



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

IES

"Something that happened to me at Manresa"
The Mystical Origin of the Ignatian Charism

CHARLES J. JACKSON, S.J.

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“SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME
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Charles J. Jackson, S.J.

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The first word . . .

Every parish has someone like Bob. He thinks Franco was soft on Communism and Mussolini was a dangerous liberal. He stops off after every Mass to point out elements of questionable orthodoxy in the homily. He has no sympathy for the historical-critical method of reading Scripture, since he believes that alluding to cultural contexts and literary forms is merely a pretense for diluting the Word of God. Although he won't openly challenge the authenticity of Vatican II, he believes it was misguided and on the whole a mistake. He is certain that seminaries and convents would be bulging with candidates if the Church had maintained its rules about traditional garb. Lay people could profit from more frequent reminders of mortal sin and eternal damnation. The Jesuits, of course, are largely responsible for all the trouble.

No, Bob is not a crank. He is an extremely well-educated professional. Despite his misgivings about the "new" Church, he still comes every week, pays attention to the preaching—if only to refute it—and is unfailingly polite. Perhaps only his long-ingrained respect for the clergy prevents him from getting nasty, but I appreciate his civility regardless of the motive. Oddly, we were quite friendly to each other in the years I helped out in his parish. Also, he's somewhat younger than I am, so I can't dismiss him as an "old fogey" without jeopardizing my own delusional self-image as a young charger.

Despite our cordiality, we inhabit very different conceptual universes. Bob has a polarized view of the world. He sees robust opposition between faith and reason, tradition and accommodation, the spiritual and material worlds, certainty and doubt. For him clear choice on all these issues holds the key to salvation. He could not be comfortable searching along the messy frontiers of doubt with people like me. I think he would find the word "humanist" suspect at best. He seems to take a Chestertonian delight in paradox; he embraces the certainty of faith *because* it is irrational. (Apoplectic theologians will surely want to make several key refinements on that last generalization.) He remains a staunch Catholic *because* it is hard. Since he sees the world as deeply flawed through hedonism, materialism, individualism, relativism, and agnosticism, he finds it important to take a stand against it. He often describes himself by the phrase "counter-cultural."

Good grief, Charlie Brown! That term has certainly taken a U-turn over the past few decades! I became vividly aware of the change when my class in Postclassical Film squirmed through *M.A.S.H.*, Robert Altman's classic anti-war, anti-everything-else satire of 1970. Most of us know the title from its sanitized reincarnation as one of the most beloved series in television history. The film has much sharper edges. It provides a perfect example of the exuberant and irreverent kind of expression that embodied the "countercultural" ethos of the sixties. The young army surgeons, representatives of the high-spirited, good-hearted and talented younger generation, continually smash social conventions and show open defiance, if not contempt, toward authority figures. For me, their jovial anarchy embodies the essence of the countercultural thinking.

Although the action was set in Korea, the film aims its serrate wit at the Vietnam War. It hacks away at institutions in general and the army and U.S. Government in particular. Anonymous politicians and apparently mindless generals send men into pointless combat, while the unruly doctors try to patch the shredded bodies of the wounded and preserve their own sanity through adolescent pranks and raunchy wisecracks. It espouses old-fashioned nihilism in a clown's suit. Life and death are arbitrary distinctions. Did you know that the title of the bouncy theme song is "Suicide Is Painless"? Probably not. The words were dropped from the television theme.

Religious establishments fare no better than the army under Altman's Jesuit-trained eye. (He spent more time at Rockhurst High than the fourteen months Hitchcock spent at St. Ignatius School in London.) The evangelical Christian in the unit is unmasked as a lustful hypocrite who, after being subjected to a series of particularly humiliating pranks, has to be led away in a straitjacket. The Catholic chaplain is treated as a harmless mascot who can be cajoled into assisting at a blasphemous parody of the Last Supper. The doctors ignore army regulations and dare their commanding officers to do anything about it, because their medical skills are indispensable; they lie, drink on the job, brutalize their enemies, smoke dope, and take advantage of compliant nurses. (In 1970 feminism was only beginning to move into the mainstream in Hollywood's collective self-righteousness, and AIDS had not yet entered the world's vocabulary. Exploitive recreational sex was still considered acceptable entertainment for a generation of voyeurs raised on *Playboy*.)

With all its edginess, I still find the film extremely funny, but the undergraduates found the story dull and the humor sophomoric. Perhaps they approach it from an elevated moral plane, but I doubt it. More to the point, I think they miss the cultural conflict that the satire feeds on and that people of my age relish. For younger viewers, it's no longer particularly shocking to see authority figures and religious people held up to ridicule. Sly in-jokes about grass or body parts no longer seem as daring or

clever as they once did. The discovery of hypocrisy fills political, business, and sports pages on a daily basis. What's the point? In the years since *M.A.S.H.* first appeared, the outrageous, amoral medical unit from the Korean War has become the dominant culture, and upstanding higher officers and religious figures the counterculture.

At least that's the way Bob would see it, and why he would define himself as countercultural. People of his cast of mind view themselves as latter-day John the Baptists shouting in the desert of rap music, reality television, and tabloid journalism. They long for some utopian, well-ordered planet where their form of religious sensitivity once again holds cultural dominance and the forces of anarchy become only a noisy but ineffective minority voice. Realizing that this is pure fantasy, at least in the immediate future, they stand bravely in opposition. In this sense, the roles are reversed and the culture and counterculture have exchanged places. In the age of *M.A.S.H.*, those who thought of themselves as "countercultural" would be reading *Rolling Stone* and *High Times*. Now the CCs are reading *National Review* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Beleaguered Catholic CCs once sought solace in the *Catholic Worker* and *Commonweal*. Now CCCs reinforce their beliefs through *The Wanderer* and *First Things*.

Oddly enough, both generations of CCs have a great deal in common. They picture themselves perching on the high ground, but their sense of moral superiority easily drifts into moral imperialism. Talking only to themselves, CCs see the majority as benighted and go for the jugular in the interests of authenticity. *M.A.S.H.*-age CCs act in the name of a higher law, and with a smirk and a wink reduce the establishment to absurdity. They want to bring "structures" down without having anything in particular to put in their place. Bob-age CCs want to reinstate literal interpretation of the law as the way to preserve the last remnants of a rapidly crumbling Christendom. Old CCs attacked with ridicule, new CCs with denunciation; old CCs giggled, new CCs scowl. Old CCs were maddeningly naïve, new CCs are simply desperate. It's not merely a question of seeing the glass as half empty or half full. Old CCs find the glass a symbol of corruption; new CCs think the well is poisoned and don't want to drink anything.

Defining one's self in terms of opposition to some other group holds many risks. CCs of any age relish their minority status a bit too much. They construct caricatures of the majority culture and then define their own identity as being unlike and therefore superior to the opposition. As a result of their self-imposed separation, they find themselves marginalized in the sweep of history. Sadly, their isolation can be a source of pride as well as of resentment; tragically, as in the case of the virulent fundamentalism sweeping some segments of the Islamic and Hindu world, the effects of self-conscious opposition can be catastrophic. How does one resist the

malevolent forces of culture and yet accept one's own role in it? When does countercultural become counterproductive? It's a delicate balancing act.

One can, for example, admire the pure witness of the Christian Science, Amish, or the Lubavitcher communities while acknowledging that their influence in the mainstream has been quite limited. Dialogue and mutual enrichment don't come naturally to exclusionist groups. As a result, they have a mixed record in making their values credible. On the positive side, old CCs linked up with several mainstream currents and made a genuine contribution to the civil-rights movement, but once the draft ended, the peace movement fizzled and the nation is more warlike now than ever. New CCs have been quite successful in crossing over into electoral politics and have even become dominant in several regions of the country. At the same time, social mores seem as impervious to their badgering as ever. A few more years must pass before historians can weigh the impact of the new CCs on American culture, or even on American religion.

A "constructive minority" seems a more positive self-image than a CC. One relishes participating in a culture, while being able to see its flaws. Such a person tries to contribute to the majority culture rather than rejecting it. It's much easier to hurl anathemas from a position of moral certitude than to maintain one's own values while respecting those who perceive different realities and hold different values. The Gospels present two fine examples of different approaches to culture. John the Baptist, in his ministry, was the archetypal CC. He went out into the desert and denounced the evils of the present age, rejecting even its cuisine and styles. Jesus preached his own set of values, to be sure, but he went to weddings, circulated in markets and the temple precincts, dined with shady bureaucrats, and associated with even shadier women. John drew his followers out of the city to the banks of the Jordan. Jesus went into the city to meet his people where they lived, worked, and prayed. Jesus forgave an adulteress; John denounced one and paid the consequences.

Jesuits on occasion flirt with the CC role, but the romance generally doesn't last very long. The tradition of accommodation probably began at Manresa when Ignatius decided to take a bath, cut his hair and nails, and end his punishing fast. Not many months before, he had renounced the society of the court and trudged off to Montserrat, where he made typically demonstrative CC gestures, like giving away his sword and military finery. The CC lifestyle he adopted was heroic, but he soon decided that it precluded the greater good that he could bring about among the better groomed—and thus more worldly in CC eyes—people who sought his counsel. Similarly Xavier traded his ragged cassock for a silk kimono when he realized that the Japanese regarded his shabbiness a sign of lunacy at best or at worst a personal insult. Such remarkable cultural adaptations routinely marked the early Jesuits, particularly in the royal courts of China.

Today “enculturation” has become a Jesuit buzzword, which generally means learning the language, and adjusting to the diet, and to some extent the worldview of the people we serve far from our home countries. A laudable goal, to be sure. But I have often thought that it is a lot easier to accommodate to a culture in a distant land with the idea of evangelizing it than it is to discern wisely the values and disvalues in one’s own culture. It’s far too easy to remain uncritical of our own culture or, on the other extreme, become disgusted and reject it as intrinsically sinful. From such rejection rises a most corrosive form of cynicism, which is the signature failing of the CC of any generation.

The Jesuits’ relationship to culture arises from paradox. Ignatius’s pattern of ongoing conversion developed over a period of years. At first he rejected the trappings of “the world” entirely. Through a series of intensely private moments in prayer, he returned to it with passion and embraced it with gratitude and love. He began as a genuine CC in a cave in Manresa and eventually became the author of the Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love. In his meditation on the Incarnation, he expressed delight in the varied tints and textures of humankind. Later in his pilgrim journey, he embraced secular learning, exchanged solitude for companionship, and moved from the hermit’s cave to university towns, to Paris, and finally to the center of Rome, where he spent his last years composing blueprints for a worldwide organization. For Ignatius the culture wasn’t evil; it was to be embraced and nurtured. Exit CC thinking; enter discernment.

