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STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Portraits and Landscapes

Scenes from Our Common Life

EDWARD W. SCHMIDT, S.J.

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27/2 · MARCH 1995

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the studies, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE SEMINAR

George M. Anderson, S.J., is associate editor of *America*, in New York, and writes regularly on social issues and the faith (1993).

Peter D. Byrne, S.J., is rector and president of St. Michael's Institute of Philosophy and Letters at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash. (1994).

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., teaches comparative theology at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass. (1994).

Allan F. Deck, S.J., is coordinator of Hispanic pastoral programs at the Center for Pastoral Studies and lectures in theology at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, Cal. (1992).

Ernest C. Ferlita, S.J., teaches theater at Loyola University, New Orleans, La. (1994).

David H. Gill, S.J., teaches classical languages at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass. (1993).

M. Dennis Hamm, S.J., teaches Scripture at Creighton University, Omaha, Neb. (1994).

John W. Padberg, S.J., is chairman of the Seminar, editor of *STUDIES*, and director and editor at the Institute of Jesuit Sources (1986).

Thomas J. Stahel, S.J., is assistant to the president at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (1992).

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3700 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108
(Tel. 314-977-7257; Fax 314-977-7263)

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Edward W. Schmidt, S.J.

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27/2: MARCH 1995



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For your information . . .

As I write these lines from Rome at the end of February, the Jesuit general congregation has just entered its eighth week of sessions. The congregation and the experiences recounted in this issue of *STUDIES* in the article "Portraits and Landscapes" might serve as counterpoint to each other. On the one hand, here are 223 Jesuit delegates from all over the world dealing with topics pertaining to the life and activity of 23,000 members of the whole Society of Jesus. On the other hand, the life and work of the members of the Society of Jesus go on in the day-to-day personal interactions of individuals and groups of Jesuits in thousands of specific Jesuit communities all over the world. The delegates here in Rome come from such communities. To these communities they will return to continue the life and work of the Society. "Think globally, act locally" is surely a maxim that the members of the congregation are aware of.

Those global concerns range from the Jesuit mission today to interreligious dialogue, from Jesuit cooperation with the laity to our religious and community life. The members of the congregation themselves, from all over the globe, are a microcosm of the variety of members that make up the whole Society of Jesus. Of some of them one could say, to quote an old Jesuit rule, that in their lives and works as Jesuits "the manner is ordinary." They have lived and worked in ways that, externally at least, seem to be usual among Jesuits. For others, that life and work have been anything but ordinary. In many cases they have been heroic.

For example, the delegate from Vietnam, the very first in the long history of the Society's presence in that country, arrived back in Saigon from studies in Rome just as the city was being taken by the forces from the north. He subsequently spent nine very hard years in prison—the details might move you to tears—because he was a Jesuit. His jailers regularly interrogated him about the Society; they had read its foundational documents and those of its more recent general congregations, perhaps more thoroughly than have some Jesuits.

Among the other unusual circumstances of this congregation, for the first time in history seven Jesuit brothers have taken their places in the hall as members of a congregation. From Eastern Europe for the first time in more than half a century came delegates from Lithuania and Romania. At the age of seventy-nine the (formerly underground) provincial of Romania is the oldest member of the congregation. He has held that office of provincial for some thirty-six years, an all-time record in the Society's history, having served through all the decades of persecution when the Society almost perished in that country. For the very first time, Russia has a delegate present for its recently established region. Perhaps the most important "first time" fact is that more than half of the delegates come from countries other than those of Europe and North America. Among them is the youngest member of the congregation, a thirty-seven-year-old native of Zaire and member of the Central African Province. The delegation from the United States, thirty-two strong, is no longer the largest national group. That title goes at present to the thirty-six members from India.

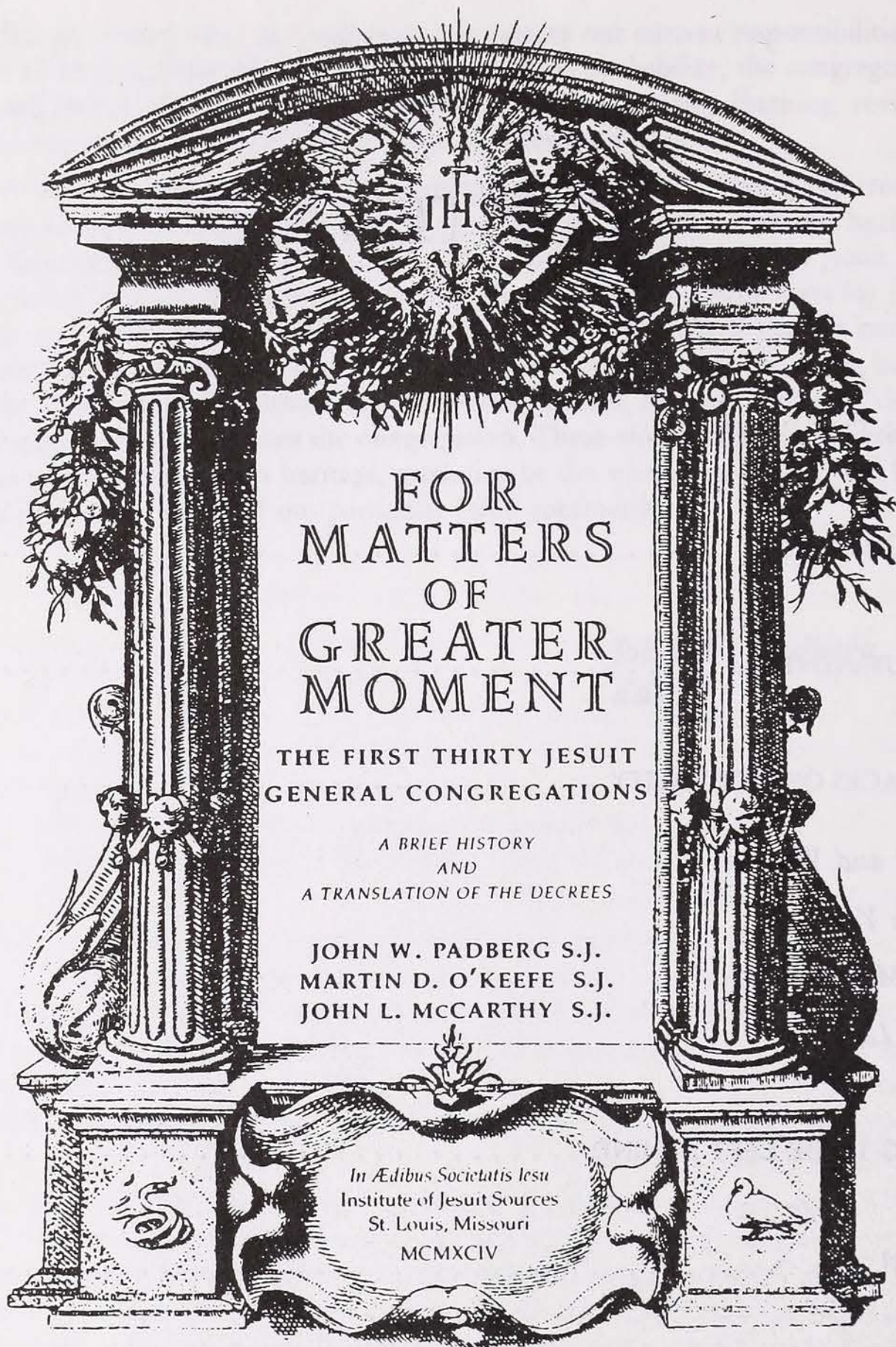
But no matter what our origins or our ages or our current responsibilities may be, we are all looking forward to returning home. In all probability, the congregation will last until late in March. Until then we shall be talking, writing, listening, revising texts, preparing statements on the life and work of Jesuits today.

