
FOUR STORIES OF THE KOLVENBACH GENERATION

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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the first word . . .

The setting: It's a sultry afternoon in early September. The students have just returned to campus. An air conditioner hums energetically in a small office, doing its job with relative success. Typical of academic offices, desks, file cabinets, phones, and computers don't leave much open space. *The cast of characters:* I've just stopped in to conduct some minor start-of-term business with an administrator, a pleasant young woman with enough experience in dealing with bureaucratic red tape to be the ever-reliable person to contact to get something done, expeditiously and with a minimum of hassle. *Dramatic action.* After our brief exchange, I linger to pass a few pleasantries. Enter a very young woman, possibly a freshman, wearing the regulation summer uniform: grubby t-shirt, faded gym shorts, flip-flops. On her back she carries the standard-issue, well-worn knapsack, and her hair is tied back with a rubber band, which may be losing the battle with the heat and the breathless activity of the day, since strands of rebellious tress cling to her glistening forehead. She asks for help finding another office, and quickly vanishes back into the hallway.

The dialogue: (Improvised on this take.) Our momentary visitor has clearly pushed some mysterious button, unknown and unsuspected by the male of the species. My colleague expresses some distaste for the way the women students dress on campus these days. She wonders why someone doesn't tell them something about appropriate attire when they go to class, or even more, come in to do business in an administrative office. (Career bachelor though I am, I know enough never to get involved in any conversation about the propriety of women's dress. Ever. I nod with my best Rogerian noncommittal "hmmm.") The fashion critique becomes more pointed. What will happen when they go for job interviews? How can they expect to be taken seriously in the workplace? No longer able to restrain myself, I ask if my style mentor has ever had nightmares about turning into her mother. She stops as though I had just splashed her with ice water, and after a tense moment, tips her head back and laughs. She doesn't answer the question, but admits that as a teenager she was often on the receiving end of similar observations, courtesy of her mother. Besides, she notes, I really know how to get to the point in a hurry. Now it's my turn to vanish into the hallway. Fast. *Fade to black.*

Before we take too much satisfaction in our male superiority, I've noted a similar pattern in Jesuit life. All too quickly we become our elders, for better or worse, as the cliché would have it. For us, it's complicated. Our transmogrification into our seniors in the Company has both spatial and temporal dimen-

sions. First the spatial. No matter how many frequent-flyer miles we rack up in a year or a lifetime, as we grow older we seem bound to certain places and personalities from the past. They give us a sense of identity, and in “family” moments we take comfort in returning to familiar territory, even without being aware of it, and even if visitors seem a bit bewildered. It’s great conversational shorthand. We don’t have to fill in much background. Only by spending time in other provinces or countries do we become aware of the pattern.

Northeasterners traveling to Transhudsonia,[†] for example, inevitably run into a repertoire of stories about farm chores at Florissant, the atrium at West Baden, the Spartan life in the Fusz Box, or the monumental pranks orchestrated on unwitting villa superiors at Waupaca and Omena. We learn about legendary rectors and ministers, about befuddled professors and eccentric brothers, and about philosophers-theologians baseball games in places we’ve never seen, and never will, since most of the properties have long ago passed over to other uses. The mere mention of a proper name brings nods of recognition and smiles of anticipation, since everyone knows where the story is going. (There’s an old vaudeville joke. A stranger wanders into a joke-writer’s convention. These professionals have categorized their jokes and refer to them only by number. The emcee begins the meeting by calling out, “23.” A few chuckles. “56” provokes more convincing laughter, but “71” brings the house down. The stranger asks why. A writer tells him, “They haven’t heard that one before.”)

Now, before the community at Wauwatosa rises in outrage against my regional bias and demands that the Conference shut down this periodical, let me be clear. We all do it, but we’re too close to our own tribe to realize it. Only when we travel to other provinces and hear their stories can we recognize the relentless conversational patterns. The first few times we hear the story, we may even join the fun, but soon it becomes clear that we have entered into a tribal ritual. We would swear on a stack of back issues of *STUDIES* that *we* never subject visitors to a barrage of such hometown stories, the way *they* do. (I’d be terrified if someone threatened to do a content analysis of recent “first word . . .” columns to see how often I’ve been guilty of the very crime I’m imputing to others.) Put quite simply, we inadvertently develop the very same conversational patterns we find tedious in our elders.

The temporal factor in our becoming other people leaps out of the denial bag with only the most superficial reflection. The march of the generations passes by, as our joints and hearing remind us every day, but somehow our psyches don’t quite believe it. Teaching helps, but it’s not a surefire safeguard. We had a juniorate professor (see the remark about “content analysis” above) who tried to demonstrate the timeliness of his subject matter by citing “con-

[†]The term “Transhudsonia” refers to that section of North America that begins at the Hudson River and extends south and west to the far rim of the San Joaquin Valley. It is largely uncharted territory, although travelers returning from frontier settlements in Worcester, Scranton, and Jersey City report that many areas are now accessible by all-terrain vehicle. That’s reassuring, but can you get good pastrami?

temporary” analogies. Of course, for him, the modern example generally began with “During the War,” referring to World War II, which ended before we had entered kindergarten. Eyes roll heavenward. More than one Jesuit in my experience routinely begins a lengthy monologue with “years ago,” as though signaling that we are in for the long haul, beginning with philosophy in Pipe Alley at Woodstock and ending with breakfast this morning.

Most of us keep assuring ourselves that we would never fall into such a time warp, but I’m afraid few escape the black hole of dating ourselves. I’ve just made fun of my juniorate professor, but in fact I have become him, as surely as I’m sitting here, squinting myopically into my computer screen. See if this strikes a familiar chord. Every semester includes at least a passing mention of the American Western. The genre declined in popularity, I explain, as the country became cynical about heroes, due largely to the sour experiences of Watergate and the Vietnam War. Most of the owners of those slack jaws and puzzled expressions did not draw a breath until 1990. “During the War . . .” In recent years, I’ve included a lecture on the history of the 1970s, which for them is akin to learning about the Crimean campaign and the Teapot Dome, and probably just as interesting to aspiring film makers. My timeless points of reference no longer hold. Imagine receiving a student paper on *Gone With the Wind* that refers consistently to Clark Gables, or the *Wizard of Oz*, starring Judith Garland. (I’ll take partial blame for the latter one. I tell them to avoid nicknames in formal academic writing.) Some day one of my successors will be forced to keep his composure while plowing through a student essay about the popular actress Marilyn Streep. If I’m lucky, a few might recognize the name Frank Sinatra, but try Bing Crosby, and you might as well be asking them to remember sitting next to a crystal set trying to tune in Russ Columbo, Rudy Vallee, and the A. & P. Gypsies. (No, I’m not that old. I once took a course in the history of media.) Clearly, students have no idea who these old-time actors and singers are. Why should they?

Points of reference in the Society change just as quickly. Those of us of a certain age, often pepper our language with well-worn Latinisms: *sine qua non*, *toties quoties*, *ad grad* (or its short-course [what’s that?] equivalent, the *ad quid*). These expressions make absolutely no sense whatever to most young Jesuits, many of whom have never had a day of Latin. Perhaps one day the terminology of Scholastic philosophy will similarly reach the status of arcane lore. If life continues on its present trajectory, we will no longer be able to refer to an unsuccessful stew as “prime matter” without provoking quizzical expressions around the table. In some future age will “agent intellect” be understood only as a talent for selling insurance?

