating and painful of human wounds. We all live with an acute awareness of our isolation, paired with an intense search for intimate relationship and unity in community. There are so many ways in which we try to relieve this loneliness: psychotherapy, support groups, smaller and more intimate liturgies, workshops about intimacy, selective and intentional community. We use all of these and so many more to break through the immobilizing and often paralyzing wall of personal loneliness.

This pain of loneliness is all the more distressing in the life of the Jesuit minister. Not only do we share in the ordinary human condition of isolation, but we also discover that the effect and impact of our ministry for others is diminishing and deteriorating to a frightening extent. Our priestly Jesuit concerns in ministry have always been the ultimate realities of human life and existence: birth and death, togetherness and separation, love and hate, offense and reconciliation, pain and healing. Most of us entered the Society impelled by an urgent desire to bring value, meaning, and purpose to the lives of God's people. Yet more and more we find ourselves standing on the edges of these awesome events and admitted only with reluctance to the throbbing pulse of real human life and experience. We are often excluded because we are deemed irrelevant to these momentous human events.

There is a deeply painful irony in all of this: Though we want to enter the very core and heart of human life and experience, we often are relegated to the periphery, where we plead in vain for admission. That is often our lonely position as Jesuit ministers: We experience ourselves as powerless with our best gifts unneeded or unwanted. The wound of such loneliness is a

³³ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 33.

deep and painful one, especially for older Jesuits. This is a kind of double whammy that we experience because we share the human condition, but also because of the current and unique predicament of Jesuit ministry for all of us, priests, Brothers, and scholastics.

Like Nouwen, the more I think about ministerial loneliness, the more I perceive the wound of loneliness as similar to the Grand Canyon—a deep incision in the surface of our existence that can be an inexhaustible source of beauty, self-understanding, and compassion for ministry. Let me then speak a truth loudly and clearly—a truth which might seem unpopular and maybe even disturbing: Our Christian, Jesuit way of life does not take away our loneliness; it protects and cherishes it as a very precious gift.³⁴ Increasingly, I believe that the painful awareness of loneliness is an invitation to transcend our limitations and look beyond the boundaries of our present existence. This awareness is a gift we must protect and guard and nurture. It reveals our inner emptiness, which is filled with immense promise for those who can sustain its sweet pain! This means, of course, that we have to discover the very Center of our lives in our own hearts.

The Experience of Conscience

A third experience in which we must confront and nurture our Jesuit ministry and spirituality is that of conscience. This really describes an insight into love, the call issued

by the ultimate value and promise of love; the warning of the destructive power of indifference or hostility to this invitation; the peace (not self-satisfaction) that results from the creative yes to love; the disharmony and disintegration of existing as an abiding contradiction to the call of love which my whole being is made to answer affirmatively.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ John W. Glaser, S.J., "Conscience and the Superego: A Key Distinction," *Theological Studies* 32, No. 1 (March 1971): 31f.

Quite clearly this is a part of the life of any mature man or woman, but it is a central part of the life of the Jesuit minister. It is that small, still voice that often invites and urges us to the Jesuit *magis*.

Let me elaborate. This is a call to self-transcendence that we avoid or deaden only at the risk of deadening our very spirit. It is an invitation to go beyond our parochial limits, our biases and prejudices, and to be more and bigger than we know ourselves ordinarily to be. It is the challenge of largehearted living, a clear invitation to generosity and magnanimity; it is, in a sense, simply to be what people expect Jesuits to be—men of Gospel values and Gospel convictions and Gospel commitments.

I believe that every Jesuit has heard this voice of conscience from time to time. Periodically, it challenges and confronts our ease and comfort, our self-protection, our pettiness and lack of generosity and commitment. Often it invites us when we least expect it. Often, too, in responding to it we find deep peace and significant personal satisfaction and ministerial fruitfulness. The Christian tradition has taught us that this is the voice of God. I submit to you again that we must attend to this voice if our Jesuit prayer and spirituality are to grow and deepen. This still, small voice can lead us to God in ways that we never imagined or expected. It can and often does reveal to us hidden resources deep within ourselves that we simply did not dream existed there. It can teach us the presence and power and love of God in awesomely unsuspected ways, for ordinarily God does not invite us or challenge us beyond what actually and legitimately lies within us.