Perhaps the most important item among all that work is what is referred to in one of these comments in an earlier issue of STUDIES: the project to link our heritage of the Jesuit Constitutions, written by Saint Ignatius, with the realities of that Jesuit life and work today. Among the current reading of all the delegates are the texts for that project, the most important task of which involves the preparation of current norms that complement but do not displace the Constitutions. We hope that we can bring home for all of us the Constitutions and those complementary norms, together with the "decrees" or formal statements issuing from the congregation. These will constitute the current expression of a vision rooted in a heritage, extending to the whole wide world and lived out in the day-to-day reality of our particular Jesuit communities.

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor

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FOR
MATTERS
OF
GREATER
MOMENT

THE FIRST THIRTY JESUIT
GENERAL CONGREGATIONS

A BRIEF HISTORY
AND
A TRANSLATION OF THE DECREES

JOHN W. PADBERG S.J.
MARTIN D. O'KEEFE S.J.
JOHN L. MCCARTHY S.J.

In Aedibus Societatis Iesu
Institute of Jesuit Sources
St. Louis, Missouri
MCMXCIV

xii + 788 pages
Index, portraits

ISBN 1-880810-06-9
\$ 47.95 plus postage

Order from
The Institute of Jesuit Sources
3700 West Pine Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108
TEL: 314 977-7257 / FAX: 314 977-7263

PORTRAITS AND LANDSCAPES

Scenes from Our Common Life

What Is This Place?

We had a quiet party last Tuesday night, a special dinner, invited guests. Somehow by the time it was over, without ceremony or notice, a new man had taken up the responsibilities of superior of our community. After six years and six months and sixteen days, I was free.

I felt a letdown in letting go, not unpleasant or unwelcome, but a subtle release. I found some empty space that I plan to fill slowly. Bouncing around in this empty space are ideas about communities and superiors, expectations and realities. These issues do not need solutions today; but they should not be left alone forever.

The issues were distilled succinctly one day last summer when I let in a man who was working on the gas lines. As I led him downstairs and through the chapel to a little closet that houses the gas meters, altar wine, and sanctuary lights, he asked me in baffled innocence, "What is this place?" The Guidelines for Superiors offer no suggestions on how to explain our communities to the gas man. One more item to update in our way of proceeding.

What, indeed, is this place? We used to protest that our houses must not be monasteries, but is there any real danger anyone would mistake us for monks? More often now we hear that we should not be a gentlemen's club, but I find scant danger here either. Some years ago a sage of the southern province spoke of communities that are orphanages for adults; I have sometimes wondered if he gives us too much credit. A more recent sage in an eastern province has asked if the changing of superiors is not a kind of rotating chance at adulthood in the Society.

Edward W. Schmidt, S.J., a member of the Chicago Province, has served as business manager of Company, A Magazine of the American Jesuits, since its beginnings in 1982. In earlier days he studied linguistics at Georgetown University and was campus minister at Xavier University and pastor of Bellarmine Chapel there. His eyes light up at the sight of old books. His address is Company, 3441 North Ashland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60657.

Wobbly metaphors aside, we find it hard to describe what we are or wish we were; I suspect that we do not know, or that what we know for ourselves we do not share. This may be why a dutiful community discussion of a pious topic the provincial suggested slips towards somnolence until a single minded soul breaks in and demands more premium channels on our cable-TV service; then we come to life! Or why new members fit in so comfortably causing few ripples on our placid pond, and old members disappear, missed mostly in silence. Or maybe why we theorize forever about the meaning of Jesuit presence in our schools but stumble trying to articulate the meaning of Jesuit presence in our community.

These issues are serious, but they are only part of the story. In a recent discussion process in our province, while many expressed some real discontent with community life, at the same time they were not crying out for change. Jesuit communities are usually positive, sometimes very positive. Most men are happy and find their ministries satisfying. The trust the community showed in me was personally very affirming, as was the provincials' trust. We may take each other for granted in daily encounters, but in times of crisis or celebration we come together. We certainly show a healthy collective tolerance for living with questions as long as the answers proposed remain un compelling; and we live at peace with a variety of personalities as long as we can keep the borders of our comfort zones secure.

In two issues of *STUDIES* (September 1991 and 1992), Charles Shelton raised delicate but crucial questions about mental health and affective community life. More recently, seven young priests from the New York Province published a long, thoughtful letter in the *National Jesuit News* (March 1993) clearly defending the thesis that healthy community life and apostolic effectiveness are vitally linked. These pieces furthered our ongoing discussion of community life. I hope that the reflections I offer here can add a little more.

The stories that follow are not answers to my questions; I do not have them. Here I want only to present some scenes from common life. Some of these scenes are enigmatic, suggesting, I hope, that deep encounters have many faces; they are enigmatic but not, I hope, unclear. Most of them focus on a single relationship but are less about individuals than about the layered relationships of our Jesuit communities.

I should add that I occasionally blur some details to obscure identities. While my memory of these events would mean little if the people involved did not mean a lot to me, the stories can stand on their own without making identities known.

And a last note. Shakespeare's character Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* prepares his audience for a curious show with an advance apology: "If we offend it is with our goodwill. / That you should think, we come not to offend, but with goodwill." My sketches are mostly the work of

midsummer nights. I know they do not betray any confidences. I trust that if they point up all-too-human foibles, I do not seem to claim immunity for myself. I hope they demonstrate my deep respect for all who have been part of my community during my time here and my trust in our future together. And if these scenes offend, well, please believe that it is with goodwill and with the hope that others as observers can derive from them even a fraction of what I have received as a player.

Good Guys

What am I doing up in my room, stretched out in my La-Z-Boy and staring out my window on this sunny Friday afternoon? I should be working, or at least loafing honestly, walking in Lincoln Park or over on the beach. There are a lot of things I might normally be doing, but not today.

Today I am waiting for the phone to ring and scared that it will. The issue goes back a few years: I did only two years of my formation outside the province, but in that time I made some very good friends; our contact is not frequent, but it is important to us. And now one friend of many years is talking to his provincial. After decades of surviving issues and anxieties, pushes and pulls, gives and takes, he is looking for a freedom he cannot find in the Society. I cannot answer his objections and I cannot say he is wrong. In fact, I cannot do much but wait for his call.

I have some music playing, which I usually confine to the contemplative hours of the night, when I work out world issues. A song comes on from a show I saw off Broadway a couple of years ago called "Closer Than Ever," in which four singers draw musical portraits of modern life—relationships, values, anxieties, and hope. In this song a woman reviews life decisions, balancing good and bad; she concludes each verse with a protest, "I'm not complaining." The woman built a career after her husband took off for an ashram back in the sixties; she raised her son, had friends and lovers. She considers her mistakes and successes and the effects of years slipping by. Now forty-nine, looking out her window at "Jersey growing dim," she feels a tug at the heart, second-guessing, realizing the problems her divorce seemed to free her from were in fact "no worse than a life alone." Still, honestly, she is not complaining.

My forty-nine-year mind slips back to my early 1960s. A muggy September morning found me kneeling on a green terrazzo floor in the community chapel; one after another, thirteen of us recited the grandiose Latin formula of first vows in the Society. The only thing I really remember from the event is that one of our number slumped to the floor in a dead faint. Fortunately, he had already professed his vows.