As the collection of essays in this issue tells us, the process of our becoming the older generation takes place more rapidly and subtly than any of us would like to admit, and it has more profound ramifications than nostalgia. Let me make a confession as editor. As these authors can attest—and probably have over a beer with their friends on several occasions—I was less than enthusiastic about this project, especially in its earlier versions. I felt it dealt in caricature and

was needlessly polarizing in trying to distinguish generations in the American Society. Maybe I was just uncomfortable about being put so emphatically into “the older generation.” But as it passed through the process of revision, I came to appreciate its message more clearly. As I read about their generation, I came to understand more about mine, and our particular place in the development of the contemporary Society.

Your indulgence, please. Readers might find a few reflections from a member of the Janssens/ Arrupe generation helpful in setting a context before they see what the “Kolvenbach Generation” has to say for itself. As I read about the Gen K, I realized how much of our earlier ethos was formed by reaction. We entered in the age of seeming timelessness in matters ecclesial and Societal. I’ve often wondered if that unshakable stability might itself have been a reaction to the tumultuous years of Depression and War. That stability might have been an illusion. As early as 1964, Father Andrew Greeley began to warn us in *America* about a coming “New Breed” that saw issues of authority differently from the “Old Breed.” Reporting from the Vatican Council had already begun to reduce controversies to a simplistic split between “liberals” and “conservatives.” From this point on, the conflict model began to dominate our thinking and acting. This reductionism has borne bitter fruit over the last few decades, as we know too well.

1964 was also the last year of Father Janssens’s generalate. Father Arrupe came into office the next year, almost simultaneously with the close of Vatican II and the liturgical renewal. We scholastics legitimated reaction against ecclesiastical authorities who tried to resist change as resistance to progress mandated by the council, and this easily flowed over to reaction against civil authorities who wanted to preserve the old ways of racial segregation and continue a military draft to fight an unpopular war that was becoming widely viewed as immoral and unwinnable. This was the age of flower power, rock’n’roll, psychedelic drugs, women’s rights. When people learned that I was a student at Woodstock College, some confused the seminary with the rock festival and muttered, “How appropriate.” To be “with it” meant you had to be against just about everything.

Here’s an illustration of the conflict model and reaction that many of us may recall. During those years reporters in both the religious and secular press spilled gallons of ink describing the efforts of some women religious to exchange their traditional habits for more contemporary dress. Much less attention came our way, fortunately, but the struggle was no less acrimonious. In both cases, as we look back on it now, it was a symbolic issue that consumed far too much energy and created far too much animosity. In the old days, a Jesuit could not leave the residence, or in some cases his own room, without suitable clerical attire. On more than one occasion, a minister denied access to the dining room to a Jesuit guest without a habit. During regency I visited friends in another community, but at dinner time the minister told me to “borrow a cassock from one of the other scholastics or leave.” Clerical suits and summer clerical shirts were not enough. One university community kept a closet full of

smelly habits in the hall to make sure everyone was properly attired at meals. *Culpas* (remember them?) and “campusing” became the customary response to such violations of religious decorum.

When the rigid dress code collapsed, the hysterical reaction set in. I remember one elderly resident of the province infirmary appearing in the recreation room in a plaid, polyester sport jacket with a garish six-inch-wide tie. (It was the 1970s, a decade not known for good taste.) Applause on one side of the room; cardiac arrest on the other. During those years more than one Jesuit took a vow never to wear clerics again, and I would not be surprised if some few of them have kept it. Jesuits who have not experienced the days of dress-code enforcement have no such qualms about wearing clerics, and many are quite comfortable dressing in black during most of the working day. We creatures of an earlier day may read this tendency through our old liberal/conservative prism, when really it may mean little more than the fact that our younger colleagues have not been marked by a spirit of reaction against an overly rigid discipline.

Delineating this shift in attitude in terms of Arrupe Jesuits and Kolvenbach Jesuits may give rise to oversimplification, but it is instructive. Father Arrupe was surely a man of the Church, unwavering in his love of the institutional Church. A lot happened during his term that we can ascribe to his era, even though they would contradict much of what he held sacred. Father Kolvenbach served as superior general in a vastly different era. We had learned to navigate ambiguity in the ecclesiastical and political spheres a bit better. At least there seems to have been a lowering of voices. Their two generalates were long ones, separated only by the two years of the papal intervention, but they might have taken place in different centuries. Our four contributors do not minimize the contribution for the Arrupe years, but they give us some sense of perceptions and sensibilities that were formed without the noisy conflicts that marked their seniors. These essays provide a wonderful historical record. And since we all become our elders, I can't wait to see how the Nicolás generation will one day describe the Kolvenbach generation. But by that time, I'll probably be in the province infirmary wearing my plaid polyester jacket and six-inch-wide psychedelic tie.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.

Editor

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Four Stories of the Kolvenbach Generation

These contributors, all present or recent members of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, entered the Society of Jesus in 1982 or 1983, after Vatican II, the Arrupe era, and the papal intervention in Jesuit governance. Their first twenty-five years in the Society correspond roughly to the generalate of Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach. In these essays they offer personal reflections on that period, focusing on their experiences of vocation, Jesuit life, and aspirations for the Society as it moves into the next era.

I. Michael C. McCarthy, S.J.

Facts and Observations

- ✦ On July 30, 1932 my father, Cornelius J. McCarthy, entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Los Gatos, California.
- ✦ He had not yet turned seventeen.
- ✦ Fifty-one years later, on August 28, 1983, the youngest of his six children, Michael Cornelius McCarthy, entered the Society in Santa Barbara, California.
- ✦ I had just turned nineteen.
- ✦ On April 4, 1945, my father left the Society of Jesus after twelve agonizing years.

- ^ Five days earlier, on March 31, 1945, my mother's brother, Kenneth Leo Doyle (a novitiate classmate of my father) had also signed out of the Society. His tenure as a Jesuit was also fraught with anxiety.
- ^ Now it's fall 2009, and I have not left.



Many stories converge around those facts. Here, though, I will make two observations.

First, long before and long after I entered the Society, my life has been intimately tied to former Jesuits, not just Dad and Uncle Kenneth. All but four of the nineteen of us who entered the California Province novitiate that day in 1983 have left the order. So have our novice director, my first-studies superior, and many other people I love. On the whole, I am happy for people when God leads them out of the Society, even when the departure is messy. Of course, I am especially grateful that the scholastic who would become my father left! Still, I almost always feel some kind of hidden vulnerability when someone leaves, as if the tender fragility of my own vocation is somehow exposed and my own projections of the future must be taken less for granted.

Second, in light of all that, I am almost daily amazed that I am still here. Both my father and my uncle stayed in the Society far longer than they should have because they feared their departures would bring shame to their families and especially to their proud, powerful Irish mothers. Although I have not suffered the same parental pressure, I now realize that I did not enjoy great maturity and self-knowledge when I entered the novitiate. Like most people, I have made many important decisions with mixed motivations. And yet it remains a constant mystery to me that at a basic level I have always known great love and joy here. The Society has been a wonderful home to me. Sometimes people ask me if I would have entered at nineteen, knowing then what I know now. While in 2010 I may be sadder and wiser than I was in 1983, the answer is easy: yes, yes! I would have tried, though, to take less for granted and be more grateful.