I simply encourage all of us to become more attuned, more sensitive, more attentive to the voice of God which we call Christian conscience. Our sense of God's presence in our lives, our prayer, our Jesuit spirituality will grow immensely if we can only learn to do this with Ignatian discernment and discreet charity.

The Experience of Beauty

Next I would like to call the readers' attention to the experience of beauty as a revelation of God's presence. I speak here in the context of the anecdote about Ignatius, who, they say, was unable to contemplate the beauty of the stars at night without being taken up into the grandeur of God. Here, then, I include the variegated manifestations of beauty around us: the created beauty of nature, the beauty of the works of the human spirit in art or music, the beauty and innocence of children, the beauty of shared marital love, the beauty and wisdom of the aged. How often we encounter this beauty in our Jesuit ministry. Sadly, how often we Jesuits miss its inner mystery because of our busyness; again, we are the poorer in our prayer and spirituality because of this.

The Experience of Evil

Finally, I want to speak about the pervasive experience of evil which I believe, is also revelatory of who and how God wants to be for us as Jesuits. Again, I am aware that this experience belongs to most human beings, but because of our role as ministers we encounter it much more often and much more intensely. In some sense, preoccupation with human evil is as much a part of our lives as the very air that we breathe. It surrounds and envelopes us; we are seldom without its ugly and destructive face before us.

How can the experience of evil show us the face of God? When we encounter evil we become more acutely aware of how things are not and how they can be. The very confusion and disturbance and ugliness we meet tell us what is missing, what needs emendation and healing. We sense within ourselves an opposite vision which attracts and allures us and demands from us a commitment to pursue it. We hear ourselves saying, It should not be this way and I will give my effort and talent and energy to make things better than they are. In fact, it is often the

experience of evil that elicits from us our best ministerial energy and our deepest Jesuit commitments.

Let me give a personal example of this. When I was a young Jesuit scholastic in the mid-fifties, I attended summer school at a large Jesuit university with a very large residential Jesuit community. In that particular community were two older (but not wiser) Jesuits who had a fabled relationship with one another. It is not too strong to say that they hated each other. Some trivial thing involving them had occurred many years before; the ensuing discord had not been healed and had escalated into a kind of guerrilla warfare which literally split that community in two. If someone belonged to the group which favored one of them, he was automatically ostracized and denigrated by the other group. The two Jesuits involved fomented and supported this kind of discord and division. Numerous strong provincials had tried to resolve the situation; all their attempts had failed miserably. You can well imagine the underlying and chronic tension and anger within that community.

I was in that community only for the summer, but I felt the tension and often found myself naively trapped by it. One morning I was serving the Mass of one of these Jesuit priests. A little after we began the liturgy, the other man came to a nearby altar to celebrate. Shortly after the second man started Mass, he suffered a heart attack and fell to the floor! The Jesuit whose Mass I was serving stopped and went over to minister to the other Jesuit. The priest on the floor looked up at him and said, "Take your hands off me, you son of a bitch." And he died!! In front of the altar of God and in his priestly vestments, he died cursing a brother Jesuit and fellow companion of Jesus!

I was appalled, literally horror-struck by what I had seen and heard. I simply could not allow myself to believe or assimilate it. It was too evil and too ugly to admit into my consciousness. I only knew intuitively that things should not be this way, that our lives together as companions of Jesus had to be different and better than this mockery. I had a deep realization that I could die

in the same way unless I made some commitments to myself and my God about my relationships with my brother Jesuits. I could literally sense what community could and should be from what it was not. I resolved that very day never to go to bed if I had offended a brother Jesuit or been offended by one without resolving the issue. I have not been wholly faithful to that promise and commitment, but I have tried. That vision of evil still haunts me and tells me how things should be among us in a Jesuit community.