Part of our vow formula was that curious clause "I promise to enter the same Society." It meant last vows, of course. But long before my last vows, there clearly was no same Society. I do not mean, as some have protested, that the Society has abandoned essentials and is thus not the same. Nor am I a Heraclitean who cannot step into the same river twice; everything does flow, but I perceive the same river flowing along. My point is that the Society in which I took first vows—and which I promised one day to enter with final vows—was one filled with many contemporaries with a promising array of talents, energies, and ideals. We were the ones who had passed together through the years of novitiate testing and had made it. We would expect in significant numbers to go on to regency, to theology, to ordination. In our eyes, these were the men we would spend our Jesuit lives with and do our work with; these companions of our youth would be those of our middle years and old age, as much as our young imaginations could approach such distant somedays. In the abstract, we were taking vows in the Society of Jesus; in the concrete, kneeling on the terrazzo, we were taking vows to each other.

Most of these men are gone, of course, as are almost-classmates of a couple of years ahead and behind. They left one by one, though for a period the momentum of departure seemed collective. Many friends were among those gone; departures did not discriminate.

Those who remained made many passages together in society at large, in the Church, in the Society of Jesus. Some transitions were painful, some a relief. With friends I got away with things, went places, made mistakes, pushed limits. Together we somehow survived theology in the early seventies, then scattered to many ministries from there. I still have a strong memory of the dread I felt when the expressway branched and I took the route marked Indiana while my friends all lived back where the Chicago sign pointed. But I followed my diverging road to much that was new and good and different.

We paused from time to time as the years passed to note and to regret as a friend departed, and then another, still looking for peace, still looking for freedom. We hoped for them, prayed for them, and quietly missed them. And we went on with our work subtly diminished.

Why them and not me? Why am I still here? Beyond some concept of capricious grace as an irresistible force, what do I see or not see, know or not know, feel or not feel that has kept me committed to that ideal I stuttered in Latin thirty years ago? I have felt the same frustrations as my early companions, known failures as they did, watched with them as reality colored in the outlines of our ideals. I was no more able than they to foresee difficulties or to avoid them or to ignore them. I was no less sensitive than they to the chafing and the bruising it took to adjust as religious life in the Church went from taken-for-granted in 1960 to what the 1990s see as a curious anachronism. I am sure I saw

grass as green as they did across the fence. But I am still here somehow, and I like the way that actress sings, "No, I'm not complaining."

The phone does ring, but it is not the call I am waiting for. By coincidence, it is another Jesuit, a good friend of fewer years, who asks if I can take a Mass for him tomorrow. He begins a leave of absence next week, and his "last Mass" today was such a positive experience he wants to close the current phase of his life on this note. The apartment he has found is great; he feels overwhelmed by freedom and peace. Can we get together when he gets back into town? Of course. And sure, I am free to take the Mass.

Another song comes on, a couple reviewing the miracle of their marriage's survival: "Nobody thought we'd last. . . . It's funny how after all these years we're closer than ever." Relationships can last, can outlast a host of trials. Even improbable relationships survive strong and healthy. Odd couples do make it.

We are an odd lot. When I look around now I still see good people, motivated, talented, though hardly young. The men who were once the older generation do not, of course, seem so much older now. The younger men entering the Society are worlds away from who we were, and not so young, thank God. But I see few companions from my early days.

Times change and spirits change, and that can explain abstract demographic shifts. But what of friends, of others basically like me who have stayed or who have gone? Nothing objective could predict which fork in the road one would follow, not IQ or MMPI or enneagram or Myers-Briggs. The imponderables of faith come into play here. We used to talk about the mystery of our vocation; but in those days, when that mystery was the atmosphere we breathed, we took it much for granted. When a vocation we once held in common, believed in, and followed together has diverged in multiple directions, can we do better than to contemplate it, understand what wisps we can of its mystery, and in the end rest content in gratitude?

We probably were not so much alike in the earlier days as we thought we were. Our common Catholic culture bound us together and buried many differences that later life brought to light. Two men we considered alike in brains and business sense have taken different tracks in later life: One has a responsible, successful career in a public-opinion-shaping industry; the other phoned me some months ago—twenty-six years between conversations—sounding as if he owned the world but desperate for a job and a friend. A few of those who left made me glad I stayed, but many others made me wonder. And I suppose I should confess that a couple of the characters who have lasted the years make me wonder what company I now keep; but with most of them, I do not mind saying I am glad we are still together.

This gives me hope as we try to build on what is. In recent decades we have emphasized building community, community meetings, community prayer. Survivors of earlier times might protest that they had good community, a bedrock solidarity with one another, common commitments that did not ask any overt articulation, and common symbols in abundance. If men suffered, felt put down, felt unworthy, they rose and prayed and ate and worked as did their accomplished, integrated fellows, and a common life moved all along together.

Now we want more. We find it hard to say exactly what, but we know we have more to share than an address and life rhythms that intersect once a day over coffee. If our life is a life based on faith, we know we must somehow articulate that faith. If religious life is supposed to be a witness, we should as a start be able to speak about what we are giving witness to. If we expect others to look at us and see something more than a random assembly of men committed to their work and their ideals on their own, we should be able to see that first in one another. But such wishes are hard to achieve, given the way our communities come about.

Sometimes we speak of communities as families. That can make us feel warm and cozy, but the analogy is quite inadequate. A crucial difference—let's assume love, acceptance, and affirmation in the family and in the community—is time. Family relationships have a lot of time.

A couple have many months to get used to the idea before a new baby arrives. At three this child might discover a helpless infant brother has moved in; she gets jealous but starts to help care for him, claims her share of attention and love, and readjusts to new expectations as a big sister. Her going off to first grade creates a loss, but she has had six-week courses in dinosaurs and cookieology at preschool and half days of kindergarten. Grade-school graduation prepares for high school, absorption in high school makes way for college, college for career, marriage, and so forth.

Arrivals are not sudden, nor are departures, in the general course of life. Parents and children—then add cousins and uncles and aunts and all in proper degrees—together experience birth and growth and challenge and success and disaster; as one changes, all change. Sudden departures do happen—death or a runaway—and they are often disasters. But the survivors survive together, not all in the same way, but all adjusting together, leaning on each other for help, drawing strength from each other.

This description is simplistic, but it serves to focus the issue. When I look around my community, I see a different picture. Most of these men are here because this place most easily supports the needs of their ministry. Most moved from elsewhere when their jobs changed or their former living space was no longer available. Most arrived suddenly. Departures from the community can have more lead time but not always.

My singer has an insight to add as he tells his wife, "Thank God when you found your new you. I loved her too." They have changed together and challenged each other as they changed. Both are new, stronger, better, closer.

Considering my community, I ask if we really share change and challenge, growing stronger or better or closer as we adjust to life together. I wonder. When I look around I see individuals who have come to live comfortably together. Though we arrived here quite haphazardly one by one, everyone seems to find something here that supports his valuable Jesuit work. Everyone works hard with an impressive roster of competencies and interests. We find personality differences, but with those differences there comes also a hearty tolerance for one another's humanity. We respect each other; and when the occasion demands it, we sacrifice time and personal agendas for each other. While our language and symbols differ, we share a faith and a spirituality. All in all, that's not a bad foundation.

And fortunately we can reach beyond the local communities to the larger Society of Jesus for strength, challenge, vision, and thanks. Here we find a common history and shared experience of pain, growth, and new life. In this larger community of the Society of Jesus as a whole, we have been through a lot. We wove dreams and made commitments for growing numbers, and we have seen those numbers disappear, leaving stretched resources and empty rooms. We never knew about faith and justice and suddenly it's at the heart of our identity. We could hardly find El Salvador on the map, and suddenly our saints are dying there.