Three "General" Frameworks: Ledóchowski, Arrupe, Kolvenbach

My father spent the rest of his life grieving over his departure from the Society. That's not to say that he was sorry he left, but there were aspects about his life as a Jesuit that he always missed sorely. As a boy, I remember his reminiscing with my uncle about the "long black

line." They had entered a Society that reflected the coming of age of the Catholic Church in the United States. Unlike their parents, they were not immigrants but born and bred "Americans," and stories of their days as scholastics were filled with a sense of clarity, order, and institutional confidence that I presume reflected the culture of the American Society during the generalates of Fathers Ledóchowski and Janssens. Dad's stories were filled with nostalgia for the simplicity of those days, when he enjoyed a kind of camaraderie that was soldierly (though never, he suggested, intimate), when he practiced a well-structured piety, and when being a Catholic seemed uncomplicated. Even the shame he felt in (what he always called) "leaving the seminary" reflected a coherent culture with powerful expectations he was afraid to disappoint. All this was so different from the chaos and conflict and complexity of six children to be raised in San Francisco of the 1960s and '70s. The grief he always carried over leaving the Jesuits can hardly be disambiguated from his own mourning of his youth, the loss of exterior clarity and predictable norms he knew in those years he signed "S.J." after his name. The vision of the Society implicit in the stories I heard as a boy would be very different from that of the Society I myself entered.

Many a Jesuit told me stories about how, when he entered the novitiate, he had been given a cassock and never called a fellow novice by his first name. Now there was an emphasis on union of hearts and minds, friendship, and communities formed by a closer affective bond.

I doubt very much that my father ever thought much about the general of the Jesuits, before or after he left. By the time I entered in 1983, however, the Society had clearly been shaped by the singular image of Pedro Arrupe. Virtually all of my *formatores* and their generation spoke about this charismatic man with such affection that for them he seemed personally to embody the Society of Jesus. I heard many people speak of him as "the second Ignatius" or "the refounder of the Jesuits." He is the one, after all, who led the modern articulation of "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice." Although I shared their enthusiasm and love for Father Arrupe, it was somewhat vicarious. As I look back from this vantage point, I realize how centrally the changes following the Second Vatican Council marked the self-understanding of the Arrupe generation. In the last several years, schol-

ars have argued whether the Church after Vatican II was continuous or discontinuous with that preceding it. While both sides of the debate have strong historical and theological arguments, at a psychological level I think my *formatores* always operated out of a narrative of discontinuity. Because they had lived through the joy and hope, the grief and anxiety before, during, and after the council, it is easy to see how this major event became a watershed moment for their own religious self-understanding.

If, before entering the Society, I listened to my father and uncle tell stories about the “long black line,” after entering I heard how the same line had been interrupted for good. Many a Jesuit told me stories about how, when he entered the novitiate, he had been given a cassock and never called a fellow novice by his first name. Now there was an emphasis on union of hearts and minds, friendship, and communities formed by a closer affective bond. The multiple side altars built in churches and chapels so that individual priests could “say their private

We must be realistic about our own designs, I learned, and we must wait patiently in hope for a reality we cannot now see.

Masses” each day were seldom used. Instead, the whole group could “celebrate community liturgy.” Older Jesuits informed me I was fortunate that the long retreat I had made in the novitiate was far

closer to St. Ignatius’s intention than their own, where the novice master preached each day to a large group and there was little one-on-one discernment with a director. All such changes, I was made to understand, were answers to the council’s call for renewal in religious life and a return to sources, which led to a deeper understanding of the Spiritual Exercises and the rediscovery of individual spiritual direction. Now we were living in a brave new world, which was often presented as a recovery of the pristine founding vision of Ignatius or (even more fundamentally) a return to the values of “the early Church.” The generalate of Father Arrupe, especially after the Thirty-second General Congregation, symbolized the Society’s response to these sea changes. And the new emphasis on faith and justice, of which Father Arrupe was such an attractive, accessible, and compelling spokesman, gave to the generation of my *formatores* an enthusiasm and passion for engaging in the world as Jesuits. From this spirit I myself have constantly drawn life.

Now, however, I need to make an important point, and I need to make it carefully. I have never felt the need or desire to react against the

generation of my *formatores*. They and the generation before them have been my heroes, who have welcomed me, taught me, and nurtured me in this life committed to the service of faith and the promotion of justice. But I also feel immense envy that both of those generations had something that I cannot claim for myself: a coherent vision of what we were about. As a boy who came of age in San Francisco of the seventies and eighties, I am neither a cold-warrior nor a flower-child. I am marked neither by the security of Eisenhower nor the idealism of Kennedy, but the vague benignity of Jimmy Carter. Moreover, as one who entered the Society during the interregnum between Fathers Arrupe and Kolvenbach, I never enjoyed the clarity of the long black line nor the conviction that I was part of a great revisioning of it. While I listen to stories of the sea change with gratitude that I have been the beneficiary of it, the narrative of discontinuity does not apply to me. Because I was one year old when the council closed in December 1965, I may be among the first men to have entered the Society without any recollection of a pre-Vatican II Catholicism, without any experience of a Latin Mass or the monumental excitement that I imagine attended the “turning of the altars so that the priest faced the people.”

Perhaps I also envy what Father Arrupe gave the generation before me; namely, a general whose very image inspired passion and a sense of vision. With most other people I acknowledge that Father Kolvenbach has been an immense blessing to the Society of Jesus at this time in history. His charism, however, was more that of a holy diplomat than an inspiring prophet. In the few times I heard him speak, I was singularly impressed by his intelligence, his command of issues, his tact, and his embodiment of *discreta caritas*. While his personal image does not have the strong appeal of Father Arrupe, his skill at navigating successfully through extremely complicated issues and events will have lasting impact. His own virtues, moreover, may also be what characterize the “Kolvenbach generation.” We “keepers of the flame” in a postmodern context have become accustomed to mourning the meta-narrative while giving our attention to the multiple and often competing micronarratives we inhabit with certain conflict and complication. Father Kolvenbach has provided us with an image of someone who did that exceedingly well. While hearing the voice of the martyrs and maintaining our fidelity to the Church and our mission, we do so within a more fragmentary world than previous generations. We are aware of how much we may pine for the meganarrative, either of the long black line or the prophetic urgency of Father Arrupe. Frankly, I suspect that

many of the ideological tensions felt within the Society today stem from a desire for a coherent vision. How could we not long for that? But perhaps the gift that the “Kolvenbach generation” may bring to the history of the Society is a loving sobriety that all grand plans are as ephemeral as the humans that embody them. Even so, there among the fragments we still find Christ who “plays in ten-thousand places, whose beauty is ever ancient and ever new.”

My Life as a Patristics Scholar

By professional training not only am I immersed in what’s ancient but my field of study has helped me learn to find Christ anew, even in contexts that may severely disappoint us. My education and ministry have been as traditional as any, and in many ways I may look like a Jesuit who lived and worked in the “long black line.” Because I entered the Society after just one year at Stanford, following the novitiate I was sent with a group of collegians to finish college (“juniorate”) at Santa Clara University, where I majored in Latin and Greek. After graduation I went to Oxford, where I spent four years “reading Greats” (as the British say) or completing a degree in *Litteræ Humaniores*, a course of study in classical literature and philosophy. For regency I spent three years teaching English and Latin at Jesuit High School in Sacramento before studying theology at Berkeley. Thereafter I went to Notre Dame to get a doctorate in theology, specializing in patristics and writing a dissertation on St. Augustine’s exegesis of the Psalms. Throughout my research, one of the things I came to love most about Augustine is the way he applies the lamentations of the Psalms to his experience of the Church. In fact, my first scholarly publications center on Augustine’s resistance to idealizations of any human community, even one that is divinely ordained.¹ We must be realistic about our own designs, I learned, and we must wait patiently in hope for a reality we cannot now see.

