



# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

# IES

Juana, S.J.: The Past (and Future?)  
Status of Women in the Society of Jesus

LISA FULLAM



## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

The Seminar is composed of a number of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. 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.

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Philip J. Chmielewski, S.J., teaches religious social ethics at Loyola University, Chicago, IL (1998).

Richard J. Clifford, S.J., teaches Old Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge, MA (1997).

Gerald M. Fagin, S.J., teaches theology in the Institute for Ministry at Loyola University, New Orleans, LA (1997).

Richard J. Hauser, S.J., teaches theology and directs the graduate programs in theology, ministry, and spirituality at Creighton University, Omaha, NE (1998).

Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., chairs the Department of Fine and Performing Arts and teaches therein at the University of San Francisco, CA (1998).

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

Timothy E. Toohig, S.J., a high-energy physicist, does research and administration in Washington and lives at Georgetown University, DC (1997).

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3601 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108  
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IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

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*Lisa Fullam*

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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## *Of all things . . .*

It may be that for Jesuit readers of *STUDIES* there is no challenge as Jesuits "at the end of this millennium and the beginning of the next." Or maybe they just don't like to write letters. In the last issue of *STUDIES*, I noted that *Jivan*, the journal of the Jesuits of South Asia, "asked this question of several South Asian Jesuits of every age and background with this stipulation: 'Give us a personal reply . . . not a bookish answer, but please be brief.'" *STUDIES* extended "that same invitation to any and all Jesuits of the United States Assistency. Write us a brief personal letter in answer to that question: What challenges you as a Jesuit at the end of this millennium and at the beginning of the next? I said that we would "try to publish a good selection of those replies in our Letters section in subsequent issues of *STUDIES*." So far, there have been no takers, no letters. The offer still stands.

In September I attended a meeting in Paris of the organizing committee for the next international Colloquium on the History and Spirituality of the Society. That Colloquium will be held in the early autumn of 2001 and, for the first time (and we hope for many times in the future), at Loyola in Spain. The theme of the meeting is "Partnership with Others." You will be hearing more about the meeting in the future.

Another gathering that you will be hearing about follows upon the highly successful and well attended Ignatian Spirituality Conference held in St. Louis this past summer, whose theme was "Companions in the Mission of Christ." More than four hundred participated in this meeting, of whom approximately three hundred were laypeople and one hundred were Jesuits. I wrote about that gathering in the previous issue of *STUDIES*, and *National Jesuit News* published an article on it in its latest number. In all likelihood, a second conference will be held in two or three years in response to the enthusiasm which the first aroused. Do you have any suggestions for a central theme for that meeting? They will be welcomed.

When someone tells me about an interesting article or a worthwhile book that I might have missed, he does me a great favor. Perhaps you will think the same in case you have missed the following "good reads." They range from brief articles to a fairly lengthy book. All of them I found both interesting and worthwhile. The first is neither an article nor a book but, of all things, a musical for the millennium. Called "Jubilee 2000," it was written for and produced in the diocese of Phoenix and since then in a variety of other places in the United States and Canada. The lyrics are by Robert Blair Kaiser, whom some will remember as the unusually knowledgeable Roman correspondent for *Time* during Vatican II, and the music is by Bob and Bernice Smith of Phoenix. More information and perhaps a CD or a video cassette can be obtained from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith, 2230 East Heatherbrae, Phoenix, AZ 85016.

If you did not see the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* of October 17 and its article on St. Ignatius, try to read the article on the web. In a section entitled "Personalities," which included brief sketches of people as diverse as Héloïse, Rasputin, and Werner Heisenberg, the novelist Mary Gordon wrote most apprecia-



tively of Ignatius in a piece entitled "Ignatius of Loyola, The Saintly Boss." To quote just two sentences, lest I get into copyright trouble: "I offer Ignatius of Loyola as an example of an admirable leader . . . because of his gifts of flexibility, a concern for the inner as well as the organizational life of those he led, and a genuine heartfelt connection to those under his charge." The second sentence reads, "Even if the Jesuits had disappeared, Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, which he wrote to help the members focus their inner lives, would be a monument to discernment and insight."

Many of our readers already know *The Way*, an English Jesuit journal of spirituality. Regularly *The Way* publishes a supplement; its most recent one, no. 95, entitled *Retreats in Transition*, has among its sixteen informative articles three that our readers might find especially interesting and helpful. The first of them, by Joseph Tetlow, S.J., is entitled "The Remarkable Shifts of the Third Transition." It details the third of three major transitions in retreats that began a century ago. The first of those transitions takes us through that century. The second began in 1922 when Pope Pius XI declared St. Ignatius "patron of all spiritual exercises," and ran until the Second Vatican Council. The third transition began seemingly abruptly at the end of the 1960s. What has happened to Ignatian retreats in the years since then? The second article, by James Bowler, S.J., "Transforming Iron John: Caring for the Male Soul," asks how men define themselves and discusses an appropriate spirituality for their characteristics. The third article, by Philip Endean, S.J., "Transitions and Controls in Early Ignatian Retreats: The Legacy of the *Directories*," illustrates a struggle over finding the balance between two sensitivities—to the Ignatian text and to the reactions it evokes among retreatants. This struggle about how the Exercises should be used began early, and is not necessarily one that must be resolved; rather it is the hallmark of any Christian practice.

As for a book, not an easy read but a fascinating and important one, you might wish to look at *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* by Klaus Schatz, S.J. Note that this is not a history of the papacy or of papal infallibility. It is specifically the first complete history of papal *primacy*. Has the papal office always been what it now is, and will it always be the same as it is today? Schatz traces the development of the idea of the papacy as a center of teaching and jurisdiction from its earliest Roman beginnings up to today. Papal primacy has grown with the Church, and it remains a reality imbedded in the Church as a living community open to change. The book is a "Michael Glazier book" published by *The Liturgical Press*. Its ISBN is 0-8146-5522-x. It has 197 pages and its price is \$19.95.

As for our frequent remarks on Jesuit anniversaries, Jesuits serving as chaplains in the armed forces might wish to recall in the year 2000 the 450th anniversary of the first instance of a Jesuit army chaplain. In 1550 Diego Laínez, one of Ignatius's first companions and later second general of the Society, accompanied the Spanish army and ministered to its members in their campaign on the coast of Africa. He came home unscathed. Not so lucky fifty years later were three Jesuits who during their service as chaplains were executed by Protestants in 1600 while serving as chaplains with the Catholic army in the religious wars in the Netherlands.

*John W. Padberg, S.J.*  
*Editor*



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## Prefatory Note

At least three documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation help in fashioning the context of the present issue of STUDIES. They are "On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church" (document 11), "Cooperation with the Laity in Mission" (document 13), and "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society" (document 14). No single quotation, nor even three of them, one from each document, make up that context. Rather, it is the ensemble of what the congregation said that does so. Yet, the following statements may help set that context and may lead us back to the full text of the documents.

Can we be surprised that this deepened sense of the coresponsibility of all God's people for the whole life of the Church has led to more voices speaking, and that they are not all saying the same thing? This is a source of vitality—as well as of creative tensions. ("A Proper Attitude of Service," no. 305)

The Society of Jesus acknowledges as a grace of our day and a hope for the future that laity "take an active, conscientious, and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great moment of history." ("Cooperation with the Laity," no. 331, quoting John Paul II, *Christi fideles laici*, no. 3)

In the first place, we invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women. Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them. There is no substitute for such listening. ("Jesuits and the Situation of Women," no. 372)

On only three previous occasions has an author who was not a Jesuit contributed an essay to STUDIES. In the March-May 1978 issue, "Affectivity and Sexuality," Sr. Madeline Birmingham, R.C., Mr. Robert J. Fahey, and Mrs. Virginia Sullivan Finn served as authors along with several Jesuits. Dr. David J. O'Brien, professor of history at the College of the Holy Cross, was the author of the November 1981 issue, "The Jesuits and Catholic Higher Education." Finally, Dr. Paul Shore wrote on Ludolph of Saxony and the *Spiritual Exercises* in January 1998.

The author of the present article is a laywoman. She brings to her presentation both historical knowledge and contemporary concerns. She both raises questions not previously asked and, I am sure, will stimulate further questions in the minds of our readers just as she raised questions, some of them presently unanswerable, in the minds of the members of the Seminar when we discussed this essay with her at length. The Seminar members hope that the essay will raise appropriate questions and encourage creative comments, and that we will hear from you about them, in our Letters to the Editor section if you so wish.

As Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach said in a talk entitled "Laity and Women in the Church of the Millennium," delivered before a group of lay and Jesuit colleagues in Mérida, Venezuela,

[t]he laity have something to say; they feel themselves an integral part of the mission of the Company; they are waiting for the fulfillment of many expectations in their lives and in their mission in the Church and in the world. Jesuits all over the world wanted the Company to take its stance toward the laity, and they asked the 34th General Congregation to take action on that more frequently than on anything else.

John W. Padberg, S.J.

Chairman of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality  
Editor of STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS



# JUANA, S.J.: THE PAST (AND FUTURE?)

## STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

### Why This Paper?

The purpose of this paper is to invite Jesuits to a discernment concerning the admission of women to membership in the Society of Jesus. What is needed to offer a starting point for such a discernment? First, we must have some awareness of the relevant history. Without a solid historical foundation, any discernment would be meaningless. Most of this paper will deal with the historical and social issues that shaped the early Society's consideration of the admission of women. In particular, we will ask, What did Ignatius say about the possibility of women Jesuits, and how was that played out in his interactions with women who wished to enter the Society? In this I am, like most writers on this subject, indebted to Hugo Rahner for his 1956 work *Saint Ignatius' Letters to Women*, which is a strikingly comprehensive account of that aspect of Ignatius' correspondence.<sup>1</sup>

But much has changed since 1956. Certainly, new data about the sixteenth century has emerged; for example, information about confraternities existing at that time has contributed to a more nuanced feel for the texture of social life in Europe at this time. But no less significant is it that

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I would like to thank all those kind people who took the time to read and comment on various versions of this paper. Particular thanks go to John W. O'Malley, S.J., for his insightful comments on this essay as it was in preparation. Any errors to be found are, of course, entirely my own.

<sup>1</sup> Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Saint Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (Freiburg, Germany: S.J. Herder, 1956).

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*Ms Lisa Fullam is currently a doctoral student in ethics at the Harvard Divinity School. Her address is 65 Meridian Street, Melrose, Mass. 02176. Her e-mail address is <lfullam@hotmail.com>.*



our own the cultural milieu has changed to such an extent. This is especially true with regard to women's roles in our own society. Women's opportunities for participation and leadership in most areas of social life have expanded dramatically. It is at most only a slight exaggeration to say that the role of women in society has changed more from Rahner's time to the present than from Ignatius's time to Rahner's. History is an ongoing enterprise: we who live in a different culture bring new perspectives and new questions to bear on our understanding of the past and, therefore, on our understanding of who we are now and where we are going.

Again, this is an invitation to a discernment, a complex process of "heart and soul and mind and strength." Of course, I don't hope to settle this question here, but rather to begin to ask it in a way that is faithful to the history of the Society and the founding vision of Ignatius, and also faithful to the development of that founding vision in our own time. This is a study that asks the Society to see in its history an opportunity to examine again a question dating back to the days of the first Jesuits. As I conclude this paper, I'll offer some modern-day considerations built on this history. I will ask what some of the questions are that need to be addressed if we are to raise this issue again today.

## Introduction

There are few absolutes about the Society of Jesus. While it is predominantly a priestly order, the Society has, since the time of Ignatius, included the permanently nonordained. Jesuit brothers were formally incorporated with the bull *Exponi nobis* of 1546, and remain an important minority within the Society. Pedro Arrupe wrote in 1978, "I regard as irreplaceable the contribution of the Jesuit Brother to the very life of the Society and to its apostolate."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, there is no defining ministry of Jesuits: the list of proper ministries set down in the Formula concludes with "any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Society of Jesus

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<sup>2</sup> Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *Challenge to Religious Life Today* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1979), 292.

<sup>3</sup> "The Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus," in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. with notes and commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), no. 3 (p. 67). Hereafter this book will be cited as Ganss, *Constitutions*; citations from the text of the *Constitutions* themselves will be indicated by *Cons.*



defies the neat categorization of religious orders into “active” versus “contemplative”: even the motto “Contemplative in action” fails to capture adequately the unique synergy of those two modes of religious life that the Society has achieved.