My singers have been through their lot too: "If all we have been through could not break us, / What's ahead can only make us stronger than ever." Amen, singers. I hope you are right.

Do I want my call or not? No matter, the phone is ringing. He is tired, and his situation is not resolved. An argument at school precipitated the crisis but did not really create it; it was a catalyst, not a cause. I cannot imagine the incident was equal to the reaction it provoked. Could this frail straw in fact have been the one too many, or rather was this camel's back no longer a match for burdens it once lightly bore?

If the incident that precipitated my friend's decision is not ultimately the cause, solving this crisis will not end the wondering. His provincial suggests at least that he wait out the heat of this crisis; that is not bad advice, but neither is it the last word.

He will probably be gone for a while, maybe forever. I want what is best for him more than I insist that that best include us and our choices, though I hope in the end they can. I will miss him and we will miss him, but we will miss him more than I do. For he and I will still be friends, but we without him are an equation thrown off balance, a symphony off-key.

Another song comes on, a middle-aged man telling about a mistake he did not make some years back but still dreams about: "She was someone's friend and she had this smile, we were on a beach." But no, he is strong, virtuous, smart—"one of the good guys." There is irony in his voice. Life has given him every symbol of success, and he is content. But in the stillness of the night he wonders, "teased by thoughts that it's second-best"; so many roads he did not take, so many possibilities.

To choose between good and evil takes strength. But to choose between goods takes an uncommon gift of grace. To wonder about alternatives is not to doubt the choice one has made and still makes. To say so is not to deny the good one finds along the way that one with God's grace still walks.

The singer—a certified good guy—shares what he has learned along his way: "It's not which road you take, which life you pick to live in; / Whichever choice you make, the longing is a given; / And that's what brings the ache that only the good guys know." I guess that includes us, all of us who make our choices and try to make sense of them and to live them the best we can.

Am I angry with the way my road has twisted? I cannot be angry with my friend: I honestly believe he is doing today what he has to. Angry with myself, with what I might have done or helped to do? I do not find much life down that path. Angry with the Society as it has evolved during our time here? No. We have all been pursuing some ideal. I have never thought this ideal is best or highest or noblest. It is good, it is noble, and that is enough. Reality has never met the ideal fully, of course, and if this reality has become death-dealing for my friend, he has to let it go.

But something brings that ache my singer felt. The mind can be satisfied, but the heart has to raise some protest. Not to do so would seem to discount so much that has been good. And curiously, there is a kind of comfort here in knowing that among the many things we still share—besides history and memories and anecdotes and values that those who have not been through it could never understand—there is that ache for other good things we could have found if our paths had continued on closer together.

Without Adverbs

A man stands at our front door and asks passers-by for money. It used to be a quarter, the price of a cup of vending-machine coffee at Clayton House, where he lives; a year or two ago it went up to thirty cents. Now he usually wants a dollar. We don't know if he splurges across the street at Starbucks or maybe buys a candy bar too. One member of the community estimated that if he had given this man money every time he was asked, he would have given him several thousand dollars by now.

The beggar at our door asks for money; he wants it but doesn't really need it. He lives in a residence for people who cannot earn their own living—some with learning disabilities, some burnt out from earlier drug use; they have government support. He is fed and clothed by some agency; his housing is acceptable if unattractive. He even gets some small cash allowance. He would get by without our help, but maybe without his cup of coffee. One gets the impression that he is begging not so much for money as for human contact, or even for something to fill his days with a sense of accomplishment, however small.

This man may be a paradigm of the need that surrounds us. For human contact he asks for money. To pass his lonely hours, he drinks machine coffee. He blocks our way a little, makes us feel a bit guilty, but doesn't really intrude. After ten years our neighbor does not seem to recognize any of us. And, in fact, after ten years, none of us know his name.

This man and our many other neighbors were on our mind as the community met to discuss various aspects of Decree 4 of the Thirty-second General Congregation. We were meeting because our provincial asked us to, but the discussions showed that we had some real concerns for the issues. Decree 4 has worked its way into Jesuit consciousness over the years even without our being aware.

The first night, we began discussing our personal responses to Decree 4. All of us Jesuits are touched by a certain Jesuit ideal. The Thirty-second General Congregation's Decree 4 articulates this ideal, an incarnation of the Gospel message in the world of today, with its intense and manifold needs. Pedro Arrupe and his life and work are part of it, as are the six Jesuits killed in El Salvador.

Some Jesuits work in ministries or live in settings that very clearly demonstrate their commitment to the service of faith and the promotion of justice. But for most—including us in this community—it is not an explicit focus of every day's work.

Some of us feel uncomfortable when the work that the Society has given to us does not explicitly, obviously give witness to the ideals of Decree 4. We ask questions: Can we live where we do, work as we work—surrounded by an atmosphere of achievement in the world, needing to act and to interact professionally with the world that prizes material success—and still live authentic Jesuit lives? Has the godlessness of our environment begun to corrupt us too? Is our living too easy?

We realize that while none of us in this community are in work that the popular mind would consider "F & J," still our work and our thinking have been steeped in Decree 4. Our institutions are changing: the high schools talk of "men and women for others," for example, and this thinking has affected the lay people who work with us at these institutions; it has also reached out to

Catholic schools that the Society does not claim as its own. The focus of mission activity has changed too: the sick in the hospital, the residents at a home for young people with learning disabilities have become our responsibilities also. Our work with these people gives witness, we believe, to our faith doing justice.

But we come back to the people of Clayton House, or to the elderly who live in public housing right north of us on Clark Street, or to the homeless who camp at our doorway. We sense the challenge here, some kind of call to be approachable for the really down-and-out, society's rejected. Whatever good we do—and it is real—how are we different from professional middle-class people who do their job, read their Bible and go to church, and do volunteer work in their free time? Does this community give witness to its solidarity with the poor?

Does our community lifestyle give witness to any kind of religious purpose or ideal? If our commitment to the service of faith and the promotion of justice does in fact motivate us personally, can anyone tell the difference at the community level? Does the beggar at our door find more here than simply a group that would feel guilty throwing him out of our doorway?

The second night, our discussions moved on to our apostolic works and how they have contributed to implementing Decree 4.

Our community does not have one common apostolate. Yet each of us in his own way articulates a personal investment in promoting the ideal of Decree 4. One man is our province vocation promoter, and he voiced a particular concern for making the Society's vocation accessible to minorities. Another, who does major fund raising, told us how Decree 4 affected development work, even raised conflict in it: we have to avoid old ideals that are no longer valid, even if they work—no appealing simply to reactionary instincts in those with money to give, no more pagan babies to buy. A number of our community work in health-care fields, and they found multiple ways in which modern life raises ethical demands. Who receives care? What costs are justified? Our men are part of working out these issues.

Every answer we found led us to further questions. Is any ministry really justified if it does not actually address the needs of the financially poor (outcast, insecure, marginalized) in our society? Even if we can say yes in a particular instance—*A's* work is fine, *B's* is fine too, *C's* also, likewise *D's*—still, when we look at the whole picture, if no one is out there with the homeless and the hungry in the street, or if I spend all of my time with the educationally poor in graduate school, or the emotionally poor in the counseling center, or the medically poor in the well-provisioned hospital, does our claim not sound a bit hollow or our protest to some extent self-deceptive? All those poor with adverbs do not seem to be as poor as just the poor.