As depressing as my Augustinian cast on things may seem, my life feels full and rich. For the past six years I have been on the faculty at Santa Clara, with a joint appointment in the Religious Studies and Classics Departments. I teach a wide range of courses, from bread-and-butter classes on Christian history or classical literature in translation

¹ See, for example, “An Ecclesiology of Groaning: Augustine, the Psalms, and the Making of Church,” *Theological Studies* 66 (March, 2005): 23–48; “Religious Disillusionment and the Cross: An Augustinian Reflection,” *Heythrop Journal* 48 (July, 2007): 577–92.

for freshmen to more advanced seminars on Augustine's theology or on Greek and Latin authors (namely, Homer, Plato, Euripides, Horace, Vergil) and bigger upper-division courses intended to help students discern their vocation before leaving the college bubble. As a priest I spend a fair number of hours celebrating the Eucharist in the larger community, doing weddings of alumni, giving spiritual direction and counseling/mentoring undergraduates. More recently I have volunteered to help on governing boards of Jesuit institutions, and a few months ago I received tenure and promotion to associate professor. I am actively engaged with publishing and a serious research agenda. I live in a large, institutional university that is aging and deeply imperfect, though filled with generous men of good faith. I am blessed, perhaps more than most, by deep friendship with people who range in age, interest, and personal orientation. There is no little intimacy or personal warmth in my life.

The discipline of historical theology, however, has been a wonderful resource to me personally because it has trained me to live with crucial contradictions. Not long ago I read the autobiography of Walter Burkhardt, S.J., the Jesuit patristics scholar and preacher, entitled *Long Have I Loved You*. I had never met Father Burkhardt before he died in 2008, but I found myself resonating deeply with his love of the Church and the Society. I was especially moved by his description of the academic

field we share. Historical theology, he noted, is very different from Scholastic theology, because for patristic writers "theology was not a system; it was the drama of salvation."

Although as a body it lacks a

systematic coherence, "patristic theology was warm, a living, breathing, quickening thing."² Much like the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, he says, study in this field keeps sinking us into God's unknown. As Christians in the postmodern age increasingly find themselves unable to take for granted cultural privileges or intellectual securities, so did our brothers and sisters in the first few centuries. The more one studies

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²Walter J. Burkhardt, S.J., *Long Have I Loved You: A Theologian Reflects on His Church* (New York: Orbis, 2000), 180.

patristic theology and early Christianity, the more one recognizes that there was never a Golden Age of faith. I was first moved to study patristics, for instance, because Ignatius's meditation on the Incarnation during the Second Week of the Exercises moved me and gave me a taste for studying the development of Trinitarian theology as it came to be formulated in the fourth century. Yet one cannot study these debates and the social/historical context in which they took place without seeing very clearly the theological tensions, the ecclesiastical fissures, and the political machinations and range of strategies people employed to survive. Controversy has always been a part of the Christian tradition, and a benefit of being engaged in the field is being able to develop a certain tolerance and aptitude for holding together the gritty reality that ecclesial existence entails while maintaining faith that God is still with us.

And God is still with us.

Why I Stay

As uncertain as I may be at times, and as desperately as I would love to have a compelling and coherent vision of Jesuit life into the twenty-first century, God does provide visions through strange and scattered fragments. Around the time I turned thirty, I remember thinking that, if I were going to leave the Society, this would be a good time to do so. I had not yet been ordained, and although I had spent almost a dozen years in religious life, it would not be too late for me to "reinvent" myself and take a new path with a whole different future ahead of me. After all, my father and uncle had done the same.

At the time, I had finished my second year of regency and happened to be traveling with a group of Jesuits on a summer formation experiment in Asia. We had stopped for a couple of days in Hong Kong before going to the Philippines, where I would work for two months. I arranged to have lunch with Wendy, an old friend from college. Wendy and I lived in the same freshman residence hall, and she was the first person at Stanford whom I informed that I'd be leaving at the end of the year to enter the Jesuits. Not a Catholic or Christian, Wendy found what I was about to do very mysterious. Still, she was understanding and supportive, and we had kept in touch over the years. After graduating from Stanford she herself got an M.B.A. at the University of Chicago. She was a bright, beautiful woman and at the time had a very high-powered, high-paying job in marketing for a huge international firm with a major office in Hong Kong.

We met for lunch on the seventy-fifth floor of some hotel and started talking about life since college and our current transition into the life of a thirty-something adult. At one point she volunteered a sense of disappointment: "The number of honorable people I have met in my life the last few years I could count on one hand, and I wouldn't need all the fingers." Then she asked me whether I had encountered many honorable people since I had left college and whether, if I had it to do over again, I would have left Stanford to enter a religious order.

Suddenly I found myself overwhelmed with emotion, to the point of tears. Admittedly, that's a common liability for someone with an Irish name, but it was especially embarrassing to cry on the seventy-fifth floor of a hotel surrounded by a bunch of stressed-out business people. Have I met many honorable people? she asks.

I started thinking of the students I had the privilege to teach and to know, how beautiful I found their struggle to lead lives that are true and good. I started to think of all the people I had met since entering the Society, with all their joys and hopes, sorrows and doubts. I started to think of the Jesuits with whom I have spent my life—real, if imperfect men, who with great fidelity and with such diverse texture try to live in a complex world and a conflicted Church with very real faith that God continues to look upon the whole expanse of the earth, saying, "Let us work the redemption of the human race." In an instant I felt an immense cloud of witnesses thronging about me as the Dim Sum carts rattled by.

And that is why I stay: because everything he has already given, even the fragments, helps me, day by day, to trust his promises. I suspect I am more realistic than ever about the limitations and inadequacies of the Society, of individual Jesuits, and of myself.

Have I known many honorable people? I could hardly get the word out; "Yes," I said with profound gratitude. "Hosts of them." And they finally have changed my life. They finally inspire me, with all my sins, to be a better Jesuit, a better Christian, a better man. Among them I am called to work out my salvation, and I'm not sure what kind of man I would have been apart from what God has given to me in them. To encounter the quality of humanity I have seen in them, I would walk barefoot on broken glass. I have loved this life as a Jesuit, as a priest, as a professor at one of our universities.

In the years since that lunch, I have often returned to that experience in prayer. I realize now that Wendy's question had initiated a spontaneous but very real contemplation on attaining the love of God. At that moment and at key moments like them, it is easy to discern the one who has shared everything with us in creation and even more intensely in the gift of himself. With Ignatius "I ponder with affection how much God our Lord has done for me." I return to this realization whenever I feel the doubts implicit in Peter's query to Jesus: "What will there be for us, Lord, who have given up everything to follow you?" And I hear Jesus promise to give back a hundredfold and the inheritance of eternal life.

And that is why I stay: because everything he has already given, even the fragments, helps me, day by day, to trust his promises. I suspect I am more realistic than ever about the limitations and inadequacies of the Society, of individual Jesuits, and of myself. Nor do I think I am overly sanguine about the next phase of our common history: its potential humiliations, breakdowns, and even strategies of self-deception. But the goodness of what has been altogether given is easy to love because it is real. Moreover, the love of what is real helps me avoid the paralysis that comes with disappointment or anger that things frequently do not turn out as I think they should. At times I fantasize about what my life would have been if I had taken a different turn some years back or what it could yet be if I were to leave now. On the whole, it is just not helpful to dwell on the road not taken because it includes a temptation to compare the pains of my present reality unfavorably with my idealized projections. Better to love what is; and what is—though mixed—is indeed very good.