It seems very clear to me that our Jesuit ministry puts us into daily contact with such ugly evil. Not a day goes by that we are not confronted by what is and should not be: family discord, marital difficulties and infidelities, professional malfeasance, child abuse and child pornography, racial and sexual oppression, and blatant sexual seduction. The list and the examples go on and on and on. The experience and the reality of evil which we meet can either severely depress and debilitate us or they can be revelatory of God's presence and love and power in our lives and in our Jesuit ministry. It shows the wonder and creative power of God that even in the mind-wrenching reality of evil something of the goodness and care and presence of God can be revealed to us. This is probably what Ignatius intended by some of the "negative" examples (sickness, short life, and so forth) of the Principle and Foundation in the Exercises.

I suggest these experiences as examples and illustrations rather than as an all-inclusive list of the Jesuit ministries in which we can find God. They are typical of the realities that make up the very fabric of our lives as Jesuit ministers. I simply submit that they are truly revelatory of the love and presence of God. Attention to them will greatly enrich our Jesuit prayer.

Brief Reflections on "Masculine Spirituality"

One final point before I conclude. Given the tremendous gains in the understanding of women and feminine spirituality after the rise of the modern feminist movement, it is no surprise

that there is an emerging and powerful male response. The high priests here are men like the poet Robert Bly³⁶ and the psychologists Robert Moore, Douglas Gillette,³⁷ and Sam Keen.³⁸ They all tend to examine the current state of males and male spirituality through the mythology of age-old stories. Perhaps it is important for us as Jesuits to pursue a similar quest for a more masculine spirituality. An example of such a pursuit is the recent book by Patrick M. Arnold, S.J., *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible*.³⁹

I think it true that all Jesuits have important questions and issues about son/father, male/male, son/mother, and male/female relationships. There are numerous important and wise (often brilliant) insights for us to pursue here; for instance, the great need that our younger members have for wise elders to serve as initiators and role models in Jesuit life and ministry. Many men, and consequently many Jesuits, have lost the traditional initiation connection with older men and mentors and thus are personally lost, flailing about in their "shadow" selves ignorantly and often quite destructively.

This emerging literature consistently suggests that, only when a man reconnects in some fashion with the best of his primitive archetypes of king, warrior, lover, and magician, will he be on the road to becoming a total man: wise, strong, decisive, challenging, spiritually alert, and intelligently passionate and compassionate. This is clearly an area in which we must immerse ourselves and become adept both for our own well-being and that of

³⁶ Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990).

³⁷ Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscover the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

³⁸ Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*, Bantam Books (April 1991).

³⁹ Patrick M. Arnold, S.J., *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

our brother Jesuits. The literature further suggests the need for mentoring—wise elders for the young—if the latter are to enter into their full manhood and really fruitful Jesuit ministry. This has tremendous implications for our relationship to our younger brothers in the Society of Jesus. I suspect that in the future our formation programs will fail or succeed on the basis of the kind of wise mentoring that they offer.

What I am suggesting, then, is that we rethink, refine, even redefine what down-to-earth Jesuit prayer and spirituality involve. I am asking that we search for new and creative ways to integrate the wonderful vision spread before us in GC 31's document on prayer. I am calling for a new understanding, a new integration, and a new synthesis of the Ignatian vision which that document recaptures for us. In bygone days it was conceived as an ascent to the height of what was called Christian perfection, with the ways and stages of this ascent outlined and marked out in advance by the traditional theology of the spiritual life. Today the more experienced among us are less likely to see it as a master plan for steady spiritual progress or growth. Today and into the future it makes so much more sense spiritually and theologically to see ourselves as led by God's providence in our life history through continually new and surprising situations in which we can never say from the outset what will happen or how we must cope with it. Thus, it is clear that genuine Jesuit discipleship and genuine Jesuit prayer are more a matter of faithfully following in the very ordinary events of Jesuit life and ministry. They do not imply marching ever onwards and upwards, but rather proceeding with the courage to expect the unexpected, to respond to the unexpected, not from a predetermined agenda, but in total openness to a Spirit who, like Augustine's Beauty, is ever ancient, but also ever new. Then Jesuit life and Jesuit prayer become a magnificent adventure, a pilgrimage in which there are only two quite predictable realities: Our God will ceaselessly surprise us and, however unexpected the event, God will certainly be there with us and for us.