How was he able to make these unprecedented adaptations not only in his ministry but in his relationships to God and his culture? This issue helps us explore the road he took. Charlie Jackson takes us carefully through Ignatius’s key experiences in prayer, and explains that it was those intensely private moments of illumination that shaped the man and his relationship to his world. From them grew the *Exercises*, the *Constitutions*, and the Ignatian charism that have shaped the Society from the beginning. At root then, these illuminations remain as Ignatius’s greatest legacy to each of us today.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.
Editor

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"SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME AT MANRESA"

The Mystical Origin of the Ignatian Charism

The Ignatian charism animates both the personal and corporate decision making for Jesuits. It can be described as an "active attentiveness" and "prompt responsiveness" to God's activity in the world. This is a vision that crystallized for Ignatius during his stay at Manresa, when he was favored with a series of illuminations that shaped his life and the life of the Society today.

I. Introduction

On March 25, 1522, a Basque pilgrim, the man we know today as Ignatius Loyola, made his way from the Benedictine monastery at Montserrat to a nearby town named Manresa. Just ten months earlier, while attempting to defend Pamplona during a siege, he had been struck by a cannonball and had almost died from his wounds. During his months-long convalescence at his ancestral home at Loyola, however, he had experienced a profound conversion. Now, guided by little more than an unfocused desire to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he had journeyed across Spain to Montserrat, where he made a general confession and an all-night vigil before the image of the Black Madonna, before proceeding to Manresa. His intention was simply to spend a few days in a hospice and to record some reflections in his notebook. As events unfolded, however, he remained there almost eleven months, months that transformed his notebook into the *Spiritual Exercises*, the

pilgrim into a mystic, and the former courtier and soldier into a student, priest, and eventual founder of the Society of Jesus. We have to ask ourselves: What really happened there?¹ That is the question I wish to address: What was it that happened to Ignatius at Manresa? Moreover, I wish to do so in a manner that will explain not only what once happened to Ignatius at Manresa but also the meaning this has for today's Jesuit and, in light of the strategic-planning process in which the Assistancy is now engaged, what it might mean for him tomorrow.

For the remainder of his life, Ignatius often responded to questions about his apostolic vision or the fledgling Society's way of proceeding by appealing to "something that happened to me at Manresa."² Although he was always reticent to speak of his experiences at Manresa, his responses made cautious reference to his mystical illuminations there, especially the great illumination he experienced on the banks of the river Cardoner.³ We can understand Ignatius himself and, through him, the Society of Jesus only if we know him as a mystic and recognize his many-faceted lifework as flowing out of his union with the Trinitarian "Creator and Lord." This was Ignatius's own understanding and, as this essay will demonstrate, it is critical to understanding the inherent unity of his spirituality and apostolic vision.

¹ Ignatius would remain at Manresa until February 17/18, 1523 ("Epistola P. Lainii," in *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*, ed. C. de Dalmases, 4 vols., vols. 66, 73, 85, and 93 of the *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1943–65), 1:81n.16 (§10). Hereafter the *Fontes* will be cited as *FontNarr*, followed by the volume number and page or section number. The series *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* will be abbreviated to MHSI and the Historical Institute to IHSI.

² *Memoriale L. González*, in *FontNarr* 1:609, §137, no. 12; Nadal, "Dialogi pro Societate," *ibid.*, 2:240; Nadal, "Adhortationes Colonienses," *ibid.*, 2:407, §8.

³ The word "illumination" requires some explanation. In the Christian tradition, mysticism is the conscious experience of the revelation and self-communication of the triune God. The recipient of this experience, the mystic, is drawn into a loving union with God and, by means of this union, is graced with "infused knowledge," a direct knowledge of God that is entirely a gift from God and totally beyond all human capability. A mystical "illumination," then, can be thought of as a mystical *event*, one in which the mystic experiences God's revelation and self-communication in a moment of time.

The primary resource for the events surrounding Ignatius's experience at Manresa is a small work he dictated late in his life, a work we know today as his autobiography.⁴ Although rich in detail, it is not simply a narrative of his life. Rather, its pages reveal Ignatius as analyzing, sifting, and interpreting the events of his life against the thoughts and motions of his soul. In relating these events, it seems that he was less interested in the events themselves than in the meaning they had for him, the sequence that best explained his spiritual development, and the pedagogy that best conveyed this to others.

The Setting: A Little Town Called Manresa

He turned off to a little town called Manresa. He planned to spend a few days in a hospice, and also to note some things in his book that he carefully carried with him and by which he was greatly consoled.

—*PilgTest* 18

Ignatius arrived in Manresa with little more than his notebook and some extravagant resolutions he had made during his convalescence at Loyola. He had taken on the garb of a pilgrim and imagined himself going "barefoot to Jerusalem, . . . eating nothing but herbs and performing the other rigors he saw the saints had endured." In his spiritual exuberance he quickly surrendered himself to prolonged periods of prayer and intense bodily penance. From one perspective, his readiness to make such "offerings of greater worth and moment" seems to reflect his desire to "to distinguish himself in total service to his eternal King and universal Lord."⁵ There seems to be no question of his capacity for heroic efforts. His desire not simply to emulate the saints but even to

⁴Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, *Acta quædam Rdi. Pis. Ignatii de Loyola . . .*, in *FontNarr* 1:365–507; For an English translation of this work, see, for example, Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, *A Pilgrim's Testament: the Memoirs of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Parmananda R. Divarkar (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995). This source will hereafter be abbreviated to *PilgTest*, followed by the section number.

⁵*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J.* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), §97. Hereafter this source will be cited as *SpEx*, followed by the boldface marginal numbers.

surpass them in prayer and penance, however, raises concern about his motivation. His sentiments, in fact, bear an unsettling resemblance to a schoolboy's challenge: Can you top this? Had his "great and vain desire of winning glory" simply changed its shape and form? It is impossible to assess Ignatius's motivation at this time of his life, but he seems to have been more focused on himself and his accomplishments than on God, whom he apparently wished to serve. Yet for about four months he basked in a tranquility of "great and undisturbed joy" (*PilgTest* 8, 1, 14, 20).

Gradually, however, he "began to experience great changes in his soul" (21).⁶ Feelings of doubt about his new way of life began to plague him, and he soon found his emotions seesawing between his previous feelings of tranquility and joy and new feelings of aridity and sadness. Far more troubling, however, was that in his very struggles to free himself from sin, he found himself overwhelmed by a sense of his own sinfulness. Although he had made his general

For Ignatius, these events didn't simply happen; God caused them to happen. God was clearly at work in his life—teaching him.

confession at Montserrat "with great care" (22), he had begun to fear the possibility of some unconfessed sin and to dread that he was ultimately living a lie. He found a wise spiritual director, but neither his director's counsel nor his repeated confessions could resolve his scruples. His penchant for reflection, moreover, to say

nothing of his obsessive desire for perfection, closed him in upon himself all the more, eventually making him a prisoner of his self-absorption. His fatigue in all this brought him to the point of despair and even to thoughts of suicide. Weeks flowed into months, but his anguish continued unabated.

Suddenly, and in a manner completely unexpected, he awoke as from a dream. In but the briefest of moments, he saw his scruples for what they were—simply lies and falsehoods—and he was freed from their power. As he reflected on his months-long struggle, it was clear that the resolution of the crisis was not his own doing but God's: "[H]e held it a certainty that God in his mercy had liberated

⁶ A numbers in parentheses following a quotation refers back to the previously cited source. It is the equivalent of "ibid., [sec. or p. X]."

him." God had revealed to him his human frailty so that he might recognize that "the all-surpassing power" resided in God alone.⁷

The tranquility he had previously experienced now returned, but with this marked difference—he had begun to discern "the diversity of spirits from the lessons he had received from God." In examining the manner by which his scruples had held him prisoner, he gained great clarity about their origin and nature and determined never to confess his past sins again. He began to receive great illuminations and spiritual consolations, but when they interrupted the little sleep he allowed himself, he questioned their origin and decided it was better to have nothing to do with them. He surprised himself when he began to question his previous resolve to abstain from meat, but when it became clear to him that abstinence was no longer important, he decided that he would partake of meat in the future. He spoke with his confessor about the matter, but no longer felt bound to follow his directives (25–27).

Introductory Lessons

God treated him at this time just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching. Whether this was because of his lack of education and of brains, or because he had no one to teach him, or because of the strong desire God himself had given him to serve him, he believed without doubt and has always believed that God treated him in this way.

—PilgTest 27

Ignatius would later refer to the months he spent at Manresa as his "primitive church."⁸ As he looked back from the perspective of more than thirty years, he realized that "God treated him at "this time just as a schoolmaster deals with a child." The analogy he chose to describe this period of his life is striking. At first glance, he seems to be speaking simply about God's *action* in his life immediately following his months-long trials. The lengthy disquisition which follows it, however, about why God may have acted in this manner and his conviction that "he believed and has always believed that God

⁷ PilgTest 25; 2 Cor. 4:7.

⁸ "Epistola P. Lainii," in *FontNarr* 1:140/142, §59.

treated him in this way," reveals that he was ultimately speaking about *God himself*—about how God had been acting and *wished to act* in his life. Ignatius understood that God was clearly at work in his life—teaching him in the manner in which “a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching.” Moreover, his autobiography makes it clear that his sense of being taught by God didn’t begin with the events at Manresa, but rather with his “first reflection on the things of God” (*PilgTest* 8) at Loyola.

His descriptions of various events in his subsequent life since are telling. In speaking of his heroic daydreams on his sickbed, he observed that “Our Lord *assisted him, causing other thoughts . . . to follow these*”; in speaking of his experience of his eyes being opened to the diversity of spirits, he described it as a “*lesson from which he derived not a little fruit*”; he related the story of the incident with the Moor “so that one may understand how *Our Lord dealt with this soul*”; and, finally, immediately upon his being awakened from his struggle with scruples, he observed that “he now had some experience of the diversity of spirits from the *lessons God had given him*.”⁹ For Ignatius, these events didn’t simply *happen*; God caused them to happen. God was clearly at work in his life—*teaching* him. It seems that his purpose in relating these events was not simply to tell *what* he had been taught but, more important, to show that it was *God* who had been teaching him.¹⁰

Ignatius employed the same developmental pedagogy in his autobiography as he did in the *Spiritual Exercises* and *Constitutions*. In the events of his life since Loyola, God had not simply been guiding him; God had actively been teaching him. Ignatius’s experiences had been for him like lessons that he had to learn slowly, one at a time. It was only after learning the more rudimentary lessons that he was able to pass on to the more substantive. In relating these events, he

⁹ *PilgTest* 7, 9, 14, 25, with emphasis added.