Postscript

This past summer I made the full Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as part of tertianship. In the Fourth Week I found myself with Mary Magdalene in the garden as recounted in John, chapter 20. She was weeping because her own dreams of her future had been shattered by the crucifixion of Jesus; and with the tomb empty, she could not even enjoy the comfort of being close to his body. Still, at the sound of her name, she knew the one she loved and in turn felt known. In that she was secure. In my contemplation, when I imagined the famous *noli me tangere*, Jesus turned from Mary to me. He addressed me by name: "And you, Mick," Jesus said. "Will you be able not to grasp at me?" Although at the time I wasn't exactly sure what he was asking me, in a later prayer I went back to him for some help.

So here is what he said: “You want to know, Mick, how everything is going to turn out. You want some assurance whether your dreams will be fulfilled, your visions satisfied. You want to be certain that justice will be done, and you want solid answers to your questions about me, yourself, the Church, the Society. You want to possess.

“But I am risen, Mick, and in that must be your hope. And you must trust that I will bring to completion the reality you cannot now see. You must trust that I will do that in ways you cannot comprehend. Will you be able not to grasp?”

The senior member of my current community, a ninety-three-year-old Jesuit who was with my father in theology, once told me that he remembers seeing my father

praying for hours, day after day, in the chapel of Alma College in Los Gatos. Later he understood that my father was in the throes of an agonizing discernment.

I have always wondered what my father’s prayer was like, but now I have a sense that I know how the Lord responded to his anguished questions about what lay in store for him.

“I am risen, Con, and in that must be your hope. And you must trust that I will bring to completion the reality you cannot now see. You must trust that I will do that in ways you cannot comprehend. Will you be able not to grasp?”

For my father that meant leaving . . . , leaving the security of the long black line in order to enter the complicated world of a wife and children who, emotionally speaking, were far messier and more complicated and unpredictable than he could have imagined. And yet that’s where God called him.

For me, well, I guess amazingly it may mean staying . . . , staying even with the possibility of full incorporation, through final vows, into a messy, complicated, unpredictable body that at this moment in history does not enjoy the privilege of great clarity regarding the future.

Today he gives me the grace to say yes to him and reminds me of the words of the poet:

Resolving our discomfort with this process is largely a matter of remaining committed to the proper caveats that qualify sweeping judgments. It may be difficult, but it is not impossible to keep generalizations in perspective.

We travelers, walking to the sun, can't see
Ahead, but looking back the very light
That blinded us shows us the way we came,
Along which blessings now appear, risen
As if from sightlessness to sight, and we,
By blessing brightly lit, keep going toward
That blessed light that yet to us is dark.

—Wendell Berry, *Given*³

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II. Thomas Massaro, S.J.

The Challenge of Generalities

After a decade of teaching social ethics in a theology center, I still find it a challenge to lead students through one particular classroom minefield: how to make responsible generalizations. Ethicists routinely rely on methodologies, abstractions, and versions of “ideal-types” analysis that involve a certain amount of exaggeration and stylization. Half-truths will invariably slip in along with the ethical insights that can only be generated by drawing generalizations from particulars. As I frequently advise my students, resolving our discomfort with this process is largely a matter of remaining committed to the proper caveats that qualify sweeping judgments. It may be difficult, but it is not impossible to keep generalizations in perspective.

Without this preface I would find it impossible to address what it means to belong to the “Kolvenbach generation” of members of the Society of Jesus.⁴ Generalizations about the experience and qualities of an entire generation of any demographic group are particularly fraught with half-truths and potential misunderstanding. When confronted with the now substantial body of literature that ventures to treat com-

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⁴Although I do not often explicitly mention the qualification below, I limit the scope of my remarks to Jesuits in the United States. I suspect there are parallels in the universal Society, but will not treat this topic.

mon patterns within entire age cohorts, many rightly bristle at the overreach associated with the project of fitting discrete facts and individual cases into preconceived molds. This instinct is sound, but does not disqualify the entire endeavor of generational analysis.

There is no typical member of the Society of Jesus, or of any age or entrance-era cohort within it. Yet, I still find it worthwhile to talk about the “Kolvenbach generation” as treated in these collected reflections, coming as they do from four members of this category of, by now, middle-aged Jesuits. To restate the disclaimer: positing commonalities of experience by no means discounts our individuality or denies irreducible differences. Each of us followed distinctive routes previous to entering the Society in the early 1980s, and equally distinctive paths in the decades since entrance, just as every vocation is highly personal and unique.

So how did I arrive at my Jesuit destination? The questions that gripped me from a young age were rarely about natural phenomena (“why is the sky blue?”) but mostly about social issues (“why is that man homeless?”). Perhaps my early sensitivity to the scourge of poverty owed something to where I spent my childhood. Growing up in a “cusp neighborhood” on the very border of New York City (where the borough of Queens blends into the far more affluent suburbs of Nassau County), I could bicycle or even walk very short distances to sharply contrasting streetscapes. Head east from my neighborhood to encounter the well-heeled and privileged, or look west to find struggling members of the lower working class. I tried to make sense of the close proximity of country clubs and tenements, of lily-white enclaves and minority ghettos. My immediate world of family, parochial school, and parish was solidly middle-class, but the scandal of the persistence of poverty in our affluent society led me to ask hard questions about the structures that shut so many people out of the security I enjoyed. What could be done to make progress against poverty in my city and beyond? Above all, I recall a precocious eagerness to find adult support to probe these hard questions that had somehow come alive for me.

It is no surprise, then, that my own attraction to the Society of Jesus as a high-school and college student was marked a bit more than is typical by the social-justice dimension of Jesuit apostolates. Dedication to “a faith that does justice” emerged as particularly important to me as I took the measure of the Jesuits I had the privilege to come to know as a student at Regis High School in Manhattan. While plenty of the adults

I encountered talked about commitment to poor and disadvantaged groups, the Jesuits seemed to be most actively engaged in effective institutional strategies for social change, always in service to the Church that I loved.

I especially admired three things about the Jesuit style of ministry that I glimpsed as a teen. First, it emphasized teamwork. I suspect that the heart of every adolescent is stirred by the promise of such warm camaraderie and common purpose as Jesuit communities and

But I think it fair to say that the actions and personal qualities of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach cast a particularly long shadow over the next quarter century of Jesuit history as well as upon the men who were formed during these years.

works achieve in their better moments. My subsequent experience of Jesuit apostolates has not, of course, been uniformly blissful, but by and large it does confirm the rhetoric of our documents when they claim that the corporate accomplishments of Jesuits are indeed enhanced through the thorough sharing of gifts and energies. Second, because so

much of the work of the Society is with youth in their particularly formative years, the “multiplier effect” associated with influencing the rising generations of citizens, and especially people of faith, held out the attractive promise of yielding a rich harvest of positive results. I recall hearing (or perhaps overhearing) some of the very first Jesuits I met discuss this point. I continue to be impressed by this factor, which rightly influences much of our corporate discernment on the province, assistancy, and universal levels.