C. To sum up . . .

In conclusion, then, let me briefly summarize the concerns of this paper. I have been discussing Jesuit prayer and Jesuit spirituality for the nineties. I have studied the historical roots of a tradition of prayer that affected the Society for almost four hundred years and the new directions offered us by GC 31. I have suggested that most of us were seriously conditioned by our earlier training and Jesuit formation. More than that, I have suggested strongly that such conditioning had a negative effect on our prayer and spirituality; for it proposed ideals and practices that created a destructive tension within us, a tension that provokes agitation, anxiety, confusion, and sometimes significant guilt for many of us.

I hope that this paper raised some serious questions about this tension and stimulated us to search for some way out of the trap and pitfalls that this tension between prayer and ministry creates for many of us. The examination of Vatican II and the new Code of Canon Law provided some clues about a more vibrant and lively Jesuit spirituality. Fortunately, those documents pointed in a direction that was indeed more healthy, more life-giving, and more Jesuit than what we had inherited from earlier times. They showed the way back to what has always nurtured the prayer and spirituality of the active Jesuit, namely, Jesuit ministry. They encouraged us to find at the very heart of our ministry the God whom we desire and whom we serve. They supported the intuition that we all knew vaguely but were afraid to believe and integrate: that God was available to us exactly where we had been called—in our active Jesuit ministry and personal pastoral encounters. What a wonderful relief those documents offered us!

What I have emphasized and urged throughout this paper is the experiential and the ministerial. I have suggested over and over again that the very work to which we are called—Jesuit ministry—is the locale of our prayer and our spirituality. In the raw experience of being human and being Jesuit ministers and in the context of a rhythm of prayer and reflection, we find the face of

God and hear the voice and Word of God. Again I want to disown any sense of uncritical activism. I do believe that there can be no real spirituality without some rhythm of quiet time and prayerful reflection.

I firmly believe that our experience is the pearl of great price, the wonderful treasure hidden deeply within us, but very available to us. If we are to have a Jesuit prayer that is alive and vibrant, challenging and energizing, it must be rooted in the experience of Jesuit ministry. If our sense of God and our relationship to God is to mature and deepen and grow, it must be in the very ministry to which we are called. This entire study has been about ministry as the origin and goal of our prayer as Jesuits. Only, I believe, when we take seriously this fundamental insight will we grow into the mature Jesuit spirituality and prayer that our God wants us to have.

Appendix

Here follows a very brief listing of works dealing with prayer in the Society:

- Aicardo, J. M., S.J. *Comentario a las Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús*. Madrid, 1920.
- Astráin, A., S.J. *De Oratione Matutina in Societate Iesu*. 1923.
- Bacht, H., S.J. "Zur Frage nach den Anfänger der täglichen Betrachtungsstunden in der Gesellschaft Jesu." In manuscript with no date.
- Bouvier, P., S.J. "Les origines de l'oraison mentale en usage dans la Compagnie." *Lettres de Jersey* (1922): 594-613.
- Conwell, Joseph F., S.J. *Contemplation in Action: A Study in Ignatian Prayer*. Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1957.
- Dudon, P., S.J. "S. Ignace et l'oraison dans la Compagnie de Jésus." *RAM* 15 (1934): 254-57.
- Fiorito, Miguel A., S.J. "La ley Ignaciana de la oración en la Compañía de Jesús." *Stromata* 22 (1967): 3-89. Trans. Aloysius A. Jacobsmeyer, S.J., and George E. Ganss, S.J., in *Woodstock Letters* 97 (1968): 149-224.
- Guibert, Joseph de, S.J. *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*. Trans. William J. Young, S.J. Chicago, 1964.
- Iparraguirre, Ignacio, S.J. *Estilo espiritual Jesuítico*. Bilbao, 1964.
- . "La oración en la Compañía naciente." *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 25 (1965): 455-87.
- . "Para la historia de la oración en el Colegio Romano durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVII." *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 15 (1946): 77-126.