¹⁰ Juan de Polanco, *Vita Ignatii Loyolæ et rerum Societatis Iesu historia*, 6 vols., vols. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 of MHSI (Madrid: 1894–98), 23, 25. Collectively these volumes are known as the *Chronicon* of Polanco. For an English translation of generous selections from this source, see *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits: Selections from the “Chronicon” of Juan de Polanco, S.J.*, trans. and annot. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004). Also see *Exercitia Spiritualia Sancti Ignatii de Loyola* (Madrid: 1919): 31 f.; Leonardo R. Silos, “Cardoner in the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 33 (1964): 8–10.

was less interested in the events themselves than in the meaning they had for him, the sequence that best explained his spiritual development and the pedagogy that best conveyed this to others. Perhaps nowhere is this more cogently demonstrated than in the manner in which he described his illuminations.

In his autobiography Ignatius singled out five illuminations as examples of how God had taught him. In spite of the obvious differences among them, Ignatius does not seem to have chosen them at random. Rather they reveal a clearly defined pattern and progression, one in which each illumination is best understood in the context of those that preceded it and those that followed it. Although each played a significant role in Ignatius's mystical transformation, it was only in the light of the last-mentioned, the great illumination he experienced on the banks of the river Cardoner, that he was able to understand their meaning and interrelatedness. It thus seems more appropriate to discuss these illuminations not as isolated events but rather as parts of an integral whole.

II. The Illuminations

Preliminary Illuminations

He had great devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, and so each day he prayed to the three Persons separately. But as he also prayed to the Most Holy Trinity, the thought came to him: why did he have to say four prayers to the Trinity? But this thought gave him little or no difficulty, being hardly important. One day while saying the Office of Our Lady on the steps of the same monastery, his understanding began to be elevated as though he saw the Holy Trinity in the form of three musical keys. This brought on so many tears and so much sobbing that he could not control himself. . . . As a result, the effect has remained with him throughout his life of feeling great devotion while praying to the Most Holy Trinity.

—PilgTest 28

Ignatius's mystical transformation began with the illumination that he experienced while he was sitting on the steps of the Dominican church. He would later describe being drawn upward into the

mystery of the Trinity, and he spoke of his conundrum about offering four prayers to the three persons of the Trinity and of his "seeing" the Trinity under the form of three musical keys. Yet it seems that it was not the Trinity itself that was central to this experience but rather the triune God's presence and action *in the world*. Ignatius had been brought to understand that the divine communication of love that eternally begets "God from God, Light from light, true God from true God" is not confined to the so-called "inner life" of the triune God. Rather, he came to understand God as a movement beyond God's self. God's very being is love: it is goodness overflowing itself.¹¹

[T]he manner in which God had created the world was presented to his understanding with great spiritual joy. He seemed to see something white, from which some rays were coming, and God made light from these. But he did not know how to explain these things, nor did he remember too well the spiritual enlightenment that God was imprinting on his soul at that time.

—*PilgTest 29*

Ignatius spoke of being graced with an illumination about the manner in which God had created the world. Although his description is stark in its simplicity, it is clear that the act of creation was presented to his understanding, not as an event that took place in a moment of time now past, but rather as an ongoing and always present action of God. The love that defines God continually radiates outward in creation and self-communication. "All good things and gifts descend from above" (*SpEx 237*), Ignatius would later write. The imagery he chose to describe the ongoing act of creation is noteworthy. Although the phrase implies that all things come into being through the instrumentality of God, his choice of words focuses on the goodness and giftedness of creation: all things are freely given by a good and loving God. They reflect God's ever-present love and are thus worthy of love in return. Of equal note is the imagery he employed in depicting the manner in which they are created: they fall as rain from the heavens: "as from the sun descend the rays, and

¹¹ John R. Sachs, "Ignatian Mysticism," *The Way Supplement* 82 (1995): 75; John J. O'Donnell, "The Trinitarian Vision of Ignatius Loyola in Contemporary Theological Perspective," *CIS* 16, no. 1 (1985): 62; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 354.

from the fountains the waters." If Ignatius were to have said nothing more about his illuminations, God had been presented to his understanding as almost prodigal in his love. Moreover, he was brought to understand that God not only creates all things; in some manner or another, God is actively engaged with all things.

Christ-Centered Illuminations

One day in this town, while he was hearing Mass in the church of the monastery mentioned above, at the elevation of the Body of the Lord, he saw with interior eyes something like white rays coming from above. Although he cannot explain this very well after so long a time, nevertheless what he saw clearly with his understanding was how Jesus Christ our Lord was there in that Most Holy Sacrament.

. . . Often and for a long time, while at prayer, he saw with interior eyes the humanity of Christ. The form that appeared to him was like a white body, neither very large nor very small, but he did not see any distinction of members. He saw it at Manresa many times. If he should say twenty or forty, he would not dare judge it a lie. He has seen this another time in Jerusalem and yet another while traveling near Padua. . . . These things he saw strengthened him then and always gave him such strength in his faith that he has often thought to himself: if there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would be resolved to die for them, solely because of what he has seen.

—PilgTest 29

In seeking words to describe three of his illuminations, Ignatius spoke of "something white from which rays were coming," of "something like white rays coming from above," and of "a white body but without distinction of members." The similarities in the words he employed in his descriptions coupled with the meaning they had for him indicate that he was speaking of one and the same thing: the person of Christ. Although it is impossible to distinguish the synthetic grace of the illumination at the Cardoner from those which preceded it, the person of Christ was clearly woven through

them. What is more important, Christ is the key to understanding them and the bond uniting them.¹²

At first glance, the Christ imagery of Ignatius's illuminations seems disconnected. Christ is envisioned first as the Son of the eternal Father, then as the Creator of all things, then as sacramen-

What Ignatius's illuminations made manifest, however, was that the mission of Jesus was not simply to reveal his Father's love; it was to draw all of creation into that love (John 10:10).

tially present in creation in the Eucharist, and finally as revealed and active in human form in the person of Jesus. Yet the settings in which these "visions" occur demonstrate a clear Christ-centered progression from the intimacy of the Trinity to the world of creation. In a manner analogous to his description of all things falling as rain from the heavens, Ignatius was brought to understand that Christ, the "reflection of God's glo-

ry" (Heb. 1:3), had not only effected God's act of creation but also that he had himself participated in creation's great descending action, and that he was now present in the world of creation and actively engaged with it.

All creation mirrors God's perfection and goodness. "God made the angels to show his splendor . . . , animals for innocence and plants for their simplicity," but the human person he made "a little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor, making him lord of the works of [his] hands."¹³ Although all creation reflects God's perfection and goodness, only the human person is made in God's image. Only the human person possesses the freedom to respond with love to God's initiative of love. God reveals his love in the world so that the human person might be drawn into that love. The "to and fro" communication of love "within" the triune God mirrors, in a manner of speaking, the triune God's relationship with the human person.¹⁴ By the same action in which God gives being to

¹²Harvey D. Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), 98.

¹³Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play in Two Acts* (New York: Vintage, 1960), 73; Ps. 8:5 f.

¹⁴O'Donnell, "The Trinitarian Vision," 67; LaCugna, *God for Us*, 353 f.

the person, God draws that person to God's self. God's creative "let there be" is always intertwined with God's alluring "come."¹⁵ In what has been described as "one of the most vivid experiences of the great enlightenment," the descending action of creation was presented to Ignatius's understanding as mirrored in the ascending action of God's gathering love.¹⁶ Ignatius had been graced to discover in God "the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth" (Eph. 1:9f.).

Ignatius thus came to perceive the person of Christ as both "Creator," the One who initiates the great action of God's sending and gathering love, and "Lord," the goal towards which it is directed.¹⁷ In fact, his often used "Creator and Lord" seems to express this twofold but integral role. This is not to say, however, that

¹⁵ Gilles Cusson, *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988), 61.

¹⁶ Pedro Leturia, "Génesis de los Ejercicios de S. Ignacio y su Influjo en la Fundación de la Compañía de Jesús (1521-1540)," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 10 (1941): 32. This cosmic vision would later be expressed as the central theme of both the Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation on the Love of God. As many commentators have observed, these two meditations are each highly condensed compendia of the entire *Exercises*.

¹⁷ The word "Lord" calls for some explanation. The early Christian community believed that Jesus had been in the "form of God" (Phil. 2:6) even before his human birth. Having been with the Father from the beginning, Jesus was sent by the Father to become human, to die, rise, and return to the Father from whom he came. Moreover, it believed that, at the moment of his resurrection, Jesus entered a manner of being identical to that of the Father himself. The Father highly exalted him, giving him a name "above every name"—his own name, *Kyrios* or Lord (Phil. 2:11). This manner of being was different from the "form of God" that had been his from the beginning. It had taken the place of it and could be called the *new* God-form of the Revealer and Reconciler. Raised from the dead through the "glory" of the Father (Rom. 6:4), Christ was endowed with a "power" (Rom. 1:4) to bring about the sanctification and eventually the resurrection of all who would believe in him. Thus he became the "lord of the living and the dead" (Rom. 14:9). See *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. "Lord," by Terrance Callan; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1395; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 67; Leopold Sabourin, *The Names and Titles of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 255.

Ignatius viewed his "Creator and Lord" as simply "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Rev. 21:6)—two bookends, as it were—of God's creative love. Rather, the expression seems to have embodied for him God's total love relationship with creation, a relationship in which God revealed God's self as God with us and for us. Although Ignatius occasionally used the expression in reference to the Father or indirectly to the Spirit, for all intents and purposes "Creator and Lord" meant one thing to him: the Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁸ What Ignatius's illuminations made manifest, however, was that the mission of Jesus was not simply to reveal his Father's love; it was to draw all of creation into that love (John 10:10). In Jesus Christ, God was not only present in his creation, but actively at work in it.