But it is exactly this diversity within the Jesuit charism that is central to the identity of the Society of Jesus. The fourth vow, calling upon Jesuits to obey the pope with respect to missions, even though it is specifically made only by professed members, is one expression of the radical availability that informs the self-understanding of the Society as a whole. In the Constitutions it is clear that this radical willingness to be sent applies to all members: “When the sovereign pontiff or the superior sends such professed and coadjutors to labor in the vineyard of the Lord . . .”<sup>4</sup> To go wherever one is needed is described as “the first characteristic of our Institute” (626), and a large part of the Constitutions is devoted to sorting out the exact meaning of this availability. This is one reason why, for example, Jesuits were not ordinarily to serve as pastors of parishes: “Such duties should not be undertaken in the houses or churches of the Professed Society, which as far as possible ought to be left free to accept the missions from the Apostolic See and other works for the service of God and the help of souls” (324). This was the central founding vision of Ignatius and the first members of the Society:

Already by this time they had all determined what they would do, sc., go to Venice and to Jerusalem, and spend their lives for the good of souls; and if they were not given permission to remain in Jerusalem, then return to Rome and present themselves to the vicar of Christ, so that he could make use of them wherever he thought it would be more for the glory of God and the good of souls.<sup>5</sup>

Another consistent characteristic of the Society of Jesus is that, from its inception, it has been an order of men, with only four known exceptions. At Christmas of 1545, Isabel Roser and two companions solemnly pronounced vows of poverty and chastity, and a third vow of obedience to Ignatius, and thus can perhaps be considered Jesuits in the broadest sense, since “[t]he Society, when we speak in the most comprehensive sense of the term, includes all those who live under obedience to its superior general”

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<sup>4</sup> *Cons.*, 573. Numbers cited from the primary documents of the Society indicate the boldface marginal numbers or paragraph numbers in the source being cited. Unless otherwise noted, numbers enclosed in parentheses in the text have the same meaning.

<sup>5</sup> *A Pilgrim's Testament: The Memoirs of St. Ignatius of Loyola As Transcribed by Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, S.J.*, trans. Parmananda R. Divarkar, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), no. 85.



(*Cons.*, 511). This experiment lasted less than six months before Ignatius requested of Pope Paul III that these women be released from their vows. In May 1547 a formal petition was made to the Holy See, requesting that the Society be “exempt from the obligations” of undertaking the permanent care of women, including women who wished to join the Society.<sup>6</sup> *Licet debitum*, issued in October 1549, addressed a number of questions regarding the nature of the new Society, including a statement granting Ignatius’s request: “None of them . . . may be obliged to undertake care of nuns or religious women of whatever kind.”<sup>7</sup>

These three women occupied an uncertain middle ground in terms of their relationship to the Society. While their vow of obedience to Ignatius tied them more closely to the Society than, for example, is the case with members of Jesuit-affiliated confraternities, they do not seem to have been regarded by Ignatius or his confreres as Jesuits. At the same time, their brief

relationship to the Society was cited as a previous case by the Jesuit leadership at the time of the secret, but clear and unambiguous, admission to the Society in 1554 of Infanta Juana of Spain, a noble lady who was invited to take the vows of a scholastic in accordance with Part V of the Constitutions. She subsequently lived and died a Jesuit. Ignatius’s failure, after 1549,

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*At this time there was no significant model for women’s active religious orders.*

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to admit women other than Juana (a woman whose political influence made her a far-from-ordinary applicant), along with the statement that Juana’s admission is a “special and sole privilege,” is often cited as a clear indication of his wish that the Society be exclusively male.

But the story is more complex than that. My purpose here is to demonstrate that Ignatius saw the role of women in sixteenth-century Europe as incompatible with, even contradictory to, the vocation of a member of the Society of Jesus; specifically, that he believed that women of this time were incapable of promising the kind of availability for mission that lies at the heart of the Jesuit calling. First, I shall look at the broader cultural and religious context of the time, and then I shall consider the

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<sup>6</sup> [I]psosque ad hujusmodi curam mulierum suscipiendam nullo modo teneri debere” (*Monumenta Constitutionum prævia [ConsPræv]* [Rome, 1934], 182; this is bk. 1 of *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Iesu*, from *Monumenta Ignatiana (MI)*, ser. 3; and it is vol. 63 of the *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu (MHSI)*).

<sup>7</sup> “[Jesuiti] curam Monialium seu religiosarum quarumlibet personarum recipere [non] teneantur” (*ibid.*, 363).



exceptions—and those who were not exceptions. What, exactly, transpired between Ignatius and the women admitted—and those who were not admitted—to the Society of Jesus?

## The Setting

Essentially, three states of life were available to women in sixteenth-century Europe: marriage, religious life, and prostitution.<sup>8</sup> Those women who did work outside the home generally engaged in work related to traditional household tasks. Women who dealt in textiles, for example, tended to deal in small quantities or in embroidered goods, and “[w]ashing, laundering, scrubbing, in whatever context, was women’s work” (4). The situation in Spain was somewhat better than in other parts of the continent: women engaged in trade in their own names, and inherited property on an equal basis with male heirs (89).

Many of the convents of the time were not unlike modern-day sororities: essentially live-in clubs for upper-class women. Nuns often had personal servants, and the lifestyle they enjoyed cannot be described as in any way rigorous.

The house was big and manorial, as was fitting for the resident noblewomen. Each nun had an airy and sunny cell, some of which consisted of several rooms: a hall to receive visitors, a bedroom, an oratory, a kitchen, a washing and dressing room, and a room for her personal maid. Their fundamental and communal obligation was, at the sound of the bell at 3 A.M., to convene for Matins and sing the psalms, responsories and hymns. Within this framework it was possible to lead a fully individual life on the side. Each of the nuns took care of her own sustenance and was free to attend to her own taste in comfort, food, and dress. (103)

There was no significant model for women’s active religious orders. Women religious of this time, even members of female branches of active male orders like the Dominicans, were cloistered, a situation that was to be set in canonical stone with the Tridentine decree in 1563 that all women

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<sup>8</sup> S. Marshall, ed., *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989), 170. Numbers cited from books that are not among the primary documents of the Society indicate the page being cited. Unless otherwise noted, numbers enclosed in parentheses in the text and referring to such sources have the same meaning.



living under a religious rule must be enclosed, “even summoning for this purpose, if need be, the aid of the secular arm.”<sup>9</sup>

The issue here, at least in part, is one of definition. The Council of Trent was not so much addressing the question of the role of women in Christian apostolic work as it was reinforcing the cloister walls. Nuns, like monks, lived under the decree of Lateran I prohibiting cloistered religious from active ministry:

[W]e order . . . that monks . . . may not celebrate Masses in public anywhere. Moreover, let them completely abstain from public visitations of the sick, from anointings and even from hearing confessions, for these things in no way pertain to their calling.<sup>10</sup>

Trent conceived women’s religious life solely in monastic terms: women religious were banned from active ministries, not because they were women, but because they were nuns; this was an ecclesial more than a social conservatism. The equation of women religious with nuns would be challenged by the rise of communities of women pursuing an active apostolate, but those groups would have to engage in a prolonged struggle before they achieved this recognition.

Ministry as such was not the problem: ministerial opportunities for women, especially those wishing to work with children or other women, were readily available. Numerous confraternities dedicated to social service provided a context in which women could minister. Rather, the issue was the juxtaposition of the somewhat daring, even scandalous, activities of women doing charitable work with the decorum expected of women with vows acknowledged by the Church. But women interested in combining religious dedication with active ministry found in the confraternities an opportunity to get their foot in the door that Trent had tried to slam shut.

Confraternities were religious associations, defined by certain rules and engaged in particular types of charitable works. Some were dedicated to burying the executed, providing for orphans or caring for the poor, others to pious practices such as adoration of the Eucharist or various Marian devotions, and others to severe penitential practices (for example, confraternities of *disciplinati*, or flagellants, often organized under Franciscan auspices).

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<sup>9</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans., H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1978), 220.

<sup>10</sup> “[S]ancimus, ut monachi . . . [p]ublicas missarum sollemnitates nusquam celebrant. A publicis etiam infirmorum visitationibus, inunctionibus seu etiam pœnitentiis, quod ad illorum nullatenus officium pertinet, sese omnino absterneant” (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. P. Tanner, S.J. [Washington, D.C.: Sheet & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990], 193).



“Intramural” benefits included mutual support, both spiritual and material, extended to the members. Confraternities have been compared to an informal welfare system.<sup>11</sup> Most commonly, confraternities were groups of laymen under lay leadership, but sometimes the groups included (or were limited to) clergy or women, and occasionally children as well. By the latter part of the sixteenth century, according to Black, most towns of any size in Italy had at least one confraternity, some had dozens, and others many more (50). While most confraternities were founded and administered by lay-people, the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits were especially active in founding confraternities, typically with a member of the order serving as chaplain or spiritual director of the group.

The Society of Jesus itself began as a *compañía*, a confraternity (a term translated as “societas” in Latin). But by the time of the vows of the companions (1541), it was clear that this “least company” possessed the character of a religious order. As a matter of fact, in 1584 Pope Gregory XIII decreed that anyone who asserted that Jesuits with simple vows weren’t religious incurred automatic excommunication.<sup>12</sup> Despite the Society’s evolution from confraternity to order, the model of the *compañía* remained central in the Society’s self-image. Ignatius insisted on confraternal terminology for his order after his vision at La Storta<sup>13</sup> in which Ignatius “saw so clearly that God the Father had placed him with His Son Christ that his mind could not doubt that God the Father had indeed placed him with his Son.”<sup>14</sup> So the continued usage of the term “compañía” represents the members’ understanding of their relationship to Christ, not their canonical legal status in the Church. The close association of the Society of Jesus with many different confraternities as founder or reforming influence does not establish the Society as a confraternity itself: it is a religious order, one of the characteristic ministries of which was the founding and fostering of confraternities.<sup>15</sup>

By and large, the confraternities, whether they were under the direction of the laity, the clergy, or a religious order, existed alongside—and occasionally in tension with—the diocesan and parochial structures of

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<sup>11</sup> C. F. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ganss, *Constitutions*, p. 65 n. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76 n.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Pilgrim’s Testament*, no. 96.

<sup>15</sup> John W. O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), 192f.



authority. It is not surprising, then, that the fathers of the Council of Trent sought to assert greater episcopal control over the confraternities.

The bishops . . . shall have the right to visit hospitals and all colleges and confraternities of laymen . . . even though the care of the aforesaid institutions be in the hands of laymen[;] . . . they shall, moreover, take cognizance of and execute in accordance with the ordinances of the sacred canons all things that have been instituted for the worship of God or for the salvation of souls or for the support of the poor; any custom, even though immemorial, privilege or statute whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.<sup>16</sup>

Parish priests were encouraged by their bishops to found new confraternities rooted in the local church;<sup>17</sup> bishops began to visit confraternities as part of their episcopal "rounds" and to assess the groups' constitutions. The effect of increased episcopal vigilance in the wake of the council was a decrease in lay leadership and a tendency to assimilate confraternities into the parish structure of the diocese.

This development was especially threatening to women's confraternities. The history of men's active religious orders provided a possible middle ground for men's confraternities: one can participate in the common works of mercy typical of male active religious without professing poverty, chastity, and obedience or living in community. But equating women's religious life (in the Church) with the cloister left women's confraternities in an unstable position: an organized group of women connected to the Church must be "religious," which implied enclosure, and thus the end (or radical circumscription) of the very activities that initially defined them as a group. The institutional response to these groups was clear: the papal constitution *Circa pastoralis* of 1566 ordered all women religious to "take solemn vows and submit to enclosure,"<sup>18</sup> and *Lubricum vitæ genus* of 1568 ordered all tertiaries to pronounce solemn vows and accept monastic discipline.<sup>19</sup> For women's groups, then, one would expect to see a gravitation toward enclosure as a group's identity as "religious" became more explicit.

Angela Merici's Ursulines provide an example of this transformation from confraternity to cloistered order. As Rapley outlines their history, in 1530, Merici founded a confraternity dedicated to St. Ursula. At first, she envisioned a truly active group, modeled on the tertiaries of the mendicant

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<sup>16</sup> *Decrees of Trent*, session 22, chap. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> E. Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1990), 56.

<sup>19</sup> Rapley, *Dévotes*, 26.



orders. (She herself was a Franciscan tertiary until 1535.) The members of her confraternity, which had no ties to any established order, took only a private vow of chastity. They lived in their own homes rather than in common, and pursued a whole range of charitable activities, including teaching. Their constitutions, approved in 1544, show an institutional structure similar in some respects to that of the Society of Jesus, in which all members were ultimately responsible to one superior general (503). Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan and an important figure in the post-Tridentine diocesan consolidation of religious authority, argued that these women were to be answerable to their local bishops. This move served to shatter the global unity of the Ursulines. From 1577 each community of Ursulines was essentially isolated in its diocese.