We know there are many poor. We know that some who insist on living with the poor are exploiting them for their own needs. We know that some of us will achieve more through needed advocacy work for which our education and sociological background make us more suited. But in Decree 4 is there not the call for at least some of us always and all of us at least sometimes to involve our time and our interests directly with those who are poor without adverbs?

Maybe we just talk too much. Our distinctions are valid and our resources valuable. We invest a lot in figuring out what the people who walk past us need. We strategize and pray and discern. But the man in the doorway is only asking for a cup of coffee.

So on the third night we move on to the practical: What can and should we do further by way of implementing Decree 4? And as we get practical, the beggars at our doorstep again focus our attention. Our neighborhood is a great place for walking and I am a dedicated walker. But on every walk I encounter many beggars, women, men, old, young. I cannot tell the really needy from those just supplementing their resources. I don't know who will buy a meal and who will buy a bottle of Ripple. All of us encounter dozens of these people every day. We don't want to ignore them; we cannot ignore them. But what do we do?

Could we go to Clayton House and to the senior citizens' center north of us and find out if they need anything we could do? We do not want to miss the obvious, but we are also very wary of making commitments. We do not have many idle hours looking for something to fill them. The simple idea that "we need to do something" does not find much enthusiastic response.

In our Jesuit way, we retreat from our frustration and get back to theory. But the theoretical questions are important and may lead us to see our own need for conversion. They may teach us why we find it hard to get practical together.

Do we maybe need first to question our own faith, our own justice—within the community, the province, the Society? We look outward to the greater world, but is our house in order? Do we live by faith and share that faith with one another? We do rise well to a particular challenge: one man who was seriously ill praised the group for its care for him, helping him with the problems that sickness creates in day-to-day living. But can we give public witness to a just order based on faith without sharing that faith every day, in the routines of ordinary life?

In the larger picture, do we practice justice based on faith? Or do we individually or together put each other in categories that do not allow freedom to grow? Do we talk about people or communities—to their detriment and ours—with prejudice or ignorance or simple lack of love? Has our mythology of

accomplishment in the Society forced ordinary men to bury their talents to survive as less than giants?

There is a major challenge here for one who is a superior. As our manpower pool shrinks, superiors and communities have to be alert to the possibility of helping the man who has buried his talent, assisting him to dig it up and put it back into circulation. Have we missed seeing gifts that some men would love to put to use? Does our community allow us to draw out the best in one another?

More broadly still, do our structures in the Church and in the Society deny individuals rights that modern society takes for granted: due process as our concept of justice has developed, or participation in decisions that affect one deeply? Specific to the Society, has contemporary culture evolved beyond the point where our distinction of grades can make any constructive sense without hurting individuals? With scrupulous care for following the book, with love, with prayer, we make decisions about individuals in secret, without hearing those involved, sometimes without their knowing they are under discussion. As we analyze and address sinful structures in the world, are all our ways of proceeding beyond scrutiny?

In our discussion of Decree 4, we could not leave its companion Decree 1 far away. Confessing our awareness that we are sinners and yet admitting that we are called to be companions of Jesus affords us a certain freedom. We are free to ask more questions than we have answers. We may feel more frustration than success, but we are free in our partial success to keep trying to do a little more.

We do have our occasional success. Some people can look at us and see some commitment to a faith doing justice. We have affected our workplaces and our liturgical ministries. We do think a little differently. And once in a while we even stop asking questions and buy the man a cup of coffee.

Four Faces of Mortality

► *Fear and Wonder* ◀

He needed a place to live. And we had room. And he had AIDS. Three points make a solid base, and somehow I sensed that superiors would find these facts solid when they came to decide where he should move when the hospital discharged him. Besides the room, we had people to help him, and we were near to his doctors, and we were discreet. Three more points—another solid base—and two weeks later the question came, Could we handle it? And though

I was uneasy speaking for the community without the chance to talk it all out, I said yes.

He was supposed to arrive on June 8, but on June 1 I came home to find he had already moved in. I had said that the community had to know: we could not understand what would be happening to him and help him if we were working out of ignorance. He readily agreed and in fact had already told quite a few people. I wanted at least to prepare the community, but suddenly here he was.

In those earlier days, AIDS was less understood even than it is today. Few of us were not awkward. We knew how to live with aging, with its weaknesses and its demands; we did not understand death in a young man and its threats and its warnings. People who worked around the house got very serious about gloves and antiseptics. We took our secret, private cautions—there was so much we did not know, and the little we did know included “fatal” and “incurable.” But as others have, in time we learned to grow from fear, but still to wonder.

And still we had our questions, private questions we could not let ourselves ask, or did not want to have answered.

Within the community we had experts in AIDS care; this was very helpful but also a little bit less so. We could learn from their expertise, rely on their suggestions, lean on their confidence. But we were also subtly less free to fear and to express that fear and to confront it for fear of seeming ridiculous or ignorant or just afraid, as of course we sometimes were.

In the evenings visitors came, friends to help him smile and to sit silent with him; I saw how they loved this man whom I hardly knew, how they drew their own courage and faith from him. Through long, long days the community was there too, helping, praying, taking care.

Weeks passed, and he weakened. He could not do much for himself and needed others more. The community grew closer, fully aware of this burden it had accepted and beginning to see a gift in the burden too. I was grateful for the community's response, and I was happy his friends kept coming to visit.

But I was also aware that a couple of miles away a lonely old man from our community sat in his dark room in a nursing home and that for months he had had only one visitor from the community besides myself. I do not know if I would have gone either except that I felt it was my job, and I had placed him there. And this reality made me fear and wonder too.

► *Fifty Years* ◀

The old man smiled a grim smile and clutched the sides of his stretcher as the two-engine Cessna 410 bumped and bobbed its way towards stable air under low clouds over Lake Michigan. He was headed at last for our province's health-care facility, back to a Jesuit community, back to old friends separated since formation days, back to the stories, the sounds, the symbols, the comfort of clichés, and the deep, unspoken fellowship that can make a Jesuit feel at home. This flight took off into strong winds, fought storms, battled cloud banks; it was not unlike the man on the stretcher. But today he was smiling, and I was glad to see it.

I had been superior only two weeks when I had to make decisions about him. He had come down before dinner and poured himself a tumbler of bourbon; he said later he thought it was juice. (He was not a drinker; if he ever fixed himself a drink, it was his unique blend of grapefruit juice and brandy, and no one could make a habit of that.) The liquor reacted with his medication. Someone called me, and we put him to bed; and he ended up not long after dressed and dry in his bathtub, screaming for help.

Doctors diagnosed another stroke, a mild one, but we knew we could not take care of him at home any more. We waited a bit like the man at the pool of Bethesda for a place to open up at our province facility, but others' needs were more pressing, other cries more insistent. We found a nursing home that gave good basic care but that also was home to all a nursing home's feelings of loss, of abandonment, of being alone, and of fear of being more alone.

He was a man of contradictions. He had stormed at his high-school classes and gently tutored kids who needed special help. Friends outside the Society found him funny, pleasant; around Jesuits he grouched and complained. Once while we were at dinner, we heard him mumbling into a nearby phone, telling a woman he had known for many years that he had had a mild stroke; he had not told us. At a brunch celebrating his fifty years in the Society, he spoke about his "fifty years of failure." A couple of days later he announced he was writing his autobiography, *One Man's Wasted Life*. I was younger, and we enjoyed talking about printing and publication; few others found common ground.