It was probably in his reflections on Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ* during his convalescence at Loyola that Ignatius first found himself drawn to the person of Jesus. Although he may initially have seen Jesus simply as an edifying example for his personal devotion, his illuminations brought him to an understanding that would animate the remainder of his life. This Jesus, who had once trod the roads of Palestine, healed the sick, forgiven sinners and eventually died poor and abandoned on the cross, only to be raised on the third day, was not simply alive: he was *actively* at work in the world.¹⁹ During his first months at Manresa, as Ignatius reflected upon his experience at Loyola, he was captivated by the realization that it was not simply a "good spirit" that had been at work in him. Rather, it had been the person of Christ Jesus, actively drawing him toward the Father while actively contesting with the spirit of evil.²⁰

¹⁸ Cusson, *Biblical Theology*, 58; Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 64.

¹⁹ Leturia, "Génesis," 26.

²⁰ Olivier Mannaerts, *Exhortationes super Instituto* (Bruxelles: J. de Meester, 1912), 344; Cusson, *Biblical Theology*, 58; Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola: An Account of Its Historical Development* (Westminster: Newman, 1953), 34. Ignatius always understood Jesus as the glorified Christ, God *with us* and *for us*. Thus, for Ignatius, the goal of reading or praying the Gospels was not to wallow in the luminous past but rather to allow, by means of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, the glory of Christ to burst forth in one's life (see Cusson, *Biblical Theology*, 225 f.). Although most theologians attribute God's action in today's world to the Holy Spirit, Ignatius didn't always clearly distinguish between the glorified Christ and the Spirit of Christ.

This was an understanding that he would continue to ponder and would later express in his key meditations on the Call of Christ the King and the Two Standards. His illuminations, moreover, brought him to understand that Christ was not only actively at work in his own life, but that he was similarly at work in the lives of *all* people—drawing them into the fullness of life.

Ignatius later observed that these illuminations so strengthened him in his faith that even "if there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would be resolved to die for them, solely because of what he had seen" (*PilgTest* 29). The greatest lesson he received from God, however, and what may have been the most important event of his life, took place on the banks of the nearby river Cardoner, at a place he described as "where the river ran deep."

The Illumination at the Cardoner

Once he was going out of devotion to a church situated a little more than a mile from Manresa. . . . As he went along occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face toward the river, which ran down below. While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and learned many things, both spiritual matters and matters of faith and of scholarship, and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him.

The details that he understood then, though they were many, cannot be stated, but only that he experienced a great clarity in his understanding. This was such that in the whole course of his life, after completing sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the various helps he may have received from God and all the various things he has known, even adding them all together, he does not think he had got as much as at that one time.

—*PilgTest* 30

In a few terse sentences Ignatius described a spiritual illumination so overwhelming that he seemed "a new man with a new intellect." Although his writing rarely projected style or polish, his precision and clarity of thought were always in evidence. On the topic of his illuminations, however, he seemed at a genuine loss to communicate

his experiences in any detail.²¹ He could find no words to describe what was clearly indescribable. The illuminations were not simply an experience of “spiritual matters as well as those concerning faith and learning.” They were an experience of *God*, one he could never speak of without overwhelming emotion. Years later, in a magnificent testament to Ignatius and his spiritual vision, Karl Rahner gave expression to what Ignatius may have wished to say:

All I can say is that I knew God, nameless and unfathomable, silent and yet near, bestowing himself upon me in his Trinity. I knew God beyond all concrete imaginings. I knew him clearly in such nearness and grace as is impossible to confound or mistake. . . . I truly encountered God, the living and true God . . . , God himself, not

simply human words describing him. I knew God and the freedom which is an integral part of him. . . . I simply tell you that this is how it was.²²

But it was only in surrendering himself to God and opening himself to God's grace that he was ultimately able to put aside his desires and allow God's desires to become the dominant factor in his life.

Although each of his illuminations helped to give shape and form to Ignatius's spiritual vision, they coalesced and found their unity and meaning in the last-mentioned—his great illumination at the Cardoner. This was the enlightenment he found so great

“that everything seemed new to him,” and about which Laínez would later remark that “he began to look on all that he had learned with new eyes.”²³ It was an event that would illuminate the rest of his life, give cohesion and strength to his spirituality, and provide an “architectonic synthesis”—an understanding of the internal structure and interrelationships—of all his previous experiences and illumina-

²¹ Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, *Acta Patris Ignatii . . .*, in *FontNarr* 1:404/405. §29; Juan de Polanco, “De vita P. Ignatii . . .,” in *FontNarr* 2:527, §16. The writings of Polanco, Nadal, Laínez, and others with whom Ignatius shared thoughts on his illuminations have proved invaluable in filling in details of their content. More veiled references can be gleaned from Ignatius's other writings—the *Spiritual Exercises*, *Constitutions*, and *Spiritual Journal*.

²² Karl Rahner, “Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit,” in *Ignatius of Loyola*, historical introduction by Paul Imhof (London: Collins, 1979), 11 f.

²³ “Epistola P. Lainii,” in *FontNarr* 1:80/81, §10.

tions.²⁴ For the purposes of this essay, moreover, it is also a prism through which to view and understand his spiritual vision.

III. A Life Changed Forever

What Happened at Manresa?

It seems appropriate to step away from the narrative for a moment and to return to the question with which we began this essay: What was the *something* that happened to Ignatius at Manresa? Joseph de Guibert observed that at Manresa Ignatius had been graced with "eminent intellectual lights, directly infused by God into his faculty of understanding" and that it was there that he had been introduced "into the way of the highest contemplation."²⁵ Although de Guibert's observation provides a good place to begin our study and there is no reason to call his assessment into question, the references to Ignatius as a "new man" with "new eyes" and a "new intellect" who looked out on a world in which "everything seemed new to him" point to a *something* considerably beyond

It was here, in this interweaving of the actions of the mind and heart—in what must ultimately be called "felt-knowledge"—that the seemingly diverse elements of the something that happened to Ignatius at Manresa coalesced into a meaningful whole.

this. They point, in fact, to a *something* that affected not simply his emotions, his intellect, and the manner of his prayer, but his entire person. The rich testimony about these events that we find in Ignatius's writings and those of his early companions points to a common truth. The *something* that happened to Ignatius at Manresa was a profound spiritual awakening to an entirely new level of consciousness, and it was because of this that he came to perceive and

²⁴ Gilles Pelland, "Ignatius and the Trinity: Theological Insights," *CIS* 13, nos. 1–2 (1982): 119; Jerónimo Nadal, *Scholia in Constitutiones S.I.* (Granada: Biblioteca Teológica Granadina, 1976), 163

²⁵ Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Practice and Doctrine; A Historical Study* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 31 f.

understand God, himself, and all created reality in a totally new light. This was not simply an *event*, however, no matter how overwhelming or how much his memory of it may have pervaded the remainder of his life. It was not something that simply *happened* to him; it was *who he became*. It introduced him into a new way of *being*. And like Dorothy, stepping from the black-and-white drabness of Kansas into the Technicolor brilliance of Oz, Ignatius entered into a world where "everything seemed new to him."

But just what was this new way of being? What did it mean to speak of Ignatius as a "new man" with "new eyes" and a "new intellect" who looked out at a world in which "everything seemed new to him"? I believe it is important to recognize that, in one

This is not to imply any improvement in his eyesight or intelligence, but rather that his perceptions were no longer filtered through the lens of his own symbols and abstractions. In a manner of speaking, he no longer gazed at the world through his own eyes but God's.

manner or another, all conversions entail a restructuring of a person's consciousness and of his attitude toward the world.²⁶ All conversions give rise to new ways of perceiving and understanding. From this perspective, all conversions entail a newness of sight, mind and heart. What happened to Ignatius at Manresa, however, was not simply a conversion. It was an irruption of the triune God into his life in a manner that was so sudden and so radical that it has

been described as a "mystical invasion" that overpowered his soul.²⁷ It was not so much a choice that he made *for* God but rather an overwhelming sense of being grasped *by* God.²⁸ Although the meaning of this new way of being would unfold only in time, his eyes and mind and heart had been opened to the brilliant radiance of an entirely new world.

²⁶ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 177.

²⁷ De Guibert, *Jesuits*, 71 f.; Hugo Rahner, *Spirituality of Ignatius*, 46 f.

²⁸ Phil. 3:12; Underhill, *Mysticism*, 178.

But just what did it mean to say that Ignatius's eyes and mind and heart had been opened? What did it mean to speak of him as being graced with "new eyes" and a "new intellect"? In this, it is important to recognize that the *something* that happened at Manresa produced, not only new understandings about "spiritual matters and matters of faith and learning," but also an increased ability to perceive and understand those same realities. This is not to imply any improvement in his eyesight or intelligence, but rather that his perceptions were no longer filtered through the lens of his own symbols and abstractions. In a manner of speaking, he no longer gazed at the world through his own eyes but God's.²⁹ His ability to understand, moreover, was the product not simply of his bodily senses but of their spiritual counterparts as well. His comment about his having "understood and learned many things" at the Cardoner did not refer to cognitive knowledge alone. In the light of his illuminations, the matters he was brought to understand were the product not simply of his pondering them in his mind; he tasted and savored them in his heart until they penetrated every fiber of his being.³⁰ He would later explain that "it is not the abundance of knowledge which fills and satisfies the soul, but rather the interior sense and taste of things" (*SpEx* 2). It was here, in this interweaving of the actions of the mind and heart—in what must ultimately be called "felt-knowledge"—that the seemingly diverse elements of the *something* that happened to Ignatius at Manresa coalesced into a meaningful whole.³¹

Grace is a gift of God; and the human person's ability to respond to God's initiative is also a gift of God.

It is important to recognize, however, that these understandings and ways of understanding were simply expressions of a far

²⁹ Hugo Rahner, *The Vision of St. Ignatius in the Chapel of La Storta* (Rome: CIS, 1975), 74, 79–80. It is noteworthy that, in his Contemplation on the Incarnation (*SpEx* 101–9), Ignatius depicted the created world as seen and understood from God's perspective.

³⁰ Juan de Polanco, "Acta quædam S. Ignatii, in *FontNarr* 2:123.

³¹ S. Ignazio di Loyola, *Autobiografia*, commentario di Maurizio Costa (Rome: Editrice CVX/CIS, 1991), 146 f.; Roger Cantin, "L'Illumination du Cardoner," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 7 (1955): 38 f.; Nadal, *Scholia*, 163.

more profound reality. In the self-communication of God we know as grace, God gives his very self. In one manner or another, God's communication in grace is always an invitation to a relationship. The initiative, of course, is always God's. Grace is a gift of God; and the human person's ability to respond to God's initiative is also a gift of God.