Borromeo also established community life for those who were interested, a departure from the group's tradition of the members living in their own homes. "These congregees lived in community and considered themselves to be religious; they enjoyed some religious privileges and they were subject to some religious discipline, including the wearing of a distinctive habit (50). Evolution toward cloister came from within the Ursuline houses as well as from outside. The Faubourg St.-Jacques community of Ursulines in Paris suffered a veritable schism on the question of enclosure, with the anti-enclosure party eventually losing out to the combined forces of Church leadership and the pro-enclosure Ursulines and their families, many of whom were concerned for their daughters' safety and reputations in a nonenclosed group. Other families were influenced by financial concerns regarding inheritance laws and dowries for women who might return to lay life. Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, increasing numbers of Ursuline houses submitted to monastic enclosure under the rule of St. Augustine (57).

The Ursulines were a group founded for numerous charitable works, including teaching. The imposition of cloister narrowed the range of their possible ministries. Their work as schoolteachers "was itself a tremendous novelty. . . . It was certainly considered inappropriate for nuns" (6). It would be a great injustice to see these women as placidly retreating into a traditional role—indeed, they helped to create the role of women religious as schoolteachers. Two

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*At the time an organized group of women "religious" implied enclosure.*

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points about their early history are pertinent to this discussion: first, as cloistered religious, they no longer enjoyed the freedom of activity assured to members of a confraternity. No such restriction necessarily applied to





men's groups, except, of course, to monks. Second, while their work in the education of girls was understood by some Jesuits as complementary to their Society's work teaching boys, a crucial difference exists. For Jesuits, education was a typical but not a defining ministry. The Ursulines, conversely, were defined, not by their availability, now starkly limited by cloister, but by a particular task. The Jesuit fourth vow is a vow of radical availability for any mission; the Paris Ursulines took a fourth vow of free instruction of children (59). The Ursulines, then, began with a vision of a Christian apostolate not unlike the founding vision of the Society of Jesus, but within a century they found themselves doubly fenced in: physically by the restrictions of cloistered life, and metaphysically by the redefinition of their charism in terms of a particular ministry.

So while confraternities offered women an opportunity for greater participation in active ministries, the Tridentine move to establish the diocese as the normative institutional context for religious activity forced women back into the dichotomy of "aut maritus, aut murus" (either a husband or the cloister). An extramural apostolate for groups of women religious was an idea that would not yet fly in the Church.

From early in his career, Ignatius was active in the reform of women's religious communities. Moreover, his own ministry made extensive use of the talents of women as benefactors and fund-raisers, but also as companions in ministry.<sup>20</sup> For example, women were active in rounding up clients for the St. Martha's houses, which began as a kind of way station for prostitutes seeking to escape that way of life. But these houses also followed the trajectory of women's religious life in this century: originally halfway houses either to religious life or to marriage, eventually these too had a tendency to turn into conventual living arrangements for their inhabitants: "By 1573, Santa Marta [in Rome] had become a full-fledged monastery reserved for virgins" (184).

The history of Mary Ward's Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the early seventeenth century provides another example of the resistance to women's pursuing an active apostolate. In this case, as with the Ursulines before them, the issue is the combination of religious identity with charitable work: they were accused of pretending to be "true nuns."

In 1606, when she was twenty-one, Ward left England for St. Omer, where "[b]efore I could take time to put off my riding habit, I went to a

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<sup>20</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 75.



college of the fathers of the Society of Jesus.”<sup>21</sup> Encouraged by her Jesuit confessor, she entered a convent of the Poor Clares for a short time. Though it became clear to her that this was not to be a permanent home for her, she did leave the convent resolved to establish a monastery for English Poor Clares, which she founded at Gravelines in Flanders. Here she met Roger Lee, a Jesuit who became her confessor and trusted adviser.

In 1611, while recovering from a severe illness, she experienced in prayer a new direction for her work.

Being alone in some extraordinary repose of mind, I heard distinctly, not by sound of voice, but intellectually understood, these words: “Take the same of the Society”—so understood as that we were to take the same both in matter and manner, that only excepted which God, by diversity of sex, hath prohibited. (29)

Ward’s first plan for her institute shows monastic as well as Ignatian influences, and expressly indicates the group’s affinity for the Society of Jesus. Her intention of a broadly construed apostolate was first realized in 1614, when her group opened a house in London from which members, dressed as noblewomen, pursued various ministries, such as caring for the sick and the poor and teaching in private homes.<sup>22</sup> In 1616, Lee helped Ward draft the *Ratio Instituti*, which is at once more clearly Jesuit-inspired than the first plan, and at the same time excludes any direct mention of the Society.<sup>23</sup> Ward’s aim was to establish a group parallel to the Society of Jesus in organizational structure, range of ministries, and commitment to mobility. Her order, for instance, was to be governed by a mother general who was directly subject to the pope. And while the apostolate of the group was to feature education, it was not defined that way.

[W]e desire . . . to devote ourselves with all diligence and prudent zeal to promote or procure the salvation of our neighbor, by means of the education of girls or by any other means that are congruous to the times, or in which it is judged that we can by our labors promote the greater glory of God and, in any place, further the propagation of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church. (44)

Lee’s sympathy for Ward’s project was not shared by the Jesuit leadership. Both Aquaviva (the Jesuit superior general from 1581 to 1615)

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<sup>21</sup> M. Emmanuel Orchard, I.B.V.M., *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 18.

<sup>22</sup> Rapley, *Dévotes*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Orchard, *Mary Ward*, 43.



and Vitelleschi (general from 1615 to 1645) discouraged their men from association with Ward's "Jesuitesses."

Let all endeavour not to meddle in their businesses and make the world know that the Society hath no more to do with them than with all other penitents who resort to them; whereby I hope, in a short time, the manifold calumniation which for their cause and proceedings are laid upon us will have an end.<sup>24</sup>

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*For Ignatius to have established the Society of Jesus as a "coed" institution from the beginning would have required a social revolution exceeding the vision of that time.*

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A prominent source of these "calumniation" was the English diocesan clergy, who were engaged in a turf-battle with the Jesuits for control of the Church in England. Set in this poisoned context, the charges against Ward's people were manifold, ranging from rumors about Ward's relationship with Lee to charges that the women traveled freely, bragged of their freedom from enclosure, squandered their dowries, and asserted that "[t]hey have set the conversion of England as their goal and work for it like priests."<sup>25</sup> The scope of their apostolate led to pejorative nick-

names like "Gallopung nuns," "Gallopung girls," and "Wandering gossips" (50).

Ward petitioned Pope Gregory XV for recognition of her group, expressly comparing it to the Society; the English seminary clergy promptly attacked, stating that "it was never heard of in the Church that women should discharge the apostolic office" (69), that their institute contravened Trent, that the members "arrogate to themselves the power to speak of spiritual things before grave men and priests, and to hold exhortations in assemblies of Catholics and usurp ecclesiastical office" (69).

The destruction of Ward's institute was gradual. On the basis of the testimony of the secular clergy, a commission of cardinals sharply curtailed their activity, but allowed them to run a charity school in Rome. The success of this school led to the founding of several other schools in Italy, but in 1625 all of these were ordered closed. Ward left Rome for Bavaria, where her institute again began to attract members: "In 1628, the Institute numbered ten houses, and between 200 and 300 members. It was at this

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<sup>24</sup> Rapley, *Dévotés*, 30, citing R. Blount, S.J., writing at Vitelleschi's direction.

<sup>25</sup> Orchard, *Mary Ward*, 50.



stage that the Congregation of Propaganda secretary ordered it suppressed.”<sup>26</sup> Unaware that suppression was pending, Ward petitioned Urban VIII and the (now reconstituted) committee of cardinals on behalf of her institute in 1629, then returned to Munich pending their decision. Urban signed the bull of suppression on January 13, 1631, and on February 7 Ward was arrested and imprisoned for nine weeks in a convent of the Poor Clares as a “heretic, schismatic and rebel to Holy Church.”<sup>27</sup> The bull of suppression states that

[t]hey went freely everywhere, without submitting to the laws of clausura, under the pretext of working for the salvation of souls; they undertook and exercised many other works unsuitable to their sex and their capacity, their feminine modesty, and, above all, their virginal shame; works which men . . . undertake only with reluctance and extreme circumspection.<sup>28</sup>

The suppression of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary led to a wave of suppressions of active women’s communities across Europe “on the vague grounds that they, too, were ‘Jesuitesses’” (333). In 1633 the Holy Office issued a statement rehabilitating Ward and her companions from the charge of heresy (one of the women, Winifred Wigmore, had been imprisoned for more than a year by this time), but the institute and any group resembling it remained strictly suppressed.

In sum, powerful pressure was exerted upon women involved in religious communities at this time to pursue a monastic way of life. For Ignatius to have established the Society of Jesus as a “coed” institution from the beginning would have required a social revolution that exceeded the vision of most men and women of that time. While some groups of women were trying to combat the identification of women’s religious life with monastic enclosure, this was a battle that the nascent Society of Jesus was unwilling (or perhaps not yet able) to join. The fate of these early communities of active women religious—suppression or cloister—combined with a narrowing of their vision of their apostolate to a particular ministry rather than a thoroughgoing availability implies that even the most progressive of these communities could not fully embrace Ignatius’s ideal. Furthermore, as I’ll show later, most of the individual women seeking to join Ignatius’s company seemed to have in mind that same monastic paradigm, a paradigm which, while it certainly has borne much fruit for the Christian community over the centuries, is fundamentally incompatible with Ignatius’s vision. If Ignatius had incorporated monastic communities (with members of either

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<sup>26</sup> Rapley, *Dévotes*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> Orchard, *Mary Ward*, 112.

<sup>28</sup> Rapley, *Dévotes*, 32.



sex) in the early Society, he would have run the risk that his idea for the Jesuits would be confused or combined with the powerful tradition of Western monasticism, a confusion that would likely have resulted in a very different Society of Jesus.

In this respect, the Society differs markedly from the two dominant active religious orders of this time. The Franciscans and the Dominicans could (and did) incorporate cloistered groups without contradicting the basic spirit of those orders. The absence of a second order of cloistered women attached to Ignatius's group is not simply due to the historical absence of a person like Clare to raise the issue. Ignatius's emphasis on mobility as a key attribute of his Society precludes cloistered groups—therefore all religious women at this time—from the outset.<sup>29</sup>

## The Players

Nevertheless, there were women Jesuits: four, all told. The stories of Isabel Roser and her two companions, and of Juana, regent of Spain, are illustrative of the difficulties facing women pursuing a Jesuit vocation in the sixteenth century. Significant also are the requests Ignatius rejected from women seeking, in one way or another, to enter the Society. What is most striking is the consistency of Ignatius's responses: repeatedly he underscores the absolute centrality of mobility, the availability for mission characteristic of the members of the Society. To Matteo Murrano, who argued for the inevitability of a women's branch of the Society of Jesus, he wrote, "We must always stand with one foot raised, so to speak, that we may be able to run freely from one place to another, according to our vocation."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in the Constitutions we read:

[B]ecause the members of this Society ought to be ready at any hour to go to some or other parts of the world where they may be sent by the sover-

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, this applies to men as well, although the special relationship of the Society of Jesus to the Carthusians provides an out for Jesuits seeking the cloister. While the Constitutions (99) forbid vowed Jesuits to transfer to other religious orders, Jesuits drawn to a more contemplative way of life may transfer to that group. This special relationship with the Carthusians dates to the bull *Licet debitum* of 1549. Jesuits seeking the cloister may transfer, but then they are no longer Jesuits but Carthusians (see Thomas Clancy, S.J., *Introduction to Jesuit Life* [St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976], 11).

<sup>30</sup> [S]ienpre deue ester quasi con el vn pie alçado para discurrir de vnas partes á otras, conforme á la vocación nuestra" (*Sancti Ignatii de Loyola epistolæ et instructiones*, 12 vols. [Rome, 1964–68], 2:346f.; this is from ser. 1 of MI, and is vol. 26 of MHSI). Ignatius writes here in reference to the nuns of the Santa Clara Convent in Barcelona.



eign pontiff or their own superiors, they ought not . . . to take charge of religious women or any other women whatever. (588; emphasis added)

“Taking charge of women,” in this context, does not necessarily mean admitting them to the Society; if it did, the clause would refer only to religious women, since all members of the Society are vowed religious. But if Ignatius perceived even this “once-removed” connection of women to the Society as a threat to the members’ freedom, clearly he would regard direct participation of women in its work as even more paralyzing—women Jesuits would be immobilized not just by responsibility for others but by their own social location. Mobility is Ignatius’s recurrent theme in answering questions about the relationship of women to the Society, and mobility is a central difficulty for those women who nevertheless sought to ally themselves with Ignatius’s order.