What if he had not wrapped himself in such clouds? What if he had smiled a little more? Would some other Jesuit community have insisted they could care for him if we could not? If I had more experience, could I have pushed harder, forced him into the pool before the others when the angel stirred the water? We did not in fact get him to this Jesuit facility until an infection almost killed him; things worked together this once to get him out of the nursing home, to get him healed, to get him home to a Jesuit community.

As the infection that in the end rescued him was weakening him, he went into a kind of delirium. In his weakness he released bitter feelings he had clutched tight for decades. He started telling the sisters who attended him that he had always been a failure, a second-class Jesuit. They challenged him, but he insisted that there are two classes of Jesuits, the highly educated and the lesser so, the upper-class Jesuits and the rest, the long course and the short. They asked me, and I mumbled something and fumbled over packing his clothes. The ambulance was waiting, and we hurried away.

I looked down now through the clouds at the lakeshore and the highways and wintry hills of Michigan, and I wondered whose were the years of failure, whose the waste.

► *He Made It Easy* ◀

The first time I saw him after he was assigned to our community, he looked very much like a dying man. He was pale and weak, and he struggled for breath as he leaned against a wall for support. He was taking up a new job, one that would reduce the strain he knew as an English teacher but would still employ his talents. The move was rough, but he made it; and he threw himself into his new job. But he never really worked a full healthy day.

He grew weaker as autumn passed. He fought, he pretended, he ignored; but when I insisted, he came along to see a doctor, though he hated visiting doctors and probably suspected what this visit meant. The doctor was gentle but honest, and even gentle honesty can be brutal when it pronounces "end-stage emphysema."

We knew him as a hardheaded realist, but somehow he seemed to refuse to acknowledge the impact of his diagnosis. He struggled to work and complained about not getting better as though some mere congestion or simple virus plagued him. His good days confirmed his determination that this would pass; his bad days were just another temporary setback.

The community was warm and welcoming. We were glad that he was with us and tried to adjust as a community should to a new arrival. But as each member's life adds to our shared life, one member's illness drains a little of our pooled vitality, calls us all not just to know but to feel our mortality too.

Often we are awkward in the presence of fatal illness. If we have profound thoughts, we can rarely find adequate words to express them. If we have deep wishes for our sick brother's welfare, we find it hard to share them with him.

Living with death, though, implies that we do go on living, not pretending but not simply giving up either. I thought we were doing well. I was surprised, though, that people did not share the illness with the sick man, acknowledging its power rather than just sympathizing with him. I thought that seeing a man dying of emphysema would scare smokers to cut down or try to quit—he had smoked heavily—or would at least sensitize them to others' complaints; it did not. In fact, as I sat with him in the living room one evening, another community member came in, sat next to him on the sofa, and lit up a cigarette. He choked and bolted from the room, and the smoker was oblivious to what he had done. What does it mean to share life if our lives seem merely to share space? If we cannot draw from our brother's dying a call to treasure the time and space God gives us for living, why be here together at all?

It is hard to be part of someone's dying when you were not very much part of his living. But he made it as easy as he could with his trust in my care for him. He lay in his hospital bed, no longer able to walk or even to talk very long. He needed oxygen and still gasped for every breath. But he looked at me and begged me to answer honestly, "Please tell me the truth. Am I dying?"

Lots of dodges flooded my mind, but only one word of truth, "Yes."

"Thank you," he whispered and slipped into sleep.

► *Too Late* ◀

Through twenty-foot arched windows the summer night draws color slowly from the sky, and the massive shapes of Chicago's downtown merge into a common darkness and divide the light into patterned speckles. Inside, the rich colors and the muted lights of the student chapel at St. Ignatius create an atmosphere that is reverent but not solemn, careful but not cautious. Against this backdrop of God's creation and human industry, family and friends feel welcome, chatting and waving, not quite knowing what it means but not too concerned about not knowing. It is hard to imagine a setting more right for a final vow profession.

He had chosen this spot for a couple of reasons, and they all worked together, the practical, the aesthetic, the nostalgic. He and I had gone to high school here, though this chapel did not exist then; the homilist had been our assistant principal, though he now worked in Peru. The chapel and the liturgy brought ages and cultures and continents together, strangers become friends, the Church at its best.

The Scripture and the homily were, properly, a call to the heart to listen to God's word and to respond. And he responded tonight kneeling on the

floor before the altar and reciting words of surrender and acceptance in a way of life that makes no worldly sense. His words were words of a commitment that had been tested over and over again through years of living Jesuit life, doing Jesuit work. Here he renewed that commitment, restated it in fuller awareness of its implications than the first time years before.

As the assembly rose and approached the altar for Communion, the wider truth of this commitment in this context was plain, the truth that all of the people who are part of his life—well represented by the Church gathered here tonight—are part of what he is doing. No Jesuit could make such a commitment without the strength of such a company that shares his ideals—other Jesuits, obviously, but also this whole communion of God's saints in the Church today.

At the party that followed, people laughed and talked, sharing stories and memories between ample food and drink. Strangers said hello, and near strangers renewed their acquaintance. People whose lives had crossed years before met again. Everyone was enjoying just being there, and if for some the technicalities of last vows remained a mystery, the experience of commitment and friendship made questions unnecessary.

I came home feeling good. As others drifted in we shared the good feeling, laughed a bit more, and felt a gratitude we did not have to talk about because it was so real. The others wandered off, and I lingered a bit.

A younger man came in and asked how our ceremony had been. He had not gone, he said, but instead had attended the first vows of a man in another religious order in a nearby church. He said he thought he would feel more welcome there. Maybe he did. I said good night as soon as I could and left him alone. I had spent too many nights on his lonely agendas, and I was tired. It really was too late.

Waiting to Be Left Behind

I have sorted these old photographs before. I found them mixed in with wrinkled birthday cards and clippings from *Reader's Digest* and addresses torn from envelopes. A few crinkled onionskin letters to Rome with responses signed Pedro Arrupe or Paolo Dezza bring back issues long since forgotten.

I have been entrusted with the care of the community in which Tom died, so it was mine to sort and dispose of these everyday scraps, traces of a life no longer as it was, objects whose collection in this room has no more center or purpose. The clothes were easy. The papers would go to the province archivist for perusal. Souvenirs and silly gifts from long-past birthdays just took

a quick look. A few people wanted simple mementos. A couple of books will move to another dusty shelf.

But the photos are different. More than other remnants, they detail living, growing, aging—synonyms of a sort. The same life looked out through the eyes of the two-year-old in dresses, of the teenager aging with his classmates over four years as they pose against the same brick wall in the back yard at St. Ignatius, of the novice at Milford, the new priest at West Baden, the principal in Cleveland. The baby, the young man, the middle-aged educator, the older man showing his years—they all carry the same chin, wear the same shape of nose and eyes; they even put on the same bemused smile.

A week ago I sat by his bed as he lay dying. His cancered lungs struggled harder and harder to breathe, each breath a brief triumph, a count-down towards the last. He had left behind a lot of breathing in his eighty years. He had left behind the frantic breath that fed the baby's cry. He had left the young athlete's panting, giddy victory yell. He had left the young priest's whispered words of Eucharist and penance. He had chided, ordered, blasted, comforted; this breath had lived many incarnations. And this breath was now the prayer of a broken body marking time until this human form should yield back the Creator's primal breath of life.