What happened at Manresa, as overwhelming and life changing as it was, was ultimately an experience of the self-communication of God we know as grace. It was indeed a spiritual awakening that introduced Ignatius to a new level of consciousness and a new way of being, but it was primarily a gift of God's very self. Although Ignatius would later speak of the manner in which God communicates God's self to *all* people, his words owe their origin to his experience of God's action in his own life, most particularly in the events surrounding his experience at Manresa. He said that God not only embraces the human person "with his love and praise" but also that God actively disposes the person "for the manner in which it might best serve him" (*SpEx* 15). The grace Ignatius received at Manresa drew him into the divine life and love. But, most significantly, it drew him into God's action in the world.³²

Ignatius's Response to God

I will reflect on myself, and consider what I on my part ought in all reason and justice to offer and give to the Divine Majesty, namely, all my possessions, and myself along with them. I will speak as one making an offering with deep affection, and say: "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will—all that I have or possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me only love of yourself along with your grace, for that is enough for me."

—*SpEx* 234

In his *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius spoke of an "election," a decision or choice made in conformity with God's guidance (169–88). In describing it, he outlined three "times," moments of diminishing degrees of clarity, in which the election could be made. Whereas the second

³²Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction of the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1982), 116 f.; Sachs, "Ignatian Mysticism," 77.

and third times center on actions the person *does*, the first time centers on "something" that *happens* to him. During this time, he explained, the effect of God's action in the person's life is such that he is left "without doubt or the ability to doubt" either the source of this grace or the course of action to which it points (175). It goes without saying, however, that a considerable difference exists between recognizing the course of action one should follow and choosing it. The apostle Paul recognized that the will to do the "good" was in him, but the power was not (Rom. 7:18). During the first time, however, the distinction between recognizing the appropriate course of action and choosing it is blurred. It is more accurate, in fact, to say that the two converge. An election made during this time is governed not by a law outside the person but rather by what the prophet Jeremiah described as a fire burning within (Jer. 20:9). The person is brought to an awareness of the appropriate course of action in a manner that so overwhelms his understanding that his choosing it arises, not from his will, but from the very core of his being.³³ In speaking elsewhere of this first time of election, Ignatius observed that even if the person had a mind to resist God's action, he could find himself powerless to do so.³⁴

Ignatius's spiritual journey began with the irruption into his life of an intense desire to serve God. This desire arose during his

³³ Egan, *Mystical Horizon*, 133 f. In his book *Perelandra*, C. S. Lewis describes such a "first time" election. The book's central character, Ransom, had been taken to Venus, an Eden-like world that had never known Sin. There he met Weston, whom he gradually realized was not simply an agent of Satan but Satan himself in human form. He suddenly realized his own role: he had been *sent* there—by *God*—to *kill* this Satan. The future and the freedom of Venus were in his hands, yet the very thought of what he found himself being called to do terrified him. He struggled within himself about how to respond. Suddenly, in the briefest moment of time, the decision was clear: "The thing was neither more nor less dreadful than it had been before. The only difference was that he knew—almost as a historical proposition—that it was going to be done. . . . There was going to arrive, in the course of time, a moment at which he would have done it. The future act stood there, fixed and unaltered as if he had already performed it. . . . You might say . . . that the power of choice had been simply set aside and an inflexible destiny substituted for it" (*Perelandra* [New York: Scribner, 1996], 149).

³⁴ Letter to Sr. Teresa Rejadell, June 18, 1536, in *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss (New York: Paulist, 1991), 337. The Institute of Jesuit Sources hopes that in the not-too-distant future it will publish an English translation of a good many of Ignatius's more than seven thousand letters.

convalescence at Loyola—in his reading the life of Christ, his long periods of prayer, his pondering the examples of the saints, and his gazing at the star-filled skies—and it was strengthened and purified during his months-long trials at Manresa. But it was only in surrendering himself to God and opening himself to God's grace that he was ultimately able to put aside *his* desires and allow *God's* desires to become the dominant factor in his life.

It is clear that Ignatius spoke not of God's *desires* but of God's *will* and of the need to find God's *will* and to do God's *will*. Although it is clearly more common to speak of God's *will* than of God's *desires*, the expression "God's will" carries emotional baggage that grates on modern-day sensitivities. It seems to describe an uncaring intention based solely on intellectual grounds that, in some manner or another, include a penalty for a failure to comply with it. It seems, in fact, to describe the state of mind, not of a loving Person, but rather of a machine. Thus, if the reader will allow for a certain latitude in translation, the first words we hear Christ utter in the

Spiritual Exercises speak not of his *will* but of his *desire*: "It is my heartfelt desire to conquer all the world and all enemies" (95). It is Christ's heartfelt desire and the focus of his life and actions that all men and women achieve the fullness of life and come to share in the fullness of his Father's love. In the Call of Christ the King, Ignatius invites the exercitant to ponder not simply Christ's will but rather his very being—his heartfelt

In being brought to understand the mystery and the wisdom and the power of God—in being graced with "new eyes" and a "new intellect"—Ignatius had taken on "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

desire—and, in doing so, he seems to invite the exercitant to ponder not only the goal of Christ's call—"to conquer all the world and all enemies"—but also, and most important, the heart and soul of the Person who calls. Ignatius presented the Call of Christ the King as a call not simply to *do* something, but rather to enter into the mystery of the person of Christ, to allow Christ to become the central figure in one's life, and in all things to be with Christ and to labor with Christ in his mission (95). In presenting the Call of Christ the King in this manner, it seems that Ignatius went beyond describing something that might fire the imagination of just any generous person.

He had moved from the general to the specific to the personal. Ignatius described something profoundly personal, something that had fired his own imagination, something that had become his own heartfelt desire. It seems that the grace of Manresa left him with such a profound sense of Christ's heartfelt desire for the world that it became Ignatius's heartfelt desire as well. In being brought to understand the mystery and the wisdom and the power of God—in being graced with "new eyes" and a "new intellect"—Ignatius had taken on "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

Ignatius's response, then, to the *something* that happened to him at Manresa was ultimately a response to this personal and loving God, who was already active in Ignatius's life and who had demonstrated that he wished to remain so. In order to assess the nature of Ignatius's response, we need to look no further than to the formulaic expression with which he concluded so many of his letters: "I close with the prayer that God grant us the grace to know his most holy will and perfectly fulfill it."³⁵ I realize that "knowing God's will and perfectly fulfilling it" is an almost sacrosanct Ignatian formulary, but I feel that "God's will" carries infelicitous emotional baggage. More important, I feel that "knowing God's will and perfectly fulfilling it" is too narrow a formulary to understand the breadth of Ignatius's response to God. I wish to suggest another expression that is more understandable in today's world and one that both encompasses Ignatius's formulary and expands upon it. I describe it as "an active attentiveness to God joined with a prompt responsiveness to God."³⁶ Ignatius's mystical horizon was a

Nadal observed that Ignatius had been graced, not only in being able to rest freely in contemplating the mystery of the Trinity, but also in being able to perceive and contemplate God's presence and action in every person, event, or situation in which he found himself.

³⁵ Ibid., 338.

³⁶ Although John Carroll Futrell proposed a similar formulary—"to hear and respond to the word of God here and now" ("Ignatian Discernment," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 2, no. 2 [1970]: 48)—I believe that my version better underscores the continuously active relationship with God.

heartfelt sense of living in an active and loving companionship with Jesus. I believe that Ignatius's active attentiveness to God joined with a prompt responsiveness to God follows as a logical consequence of this understanding, and that "an active attentiveness to God" encompasses what he meant by "knowing God's will"; and that "a prompt responsiveness" plays the same role for his "perfectly fulfilling it." Moreover, I believe that its two components not only help us to understand the breadth of Ignatius's response to God; they project a dynamism—an *active* attentiveness and a *prompt* responsiveness—that Ignatius implied yet failed to express. It is important to point out, however, that the components of neither formulary should be interpreted as the two stages in a two-stage sequential process. Although knowing God's will might seem to be a prerequisite to fulfilling it, and being attentive to God might play a similar role in responding to God, neither formulary follows such a pattern. In fact, active attentiveness to God and prompt responsiveness to God were so interwoven in Ignatius's life that one was meaningless without the other. Moreover, the interplay between attentiveness to God and responsiveness to God or between reflection and experience in Ignatius's life became a hallmark of his response to God.

IV. The Ignatian Charism

Active Attentiveness and Prompt Responsiveness to God

Ignatius's response to God is known today as the Ignatian charism, a way of living and acting in accord with the way Ignatius lived and acted. In the section that follows, I wish to examine some components of this charism, but I will do so in a manner that underscores, not their individual differences, but rather the property that unites them—Ignatius's desire to be actively attentive and promptly responsive to God.

Discernment

Ignatius's attentiveness to God and what ultimately became his responsiveness to God can be traced to his "first reflection on the things of God" during his long convalescence at Loyola. It was there, in being attentive to the different reactions his imaginings evoked in

him, that his eyes had been opened to the diversity of "spirits" affecting him. He noticed that thoughts of himself as a valiant knight, though delightful while they lasted, ultimately left him feeling empty and sad. On the other hand, thoughts of imitating the heroic deeds of the saints brought him a joy that lasted even after the thoughts had ended. Then, as he later described it, "one day his eyes opened a little, and he began to wonder at this difference and reflect upon it." Little by little he came to recognize that two contrary spirits were stirring within him, "one from the devil; the other from God."³⁷

During his convalescence at Loyola, Ignatius came to realize that a diversity of spirits, or dispositions toward good or evil, existed in his life. It was only at Manresa, however, that he began to distinguish among his affective movements to identify these spirits so as to determine which were leading him toward God and which were leading him away.³⁸ It is important to bear in mind, however, that this discernment gave rise to a decision that was not simply a matter of "this" and not "that," but rather one that was both more subtle and more profound. Ignatius's discernment was grounded in his preexisting desire to live in active and loving companionship with Jesus.³⁹ His discernment thus evoked in him a response that was

³⁷ *PilgTest* 8. Whereas theologians today attribute all such affective movements to secondary causes, including the subtle influences of a person's own unconscious, Ignatius, following a long tradition that had its roots in the Bible, attributed virtually all of them to the presence and action of "good" spirits, whom he understood as being God and his angels, or "evil" spirits, whom he understood as being Satan and his demons. As a consequence, Ignatius defined the "discernment of spirits" as the process of sifting through these affective movements or distinguishing among them to identify the direction to which they seemed to be leading.