### Isabel Roser

Isabel Roser was a noblewoman, a longtime benefactor and friend of Ignatius the pilgrim as well as of his young Society. She was active as well in eliciting support from the wealthy in Barcelona, especially wealthy women. Ignatius’s correspondence with her is both gracious and grateful:

I have no other refuge but, when the merits I obtain before God’s Divine Majesty are counted, . . . to ask the Lord himself to distribute them among the persons to whom I am indebted, to each one in accordance with the service he has rendered me, and chiefly to you—for to you I owe more than to anyone I know in this life.<sup>31</sup>

Roser’s husband died in 1541, and in 1542 Roser told Ignatius of her wish to live and work in Rome under his obedience. Ignatius responded to her that some discernment was in order: Was this a good or an evil spirit at work? Roser’s response, curiously, addressed this question without answering it. She indicated only her eagerness to join Ignatius.

As to what you wrote to me, that I myself can know whether I am moved by a good spirit or a bad one, and that the good always brings strength and quietness, peace and hope, whereas the bad brings fear, restlessness, strife, little faith, and much dread, as I have already written to you, it seems to me, and I have the same feeling today, that I desire to forget altogether all

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<sup>31</sup> “[N]o tengo otro refugio sino que, contados los méritos que yo alcançare delante de la diuina magestad, . . . que el mismo Señor los reparta á las personas á quienes yo soy en cargo, á cada vno según que su seruicio á mí me ha ayudado, maxime á vos, que os deuo más que á quantas personas en esta vida conosco (*Epistolæ et instructiones*, 1:85; this is vol. 22 of MHSI).



my possessions, and I have no feeling of attachment to these things. All that is a great grief to me is that I must be kept here so long with breaking up my home.<sup>32</sup>

In 1543 she set out for Rome, accompanied by her servant Francisca de Cruyllas and Roser's friend Isabel de Josas.

What kind of life did Roser expect to live with the Jesuits in Rome? Her letter to Ignatius of November 6, 1542, in which she expresses a wish to see him again before her death, indicates that she was no longer a young woman. Her departure for Rome had been complicated by her anxiety at the prospect of traveling without male companions. On October 1, 1542, she wrote: "I therefore ask and indeed implore you . . . to write to me most clearly as to . . . what male escort I should take so that I may travel with the greater peace, quiet and security of my conscience."<sup>33</sup>

She arrived in Rome with two servants, followed by "a whole shipload of chests and boxes, in charge of one of her servants,<sup>34</sup> and settled at first into a private house with a lay brother, Esteban de Eguía, as servant. (Eguía, a widower who had entered the Society with his brother Diego, had opted to forgo ordination; the grades of temporal and spiritual coadjutors were not formally instituted until June of 1546.<sup>35</sup> Ignatius put Roser to work in the establishment and early management of the first house of Saint Martha. Roser and her servant Cruyllas were joined by Lucrezia di Bradine, a Roman noblewoman. De Josas dropped out of the picture soon after their arrival in Rome. But Roser's new life, while apparently motivated by a sincere desire to be of service and to participate in the work of the Society of Jesus, was a life of unreconstructed female monasticism: she maintained substantial personal property, had servants, and practiced a more or less fixed ministry in this "Convent of St. Martha" (as she described the house in a

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<sup>32</sup> "Quanto á lo que dize, que yo mesma puedo conocer si es espíritu bueno ho malo, y que el bueno siempre trae fortaleza y quietut, pas y speransa; y lo malo, temor, ynquietut, rinya y poca fe y muxta temor, ya us tengo scrito qué me parece, y axí lo siento, y es todo lo de acá tenerlo muy holuidado, y sin sentir ninguna aficcion, y teniendo vna gran pesadumbre en aver entender en la despedicion de todas las cosas de acá" (*Epistolæ mixtæ ex variis Europæ locis, 1537-56*, 5 vols. [Madrid, 1898-1901], 1:111; this is vol. 12 of MHSI).

<sup>33</sup> "Asi que, . . . porque más descansada y quieta, y seguridad de mi conciencia, yo me pueda yr, hos soplico que más claramente me ableys . . . qué companya de hombre tengo de labar" (*ibid.*, 111f.).

<sup>34</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 282.

<sup>35</sup> Ganss, *Constitutions*, p. 50.



letter to Margaret of Austria, duchess of Camerino).<sup>36</sup> Roser's petition to Paul III, in which she asked to be "admitted to the least Society of Jesus"<sup>37</sup>—and that Ignatius be compelled to receive her—bears this out. She wrote of her devotion to Ignatius and requested that she make solemn vows. She had already, she wrote, vowed to observe poverty and chastity and to place herself under Ignatius's obedience. There's a vow missing. Roser was not, and as a person of her age and class in this society, perhaps could not have been "able to run freely from one place to another."

Nevertheless, her request was granted: on Christmas 1545 Isabel Roser, along with Lucrezia di Bradine and Francisca Cruyllas, pronounced these vows:

I, Isabel Roser, widow, the undersigned, promise and solemnly vow before God our Almighty Lord, in the presence of the Holy Virgin Mary my mistress, St. Jerome, and the heavenly court of Paradise and before all who are present—and before you, most reverend Father Ignatius, general of the Society of Jesus, our lord, as the representative of God: perpetual poverty according to the limits which are laid upon me by Your Reverence, chastity, and obedience to the rule of life laid before me by Your Reverence.<sup>38</sup>

As people who have vowed obedience to the superior general of the Society of Jesus, they were, in a sense, Jesuits (*Cons.*, 511). In fact, they were the core of an essentially monastic second order under obedience to the Society. This disjunction was problematic on two accounts: not only were they kept, by personal and societal circumstances, from exercising fully the charism of the Society, but as a fixed community they were an immobilizing force within the Society, as exemplified by the unfortunate Esteban de Eguía.

It is not at all clear that Ignatius and the other companions viewed these women as fellow Jesuits. Nadal, for example, was shocked that the women were being fed from the Jesuits' kitchen<sup>39</sup> and complained, "When Ignatius at the command of Pope Paul III had taken three women under his obedience, they kept all of us who were in Rome at the time continuously

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<sup>36</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 284.

<sup>37</sup> "Sopliquo homilmente a [vuestra] santidad me quera aser de la misma congregación de Jesus . . . y me conseda los méritos y gracias que por [vuestra] santidad los es otorgado" (*Scripta de Santo Ignatio de Loyola*, 2 vols. [Madrid, 1904–18], 2:12); this is from MI, ser. 4, and is vol. 21 of MHSI).

<sup>38</sup> Rahner cites the Society's archives in Rome: Cod. Ital. 59, f. 11. For Cruyllas's and Bradine's vows, see f. 11a, 12.

<sup>39</sup> "Offendit me in culina, quod ex nostra paupertate ferebatur prandium et coena ad Rosseram" (*Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal*, 4 vols. [Madrid, 1998–1905], 1:22; this is vol. 13 of MHSI). One wonders if Fr. Nadal was familiar with Matt. 15:27.



busy.”<sup>40</sup> Ignatius also spoke of Roser’s group as “ladies with vows of obedience,”<sup>41</sup> not as fellow Jesuits. On the other hand, Roser’s petition to Paul III had been exactly to join the Society and be made “a participant in the merits and graces which Your Holiness has granted to the Society.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, when the appeal of Infanta Juana of Spain to enter the Society was considered, Roser’s group was seen as a previous case in which women had been admitted into the Society.<sup>43</sup>

It was quickly clear that this experiment was a failure. In April 1546 Ignatius asked Paul III for permission to release the women from obedience to him. A formal petition was to follow in May of the next year. The source of the difficulty seems to be personal more than institutional: the same organizational energy, effusive enthusiasm, and profound devotion to Ignatius that made Roser such an efficient fund-raiser and all-around advocate for the Society among the Barcelona upper class became a problem when exercised at close range. For example, in his autobiography Benedetto Palmio describes Roser’s discomfiting “nursing” of the sick Ignatius.<sup>44</sup> At one point, Roser created a disturbance when she invited two of her nephews to come to Rome so that she could arrange a marriage for one of them (287).

Now Ignatius was in an awkward situation. He had been specifically instructed by the Pope to accept Roser’s vows. The other two women were so closely associated with Roser—in their common work, in their simultaneous incorporation into the Society, and in being the only women in the Society at that time—that their relationship to the Society was inextricable from hers. If Ignatius’s goal was Roser’s dismissal, he could have achieved this by declaring the Society to be an essentially clerical group, or an exclusively male group, and thereby he would be rid of Roser by definition. Ignatius’s petition is cast in the language of freedom from obligation of care of women generally. But again, Ignatius provides a reason for the exclusion of women, and that reason is mobility. Jesuits perform their ministries “always free and without encumbrance, ‘shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace’ [Eph. 6:15], whenever Your Holiness sends them forth under obedience to any part of the world.” Spiritual direction of “nuns and ladies” is “liable easily to become a hindrance” to their work. Therefore, Ignatius makes this request:

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<sup>40</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 287.

<sup>41</sup> “[D]ueñas con votos de obediencia” (*Epistolæ et instructiones*, 1:424).

<sup>42</sup> See n. 37 above (p. 17).

<sup>43</sup> See p. 23 below.

<sup>44</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 287.



[I]n order to be able to live unhampered in accordance with the spirit of their vocation and the constitutions of their lawfully approved Society, these petitioners ask that permission may be granted that they shall no longer be obliged to undertake the spiritual direction of [various categories of women] who wish to serve God holily by placing themselves regularly under their direction and following the way of life of the Society.<sup>45</sup>

Paul's response to Ignatius's 1546 request to release the women was in the affirmative. A sad struggle ensued in which Roser, attempting to maintain her connection to the Jesuits, resorted to financial pressure. She presented Ignatius with a detailed list of her gifts to the Society, demanding repayment, along with a promise of an additional gift to the House of St. Martha should she be allowed to remain. Ignatius responded with a bill of charges due to the Society, depicting Roser as indebted to the Jesuits by some 150 ducats.<sup>46</sup> Finally, on October 1, 1546, Ignatius issued a letter of dismissal to Roser. Nadal had to read it to her four times.<sup>47</sup> The financial matter was settled in court, where one of Roser's nephews, Dr. Francisco Ferrer, testified that Ignatius had been plotting the theft of his aunt's fortune all along.<sup>48</sup> Judgment was in Ignatius's favor, and Roser signed an affidavit to the effect that any gifts she had given to the Society had been freely given. With the Pope's favorable response to Ignatius's petition and the rejection of Roser's court case, this experiment of a community of women bound to the Society of Jesus came to an end.

Prior to her return to Barcelona, Roser and Ignatius were reconciled, and their subsequent correspondence remained gracious. Roser later entered a Franciscan convent, where she died late in 1554. Lucrezia di Bradine eventually entered a convent in Naples, and Francisca Cruyllas spent the rest of her life working in the Hospital of the Cross in Barcelona (289).

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<sup>45</sup> "... semper calceati et expediti in preparationem euangelii pacis juxta prescriptum et obedientiam S.V., quouis terrarum illos miserit. . . .

"Et ut liberius secundum vocationis sue propositum et institutionis Societatis huiusmodi institutum deinceps procedere possint, *quod ex nunc de cetero oratores prefati monasteria seu domos monialium vel sororum aut aliquas alias mulieres sub eorum obedientia in communi vel alias virtutum Domino famulari intendentes, sub eorum cura et institutis regularibus suscipere minime teneantur*" (*ConsPræv* 1:183f.; emphasis in original).

<sup>46</sup> Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., *Ignatius Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits: His Life and Work* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 254.

<sup>47</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 289.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 290. Two of Roser's nephews had arrived in Rome at the beginning of this whole unfortunate episode. They were apparently instrumental in Roser's use of financial leverage in this matter: it is not unreasonable to wonder if their concern for their aunt's financial interests may have been related to their position as heirs.