Third, it seemed to my adolescent mind that the Jesuits had found an intuitive genius for overcoming the putative divide between theory and practice, between efforts that emphasize intellectual achievement and those that embody frontline involvements in social issues. A religious order that includes both renowned scholars and passionate social activists held great attraction for me, a young man who could not imagine a life occupying only one side of this seeming split. In fact, the only other religious order I ever considered joining was the Paulists, whose mix of apostolates on university campuses and in inner-city settings seemed to me similarly to bridge the academic-activist divide. Since my own talents and interests were very much in line with the intellectual apostolate, it was not hard to envision future work in the impressive Jesuit educational enterprise. Yet I knew that I would always keep one foot in the more practical sort of hands-on work for social-justice causes,

beyond teaching and research activities. Although I have held a full-time academic post for well over a decade now, I am delighted to have found outlets for my practical impulse through measured involvements in activism to support peace, labor-justice, and antipoverty campaigns.

Defining Events

Scholars of generational analysis stake their claims regarding cohort resemblances upon a simple and commonsense thesis. What forges the members of an age group into a significantly coherent cohort is some common experience that helps shape their identity in self-conscious ways. Examples from U.S. history abound, perhaps most famously the age group often referred to as the "Greatest Generation." This grouping, treated at length in recent works by broadcast journalist Tom Brokaw, consists of those who were raised during the Great Depression of the 1930s and went on to render service (in active military duty or on the home front) during World War II and/or the Korean War. Other researchers have drawn up elaborate schemas positing a succession of generations with identifiable attributes based on common experiences through the entire span of the centuries of American national life.⁵ For those entering the Society of Jesus in the 1980s, the most obvious common shaping experience was the Holy See's intervention in the ordinary governance of the Society once Pedro Arrupe fell ill. The election of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach on September 13, 1983, officially ended the formal intervention, but of course our entire years of formation were marked by concerns regarding relations with the Holy See.

Now, by no means am I a close watcher of Roman events. As a moral theologian, I have often resolved (uniformly in vain) in recent years to redouble my information-gathering efforts and to point my antennae in the direction of the Tiber. However poor a Vatican watcher I may be these days, I can declare with confidence that as a college student, even one considering entrance into the Society, I was particularly inattentive to any European developments that did not involve British rock bands or did not unfold in a sports stadium. Rome just seemed far too distant to matter much to a twenty-one-year-old at a resolutely

⁵*Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069*, by William Straus and Neil Howe (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), is perhaps the best example of a work that posits a succession of generations whose qualities fit fixed and recurring patterns throughout American history. While it can certainly be faulted for making excessive leaps in its argumentation, this work illustrates very well the concerns of this literary genre of generational analysis.

secular-minded American college. Thus it was with rather total surprise that I learned in the first week of my novitiate (late August 1983) that delegates of the Society were gathering in Rome to elect a successor to Pedro Arrupe (known to me mostly through his 1973 appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine) and to return the order to normal governance. I even recall asking my novice director rather ill-informed questions about general congregations: Does this happen every year? Do they rotate the venue of such meetings?

Whoever was elected by General Congregation 33 would surely have placed his imprint on the Society of Jesus in very significant ways. But I think it fair to say that the actions and personal qualities of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach cast a particularly long shadow over the next quarter century of Jesuit history as well as upon the men who were formed during these years. We must all, of course, be extremely grateful to our retired Father General for his careful, even meticulous stewardship over the worldwide Society during these years of healing, consolidation, and revitalization in many parts of the world. Possessing a keen mind for planning and administration, as well as a legendary encyclopedic memory for names and faces, Father Kolvenbach exercised impeccable care for the men he was elected to serve. Without question, he was a God-send for us all, and arguably the best imaginable fit for the leadership needs of the Society at the time, given all that had transpired in the years before he took office.

To Risk or Not?

Since the topic of this essay is the experience of American Jesuits of the Kolvenbach generation, there is no need to submit and evaluate evidence regarding the contrasting leadership styles of Kolvenbach and Arrupe. I gladly leave it to future historians either to validate or to debunk the conventional wisdom that offers the picture of a risk-taking Arrupe and a Kolvenbach who prized prudence and caution. What matters for present purposes is that these perceptions exist in the popular imagination, and that awareness of the contrast between boldness and risk aversion in Jesuit leadership has helped shape the experience of my generation in the Society of Jesus. In fact, I have often heard my Jesuit contemporaries measure provincials and local superiors on the same scale that runs from "someone given to caution" to "one who rolls the dice and shakes things up." Every walk of life, of course, has its leaders who stir up the pot and those who prefer to allow the pot to simmer down a bit. Ultimately, the salience of these categories for American Jesuits of my

age group has less to do with the particular details of what went on in the Roman Curia during specific decades than it does with how our perceptions of our leaders have shaped our collective experience.

This contrast between taking risks and playing it safe has been an important feature in the psychic landscape of younger (and possibly all) Jesuits in the years since the intervention. Fairly or not, the perceived leadership styles of Arrupe and Kolvenbach raised the profile of these types of choices. U.S. Jesuits in my generation frequently ask ourselves questions bound up with this divide in styles as well as substance: Are we as a Society and as members of it perhaps playing it too safe at times? What rationales should guide us as we negotiate the fine line that separates an excess of caution in the apostolate from bold but risky measures that promise great progress? Is the time right for new initiatives, or is the safer path of the better traveled road more advisable, at least for the time being? Such questions surfaced at two national venues where Jesuits of my generation met in recent years to deliberate on apostolic life: the June 16–18, 2006, meeting of young Jesuits serving the higher-education apostolate (held at Loyola Marymount University) and at the June 24–27, 2009, “Keepers of the Fire” gathering (held at Santa Clara University).

Harmonious relationships with the Church hierarchy are important to us, but we are also quite wary of doing violence to our convictions in the name of orthodoxy or uncritical obedience to authorities.

In my own reflections, such questions arise when I consider ecclesial realities in the post-Vatican II era. Has the universal Church, and the Society of Jesus in particular, responded in the most helpful ways to the new possibilities presented to us by the efforts of the Council Fathers? Here I find myself divided between the personal proclivities of our two past Fathers General. The “Arrupe in me” laments that we have perhaps not taken full advantage of the potential for creative updating within Church life and particularly on the Church-world boundary. This is the side of me given to regretting that either sheer timidity of character or a more calculated pursuit of a safer course of action has foreclosed promising possibilities for apostolic and spiritual renewal. Here my personal focus tends to be on matters of faith-based social-justice activism, but the concerns of other Jesuits would touch many other areas of interest. Simultaneously, the “Kolvenbach in me” is ea-

ger to avoid mistakes associated with outrunning the optimal pace of constructive change and exceeding the boundaries of prudence. To be a wise minister of the Gospel is to know the limits of innovation and to reap for the Lord the harvest prepared by dint of patience. I suspect that a comprehensive attitudinal survey of Kolvenbach-generation Jesuits in the United States would reveal not only an acute awareness of the trade-offs in play in this regard, but also a most sincere desire to achieve the optimal balance of values. We genuinely strive to be both loyal sons of the institutional church and ministers who adhere to the highest principles of conscience and personal integrity. Harmonious relationships with the Church hierarchy are important to us, but we are also quite wary of doing violence to our convictions in the name of orthodoxy or uncritical obedience to authorities. Neither extreme represents an inviting prospect for members of my Jesuit generation.