³⁸ Among the affective movements Ignatius experienced, two distinct but contrary movements stood out, movements he called "consolation" and "desolation." "Consolation" was any feeling or affective movement that drew him toward God or made him less centered upon himself and more open to others. "Desolation," on the contrary, was any feeling or affective movement that drew him away from God or made him more centered upon himself and less open to others.

³⁹ This was the grace for which Ignatius had been praying when, fourteen years after the events of Manresa, he and two companions paused to pray in a wayside chapel in La Storta on the outskirts of Rome. While he was at prayer, "he . . . experienced such a change in his soul and saw clearly that God the Father placed him with Christ his Son" (*PilgTest* 96). The grace of that event was his sense of being received in active and loving companionship with Jesus.

guided by a felt knowledge not of God's *will* but of God's *heartfelt desire*, a response to God that was guided not by duty but by love.⁴⁰

The central action of Ignatius's discernment was reflection on the ordinary events of his day-to-day life. Although the events in themselves may have had little intrinsic meaning, he learned that his reflections on them coupled with the affective responses they evoked in him—feelings of joy, sorrow, peace, anxiety, along with the innumerable impulses, urges, and the indefinable “somethings” that arose and stirred within him—could reveal God's guidance. The ordinary events of his day-to-day life—a chat on a street corner, an opinion offered, a concern expressed, a request for help—all these,

whether consciously or unconsciously, were weighed in God. They were brought to prayer, sifted, evaluated, digested. In the end, Ignatius found himself face to face not with a decision that awaited him but with his own authenticity, his own single-mindedness toward God. His discernment was not a process for making a prudential judgment. It was a means of determining within the ambiguity of day-to-day events, and among the various decisions

God is already glorified in all persons, as God is glorified in all things, but the human person is able to give greater glory to God by his freely chosen actions directed toward achieving the fullness of life for which God created him.

and actions available to him, what God was asking of him at that very moment. It was not a feeling that something was right or wrong. It was a heartfelt knowledge grounded in love, an intuitive depth of understanding, the wisdom that is a gift of God.⁴¹ It is important to recognize, however, that even when his discernment seemed to bring clarity and peace, he always sought to confirm his decision by God's grace. Ignatius understood that God's work in a person is always “in conformity with the commandments, the pre-

⁴⁰ Thomas A. Dunne, “Models of Discernment,” *The Way Supplement* 23 (1974): 20–22.

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola,” in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 118ff.; Dunne, “Models of Discernment,” 23–25; Futrell, “Ignatian Discernment,” 48 f., 53.

cepts of the Church, and obedience to one's legitimate superiors . . . for the same divine Spirit is present in all."⁴²

The Examen

Ignatius recognized that his attentiveness to God began with attentiveness to his own inner world. It is unclear how the examination of conscience (the "examen"), which began in his life as a means of self-purification and preparation for confession or of correcting a particular sin or fault, evolved into a means of achieving this attentiveness to God, yet it is clear that it did.⁴³ Although his examen seems to have had aspects of both these forms, it ultimately followed neither pattern. It focused not so much on his *conscience* and its attendant concern about the morality of his actions, as it did on his *consciousness* with its attentiveness to how God was affecting and moving him in his inner world.⁴⁴ His examen, however, was not simply a matter of memory and analysis. It was a Spirit-guided insight into every facet of his life. In the final analysis, it was a time of prayer—an opportunity to deepen his relationship with God and to be actively attentive to the intimate ways in which God approached and called.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most noteworthy element of Ignatius's examen was the degree to which its practice pervaded his life. It is clear that it was more than simply a devotional or occasional practice for him. He was said by Ribadeneira to have "kept the habit of examining his conscience every hour, and of asking himself with careful attention how he had passed the hour," and Laínez expanded upon this by observing that "he had so much care of his conscience that each day

⁴² Maurice Giuliani, "Movements of the Spirit," in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Ignatian Spirituality Selected from "Christus"* (Chicago: Regnery, 1958); letter to Sr. Teresa Rejadell, June 18, 1536, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 337, with emphasis added.

⁴³ Ignatius addresses the means of self-purification and preparation for confession in his treatment of the "general examination of conscience" (*SpEx* 32–43), and those of correcting a particular sin or fault in his treatment of the "particular" examination of conscience (24–31).

⁴⁴ George A. Aschenbrenner, "Consciousness Examen," *Review for Religious* 31, no. 1 (1972): 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15–17.

he compared week with week, month with month, day with day, seeking daily to advance."⁴⁶ But what, we wonder, was the focus of all this soul-searching? Was it simply, as Joseph de Guibert suggested, "a humble search for faults that had escaped him"?⁴⁷ Although there seems to be an element of truth here, it doesn't seem to explain his later refusal as superior general to ever consider dispensing a Jesuit from his two examens, although he would, on occasion, dispense him from his other prayers.⁴⁸ Ignatius's examen cannot be dismissed as simply a "humble search for faults." Something else was clearly at work here—and that *something*, I believe, is to be found in Ribadeneira's remark about Ignatius's "careful attention" about how he had passed the hour.

The *something* that happened to Ignatius at Manresa brought him to understand the degree to which God was *active* and *wished to*

Nadal observed that Ignatius had been graced, not only in being able to rest freely in contemplating the mystery of the Trinity, but also in being able to perceive and contemplate God's presence and action in every person, event, or situation in which he found himself.

be active in his life. This understanding seems to have evoked in him a desire to be equally active in his response to God. Ignatius's frequent examens must be seen in this light: his experience of God's being *actively* at work in his life evoked in him a desire to be similarly *active* in his attentiveness and *prompt* in his responsiveness to God. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to assess what may have been behind his unwillingness to consider dispensing a Jesuit from his examen, it is not

unreasonable to think that Ignatius believed that *active* attentiveness to God and *prompt* responsiveness to God should be characteristics of *all* Jesuits and that frequent examens were one of the best means of achieving this.

⁴⁶ Pedro de Ribadeneira, "De actis P. N. Ignatii," in *FontNarr* 2:345, §42; "Epistola P. Lainii," *ibid.*, 1:140/141, §59.

⁴⁷ De Guibert, *Jesuits*, 67.

⁴⁸ Alexandre Brou, *Ignatian Methods of Prayer* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1949), 72.

Contemplation in Action: Seeking God in All Things

Ignatius's active attentiveness to God was not limited to attentiveness to the God he found in the quiet of his heart. Rather, in realizing that God was present and at work everywhere, but most particularly in every dimension of human existence, he sought God in all things. He later recalled that his ability to find God had continued to grow since his "first reflection on the things of God" at Loyola. At any time or place he wished to find God, he said, he was able to find him (*PilgTest* 99). This ability to find God anywhere and everywhere, however, was not simply a matter of recognizing that God was somehow present in the world. Rather, it was an active attentiveness to God's action in that world and in every inclination of his heart. It was, more correctly, a permanent openness to God and an ongoing act of interior surrender and a wholehearted offering of himself to God.⁴⁹ Ultimately, it was a means of union with God at work in the world.

Nadal observed that Ignatius had been graced, not only in being able to rest freely in contemplating the mystery of the Trinity, but also in being able to perceive and contemplate God's presence and action in every person, event, or situation in which he found himself. He described him as "a contemplative even in the midst of action."⁵⁰ For Ignatius, his ability to find God in all things and to contemplate God "even in the midst of action" was a continuous raising of his mind and heart to God and was thus a habitual attitude of prayer. Perhaps it is best described as an informal kind of *prayerfulness*, a continuous but diffuse awareness of God's presence

God is already glorified in all persons, as God is glorified in all things, but the human person is able to give greater glory to God by his freely chosen actions directed toward achieving the fullness of life for which God created him.

⁴⁹ Joseph Stierli, "Ignatian Prayer: Seeking God in All Things," in *Ignatius Loyola: His Personality and Heritage, 1556-1956* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 156.

⁵⁰ Jerónimo Nadal, "In examen annotationes," in *Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal*, 5 vols., MHSI vols. 13, 15, 21, 27, 90 (Madrid-Rome: IHSI, 1898-1962), 4:651; Dunne, "Models of Discernment," 24; letter to Fr. Antonio Brandão, June 1, 1551, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 353.

that Ignatius maintained even in the midst of the activity of his day-to-day life. This informal but habitual attitude of prayer, however, did not replace formal prayer in Ignatius's life, but rather expanded upon it, allowing it to pervade his life.⁵¹ It was only in finding God in the quiet of his heart that he was able to find God in all things. Although Ignatius was convinced that "for a truly mortified man, a quarter hour would suffice to unite him in prayer to God" and that, by directing everything to God's service, everything thus became prayer, both formal prayer and an informal but continuous prayerfulness seem to have pervaded his life.⁵²

The Glory of God

During his long convalescence at Loyola, Ignatius recalled that his greatest consolation "was gazing at the sky and the stars . . . because he thus felt within himself a very great impulse to serve Our Lord" (*PilgTest* 11). For the remainder of his life, he was captivated by the beauty of the heavens, and he marveled at seeing God in plants, leaves, flowers, and even a tiny worm.⁵³ For him, all things mirrored the radiant fire of God's glory. Ignatius never explained what he meant by the "glory of God," though its use pervades his writings. In truth, it meant many things for him, but at its most fundamental level, the "glory of God" is God's power and beauty and light and splendor and goodness made manifest. It is God's self-revelation to the world. God shares his eternal glory with all creation. All things are the image and glory of God. God's glory, however, is not simply a glow suspended over all things. It is *in* all things and *pervades* all things. All things thus glorify God in their

⁵¹ Stierli, "Ignatian Prayer," 161; Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 84; Aloysius Pieris, *Mysticism of Service* (Gonawala-Kelaniya: Tulana, 2000), 38 f., 56 f., 63 f.; Oliver Mannaerts, "Responsio ad quædam postulata . . .", in *FontNarr* 3:438, §§36 f.

⁵² *Scripta de Sancto Ignatio de Loyola*, vol. 1, Monumenta Ignatiana, in MHSI (Madrid, 1904-18), 251; Joseph F. Conwell, *Contemplation in Action: A Study of Ignatian Prayer* (Spokane: Gonzaga, 1957), 8; Juan de Polanco, under commission from Ignatius, letter no. 4012 to Gaspar Barzaeus, Dec. 24, 1553, in *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Epistolæ et instructiones*, vol. 6, vol. 33 of MHSI (Rome: IHSI, 1967), 91.