Roser and company weren't the only women seeking some connection to the Society of Jesus. A number of other women, individually and in groups, petitioned Ignatius for various kinds of association with his Society or individual Jesuits. Sometimes, for example, in the case of Sebastiana Exarch, a married woman who sought permission to take a vow of obedience to her Jesuit spiritual director, Ignatius simply refused. Exarch's request, of course, is exactly the kind of encumbrance Ignatius's petition was intended to avoid—her request is not for membership, but for a special connection to a particular Jesuit. In other cases Ignatius gave additional reasons for denying the request. In a letter sent to Spain with Miguel Torres, Ignatius wrote:

As regards the question of the foundation of a convent of female religious in Gandía belonging to and subject to the Society of Jesus, we cannot persuade ourselves that this is advisable. For our Society is still in its first beginnings; it suffers much opposition and lacks members. First of all, it must itself grow in our Lord. Secondly, also because the Society has made a special vow to be always mobile, according to the will of the pope, so as to be able to go from one part of the world to another.<sup>49</sup>

In the same document, Ignatius underscores the second point: "As far as we can judge in our Lord, what really matters is to keep the Society free to move unhampered in order to meet essential demands."<sup>50</sup> Ignatius goes on to note the difficulties created among Franciscans and Dominicans by the "complaints of the convents of nuns."<sup>51</sup> Evidently, Ignatius was considering a situation in which women Jesuits would form a second order, a cloistered or at least stable community. But also in the same letter, he brings up the possibility of a company of women: "We are persuaded that it would be a good and holy step to establish a *compañía* of women."<sup>52</sup> Ignatius

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<sup>49</sup> "Cerca hazer algún monasterio de monjas en Gandía, dedicadas y subjectas á la Compañía de Jesús, por agora en ser principio desta minima religión, y con tantas contradicciones, y con tanta penuria de compañeros que ay en ella, hasta que cresca ella in Domino no nos podemos persuadir que sea conueniente. . . .

". . . porque esta Compañía tiene el voto expreso de ser in motu á la voluntad del summo pontifice, para discurrir de vna parte en otra del mundo" (*Litteræ et instrucciones*, 1:421).

<sup>50</sup> ". . . quanto acá nos puede parecer en el Señor nuestro es, de hazer á la Compañía libre para poder discurrir por las mayores neçesidades" (*ibid.*).

<sup>51</sup> "[D]e las querelas de los monasterios de monjas" (*ibid.*). This was written just as the situation with Roser was reaching its nadir: Ignatius also relates his eagerness to be rid of these women.

<sup>52</sup> "[N]os persuadimos que será vn bueno y santo medio de hazer una compañía de señoras" (*ibid.*, 421f.).



may be recognizing the need for the establishment of another confraternity under the auspices of his Society, as, for example, the Jesuits fostered both male and female groups in Naples, Messina, and in its work in Japan.<sup>53</sup> This interpretation is in keeping with his use of the term “señoras” rather than a term indicating religious profession. But even if this refers to just another “business as usual” *compañía*, this is an instructive statement on Ignatius’s part, as he simultaneously rejects a “convent” of women and supports “una compañía” of women. The distinction isn’t sex, it’s cloister.

If Ignatius’s vision of women’s religious life seems to be limited to the cloister, so, by and large, was that of those women who petitioned to join the Society. It seems that most of the requests Ignatius fielded from women were requests to establish convents under obedience to the general or other Jesuits—a state of life fundamentally not in keeping with the charism of the Society. Jacoba Pallavicina, who signed herself “Jacoba of the Society of Jesus” in her letters to Ignatius, made this offer: “I could make an initial payment of six hundred scudi for the establishment of a convent of nuns, governed by your Society, and placed under your rule and obedience.”<sup>54</sup>

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*The Society has made a special vow to be always mobile, according to the will of the pope, so as to be able to go from one part of the world to another.*

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Jeromina Pezzani and others requested permission to establish a convent of women dedicated to working with Ignatius, and before they heard back from him, sent along a document vowing obedience to him.<sup>55</sup> Again, any hint of the fourth vow is missing—the women, inspired by the success of St. Martha’s House in Rome, vowed poverty, chastity, and obedience to Ignatius. While Ignatius refused their obedience, their work in Modena went on in close association with the local Jesuits, and Pezzani and Ignatius continued their correspondence until late in Ignatius’s life.

Teresa Rejadell, a nun in the Benedictine convent of Santa Clara in Barcelona directly subject to the Holy See, was the leader of a small group

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<sup>53</sup> O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, 195.

<sup>54</sup> “[L]a quala agiongerebe ala summa de 600 scudi l’anno de intrata . . . dela qual entrasta intendo sie afondato un monestiero de monege, gubernate sotto ala Compagnia uostra, e sottoposto ale uostre regule et costi[tu]cione et obediencia” (*Epistolæ mixtæ*, 3:335; this is vol. 17 of MHSI).

<sup>55</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 324.



of nuns wishing to introduce a more ascetical life into their convent in place of the lifestyle preferred by their fellow religious, aristocratic ladies little given to religious rigor. Rejadell's group, failing to sway the whole membership to their plan for renewal, requested to be accepted under the obedience of the Society. Again, what they requested was the incorporation of a monastic group within the Society; again, Ignatius responds in terms of mobility:

[T]he Vicar of Christ has closed the door against our taking on any government or superintendence of religious, something that the Society begged for from the beginning. This is because it is judged that it would be for the greater service of God our Lord that we should have as few ties as possible in order to be able to go wherever obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff and the needs of our neighbors may call us.<sup>56</sup>

The question isn't sex, it's availability for mission.

I've dealt in this section with some of the women known to have petitioned Ignatius for admission to the Society of Jesus. Ignatius's response, I've maintained, has to do more with the question of mobility than sex per se: Ignatius founded a Society of people always available to go wherever they were needed, to perform whatever tasks seemed to be needed for the greater glory of God and the help of souls.<sup>57</sup> Isabel Roser, Lucrezia di Bradine, and Francisca Cruyllas were apparently incapable of that kind of availability. These women made substantial contributions to the work of the Society, but they did not completely share its life. Roser and her companions created, briefly, a second order, a monastic offshoot of the Society. They established

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<sup>56</sup> “[L]a autoridad del vicario de Cristo ha cerrado la puerta para tomar ningún gobierno ó superintendencia de religiosas, suplicándolo al principio la misma Compañía, por juzgar que sería para más servicio de Dios N. S. que estuviese quanto desembarazada pudiese, pare poder acudir á cualesquiera partes, que la obediencia del sumo pontifice y las necesidades del prójimo llamasen” (*Litteræ et instructiones*, 2:374).

<sup>57</sup> A point of distinction: when Ignatius answers inquiries from women (or those writing on behalf of women) about admission to the Society with “we must be mobile,” is he addressing the women's availability for mission, or is he merely saying that (male) Jesuits would be restricted in their mobility if the Society were associated with women's groups? I've interpreted Ignatius in the first way, because (1) otherwise Ignatius is not answering the question he's being asked; (2) the latter position presumes the former, that is, it is women's lack of mobility in religious and social life at this time that would cause them to limit the mobility of the Society as a whole; and (3) Ignatius's Society worked extensively with women's groups, cloistered and not cloistered. It was when they asked to become Jesuits that the mobility issue was raised. If only male Jesuits' mobility was at stake, those other ties would have been problematic as well. And while in particular cases a Jesuit's ministry to women was curtailed, the Society has never avoided ministering to women in general on grounds of mobility.



a Jesuit-influenced convent, perhaps, but a convent nonetheless. Ignatius's consistent refusal to undertake care of cloistered women—therefore at this time any women religious at all—underscores his focus on mobility: Jesuits cannot be enclosed.

## Juana of Spain

Unlike Isabel Roser and her companions, Infanta Juana of Spain was unambiguously admitted to the Society of Jesus by Jesuit superiors themselves rather than in response to a papal order. She remained a Jesuit for the rest of her life. Juana was born in 1535, second daughter of Emperor Charles V, and was married in 1552 to João Manuel, the heir apparent to the Portuguese throne, a marriage that lasted only two years before her husband's death. Her request in 1554 to enter the Society prompted a hushed debate among the Jesuit leadership. Clearly this was a politically sensitive issue: Juana, widowed at nineteen, was an eminently marriageable young woman. To admit her to the Society would risk enraging her father the Emperor, himself no fan of the Jesuits. But at the same time, to refuse her request was to risk the displeasure of the Regent of Spain (Juanna had been appointed to that post by Charles in July of 1554), a move that could have serious consequences for the work of the Society there. The Jesuits, therefore, debated the very special circumstances of "Matteo Sanchez" and "his" request to enter the Society of Jesus.

If, on the one hand, we regard our Constitutions, which forbid such an admission, and the privileges of our foundation bulls, we cannot be forced to accept such a charge. On the other hand, understanding that three persons of like condition were admitted in the early days of the Society, and in view of the terms of the above-mentioned bull [commuting "Matteo's" vow to enter the Franciscans to one of entering the Society of Jesus], we have resolved the following:

That this person be admitted, and that the admission might be fittingly made in the way in which the scholastics of the Society are received, on probation, it being made clear to the person in question that for two years (and longer if it seems good to the superior) it is usual to be on probation, and that until this period has elapsed our constitutions do not impose any obligation to take a vow of any kind. If anyone, however, makes a vow of his own free will before this time has elapsed, in conformity with the Society's Constitutions he should make it in this form: [what follows is a paraphrase of the vow taken by scholastics (*Cons.*, 540)]. Whoever makes



such a vow is a religious of the Society, as may be seen from the sixth [actually fifth] part of the Constitutions.<sup>58</sup>

The document is a masterpiece of careful phraseology. It is evident that the Jesuits regarded Juana's admission as contrary to the Constitutions. The section of the Constitutions usually cited as prohibiting the admission of women to the Society (588) does not mention women in the 1550 earlier draft.<sup>59</sup> The specific reference to "religious women or any other women whatever" first occurs in the 1556 text, after Juana's admission. (Women are prohibited, from the 1550 text onwards, from entry into the houses and colleges of the Society, unless they are "persons of great charity or of high rank as well as of great charity" [*Cons.*, 267]. This, though, is a matter of house decorum, not of membership in the Society.) So it is not at all clear that the Constitutions in fact forbade Juana's admission. And, as explained earlier, even if the fathers were working with a text that included that reference to women, the prohibition is based on freedom for mission, not on sex simply.

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<sup>58</sup> "[M]irando de vna parte las constitutiones nuestras, que viedan tal admisión, y el priuilegio de nuestras bullas, que no podemos ser forzados á tomar tal cargo; y de otra parte entendiendo que fueron admittidas tres personas semejantes al principio, y lo que contenía la bulla arriua dicha, nos resolvimos en lo siguiente, y es:

"Que podía ser admittida esta persona, y conuenía que se admittiese, al modo que se rescien los scholares de la Compañía, á probación, declarándole que por dos años (y más, si al superior pareciese) es lo ordinario ester en probación, haste el qual término las constitutiones nuestras no obligan á hazer voto ninguno; pero si alguno los haze por su uoluntad antes de este tiempo, conformemente al instituto de la Compañía, los haze desta forma. . . .

"Y el que tiene tal voto es relligioso de la Compañía, como en la 6.<sup>a</sup> parte se vey. . . .

"Asimesmo juzgaron los arriua dichos que esta persona, quienquiera que sea, pues con priuilegio tan special, y sola, es admittida en la Compañía, tenga su admisión debaxo de sigillo de secreto y como en confesión; porque, sabiéndose, no fuese exemplo para que otra persona tal diese molestia á la Compañía por tal admisión" (*Litteræ et instructiones*, 7:686; this is vol 34 of MHSI).

<sup>59</sup> The 1550 text: "Porque las personas desta Compañía deben star cada hora preparadas para discurrir por vnas partes y otras del mundo, adonde fueren ymbiados por el sumo pontífice y sus superiores; no dueun tomar cure de *ánimas ni obligatió de müssas perpetuas en sus yglesias*, ni cargos semejantes que no 'se' compadezen con la libertad que es necessaria para 'nuestro modo de proceder' 'in Domino.'" The 1556 text is similar, with some exceptions: "*no deuen tomar cura de ánimas*, 'ni menos cargo de mugeres relligiosas o de otras qualesquiera para confessarlas por ordinario o regirlas, aunque por una passada no repugne confessar vn monasterio por causes speciales'" (*Textus Hispanus* [Rome, 1936], 548, 550; [emphasis in original]; this is bk. 2 of *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Jesu* from MI, ser. 3, and it is vol. 64 of MHSI).