- Karrer, O., S.J. *Der Heilige Franz von Borja*. Freiburg, 1921.
- Leturia, Pedro de, S.J. "De Constitutionibus collegiorum P. Ioannis de Polanco ac de earum influxu in *Constitutiones*." *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 7 (1936): 1-30.
- . "La hora matutina de meditación en la Compañía naciente." *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 3 (1934): 47-86.
- . "Lecturas ascéticas y lecturas místicas entre los Jesuitas del siglo XVI." *Archivo italiano per la storia della pietà* 2 (1953): 3-34.
- McNally, Robert, S.J., "St. Ignatius: Prayer and the Early Society of Jesus." *Woodstock Letters* 94 (1965): 109-34.
- Schneider, B., S.J. "Der Konflikt zwischen Claudius Aquaviva und Paulus Hoffaeus." *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 26 (1957): 11f.
- Suau, P., S.J. *Histoire de St. François Borgia*. Paris, 1910.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

With regard to Father Houdek's essay "The Road Too Often Traveled" (*Studies*, January 1991), I have an idea to suggest. First, let me say that I understand well the unwillingness of people who do not want to take a year away from a significant apostolate just because it is "time" for tertianship. In my own congregation, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, there is the case of the second superior general, who waited nine years for what we call probation or second formation immediately preceding the final profession. She waited because she could not be spared from her work in the schools in France.

Given the circumstances of our times, understanding the rhythms of our own active and contemplative lives, recognizing that most of us both want to interiorize our lives and to obey the apostolic calls that pursue us even in our deepest moments of prayer, would it not be an effective structuring of the tertianship to make it analogous to the sabbatical year? I am saying "analogous" because the number seven actually has nothing to do with it.

But I envision a person (aged anywhere between thirty-seven and forty-nine) who is working well and effectively for the Kingdom and who begins to feel a need for a year to retool, to update, to

renew, to take stock of life. This person asks for his (or her) tertian experience and personally takes part in its structuring. Perhaps this would separate tertianship from final vows, but it is pretty much separated already, is it not?

In my earlier years there was never an option on this matter. Perhaps that explains why my own "probation" meant so little to me. Actually, I found it quite boring, and none of the significant turning points in my life with God took place during those dreary months.

Thank you for *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*. They are a sign of the vitality of the Society of Jesus.

Mary Byles, r.s.c.j.
13648 Conway Road
St. Louis, Mo 63141



Editor:

I would like to express my appreciation for the article by Charles Shelton, S.J., "Reflections on the Mental Health of Jesuits" (*Studies*, September 1991). As a Jesuit and a psychologist, I tend to agree with most of what he offered, and I was especially pleased with his treatment of gratitude and mental health. It has been my observation that Jesuits who cannot either experience or express gratitude to their fellow Jesuits are

lacking some of the key characteristics of good mental health as outlined in Fr. Shelton's article.

As a Jesuit celebrating his fiftieth year in the Society and his seventieth year of life, I would like to suggest one area which was not covered in the article. It concerns the mental health of older Jesuits within a given province who because of age or physical health are not longer able to function in an apostolic manner as they were able to do for many years when they were younger. In short, they no longer are as "available" as before, not because of significant mental health problems—though indeed these do exist—but simply because they may have outgrown their apostolic "usefulness" within the province.

It seems clear that the Society places a great deal of emphasis upon the apostolic work that we do, and rightly so. However, when a Jesuit is due to face the prospect

of retirement, he can also begin to experience some loss of self-worth precisely because he is no longer recognized for what he does, but only remembered for what he used to do. In Jungian terms, a Jesuit can become "persona identified" rather easily within the Society. When he loses that "persona," he must face the reality of the self in a way which does not invite much recognition. To put this another way, there comes a time in the life of an older Jesuit when he needs to focus on being rather than on doing. If this is done gracefully and with an experience of gratitude for God's love and the love of friends, both Jesuit and lay, the older Jesuit can look upon his retirement years as a form of apostolate, not necessarily recognized as such, but nevertheless effective and conducive to personal and communal mental health.

J. Ripley Caldwell, S.J.
Santa Clara, CA

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