I sit by Tom's bed as he wrestles for each breath, and I know I am sitting in the presence of mystery here. I am here rather than at my cluttered desk because the Society has given me this care. I would not have chosen it, and my heart bounces between feelings I do not like—impatience, annoyance that I should be elsewhere, busy at some familiar everyday task—and utter wonder that I have somehow come to share the painful privilege of this moment. Eternity is intruding here, with all the questions and doubt and hope for loved ones dead whose love is still alive in something more than empty memory. The reality reaches beyond surface feelings, probes beyond profound movements of the heart; the reality plunges down to the last of the gifts of the Spirit, to awe in the presence of God, where it is beyond expression, beyond explanation, beyond order.

My mind flashes back to some animated talk a couple of weeks ago. A Jesuit novice—young only by our current demographics—was talking about his formation; and for some attitudes he disliked, he dredged up the dreaded phrase *in loco parentis*. This triggered memories from my campus-ministry days, how this phrase ignited students' passions, ridicule, indignation. I remember too—next link in the chain of consciousness—an article that nuanced the argument: The concept *in loco parentis* is valid if one is willing continually to redefine the proper role of a parent; it did not mean treating college students like high schoolers but rather demanded shifting relationships as both parties aged and changed.

I think of this as Tom lies dying. I think about my parents, whose deaths my sisters and brothers and I lived through in recent years. They died not very old—late sixties, just seventy—loved, surrounded by their children, never knowing or known by some grandchildren yet unborn, their passing mourned. Tom is older—in his eighties—respected, well spoken of; he does not have much family, but a cousin and a cousin's son come faithfully to visit, while others always ask how he is doing.

Tom is something like an aged parent now, a variation on *in loco parentis*. I am said to be his superior, a functional term, not a description; I do not feel very superior. I know his history—a quick climb on the leadership ladder, the sad fate of icons in the iconoclastic late sixties, restoration in later years when we learned to respect our nonrenewable resources and endangered species. He is older by at least a generation, successful in structures that today are all but gone. He went before us, providing, encouraging, wanting sometimes for things to be as they had been because they had been good, but also letting go.

And I sit here powerless in his helplessness, embarrassed by mundane distractions in the presence of this mystery, overwhelmed by the sense of nothing left to do but to be here, sitting with Tom, praying what prayer I can find, waiting to be left behind.

It is an odd twist—having someone still *in loco parentis*. Somehow, I thought I was over that. In part of my life I am clearly becoming an older generation. A couple of weeks ago I celebrated the wedding of the youngest of my twenty-seven first cousins, and she is considerably younger than I. My two younger brothers and younger sister, married and with children, direct a lot of their energy towards the younger generation; the oldest child in each family is a son, and they all make significant passages this year.

Matt goes off to college. The immediate change for his parents will be a lot less anxiety. He may stay out late, but they will not have to wait up. They have big bills to pay, but they knew that was coming. And they have a lot less food to buy. There is a welcome quiet as they reclaim a few hours of their day. But this quiet is also an emptiness. The intriguing burden of eighteen years does not lift overnight without a trace. They hope that what they gave him, made him, was for the best, but there is still the wonder and the wondering. Out of sight he may be, sometimes out of mind, but never out of heart.

James starts high school. For his mom and dad this means four years of heightened anxiety. It will not be long before he gets a weird haircut, wants the car keys, agonizes over dates, feels the bonds of a part-time job and the freedom of some money he has earned from it. Will the love and example they gave him prove a strong enough foundation? He needs more freedom, more understanding to grow; he needs a level of separation. That is what high school is for. He has earned every gram of trust they grant him, and trusting him is really trusting themselves, their decisions, their sacrifices, their love through fourteen years.

Quinn is off to first grade. His personality, fairly well outlined in broad strokes, is still emerging, not yet detailed by many choices of his own. He is all possibility, options open, few closed doors—not long ago he told us he wanted to be a paleontologist when he grew up, or maybe a goatherd, or maybe he would be content to be just a dad. His parents send him off to school where he will find new friends, strangers they do not know. He will try out for teams, pursue challenges mom and dad cannot help him with. They will watch him from the sidelines, from the audience, cheering, letting go.

I love these kids and their sisters and brothers. I have baptized most of them. I have fed them Cheerios from their high-chair trays. I have helped coax their first words and coach their first steps. I have shown up in their grade-school stories and have been the subject of high-school interviews. We have watched the seals in the zoo together and raced their parents in paddle boats on the park lagoon. I have sung their happy birthdays; though I am not very reliable with presents, they seem to forgive, since I have an extraordinary collection of their artwork, all properly signed for me.

I also love to see how they image their mothers and fathers, and I see in them diluted traces of my mother and father—and maybe sometimes a bit of myself, in a collateral way. I enjoy their sports and their report cards, their pageants and their passages. I see how fast they grow and change as they take in the love and care that surrounds them and incarnate it in their unique individual ways, and how through all the growing and changing, in the deepest regions of the human heart, they really stay quite the same. The more choices they make, the more freedom they enjoy, the more they look like and act like their parents as they assume their own stance in life, ironically, very much—to vary the term again—*in loco parentum*.

And I love this old man dying in his tired bed. I can say that, even if it probably would not have occurred to me to think about it if I were not sitting here with him. We have shared some trials in the Society of Jesus and its celebrations too, followed the triumphs and failures of the Bears, lived through festive seasons and a lot of ordinary time. I have seen Tom's health decline, and I sat with him as he came to terms with his doctor's report and the clear diagnosis of cancer. Without canonizing him or forgetting his humanity, I acknowledge how much I owe him—an energy for service, a loyalty, a simplicity, an integrity.

Can I say I see him in myself? This is a different kind of generational hand-me-down than the contours of laughing eyes or of a pouting mouth; it is not in the silhouette or the posture or the gestures, not in inflections or the timbre of the voice. But it is real, finding its reality in words and structures, but more deeply in symbols and attitudes, truths and hopes bruised a bit, blunted, bent by challenge and the need to change and become new, but basically intact

and as valid for a generation yet to come as they have been life giving for his generation almost gone.

Tom rests here in another *loco parentis*, in the place of a God in whose image and likeness we are created daughters and sons. Like each of us, Tom has been creating a unique aspect of God's face to show to the world; like us, he could sometimes mask that face or apply makeup to hide blemishes. Children, in their innocence, have not learned yet how to hide the face of God. And now this dying man, in his helplessness, has passed beyond pretense. He can begin to rest in peace. The form he has chiseled and chipped, buffed and polished is nearly finished. And in this image and likeness, God must be well pleased.

The truck has come from St. Vincent de Paul. The boxes of clothes will help some other old men get through next winter; some odds and ends that have lost their meaning here may find new life as someone else's gift to someone else.

But these pictures. Images that have long outlived their subjects, children who do not grow up; cocky high-school students who never lose their strength, their youth; intent young men setting out on paths we know while they do not. The images do not age or pray or love or hope; they only fade. The reality changes and grows to a mysterious point where in the body further change becomes decline, and then it ends, while the spirit plots its own trajectory, able to go on growing in wisdom and in grace according to each one's character.

Why can't I throw these pictures out? They have no meaning when there is no one left to look at them. They are deceptive in their false sense that the life they image still goes on. They make something seem permanent that we know does not last. But they also remind us of something we need to remember, and my memories are not fixed securely enough yet. So I guess I will just box them up for now. Maybe some distant relative will want them. Or maybe I will look at them again.

At Last!

And I was always very happy," Hank choked and then crumpled into tears. There was nothing left to say, so we just sat there side by side and let the tears start their healing.