But the constitutional issue is not the end of the discussion, but its starting point. Next, the Jesuits are careful to reassert their freedom in this matter: "We cannot be forced." The question of obligation is an important subtext in all the discussions surrounding Roser and Juana. Roser had petitioned Paul III to order Ignatius to admit her to the Society.<sup>60</sup> Ignatius's petition to the Pope asked that the Society "no longer be obliged"<sup>61</sup> to undertake care of women who would follow the way of life of the Society. Paul's response<sup>62</sup> is cast in the same language: "None of them . . . may be obliged." And here again we see language of freedom from obligation; here, though, it seems likely that the declaration is meant more for Juana's ears than the Pope's: any pressure here, after all, is not from Rome, but from "Matteo." If the intention was to rule out once and for all the possibility of admitting women to the Society, the language in all these documents is curiously circuitous. A more direct reading would indicate that the Society wishes to be free to determine whom to admit and whom not to admit. This freedom would be especially crucial where the issue at hand—the admission of women—has been interpreted as touching on the central concern of availability for mission.

In the next sentence, the Jesuits exercise that freedom to decide. Citing "three persons of like condition"—Roser and companions, no doubt—as a previous example of admitting people like "Matteo," the Jesuits decide that Juana would be admitted as a scholastic. Her admission would be probationary for at least two years and during that period she (like other scholastics) would be free to take the same vows taken by scholastics at the end of probation, but only as a matter of "personal devotion" (*Cons.*, 544). Following the two-year probationary period, "the obligation of the initial vows must be fulfilled by entering the Society in the ordinary way."<sup>63</sup>

What, exactly, the Jesuits meant by this obligation to enter the Society "in the ordinary way" is unclear. All candidates are required to fulfill a two-year (at least) probation prior to admission into the Society as scholastics. The scholasticate, though, is also seen as a temporary state; the scholastic's vow includes a promise to enter the Society permanently (*Cons.*, 540). This means that "they promise to become either professed or formed coadjutors" (*Cons.*, 511). The only grade of permanent membership for which Juana would have been eligible is that of temporal coadjutor (since

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<sup>60</sup> See p. 17 above.

<sup>61</sup> See p. 19 above.

<sup>62</sup> See p. 4 above.

<sup>63</sup> ". . . satisfaze a la obligati6n del voto primero, pues ha de entrar en la Compañia al modo que ella ordinariamente vsa" (*Litteræ et instructiones*, 7:687).



the professed and spiritual coadjutors must be ordained). Because of the political difficulties involved, it is unlikely that Juana's membership was ever intended to be formalized in that way. This statement about "Matteo's" obligation to enter may serve chiefly to obscure the truth of the matter at hand, consistent with the masculine pseudonym used, or perhaps some form of permanent scholastic status was envisioned for her. Either way, there is no particular reason to infer that she would have been accepted into any other grade of membership in the Society. The probationary nature of Juana's initial admission protected the Society from the serious legal and political consequences that might be anticipated from accepting the Regent of Spain into the order. Had her membership been discovered, she could simply have been dismissed. But despite all the tergiversation about her exact status in the Society, the decision of the fathers was to admit her: Juana's request was granted.

The Jesuit leaders wanted this situation kept very quiet, both for obvious reasons of political prudence and also because they were concerned that this might start a trend, as Roser's admission earlier had sparked a wave of interest among Spanish women who might have wished to join the Society. So this "special and sole privilege"<sup>64</sup> must be kept strictly secret, "as in confession, because, if it came to be known, it might be taken as a precedent, so that some other person like this would trouble the Society for a similar admission" (*ibid.*).

At this point, secrecy "as in confession" descended: the precise details of Juana's vows are unknown. Ignatius wrote to her in January 1555:

From a letter from Father Francis Borgia I have understood what a great service it would be to you that we should comply with the pious and holy desires of a certain person. Although there was no small difficulty in the matter, we put such difficulty second to the will we all have and should have to serve Your Highness in our Lord.

Because Father Francis will speak of the details of which Your Highness will wish to be informed, since I have confidence in whatever he will say on my behalf, I shall say no more.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See p. 24 n. 58 above.

<sup>65</sup> "Por una letra del P. Francisco de Borja entendí cuánto sería servida V. A. que turbiésemos forma como los píos y santos desseos de cierta persona fuesen cumplidos. Y aunque en el negocio ubiese dificultad no pequeña, pospúsose todo á la uoluntad que todos deuemos y tenemos al seruicio de V. A. en el Señor nuestro.

"Y porque el P. Francisco hablará de lo particular de que V. A. querrá ser informada, remittiéndome á quanto dirá de mi parte, no diró yo otro" (*Litteræ et instrucciones*, 8:235; this is vol. 36 of MHSI).



Offered as evidence of Juana's vows is this very silence on the details, in keeping with the directive from the Curia, even as Ignatius made it clear that the request was granted. Juana's assiduous work on behalf of the Society is a further hint, as is the subsequent correspondence concerning not only Juana's political services to the Society but her spiritual growth as well. Rahner writes:

The General took the princess's vocation seriously. Hardly a letter reached Spain in which Borgia or Araoz and other fathers were not informed of the regent's services or asked to report on them. . . . A proof of the seriousness with which Ignatius and his successors took the princess' membership of the Society, despite its unique and secret nature, are the repeated reports to Rome on her progress in virtue.<sup>66</sup>

But the same question must be asked of Juana as of Roser: What kind of life did Juana anticipate as a Jesuit? Again, consider the dynastic consequences: Juana was young and unmarried. While she remained unmarried for the rest of her life, a promise to do so could hardly have been made public. Secondly, some legal questions: Can the regent of Spain take a vow of poverty? What, exactly, would it mean to take a reigning monarch under obedience? And, finally, can Juana, regent of Spain, expect to live a life informed by that fourth vow of availability for mission (even though, like other scholastics and coadjutors, she had not taken such a vow)? In short, Juana's admission to the Society of Jesus was exceptional because of her sex and also because Juana's circumstances presented problems relating to all four of the vows normally

taken by Jesuits. The first three—poverty, chastity, and obedience—were atypical for Juana primarily because of her political position. The fourth vow, narrowly interpreted, was troublesome for this rea-

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*The decision of the fathers was to admit her: Juana's request was granted.*

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son too, but also because of the social and cultural position she shared with Roser: short of a revolutionary revision of the nature of women's religious life, a revision that neither she nor Roser nor Ignatius seems to have envisioned (and that, as shown above, the Church was not yet ready to allow either), women in sixteenth-century Spain were, by and large, not free in the way that Jesuits of that time were characteristically free for mission.

Nevertheless, she came as close as she could. Her life at court was one of unusual austerity. Bustamente wrote to Ignatius that "the regent's

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<sup>66</sup> Rahner, *Letters to Women*, 60.



palace is more like a convent.”<sup>67</sup> Juana was unfailingly helpful to the Society, but there was no constraining her imperial manner: a letter to Ignatius in 1556 “thanking” the General for keeping Francis Borgia and Araoz close at hand in Valladolid reflects the profound ambiguity of being an obedient ruler:

Fr. Nadal gave me a letter of yours at which I greatly rejoiced. What you say in it gives me double reason for favoring the Society, since you do not want Fr. Francis’s departure to take place without my consent. For this I am extremely grateful to you. . . . I feel the same about Dr. Araoz and thus I have commanded them under no circumstances to go away.<sup>68</sup>

Yet despite the ambiguity of her position, Juana seemed to have a real affinity for the Society. In 1558, Borgia wrote to Laínez: “She grows daily in the spiritual life and in pious submission to the Society; I think she is one of those who fully understand the nature of the Society, and she has in truth a good will for all our affairs.”<sup>69</sup>

Juana died at the age of thirty-eight, still a member of the Society of Jesus, the only woman known to have lived and died a Jesuit.

What shall we make of Juana’s admission to the Society? Most basically, with Juana, the Jesuits decided that being a woman was not an absolute bar to membership in the Society. Beyond this obvious conclusion, can more be said? The answer is complex: First, the Jesuits did not offer any explanation for their decision beyond the bare-bones note about “Matteo.” What is clear is that they admitted a woman; they do not explain exactly why. Doubtless, one factor in the Jesuits’ decision was Juana’s political influence: it seems likely that it was her political position that caused the Society to seriously entertain the possibility of her admission at all. But while it would be beyond naive to think that her political clout had nothing to do with her admission, to explain away her admission as mere political pandering is too simplistic. Clearly, agreeing to her request was politically advantageous to the Society. It is also true that admitting Juana entailed

<sup>67</sup> “[M]ás monasterio que palacio” (*Epistolæ mixtæ*, 4:618).

<sup>68</sup> “Una carta vuestra me dió el P. Nadal, con que holgè mucho, porque, por lo que en ella me deçís, se me dobla la razón que tengo pare fauoreçer á la Compañía, pues no queréis que la ida del P. Francisco sea sin my voluntad, lo qual os agradezco mucho, . . . y lo mesmo siento del doctor Araoz, y asy les e mandado que en ninguna manera baian” (*Epistolæ mixtæ*, 5:184f.; this is vol. 20 of MHSI).

<sup>69</sup> “Crece de cada día en spiritu y en deuoción de la Compañía, y así creo es vna de las personas que entiendo el instituto della, y con verdad tiene voluntad á todas nuestras cosas” (*Sanctus Franciscus Borgia*, 5. vols. [Madrid, 1894–1911], 3:406; this is vol. 35 of MHSI).



some risk—the potential effects of inciting Charles V against the Society extended far beyond the work of the Society in Spain. So the political advantage of saying yes to the regent of Spain is part of the situation, but not all of it.

What about availability? If availability for mission was the principal reason for Ignatius's unwillingness to establish a second order of female Jesuits from the outset, did Juana somehow overcome the social limitations on women's activity of her time? The answer here, I suggest, is a qualified "yes." The qualification lies in the Society's evolving understanding of the meaning of apostolic availability and mobility at the time of Juana's admission.

A prime example of—and motive force in—this evolution can be seen in the increasing Jesuit commitment to founding and running schools. By 1551 the Society was opening schools "at the rate of about four or five per year."<sup>70</sup> With the establishment of the schools, the Society had increased its commitment to ministries that required a more constant presence. The willingness to be sent "to whatsoever place" had evolved into a more thoroughgoing availability "for whatsoever ministry" the Church might need.

The Jesuit Constitutions stipulated that "the first characteristic of our Institute" was for the members to be free to travel to various parts of the world. The foundational model for this characteristic was the itinerant preachers of the Gospel described in the New Testament. Although the evangelical model was dominant in the early years, it was of course not the only one, for stable residences were foreseen from the beginning. Nonetheless, that model now had to be further tempered by the reality of being resident schoolmasters. The tension between the continuing insistence on the necessity of mobility and the long-term commitment required by the schools would remain throughout Jesuit history. (239)

The tension O'Malley notes is important. The concept of mobility was not simply replaced by a kind of theoretical availability: a complex and dynamic relationship between availability and mobility ensued—a relationship that is beyond the scope of this paper to delineate—in which the Society's radical availability is manifested in missions that may require some Jesuits' personal stability. Yet mobility, which in turn requires a prior fundamental availability of mind and heart, a basic willingness to be sent, remains important to Jesuit self-understanding.

So was Juana available? In a political sense, certainly: Juana was in no sense cloistered—on the contrary, she was engaged and active in the world on behalf of the Society. And while she herself could not be sent "to

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<sup>70</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 200.



whatsoever place," surely her influence moved freely over the whole of Spain and throughout the empire to facilitate the Jesuits' work. Juana was "missioned" in the exercise of her influence, wherever the Jesuits needed her: her political position gave her an almost unique mode of availability for the work of the Society. She also seems to have manifested personally the deeper availability of heart that underlies mobility in its more usual sense: her profound sense of connection to the Society's mission can be seen in her dedication to promoting and defending its work. Juana was not merely an advocate for the Society: her dedication to living out religious life as well as she could—and the Jesuits' concern for her spiritual well-being in return—reveal a true effort to enter into the life of the Society as completely as her political circumstances permitted.

In the complex of factors that may have influenced the Jesuits' decision about Juana, therefore, we see political advantage and risk to the Society (even as they assert their freedom to decline her request); her commitment to a kind of religious life (even while the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were atypical in her case); her dedication to the work of the Society (while Roser seems to have been motivated more by personal devotion to Ignatius); as well as her ability to exercise a kind of availability roughly analogous to that of other Jesuits in fixed apostolates. But on the other hand, of course, there had been no significant change in women's status in society and in the Church, so even while Juana was able to exercise a kind of availability, still she lived in a social and religious context in which her admission could not be seen as opening the door for the admission of ordinary women.