⁵³ Jerónimo Nadal, *Pláticas Espirituales en Coimbra* (Granada: Biblioteca Teológica Granadina, 1945), 71; Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loyolæ*, in *FontNarr* 4:743, 747, 749.

very being. For the human person, however, God's glory is not simply *in* him; it is *alive* in him.⁵⁴ God is already glorified in all persons, as God is glorified in *all things*, but the human person is able to give *greater* glory to God by his freely chosen actions directed toward achieving the fullness of life for which God created him. Thus St. Irenaeus was able to say that "the glory of God is the human person fully alive."⁵⁵

One of the central experiences of Ignatius's illumination at the Cardoner was that of God's sending and gathering love: the procession of all things from God and their necessary return and re-integration into their Trinitarian origin. He was brought to understand that Jesus Christ had himself participated in this descending-ascending action of creation. Although Christ shared in his Father's glory, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and suffering death on a cross, and thus returned to the Father in the glory of the Resurrection. The Redemption can thus be understood as a movement of Christ the Redeemer from glory to glory. It is in Jesus Christ that the uncreated splendor of the Father—the glory of God—has been made present and revealed. As the sign of the Father's presence and the revelation of the Father's love, power, and wisdom, Christ is the manifestation of the Father's glory *for* all persons. Yet Christ becomes the Father's glory *in* all who accept him with living faith. They thus share in the love with which the Father loves the Son, and are called to share in the glory of the Son in whom the Father desires all fullness to dwell.⁵⁶ The glory of God, then, is ultimately the glory of Jesus Christ the Redeemer.⁵⁷

He never allowed magis to be transformed into simply an ideal for human action. Its source was always God and a discerned understanding of what God was asking of him.

⁵⁴ George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Glory: What to Expect from the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 102.

⁵⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus hæreses*, IV. 20. 7.

⁵⁶ Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision-Making* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 17–20; Col. 1:19.

⁵⁷ François Courel, "St. Ignatius and the Greater Glory of God," in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Ignatian Spirituality* (Chicago: Regnery, 1958), 30, 35; Phil. 2:5–11.

For Ignatius, the “greater glory of God” was not simply a life well lived. Rather, it was a life of being with Christ and laboring with Christ in his redemptive mission. In his letters, *Spiritual Exercises*, and *Constitutions*, Ignatius’s frequent references to “the glory of God and the help of souls” and “the glory and service of God” speak eloquently of his desire to share in this mission. For Ignatius, the greater glory of God was his own active participation with Christ in Christ’s mission.⁵⁸

The Magis

The “greater glory of God” reflected Ignatius’s love for God and his desire to be attentive and responsive to God in a manner that was *more* generous, *more* Christlike, and *more* directed toward

What was particularly remarkable in Ignatius’s ministry of helping souls was the vitality with which he pursued it for the remainder of his life.

him (*SpEx* 97, 167). His frequent use of the word “more”—*magis*—to describe activity directed towards the *greater* glory of God reflected this desire. *Magis*, however, was not simply fervor of character seeking to surpass itself. It was an attitude of the heart directed toward a greater attentiveness and responsiveness to God’s guidance. It was a “discreet charity,”

a discerned generosity, a discerning love.⁵⁹ (*Cons*: C 269, 274). It was a generous offering of himself, yet it was always tempered by a *discerned* understanding of God’s response to that offering. In his *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius expressed this by juxtaposing the exercitant’s generous offering to God—“what I desire”—with God’s response to that offering—“if God should choose” (139, 147). Ignatius desired to imitate Christ in all things—even suffering injuries, false accusations, and being considered a fool—but only “if God would be

⁵⁸ Roger Cantin, “Le troisième degré d’humilité et la gloire de Dieu selon saint Ignace de Loyola,” *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 8 (1958): 246 f., 253.

⁵⁹ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to *Cons*, with C added to indicate that the quotation is from the boldface marginal number in the *Constitutions*, and with CN when the quotation is from the *Complementary Norms*. Here the reference is to C 269, 274.

served and if he should choose me for it" (*Cons C*: 101; *SpEx* 147). He never allowed *magis* to be transformed into simply an ideal for human action. Its source was always God and a discerned understanding of what God was asking of him.

Helping Souls

While he was still convalescing at Loyola, Ignatius began to engage members of the household in spiritual conversation, and he found that it brought "profit to their souls" (*PilgTest* 11). Shortly after he arrived at Manresa, he began to speak with a few spiritual persons and soon found himself busy "with certain souls who came looking for him to discuss their spiritual interests," and by the time he was leaving there, he sensed a great desire to communicate to others what he had received from God (21, 26, 34, 50). Ignatius's desire for ministry seems to have arisen in him gradually. Although his ministry of the word may have arisen simply out of a desire to clarify and confirm his own spiritual experiences, it eventually became a ministry directed toward communicating the word

Ignatius was able to cooperate generously with God's grace because he developed the interior freedom to set aside his own desires and allow God to teach him, to work in him, and to lead him in his service.

of God in any way that it could be assimilated into people's lives. It was not limited to ministry that was specifically spiritual. Ultimately, it was a ministry of concern that touched upon everything from a person's deepest spiritual desire to his most fundamental human need, and it grew to include anything where Ignatius saw hope of "greater fruit" or being of the "greater need" or to "the greater service of God and the more universal good."⁶⁰

⁶⁰*Cons C* 622. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to address the topic of Ignatius's priesthood, it is important to point out, as Michael J. Buckley has done, that Ignatius's priesthood did not alter the ministry that he was already doing. Rather, it simply ratified it and caught it up within the public mission of the Church. See Michael J. Buckley, "Jesuit Priesthood: Its Meaning and Commitment," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 8, no. 5 (1976): 144 f.

Ignatius's desire to help souls gave his responsiveness to God clarity and focus. He gained a sense of proportion and the ability to distinguish between the "one thing necessary" and the means to accomplish it, between what was essential in God's service and what was merely accessory.⁶¹ The use of all things in God's service took on new meaning for him, and he learned to use them to the extent they helped him towards his end. His confidence, however, remained fixed on God.⁶² In this he exemplified the spirit expressed in Hevenesi's maxim: "Put your trust in God as though the success of your endeavor depended entirely on yourself, and not on God; but at the same time do everything in your power as though you had nothing to contribute, but as though God alone would do everything."⁶³ Ignatius's unbounded confidence in God urged him towards his greatest personal effort, yet in making this effort he remained interiorly free. He had surrendered everything, even the success of the venture, into God's hands. God alone could provide the growth (1 Cor. 3:6).

What was particularly remarkable in Ignatius's ministry of helping souls was the vitality with which he pursued it for the remainder of his life.⁶⁴ As the living flame of God's love took possession of him, everything he had once deemed important faded to insignificance in light of the all-surpassing value of knowing, loving, and serving Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ Like the apostle Paul, his response to God's love reflected a decision that seems to have become almost a compulsion for him.⁶⁶

⁶¹ De Guibert, *Jesuits*, 534; Pedro Arrupe, "Our Way of Proceeding," *Acta Romana* 17:700, §18.

⁶² *SpEx* 23; Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loyolæ*, in *FontNarr* 4:82/83–84/85.

⁶³ Gabriel Hevenesi, a Hungarian Jesuit (1656–1715) who served as college professor, superior, and provincial of Austria, is best known today for his small book of maxims, *Scintillæ Ignatianæ* (Ratisbon: Pustet, 1919), 2; Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius: the Man and the Priest* (Rome: CIS, 1977), 32 f.

⁶⁴ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 430

⁶⁵ Phil. 3:8 f; Underhill, *Mysticism*, 84.

⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 5:14. This compulsion directed toward service of others is not peculiar to Christian mysticism. In the Buddhist tradition, a "bodhisattva" is an enlightened being who delays his own enjoyment of Nirvana to devote himself to promoting the enlightenment of others. His enlightenment, rather than drawing him into an apophatic quietism, sends him out in an active compassion so that others might share in that enlightenment.

Interior Freedom

It is important to bear in mind that Ignatius was not simply a passive recipient of God's grace. Without overstating the matter, we can say that he fell totally and irrevocably in love with God, and he would direct *everything* to responding to that love. But we have to ask ourselves, How was it that he responded as he did? Was there a particular quality of his that stood out, one that melded perfectly with God's grace, to form what became the Ignatian charism? I am sure that many might point to his iron-willed determination, his great personal courage, or his strength of soul. Without denying the importance of these qualities, we suggest that Ignatius was able to cooperate generously with God's grace because he developed the interior freedom to set aside his own desires and allow God to teach him, to work in him, and to lead him in his service. This interior freedom, forged in humility, lay at the root of what he would call *indifference*. This was an openness to God, a courage that was to be found in God alone, a conscious choice for God in all things that became a seeking for God in all things. Ignatius began his *Spiritual Exercises* on the theme of *indifference*, and concluded them with an offering of oneself to God based on this same interior freedom. It was this humble openness to God that determined the manner of his prayer, gave rise to his frequent examens, and was ultimately the source of his utter confidence in God, his universal availability, and his generous responsiveness to God's direction and guidance.

The recipients of the questionnaire were asked to assess their ministry in light of an alarming shortage of manpower. Over 90 percent of those who replied felt that their own ministry was of the greatest importance and should be given highest priority.

V. The Meaning of the Manresa Experience Today

Almost twenty years passed between Ignatius's experiences at Manresa and the papal approval of the Society of Jesus in 1540. What set the fledgling Society of Jesus apart from already existing religious orders was its overarching and unrelenting

desire "to labor *with Christ*" in ministry. Ignatius's mysticism was one of action: a mysticism of *active attentiveness* and *prompt responsiveness* to God's guidance. The Society of Jesus was understood as following this pattern. In fact, Ignatius and his early companions envisioned the Jesuit as being ready to depart on mission at a moment's notice. This demanded of him the ability to adapt to changed circumstances, to determine the best course of action, and to make decisions. The fact that within a few short years schools were opened and soon enjoyed great success seemed to call this earlier ideal into question.⁶⁷ Whereas the fruit of itinerant preacher's local missions was often short-lived, the schools produced widespread, long-lasting good for God's service. Hence, a tension developed between two ideals: mobility for mission vs. stability for competence in institutions. It is a tension that is still with us. The issue, however, was not that a dynamic movement had become a static one. Rather it was a question whether the institution could manifest the same prompt responsiveness to changing needs and times as that demanded of the individual.⁶⁸ The individual Jesuit today may spend many years in the same ministry, yet the ideal of *active attentiveness*—to God, to the world, and to the needs of the world—*joined with prompt responsiveness to God* remains as true for him today as it was for Ignatius.