He was talking about the three assignments he had had in the forty-five years since his ordination and the four communities he had lived in; and he said that once he moved from one place to another, he never went back to visit. Was this "very happy" of his a summary blessing of these years? Or was it a last

dutiful nod to the virtuous thing to say before a deeper honesty took over and demanded reconciliation? I sensed it was the latter.

Hank was a quiet man, reliable, a comfortable fixture in the community. He worked hard, even at seventy-eight braving Chicago's winter winds and snow to take the bus to work. His needs were simple—a cup of coffee and a muffin at 4:30 AM. He guarded his privacy and found his comfort in the customary pieties and devotions of his early Jesuit years. We saw rare flashes of anger when truths he cherished were questioned and, once or twice, when his privacy was threatened. He was a gentle man, polite and friendly, but controlled.

In the past weeks this control had begun to slip. In January he felt a pain, and a hospital stay turned up something wrong but nothing definite. Subsequent tests told my instincts that his health was failing fast, but he kept trusting his doctor, who told him it would be all right. The doctor urged surgery. I suggested a second opinion. He wanted to obey the doctor's orders.

In the days after surgery in early March I sat with him when the doctor visited. He heard her say one thing, I heard something else. She spoke of the growth they had removed and how he had to fight; I heard what she did not say about the cancer that was still there. She came from a different tradition, where you hint at death, drop clues and veiled references; for twenty years Hank had worked in the blunt reality of County Hospital, where nothing is subtle. He did not understand her. Was it my job to correct the doctor, I wondered, to say what she would not? I could not interpret medical technicalities; I just tried to tell him what I had heard.

Now, a week after the surgery, we sat in his hospital room, surrounded by rattling carts and beeping screens and faceless pages for some doctor who was not there. Nurses came and went, and the man in the next bed cursed and moaned to his visitors. And Hank and I talked about the future. I said that when he was released next week, I thought we should go right from the hospital to Midway Airport and from there to our health-care facility in Michigan. We could not give him proper care at home. He understood this blunt reality, and understanding led to looking back over his Jesuit life, and then to gratitude mixed with regrets, and then to tears.

As I went to leave late that afternoon, he made a request, or rather a demand. He described where I would find an album hidden in his closet, pictures from his ordination in 1947. "I want you to destroy them"—he almost spat the words out—"destroy them." The strength of the demand surprised me. Besides, I had already looked around his room and had noted the absence of photos, nothing on the walls, no souvenirs, not even any personal jottings in articles he had cut out and saved. I said I would take care of the pictures.

The first of April gave no hint of springtime. In the fading daylight, snow mixed with rain mixed with slush and mud around the wounded earth

that was his grave. The rector bundled in his parka proclaimed the Church's solemn farewell. Hank was at rest.

I had learned a lot about him in these last weeks. His older sister told me that when Hank was a boy their mother died; his father abandoned the home and died a couple of years later. It seemed Hank had clung to hurts and guilts and fears, products of events reshaped by his imagination. This placid man burned with bitter memories that he clutched and hid and suffered alone.

In his last three weeks he healed a lot, even as his body weakened, and he shed a lot more tears, a child's tears finally released, a child's fears finally resolved, a boy's cry finally heard. The man was free.

The rector bade him rest in peace, and the funeral directors and grave diggers and I mumbled our amen. I looked up and said thanks, then brushed away the snowy rain that had dripped into my eyes, and I slogged down the hill. Hank had come in his last days to a place where he could accept love and care. Here in the end I believe he really was at last very happy.



FAITH BEYOND JUSTICE

WIDENING THE PERSPECTIVE

by

Martin R. Tripole, S.J.

This book examines – in a way both sympathetic and critical – the “faith and justice” motif that has dominated talk of apostolate and spirituality in many contemporary circles. The author concludes that, while noble and inspiring, the notion of “justice” is inadequate to handle the burden that many of its advocates would have it carry. He then suggests an alternative criterion for apostolic choices in the twentieth century and beyond.

Pp. vii + 153.

ISBN 1-880810-07-7

\$ 14.95 plus postage, paperbound only.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor,

Let me congratulate STUDIES on its great work.

The recent article by Tom Landy (November 1994) is excellent. May I make a suggestion for further study relative to the myths that shape us? Working with alumni for many years now, I am convinced that they carry substantive wisdom on the issue. I am also convinced that they rarely, if ever, share this wisdom with Jesuits, especially Jesuits in positions of authority. The "Yes, Father" syndrome makes them silent. The right approach could bring them around to tough love. They are our greatest friends, as well as our product. They have insights that would be very supportive and some that could be a healthy antidote to possible complacency.

Incidentally, as I have observed, Jesuits seem to be reading and commenting on the issues raised in STUDIES much more than they did a few years ago. Congratulations again.

Louis I. Bannan, S.J.
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053

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Editor:

Many thanks for Tom Landy's fine essay "Myths That Shape Us" (STUDIES 26, no. 5 [November 1994]). While one may have wished for a wider sample and more comparison between the Society's "generations," this essay serves as a much needed conversation piece. Allow me to offer three observations that might be of help to the conversation.

I agree with Tom that our formation often undervalues "the flourishing

Society's experience during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries" in favor of a presentation of the Ignatian charism that is "somehow pre-institutional." I would caution, however, against any benign mythologization of that period in our history as well. Even the most cursory examination of the Society's history in America during that time runs directly into one of our greatest institutional tragedies, the sad history of colonial and antebellum Jesuit slave holding. Virtually every institution founded by the Society in Maryland was dependent upon income produced by slave labor until the sale of those slaves in 1838. When it came to the peculiar institution of American slavery, as Emmett Curran has written, American Jesuits were "very much the children of their culture."

I wonder if Tom is correct in assuming that "[y]oung Jesuits are probably less individualistic than Bellah considers Americans to be. . . ." The absorption of so much of Jesuit formation in issues of "personal development of a psychosocial and psychosexual nature" and our inability to invest our energies into training for "programs that could really shape institutions" seem to argue the opposite case. In Tom's sample a large number opted for the "infusion model" of institutional involvement because of high visibility and the sense that institutions worked "for me." This decision on their part also seems to argue against his assumption. Finally, none of the thirteen Jesuits who opted for the infusion model were talking about institutions as transformative opportunities for shaping culture or critiquing the current use of our institutions in hopes of imagining a better future for them. As Tom himself notes, "the men who . . . are most often thought

of as pro-institutional, were often the most individualistic when they talked about their work at those Jesuit institutions." This seems to support rather than counter Bellah's notion that most of us who "live by institutions" are dubious about "the ability of our institutions to transform society or in our own capacity to alter institutions for the better." My sense is that we are far more individualistic and far more children of "the culture of narcissism" than we imagine, regardless of which of the four models we favor. Frank Houdek and Charles Shelton seem to have pointed this out in their own recent essays in *STUDIES* (January 1991, September 1991, and September 1992 respectively).

Lastly, most Jesuits still spend the bulk of their formation in schools. Six years of study and two or three years in a school setting powerfully shape our ministerial imagination. Perhaps the large num-

ber of Jesuits (seventeen out of twenty) in Tom's sample opting for schools has less to do with pro- or anti-institutional preference and more to do with the tendency we humans have of choosing the familiar over the unknown.

Historically conscious, critical discernment concerning issues of inculturation, especially the inculturation of many of our institutions, is an absolute necessity for American Jesuits. Our ability to evangelize the culture depends on it. Critical evaluation of our institutions and the imagination to shape our institutional presence to meet the adaptive challenge of our time is of the utmost importance. Our future relevance relies on it. Let the conversation continue!

Ed Beckett, S.J.
10 Martin Street
Cambridge, MA 02138



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