A summary of the story thus far: I've tried to show that most women in Ignatius's time could not embody the availability for mission that is essential to the Jesuit charism. Ignatius's group was a religious order. The question of the admission of women to the Society was, in most cases, a

non-starter in Ignatius's time, because women were either cloistered if they were religious, or not religious if they were not cloistered. On grounds of mobility Ignatius consistently rejected the idea of women belonging to the Society. And Juana's admission underscores the idea that sex can-

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*They admitted her in a strikingly ordinary way.*

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not be the deciding issue here—Juana was no less a woman after her admission than before. What she was after her admission was a woman living under the religious vows of the Society of Jesus while substantially assisting the Society's work in Spain. To an unusual extent, Juana was able to overcome the catch-22 that kept most women from being able to live as



Jesuits: her political influence was an avenue to a kind of apostolic availability for the work of the Society, and at the same time it served as leverage that enabled her to force the question of her admission on the Jesuit leadership. And, as it turned out, they let her in. Beyond that, they admitted her in a strikingly ordinary way. The infanta Juana, regent of Spain, became—a scholastic. An extraordinary person in extraordinary circumstances was seen to fit into a very ordinary niche. It is her ordinary admission, freely undertaken, that is salient about Juana's case: when all was said and done, the Jesuits decided that Juana was a Jesuit—an unusual Jesuit, to be sure, but a Jesuit nonetheless.

### And Now?

**T**he idea that availability for mission was the grounds for excluding most women from the early Society has not gone unnoticed by twentieth-century commentators. Thomas Clancy, S.J., has written:

In 1546 the first sketch of the General Examen was made, and in this and the following year Ignatius decided that the Society should not admit women and should indeed be relieved of the duty of regularly caring for religious women. . . . As Hugo Rahner has shown, he was no misogynist and he found himself throughout his life deeply indebted to female benefactors both spiritual and temporal, but he concluded that this work had to cede to the desired mobility of his Company.<sup>71</sup>

Rogelio Garcia-Mateo, S.J., concurs.

It was not so much this experience [with Roser's group] but the apostolic goal of the new order (to go where the greatest need was, and often alone, like Francis Xavier) that led Ignatius to reject the idea of a women's branch of the Society of Jesus. Given the social structures and external conditions of the time, such missionary activity was hardly conceivable for women. . . . It needs to be underscored that Ignatius' refusal to accept women into the order was not because of any enmity toward them, but because of the circumstances of the time.<sup>72</sup>

But times change.

So how shall we understand Juana, S.J., for our own times? Is Juana merely a sixteenth-century singularity, a permanent footnote in the annals of

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<sup>71</sup> Clancy, *Introduction to Jesuit Life*, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Rogelio Garcia-Mateo, S.J., "Ignatius of Loyola and Women," *Theology Digest* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 31f.



the Society? How shall we decide whether she was an exception—a historical curiosity without particular importance for the Society today—or a precedent pointing to a future for women as members of the Society of Jesus? In part, of course, only time will tell. If women are members of the Society in the future, Juana will be a precedent; if women are never admitted, she will have been an exception. The judgment of Juana's relevance, then, depends on present-day and future Jesuits and how they interpret the meaning of her story. To conclude this essay, I would like to offer a few considerations that might shape a renewed examination of the question of admitting women to the Society in our time.

Behind any of the specific issues I will raise, though, is the deeper question that has guided the individual and corporate decisions of the Society of Jesus since its birth—what is “ad majorem Dei gloriam”? This question is not amenable to simple calculation of practical costs and benefits. Rather, this question draws us into a deeper kind of inquiry: it is an opening

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*Faithfulness to Ignatius's  
vision invites discernment.*

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to discernment. How may God be better served in the work and lives of Jesuits in our time? If the mission of the Society is to be people “for others,” would the inclusion of women in its life and work enhance its availability, its flexibility, its ability to speak to modern cultures in a way

that is both familiar and prophetic, both encouraging and challenging? The stance of attentive responsiveness to the voice of the Spirit at work—which is the heart of all true availability—should inform any consideration of this topic.

With this hermeneutic as our guide, I'll explore three main concerns. First, I'll consider the meaning of inculturation: What are the implications for the Society of the changing status of women in our time? Another issue that I must consider is priesthood: although most Jesuits in Ignatius's lifetime were not yet ordained, it is now nearly normative for Jesuits to be priests. Can women be Jesuits if they cannot be ordained? Finally, I'll offer some reasons why I believe that the Society might raise again the question of admitting women to membership—not “Why not?” but “Why?”

## Inculturation

One of the great themes of the work of the Society of Jesus from its very beginnings down to the present is an emphasis on inculturation. Matteo Ricci's work in the Far East is an often cited early example, and General



Congregation 34 reiterates the importance of this characteristic of Jesuit mission.

The proclamation of the Gospel in a particular context ought always to address its cultural, religious, and structural features, not as a message that comes from outside, but as a principle that, from within, “animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about ‘a new creation.’”<sup>73</sup>

Inculturation, theologically, is a gesture of faith that God speaks to the human heart in all places and times. (The same confidence undergirds annotation 15 of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in which the director is instructed that it is better to allow “the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its the Creator and Lord.”<sup>74</sup> This connection of Jesuit mission and culture is “not just a pragmatic apostolic strategy; it is rooted in the mysticism flowing from the experience of Ignatius. . . . [I]t is never a question of choosing either God or the world; rather, it is always God in the world” (GC 34, dec. 4, no. 7).

This is the dynamic expressed in Vatican II’s call for religious orders to reassess their foundations and to embrace again the “spirit and aims of each founder.” But these aims, along with the “sound traditions” of each institute, are retained in the context of renewal.

The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.<sup>75</sup>

Time calls for cultural accommodation no less than distance. Inculturation is not only a bridge across synchronic cultural gaps but is also required where time has made a culture different from its former self. Faithfulness to Ignatius’s vision invites discernment: not simply repeating his decisions, but rather weighing issues based on the needs of the Church, the needs of the Society, and the continual search for how the Society might work “to the greater glory of God and for the help of souls.”

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<sup>73</sup> *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), dec. 2, no. 41, citing Pedro Arrupe, “Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation,” *Acta Romana* 17 (1978): 257.

<sup>74</sup> *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. with commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), no. 15 (p. 26).

<sup>75</sup> “Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life” (“*Perfectæ caritatis*”), in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1975), no. 2 (p. 612).



Ignatius did not want to bequeath to us the constitutions as a finished product, and . . . Laínez “saw in this unfinished work of Ignatius a summons to a creative fidelity, the Society’s responsibility, when gathered in general congregation, to renew, enrich and clarify with new apostolic experiences, demands, and urgencies, the way pointed out to us by the pilgrim Ignatius.”<sup>76</sup>

What, then, are the “new apostolic experiences, demands, and urgencies” of our times? Surely one of the most striking signs of these times is the dramatic change in the role of women in society, particularly an increase in women’s self-determination in freedom. Women now participate in government, academia, the military, business, medicine, and many other areas of public life in ways unimaginable in Ignatius’s time. Bluntly put, women in Ignatius’s time were not available for mission as the Jesuit charism required. Now women are. Ignatius’s express reason for excluding most women from the Society no longer holds.

This happens at a time when the Society itself is beginning to consider the importance of issues involving women. Decree 14 of GC 34, “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society,” begins with a statement of the scope of this issue:

[I]t is indeed a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate faith and justice. It has a universal dimension in that it involves men and women everywhere. To an increasing extent it cuts across barriers of class and culture. It is of personal concern to those who work with us in our mission, especially lay and religious women. (361)

Perhaps, then, it is time to consider again what the first Jesuits and Juana began.

## Priesthood

It is impossible to consider the inclusion of women in the Society of Jesus today without addressing the question of priesthood. Ignatius envisioned a company as broadly useful to the Church as possible, ready for any task that is “for the greater glory of God and the good of souls” (*Cons.*, 605, et passim). And it is certainly true, in our own time no less than in Ignatius’s, that priestly ordination expands the types of ministry that an individual may offer in the Church. Sacramental ministry (of Eucharist and penance particularly) was central among the activities of the early Jesuits. The largely sacerdotal character of the Society since then has confirmed and reconfirmed Ignatius’s emphasis on administration of the sacraments as a significant

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<sup>76</sup> “Historical Preface,” in *Thirty-Fourth General Congregation*, p. 14.



aspect of the Society's work. Moreover, the multilayered meaning of membership in the Society indicates that it is the professed of all four vows (who are priests) that are considered members in the strictest sense.

The fourth and most precise meaning of this name, the Society, comprehends only the professed. The reason is, not that the body of the Society contains no other members, but that the professed are the principal members. (511)

The description of the Society given in the *Formula* also includes priestly functions: The Society is

founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments. Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons and hospitals, and indeed in performing any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good. (3)

But the Society has never been composed only of priests. The history of the Jesuit brothers, known prior to GC 34 as temporal coadjutors, bears witness that Jesuit identity is not a subtext of priestly identity, but exists distinct from priesthood. Jesuit brothers are not failed priests: they are Jesuits for whose ministry ordination is not required. Their presence in the Society is a particularly bold assertion of the meaning of "for the greater glory of God and the good of souls"—not even a ministry as clearly important in the life of the Church and the Society as sacramental priesthood can completely circumscribe the Jesuit vocation. As Pedro Arrupe noted, "In some ways, the religious brother embodies religious life in its essence, and so is able to illustrate that life with particular clarity."<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, the present ban on the ordination of women does not mean that women cannot fully participate in the Jesuit mission. The purpose of the Society given in the *Formula* includes ministries reserved to priests, but the description neither begins nor ends with those tasks. Indeed, as it does in the case of the brothers, the incorporation of women in the Society would emphasize Ignatius's point that what is essential is availability for

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<sup>77</sup> "Contribution of Jesuit Brothers to the Apostolic Community of the Society," *Acta Romana* 27 (1978): 381, cited in *Thirty-Fourth General Congregation*, dec. 7, 204 (p. 104).



whatever is deemed to be “for the greater glory of God and the good of souls.”

## But Why?

I’ve argued so far that inculturation includes a kind of “entemporization,” that is, looking at and responding to the signs of changing times. Women are now participants in public life in an unprecedented way; and GC 34, recognizing that “women’s issues” are the urgent concern of the whole Church, has dedicated the Society to solidarity with women in all aspects of its work. Priesthood, while an important aspect of the ministry of most Jesuits, is not a prerequisite for membership in the Society, as the Jesuit brothers have demonstrated for more than four centuries. Now I’d like to offer a few more specific thoughts on why the Society might once again take up the question of women as members. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but perhaps might serve to provide starting points for further discussion of this issue.

### *A reexamination of the nature, scope, and distinctiveness of Jesuit vocation*

Ignatius’s response to Roser and Juana reflected and underscored one of the central aspects of his religious vision: Jesuits must be available for mission. A renewed discussion of the possibility of women Jesuits would likewise focus on the self-understanding of Jesuits as religious, as Christians, as human beings—what does this vocation mean today? How is the Jesuit charism distinctive in today’s Church?

### *A model of collaboration in a divided Church*

Including women as members of the Society of Jesus would be a powerful witness to collaboration in a divided Church. As GC 34 phrased it, “We invite all Jesuits, as individuals and through their institutions, to align themselves in solidarity with women” (373). What better solidarity is there than common commitment to the Jesuit mission in its entirety, in its internal life as well as its external work? Women have participated in the work of the Society from its beginning. But women like Juana and others down to our own time seem to share more than mere cooperation in the work of Jesuits—they share a common vocation. If the Society truly means to “listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women” (372), it might listen to this aspect of women’s experience as well, where the quiet and persistent voice of a Jesuit vocation asks to be put to work “for the



greater glory of God and for the good of souls." Ignatian spirituality has touched the lives of countless men and women over the centuries; why would it be surprising that the Jesuit vocation is likewise shared by women as well as men?