During the past few years, the Jesuit Conference Board—the president of the Jesuit Conference in conjunction with the ten U.S. provincials—has been engaged in a process of strategic planning. In a letter dated December 15, 2004, the Board introduced the process to the Jesuits of the U.S. and offered a brief overview both of its rationale and practical specifics. The Board prefaced its remarks by observing that "our Jesuit identity is grounded in radical apostolic availability as 'servants of Christ's mission' " and that one of the demands of this availability is that Jesuits "open [themselves] to and prepare for the future by discerning the signs of the times and the call of God's Spirit."

⁶⁷ John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.

⁶⁸ Michael Amaladoss, "Sent on Mission," in *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Incorporation of a Spirit* (Rome: Secretariat of Ignatian Spirituality, 1993), 336; George E. Ganss, "St. Ignatius's Personal Charism and Its Institutionalization in His Constitutions," in *Dossier: "Constitutiones" A* (Rome: CIS, 1972), 138 f.

The letter pointed out that Part VII of the *Constitutions* reminds us that it is our responsibility to discern how and where to use our resources in a manner that is most in accord with our apostolic goals and the Church's needs. To underscore this point, it recalled that

[a]ll members of the Society of Jesus, even though dispersed in various local communities and ascribed to individual provinces and regions, are inserted directly and primarily into the single apostolic body and community of the whole Society. . . . This demands of all of us a *high degree of availability* and a *real apostolic mobility* in the service of the universal Church.⁶⁹

The letter concluded by outlining eight goals by which the planning process is to be accomplished. Although I found much reason for hope in the enumerated goals, I noticed that none of them moved beyond institutional-level actions to address the more complex but equally important issues pertaining to the individual Jesuit. I particularly noticed that no mention was made of any pedagogy for promoting the availability and apostolic mobility the letter spoke of. Although the authors of the letter may have recognized, as I did, that such qualities cannot be imposed from above but must arise in the heart of the individual Jesuit, they cannot be ignored.

Some years ago, an article on decision making mentioned that the English province of an unnamed apostolic religious order had sent its members a questionnaire as part of a strategic-planning process not unlike our own. The recipients of the questionnaire were asked to assess their ministry in light of an alarming shortage of manpower. Over 90 percent of those who replied felt that their own ministry was of the greatest importance and should be given highest priority. The author observed that it was possible to draw one of two conclusions from this. On the one hand, one might argue that it was heartening that those who responded were so committed to

The strategic-planning process in which the assistancy is currently engaged will make demands of all of us. Each of us will be asked for our input.

⁶⁹ *Cons* CN 255, §1, no. 1, with emphasis added.

their work. On the other hand, it was possible that they were reluctant to enter upon any discernment that might call into question their own *raison d'être*, and so they contented themselves with simply airing prejudices. In other words, the author contended, they were fearful of what God might be asking of them.⁷⁰

I don't believe that it is necessary to go as far afield as England or to look to some other apostolic religious order to find a parallel to the situation facing us here in the United States. I believe that a similar questionnaire distributed to American Jesuits would yield similar results. We honor Abraham as the "father of our faith," yet his willingness to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and to set out for a distant country "not knowing where he was to go" (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8) denotes a level of openness and trust that probably few of us share. It would be tempting to interpret the above-mentioned reticence as a lack of availability or of apostolic mobility on the part of the typical American Jesuit. In all fairness, however, I believe the situation is more complicated than it might

initially seem and that it cannot be so easily explained. I would, however, like to offer a few observations and reflections.

It is important to recognize that availability and apostolic mobility can be terribly frightening. We all live with our fears and insecurities, and, in one manner or

It was clear that the same God who had once been so actively at work in the life of Ignatius was actively at work in my own as well.

another, we all seek affirmation in our ministry. Most of us are good at what we do and we enjoy it. Our current ministry and our current place of ministry seem to offer the best and most productive setting for our talents. To consider leaving it—as availability and apostolic mobility seem to propose—seems to border on folly. And it would be folly if our leaving it were understood solely in terms of a great-hearted response and we were to ignore the God who invites us to make that response.

The introductory section of the above-mentioned letter concluded with an important sentence: "For the entire Assistancy, this is

⁷⁰ See Nicholas King, "Ignatius Loyola and Decision-Making," *The Way Supplement* 24 (1975): 46 f.

an invitation to dialogue, prayer, and discernment." I realize that the words dialogue, prayer, and discernment have become almost hackneyed for many of us, yet without them I feel that it is folly to speak of availability or apostolic mobility. For the past thirty and more years, a change of assignment for most Jesuits has begun in the context of dialogue with his provincial. Gone are the days when a man would stand at the bulletin board and there for the first time learn that he was being moved to a new community or to a new ministry. Dialogue—with the opportunity it presents of allowing a man to express his hopes, fears, concerns, and apostolic desires—is now an integral part of the missioning process. Yet prayer and discernment need to play a similar role in this process. It is easy to find reasons to say no to a new assignment; reasons for saying yes are often more difficult to find and, I believe, can only be found in the quiet of our hearts. The strategic-planning process in which the assistancy is currently engaged will make demands of all of us. Each of us will be asked for our input. The process has already begun with dialogue. Yet I feel that it is equally important that it include prayer and discernment so that we might be, as Ignatius was, actively attentive and promptly responsive to the God who began this good work in us.

VI. Conclusion

Forty-five years ago I sat at my novitiate desk and opened a biography of St. Ignatius Loyola. There I embarked upon what has become a lifelong fascination with a man who began life as a courtier and a soldier, and then a pilgrim, mystic, student, priest, and founder of the Society of Jesus. For the first time I encountered the language I would later associate with Ignatius and his spiritual vision—the themes of indifference, *magis*, discernment, helping souls, the greater glory of God, finding God in all things. The years that have passed since that time have allowed me to grow in my understanding of these themes and to see their remarkable interrelatedness. I discovered that one theme was often an expression of, or a logical conclusion of, or the philosophical or spiritual underpinning of, another. Thus I came to understand *magis* in its relation to discernment, and helping souls in its relation to the greater glory of God. I began to see Ignatius's spiritual vision in a

new light, one in which indifference, *magis*, discernment, and all the rest were not simply disparate pieces in a puzzle, but rather facets of a vision that possessed a remarkable cohesion I had never noticed before. But where, I wondered, had this understanding come from? Ignatius had shared it with his early companions, developed its meaning at length in his *Constitutions*, and outlined its foundations in his *Spiritual Exercises*. But how or where, I wondered, had it been born in Ignatius himself?

When I set out to write this essay, my intention was not to address the broader and, perhaps, more timely topic of what I have called the Ignatian charism. Certainly the rediscovery of the Society's foundational charism following the Thirty-first General Congregation and its expression in the faith-justice dimension of the Thirty-second General Congregation seemed to offer encouragement to address this important topic. What I chose to do, rather, was to address the *origin* of this charism—specifically, its roots in Ignatius's mystical illuminations at Manresa. I realized I was treading on holy ground, and that many capable scholars had gone before me. They had already explored the subjects of Ignatius's great illumination at the Cardoner, Ignatian mysticism, Trinitarian theology, discernment, contemplation in action, the greater glory of God—to name but a few facets of what I ultimately wished to discuss. The topic of the *origin* of the Ignatian charism, however, at least in the manner in which I wished to present it, seemed to have eluded such scholarly treatment. Yet very early in my research I realized that the numerous facets of this charism were inextricably intertwined in Ignatius's life. Although we might speak of Ignatius's boundless love for God or his desire to help souls, they were so inexorably interwoven that one was meaningless without the other. I thus realized that my desire to address the origin of the Ignatian charism was akin to unraveling the "unravelable." My primary concern, much like Ignatius's own concern in telling his story in his autobiography, was to follow a sequence that best explained the manner of his spiritual development and employ the most appropriate pedagogy to convey this experience to others. Implicit in any attempt to explain such a complex matter in a linear fashion were the unavoidable repetitions and, in a few instances, passing references to themes before they had been adequately introduced or explained. Although I made every attempt to hold these annoyances to a minimum, I judged

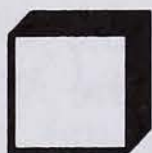
more than a few to be necessary. I thank the readers for their patience.

My original intention in writing this essay was simply to tell a story that had been growing in me for almost as long as I have been a Jesuit. Like any writer, I hoped my scribblings might bring clarity to my thoughts. Little did I realize how this exercise would affect me personally. What had begun in the dusty recesses of my mind as little more than an intellectual exercise quickly took on an unexpected but decidedly affective dimension. I would not be so bold as to say that Ignatius's experiences became mine, but I came to recognize a remarkable parallel between what he experienced at Manresa and what I was experiencing in trying to give expression to my thoughts. It was clear that the same God who had once been so actively at work in the life of Ignatius was actively at work in my own as well.

As I write these final words, I realize that this essay is the product not simply of a great deal of reading, reflection, and prayer. It is ultimately the product of my lived experience as a Jesuit and of the God who has never ceased to surprise and delight and invite me. When I first gave serious thought to writing this, neither I nor anyone who knows me could have imagined me in my current ministry. In fact, I am embarrassed to confess that for the greater part of my Jesuit life, vocation promotion had the same moral imperative for me as flossing teeth: it was something I was very much in favor of but rarely did. Now, as I write these words, I am in my third year as province vocation director. It is a work I love. It is not, however, a work I chose to do from an intellectual perspective. There was a part of me, in fact—that timid and shy part of me—that didn't want to do it at all. Yet some years ago, about the time I had just completed my initial research, I found myself not simply interested in this ministry, but captivated by the very thought of it—and I can't begin to tell you how much this surprised me—because I sensed something within me compelling me. Yes, I realize that Tom Smolich, my provincial at that time, had invited me to consider this

In the mysterious ways in which God works, it seems that my research, reflection, and prayer about the something that once happened in the life of Ignatius gave rise to a different something in my own life.

work. Yet I sense that God had been inviting me to it and preparing me for it long before I received Tom's phone call. In the mysterious ways in which God works, it seems that my research, reflection, and prayer about the *something* that once happened in the life of Ignatius gave rise to a different *something* in my own life, a *something* that had to be shared, a *something* that continues to animate me in the vocation that I share with Ignatius. In closing, it is my hope that readers might have a similar experience.



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