Personal Tensions

After offering the above generalizations (to employ that word yet again) about the Jesuits in my age cohort, I return to my own experience, where I can speak with greater authority. The bundle of tensions treated above has come up for me personally in two types of issues: those that involve the Church in a comprehensive way, and those that are primarily intra-Jesuit concerns. Treating these two in turn will bring me to the close of this essay. The first category includes episodes when the Society's advocacy on behalf of the poor and marginalized has run up against opposition from certain church circles. The 1984 "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'"⁶ from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and the November 2006 notification regarding two works of Jon Sobrino⁷ are just two instances when the magisterium has challenged the kind of work that Jesuits commonly do. Many other episodes could be cited, including CDF investigations in recent years into the work of several prominent Jesuit theologians who stand accused of pushing the envelope of theological innovation too far for comfort.

⁶Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" dated August 6, 1984, appearing in *Origins* 14, no. 13 (Sept. 13, 1984): 193–204.

⁷Insightful assessments of the work of Sobrino as well as the full text of the notification appear in *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008).

By no means is it clear *prima facie* how Jesuit theologians and their superiors should respond to such pressures for theological conformity. Each controversy constitutes a unique challenge and every episode calls for a distinctive course of action. Important values may be sacrificed through an excess of caution just as easily as through an excess of boldness. Mapping the appropriate path remains a matter of careful discernment. Those Jesuits with greater investment in the works in question (in the cases I have in mind, with liberation theology and innovative Jesuit apostolates among the poor of Latin America) are more likely than most to favor the continuation of efforts in these areas, even if it entails assuming greater risks, such as reprimands from ecclesiastical authorities. Some of the most dramatic memories of my own Jesuit life (visiting El Salvador just a year after the martyrdom of the U.C.A. Jesuits and participating in several protest events against the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia) dispose me to being more of “an Arrupe” than “a Kolvenbach” on matters related to Latin America. Every Jesuit will find the issues that matter most to him and will stake out his own position on the spectrum that runs from a stance of extreme caution to one of bold risk taking. My core claim here is that this spectrum is especially salient for my generation of Jesuits because of our common formative experience in the past quarter century or so in the Society.

A young Jesuit discerning a call to engage in the social apostolate, perhaps to work in ethnic ministries with immigrants, to do prison ministry, to set up or staff a Nativity-style or Christo Rey school in an inner-city neighborhood, for example, is taking on genuine apostolic risks.

Second, the intra-Society concerns I have in mind involve two items: our choice of ministries and our manner of living in community. Once again, the motif of risk taking is particularly prominent in what I have personally observed and, I suspect, in the experiences and reflections of many of my peers. These concluding reflections are not only about my peer group (born in the mid-1950s to mid-1960s) of “trailing-edge baby boomers,” but also about the cohort of younger Jesuits who claim membership in the demographic designation Generation X as well as in the “later Kolvenbach generation.” Since so much has been written elsewhere about selection of ministries on the province and as-

sistancy levels, I will address only the microlevel of the discernments of young Jesuits in choosing future ministries and living in community.

I have lived and taught for a dozen years at the theologate in Boston/Cambridge. My work in formation has afforded me many opportunities to discuss with younger Jesuits (including my own house mates) their hopes and prospects for future assignments. I draw here on these conversations with men who entered after 1990 or so to supplement what I know from my immediate peers (those who entered in the 1980s). There is no easy way to summarize the attitudes of these men over the span of recent years, but allow me to share one impression I have gained of the U.S. Jesuits who have passed through our theology center in the past dozen years. As they ponder how they will spend at least the initial years of their post-formation apostolic life, younger Jesuits today seem abundantly aware that before them lie two distinct paths. One is the well-trod route of traditional, mainstream Jesuit apostolates, such as secondary or higher education. Discerning with superiors a future on this path provides these men with the prospect of (after completing special studies, as necessary) a rather "settled" future. Once set on this trajectory, men nearing the end of formation can count on the psychic comfort of occupying a well-defined role in a Jesuit-sponsored institution, and probably the additional comfort of residing in one of the larger Jesuit communities that will allow the man to follow familiar patterns of daily life.

On the other hand, charting a future in less traditional, even "fringy" Jesuit ministries often means forfeiting whatever certainties and settled routines accompany the standard works. A young Jesuit discerning a call to engage in the social apostolate, perhaps to work in ethnic ministries with immigrants, to do prison ministry, to set up or staff a Nativity-style or Christo Rey school in an inner-city neighborhood, for example, is taking on genuine apostolic risks. His work may be challenged by critics as inappropriate for priests and brothers. It may be terminated by budget cuts or even program cancellation. The work may prove unsustainable because of personal issues, such as burnout, or to systemic factors, such as demographic shifts or new public policies. A young Jesuit starting such ministries will have to prepare himself to explain his work even to sympathetic audiences, and will frequently need to defend his work to skeptical observers, especially if it is not directly sponsored by a Jesuit province or does not operate under church auspices. Because he is less likely to live in a large institutional community, such a Jesuit is unlikely to have at his disposal as many resources and

services as his peers who settle into works more traditionally performed by American Jesuits.

I offer this picture of the contrasting trajectories, not to demonize or valorize any members or sectors of the Society, but rather to describe what I have observed and to link it to the pervasive theme of risk and safety as developed above. The Jesuits I have come to know as they are nearing the end of formation are fully cognizant of these patterns of Jesuit life and readily articulate the existence of the two paths as sketched above. To their credit, these scholastics and young priests and brothers show every evidence of choosing ministries based on genuine spiritual discernment and a selfless desire for service in the most effective ways. I cannot recall a single young Jesuit I have known who was dominated by timidity, laziness, or excessive self-regard in facing decisions about apostolic opportunities. Maybe I suffer from selective memory, but I have been impressed and edified by the way these men consistently base their discernment on apostolic criteria, with laudable freedom from disordered attachments and commendable indifference to their own comfort. If anything, the post-1990 entrants I have taught and lived with appear more willing to take on sacrifice and inconvenience than my own peer group in the first half of the Kolvenbach generation. Still, my main observation is that younger Jesuits fully recognize the existence of the two distinct paths before us. We are easily able to distinguish the trajectory of the risky variety of ministry from the safer, more comfortable, and more traditional Jesuit works.

I am eager to encourage my students and housemates to pursue those apostolates that include less prestige, continuity, and security.

To my eyes, the least interesting part of the contrast I am describing is the question of lifestyle and Jesuit poverty. I mention it only reluctantly. I think I can speak for the vast majority of my generation in the Society when I say that we have no desire to witness another round in the stale debate over such issues as how much money various types of communities spend on food or autos or furnishings. Rather than rehearse or rejoin the pitched battles of the past on issues of lifestyle, it would be more constructive to notice the ways that we have started to outgrow the old divisions. At least in my home province of New England, recent developments have made the matter considerably more complex, as many university communities now host men working in a

variety of apostolates in the same geographic area. The downsizing of most communities, the establishment of satellite communities off main campuses, frequent turnover of Jesuit assignments and community placements—all these factors make the former divisions less monolithic and render the old debates over lifestyle somewhat moot.

Even if issues of material lifestyle are of diminishing importance in marking Jesuits working in various sectors, the interplay of risk and safety in the apostolic choices of Jesuits remains. For my part, I find myself rejoicing whenever I discover in a younger Jesuit enthusiasm for one of these riskier and nontraditional ministries. I am eager to encourage my students and housemates to pursue those apostolates that include less prestige, continuity, and security. Their interest in participating in more marginalized ministries allays my fears that the work of the Society of Jesus in the United States is losing the healthy diversity I value. I would not want to see further diminishment in the variety of our ministries and the range of social and geographical locations we occupy, even if maintaining this variety entails taking some risks on the individual or corporate level.