*A focus on the role of vowed religious in collaboration with laity*

Decree 10 of GC 34, "The Promotion of Vocations," states that "[c]learly, a vocation is a gift from God, and no human effort can replace the action of the Spirit. Nonetheless, God uses human instruments. Each Jesuit and each Jesuit community must take responsibility for ensuring that we can carry out our mission in the years to come" (292). Incorporation of women in the Society of Jesus is not the whole solution to the challenge of continuing the Society's mission. Doubtless, increased collaboration with laypeople in the work of the Society as well as increased cooperation with members of other religious congregations will also be essential and will add a synergetic vigor to its work. But the mission of the Society cannot be completely summed up in any list of tasks accomplished: the work of the Society consists in the witness of the lives of Jesuits as much as any work performed in the name of the Society. As Arrupe noted, "the true contribution of the Brothers (as of every other member of the Society) is himself, his own person, the gift God gives to the Society in each vocation."<sup>78</sup> That is why the list of usual ministries ends with "any other works of charity." That also gives impetus to the fourth vow of availability for whatever mission is required: the first task of a Jesuit is to be a Jesuit, "for the greater glory of God and the good of souls." As such, vowed Jesuits are at the center of the mission, the paradigmatic agents of Ignatius's ideal of Jesuit discipleship. Welcoming women to membership in the Society would help to reinforce that distinctively religious, distinctively Jesuit identity, not as a refutation of the close bonds of shared apostolate of laity with the Society, but in recognition and celebration of the gifts of the lay and religious vocations.<sup>79</sup>

*A response to a pastoral need*

When Polanco listed the benefits to the Society of Jesuit-run schools, he noted that "[a]lthough Jesuits should not try to persuade anybody to enter the Society, especially not young boys, their good example and other factors will, nonetheless, help gain 'laborers in the vineyard.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Arrupe, *Challenge*, 282.

<sup>79</sup> See *Thirty-Fourth General Congregation*, dec. 13, 358 (p. 169).



Polanco's observation still holds true: the schools help gain potential members for the Society. As increasing numbers of Jesuit schools become coed, it has become more common for Jesuits working in those schools to be approached by young women inquiring about membership in the Society. Obviously, a first inquiry is not the same as a thoroughly discerned and tested vocation, but at the same time, such an inquiry is often the starting-point of such a discernment. How should the Society respond to these inquiries?

Sending those who ask to other religious congregations is frequently an unsatisfying solution for all concerned. A religious order is built on the vision of its founder, but also on the way that vision is received and lived

out by its members, much as the Church is built on Scripture and tradition. Even where orders share a similar founding vision, the expression of that charism develops uniquely in response to the circumstances of history and personality of those called to that way of life. Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus, but the charism of the Society lives in the lives of all its members, from Xavier to Ellacuría, from Alfonso Rodriguez to Pedro Arrupe. The Society

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*A charism, like an individual's vocation to a particular way of life, is an avenue of growth in fidelity.*

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of Jesus is a unique expression of the Ignatian tradition, and women who inquire about joining the Society are asking about becoming Jesuits. There is a pastoral need for a sensitive and thoughtful response to these inquiries that requires, first of all, a consideration of the question on its own merits: Can these women join the Society?

### *The magis*

I'd like to end this section by returning to the first and most important question: What is "Ad maiorem Dei gloriam"? The best reason for the Society once again to consider incorporating women as vowed members would be in response to a prayerful discernment of this question undertaken by the Society as a whole, its leadership, smaller communities, individual Jesuits, and women who feel called to Jesuit life. Continually seeking the *magis*, the "more," the greater avenue of service, is central to Jesuit life and ministry. This question has led the Society to continually reassess its role in

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<sup>80</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 212, quoting *Epistolæ et instructiones*, 4:7; this latter is vol. 29 of MHSI).



the Church and in the world these last several centuries, and will remain the touchstone of the Society's discernment. In sum, could God be better served by the Society's incorporating women fully among its membership? Are there gifts that women might bring to the Society that might enhance its effectiveness in ministry? Would the Society be a better witness to Christ if it refused to exclude women? Women are no longer limited to certain circumscribed spheres of society: should the Society of Jesus, which has always gone wherever it was needed, to do whatever is "ad majorem Dei gloriam" and for the help of souls, reflect this reality in its corporate life? Ultimately, this question can only be asked in dialogue, in shared work, in shared prayer, in shared life.

## Conclusion

**T**he charism of a religious order is its institutional vocation. Like any vocation, it is less a summons than an invitation, less a set of instructions than an opportunity for response. A charism, like an individual's vocation to a particular way of life, is an avenue of growth in fidelity. An institution, like an individual, becomes most truly itself, what it is particularly called to be, by striving for fidelity to its original vision and by embodying that vision in all the circumstances of its corporate life. The experience of Roser and those others who petitioned Ignatius unsuccessfully has left us a record of the founder's thoughts about some aspects of Jesuit identity, and the utter centrality of availability for mission to that self-understanding. Likewise, Juana's request to join the Society occasioned an examination of the limits of Jesuit identity and resulted in the determination that, while hardly typical, she fitted within those limits—she was a Jesuit, not in a special category, but simply as a scholastic. In our own time, women have achieved an unprecedented degree of social self-determination, a freedom enjoyed only by very exceptional individuals in past ages. That freedom is the precondition for considering again the scope of Jesuit identity and to ponder how the Society will put into practice its stance of solidarity with women. Perhaps the time is right to consider the possibility of incorporating women again in the Society of Jesus.





## SOURCES

### St. Ignatius of Loyola To Mary of Austria, governor of Flanders Queen of Hungary and Bohemia

*Close to the heart of Ignatius was the founding of a college of the Society at Louvain in Flanders, site of one of the great universities of Europe. But such a foundation could not legally be made without the permission of the governor of Flanders, Mary of Austria, second-youngest sister of Emperor Charles V and widow of Louis, king of Hungary and Bohemia who had been killed at the great Turkish victory over the Christians at Mohács in 1526. In 1530 her brother had installed her as the regent of the Netherlands, a post that she still held at the time of this letter. While her sister Catherine in Portugal was extraordinarily favorable to the Jesuits, Mary followed the advice of her counsellors, Granvelle and van Zwichum, who were unfavorable to them. In this letter Ignatius presents to the regent a brief sketch of the Society, its purposes, members and activities, and asks for permission to establish a college at Louvain. The letter received no reply. Ignatius did not live to see a house established there. It was only after Charles V abdicated as emperor and his sister left the Netherlands that the Jesuits were formally established at Louvain in August 1556, a few weeks after Ignatius had died.*

*This letter, no. 2517 of the collected letters of Ignatius, was translated by the late Martin Palmer, S.J.*

Rome, March 26, 1552

Her Sacred Royal Majesty

Most clement Lady:

Since the founding in Rome a few years ago and confirmation by the Apostolic See of the Society of the name of Jesus, whose protector is Cardinal Carpi, it has pleased Almighty God that a number of learned and pious men should leave their homelands, renounce their own property and all worldly goods, and dedicate themselves to God in this Society. They have been joined by numerous young men of good character and outstanding promise, natives of various places, who have embraced the way of life of this Society in order to serve spiritually as soldiers under the banner of Jesus. For the Society was founded

with the intention that its professed members, rendering obedience to the Holy Apostolic See, should work for the general good of souls; namely, by public preaching of the word of God, practice of works of Christian charity, proclamation of the Christian faith to any and all unbelievers when sent to do so, and finally by strenuous opposition to the efforts of heretics, each according to the talent he has received from the Lord. However, since this can be carried out only by persons who join knowledge of the sacred writings with piety, divine Providence has prompted a number of illustrious and most religious princes, as well as numerous other God-



fearing, noble, and generous men similarly well affected towards the scholastics of this Society, to establish colleges for them. These have been successfully founded in a number of important places, such as at Catholic universities in various countries, where there are numerous such persons who can be formed to honorable and truly Christian behavior and at the same time be brought with outstanding trustworthiness and care to solid learning in Holy Scripture. There are a number of such colleges in Spain, one in Portugal, several in India, two in Sicily, as well as in Rome, Bologna, Padua, and Venice.

Also, from the Society's earliest confirmation there were not lacking in it studious young men who had already studied for a number of years in various places, but particularly at the flourishing university of Louvain. There a number of them made such progress in their studies that, with Christ's favor having successfully completed their studies there, they supply useful workers for the vineyard of the Lord. Some have not yet finished their studies there.

Meanwhile, it has pleased the divine Goodness to inspire certain honorable men to take steps for the benefit of these scholastics, who are living there in poverty. That is, there are persons who, as in other places, are eager to see a col-

lege of the Society of Jesus established at the famous academy of Louvain. For this purpose one such person would be quite willing to offer and assign possessions of his own, including real-estate property. However, this cannot be done without the approval, without the generous consent and kindly patronage, of Your Sacred Majesty. Wherefore, Ignatius of Loyola, a priest of Spain and superior of said Society, most humbly and obediently petitions Your Sacred Majesty to deign to grant such permission for establishing this college at the great university of Louvain, and likewise to permit real-estate property to be assigned to it, together with such annual income as the generosity of good friends may sustain, up to the amount of a thousand ducats.

Should Your Sacred Majesty grant this favor, you will be performing an act of undoubted piety and one most pleasing to the Lord Jesus. Moreover, you will render this entire Society—already indebted to Your Majesty on so many scores—even more closely obligated to you, so that for as long as it endures it cannot help but pour forth prayers to God for Your Majesty's security and well-being and for the happiness of all your realms.

Ignatius of Loyola





## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

I read most of the STUDIES that come, and often find them a source of wonderment. From the May 1999 issue I learn there are no Jesuits in Michigan. Where have they gone?

Still more puzzling is the principal article, "Fidelity in the Church—Then and Now."

On p. 10 Fr. Gerald Fagin tells us, "St. Thomas spoke of two kinds of magisterium, magisterium of the bishops and the magisterium of the theologians. The bishops possessed authority by virtue of their office, whereas the theologians derived their authority from their knowledge of theology." This is not really what Thomas says in the *Quodlibetal* indicated (III, 9). The question is whether it is legitimate for someone to ask a license for himself to teach theology. In the body of the article, Thomas states that the person who gives the license gives him, not knowledge, but the authority to teach. That is, while theologians are supposed to acquire their knowledge by boning up on it themselves, they get their authority to teach from the one who confers the license (a bishop or pope, I presume). So upon examination, Thomas is found saying the opposite of what he has been called into court to say.

The other great names mentioned (Orsy, Sullivan, Komonchak, McBrien, Gaillardetz) I regret are not found in the library I write from; but the author's use of them, with all their fine words and creative assertions, does not convincingly establish a parallel magisterium, unless of course one is convinced of it already.

The drafters of CG 34's decree 11 attempted a "nuanced and substantive statement." Rather it turned out long on nuance and short on substance. For after the nuances have finished canceling each other out, we are left with a decree thin and vague enough to cover the present reality: Jesuits, probably the majority, dissenting from the clear and often expressed teachings of the magisterium on one or more issues such as contraception, objective moral norms, homosexuality, the restriction of ordination to men. We could go on into dogma, starting with Christology, but enough.

Decree 11 of CG 34 implies we can have all this and fidelity too. But does common sense allow both? People no longer expect Jesuits to stand with the Pope. To some this is exalting, to others puzzling. In any case, something basic has changed in the Society since the years leading up to *Humanæ vitæ*, something that cannot be papered over by such decrees issued by congregations.

We are told in this study (p. 23) that "[t]he desire to be faithful servants has been the passion and driving force of the Society of Jesus since its foundation." Agreed! "That same desire continues to shape the life and ministry of the Society today." Well, provided you agree that "fidelity" now means something different from what it did, and "Church" as well, and that "to" means "in," and that, to place the statement in a context, whereas the Church and the faith were under attack in the sixteenth century, they are not so today.

Fortified by such provisos, Jesuits may confidently assert what the randy poet put so beautifully to his puzzled



girlfriend: "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

Martin McDermott, S.J.  
Bibliothèque Orientale  
Rue de l'Université Saint-Joseph  
B.P. 166775 Achrafieh  
Beirut, Lebanon

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Editor:

I appreciate Fr. Martin McDermott's response to my issue of *STUDIES*. I hope that my essay will encourage readers to examine more closely the document from GC 34 and to dialogue with others about the meaning of fidelity. I am grateful that Fr. McDermott has taken the time to enter into that dialogue. I would like, however, to clarify a few points.

The reference to Thomas Aquinas was more a historical footnote than a major argument. Mention of it was certainly not intended to justify a parallel magisterium in the Church today, but

only to note that Thomas spoke of two magisteria. I was not proposing a second magisterium in my essay, but rather a recognition of the role and responsibility of all Christians to search together for the truth in a dialogic community with different gifts. This does imply a new understanding of Church and fidelity, but one that is rooted in a Vatican II theology of Church.

Finally, I say explicitly that fidelity "in" the Church includes fidelity "to" the Church; but I also think that we have suffered from too narrow an understanding of fidelity, one that does not acknowledge the voice of the Spirit in all Christians and that discourages rather than encourages informed and open discussion in the Church.

Gerald M. Fagin, S.J.  
Loyola University  
6363 St. Charles Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70118-6195





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