Perhaps including a note of irony is an appropriate way to end this essay, replete as it is with generalizations and expressions of my support for Jesuits taking apostolic risks. Those who know me best sometimes playfully chide me for practicing an excess of risk aversion. Almost by instinct, I avoid dangerous situations (rickety balconies, airline itineraries with short connection times, skiing in all its forms) that introduce risk into my daily life. There is probably more “Kolvenbach in me” than I care to admit. But I still take every opportunity to encourage Jesuits to pursue apostolic paths that reflect the rather bold spirituality of an Ignatius of Loyola or a Pedro Arrupe. Whatever our personal proclivities and character traits, the merits of choosing between risky and safer courses of action remain live questions for my cohort in the Kolvenbach generation as well as the cohort behind us. And I am most eager to see how these concerns play out for members of the Adolfo Nicolás generation as well.

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III. Thomas Worcester, S.J.

Born in 1955, I am the oldest of the four authors of these essays. I grew up in Burlington, Vermont, a university town characterized by progressive politics, fine restaurants, gorgeous sunsets on Lake Champlain, an international flavor strengthened by the proximity of Montreal, and an intellectual vibrancy sustained in no small measure by a large Jewish community. My ancestors were French-Canadian Catholic on my mother's side and English Protestant on my father's side, a not uncommon mix for northern New England. In Burlington the public schools were excellent, and the Catholic schools mediocre, the opposite of what is usually said of schools in larger cities. I have always been grateful for growing up in Burlington's public schools. Though I was baptized in one of the two French parishes in Burlington—indeed, in the oldest French “national” parish in New England—the parish I grew up in was ethnically mixed, and in some ways ahead of its time with a church built in 1941 in the form of a Greek cross with the altar in the middle.⁸

I went from public schools to the Ivy League, and found that I was well prepared. A French major at Columbia University, I spent my undergraduate years not only in New York, but in Paris for a summer and a semester, and in Rome for a semester as well. Attending Elizabeth Seton's canonization on September 14, 1975, in St. Peter's Square, was a highlight of my Roman experience, in an era when canonizations and beatifications were not yet nearly as common as they became under John Paul II. It was between the terms in Rome and Paris, while traveling by train with an Interail pass, that I began to read the works of Thomas Merton, and to think of a possible vocation to religious life.⁹ This was well before the advent of cheap air fares within Europe; long train rides from London to Edinburgh, Munich to Barcelona, or Madrid to Paris, provided plenty of time for serious reading. A year after graduating from Columbia, in August of 1978, I was once again traveling in Europe with a rail pass, and I was in St. Peter's Square when John Paul I was announced as the new pope and made his first appearance on the basilica's balcony. After this exhilarating experience, I remember walk-

⁸For a history of the diocese of Burlington, see *An Inland See: A Brief History of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington*, by Howard Coffin (Burlington: Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, 2001).

⁹The first work of Merton I read was his *Seeds of Contemplation* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke Books, 1972).

ing across Rome to the *pensione* where I was staying, near Santa Maria Maggiore. As I walked I said to myself, “You know you want to be a priest. You know it. Why don’t you do something about it? Why are you going to a Protestant—no, vaguely Unitarian—divinity school?”

Three weeks later I began a Master of Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School, but I always seemed to be thinking about more than academics, and to desire monastic life and priesthood. In 1981 I was accepted for entrance to St. Anselm’s, a Benedictine abbey in Washington, D.C., but I decided against entering because I did not want to be on retreat all the time. Still, even today, I admire monks and I value opportunities to make even brief visits to monasteries; I am grateful for the contemplative spaces they provide. I still feel some residual attraction to the path not taken. But while at Harvard, I had taken some courses with Brian Daley and John O’Malley, both new to the Weston faculty at that time. When I said no to the Benedictines, I was also thinking that perhaps the Jesuits were best for me.

I began a doctorate in theology at Marquette University in 1981, right around the time Pedro Arrupe fell ill and Pope John Paul II intervened in the Society’s governance. Being for the first time in my life enrolled in a Catholic educational institution, and indeed a Jesuit one, I heard a lot about Father Arrupe and about what was happening to the Jesuits. None of it dissuaded me; in fact, the more I knew about the Society,

I was proud to be a part of a religious order that was courageous to the point of martyrdom, in defending the poor, the exploited, and the suffering.

the more I was interested in it. I was also impressed by what I learned about Jesuits during my two years at Marquette, 1981–83. During this period I also read several press reports about the papal intervention in Jesuit governance. I liked what I heard and saw of

men who were men of the Church and precisely as such were men who sought and worked for justice and truth and did not presume merely to hand these things on. The year 1981 was also the year Ronald Reagan took office, and I was attracted to the Society in part because of its witness to Gospel values over and against the selfish, greed-driven, individualistic imperatives that were then in political ascendancy. In Milwaukee, in the summer of 1982, I made for the first time an eight-day version of the Spiritual Exercises, and it confirmed my desire to become a Jesuit.

My reading in those years included *Ours*, an entertaining book by F. E. Peters, on his experience as a very young Jesuit in the New York Province in the 1940s and 1950s and his reasons for leaving the order.¹⁰ Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, his narrative did not at all turn me away from the Society. On the contrary, it helped me to claim my own story, my own voice, and at the age of twenty-seven to make my own decision to seek acceptance to the Jesuit novitiate. Accepted by the then Vice Provincial for Formation, William Barry, I entered the novitiate at 300 Newbury Street, in Boston's rather fashionable Back Bay, on August 23, 1983. Less than a month later, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach was elected superior general, and this event elicited considerable excitement from us novices as we began our Jesuit lives, and as the whole Society began a new era of Jesuit life.

Growing Up Jesuit

I have never regretted entering the Society, though every day has not been a sunny one. Sometimes I have felt rather out of place in a "New England" Province in fact dominated by Boston, its Catholic culture, and its strengths, weaknesses, quirks, and particularities. But from the first I liked the Jesuit novitiate, and how we lived in community, and worked, and prayed, in relative poverty and simplicity—relative, that is, to many of our upwardly mobile neighbors on Newbury Street. In a period when some U.S. Catholics began to identify Catholicism principally with a narrow anti-abortion rhetoric, I was pleased to find most Jesuits supportive of a much broader pro-life ethic that included opposition to the death penalty and to the nuclear-arms race, which was accelerating in the 1980s. And I soon found that the Society of Jesus took Catholic social teaching very seriously and thus made justice for the poor central to its mission.

The long retreat in the first year of novitiate, at Gloucester, Massachusetts, was mostly consoling and confirming, even though it took place during a cold, snowy January. At that time Eastern Point Retreat House had a primitive heating system, so most of the warmth experienced on retreat was more spiritual than material. In retrospect, I would say that the radical horizontality of "companionship with Jesus" came

¹⁰F. E. Peters, *Ours: The Making and Unmaking of a Jesuit* (New York: Mare, 1981, reprinted New York: Penguin, 1982). There are, of course, many other first-person accounts of why someone left the priesthood, the seminary, or the religious life; another from the early 1980s is *Seminary: A Search*, by Paul Hendrickson (New York: Summit, 1983).

into much sharper focus for me than it had previously. Other things happened during our thirty-day retreat at Gloucester. For example, Bernard Law was announced as the next archbishop of Boston, and I recall reading with much interest the long and very sympathetic articles on him in the *Boston Globe* at that time, a time that now really does seem like another century, indeed, another millennium.

As the novitiate progressed and I got to know the New England Province, I was happy to find that the province had always had an exceptionally strong tradition of commitment to higher education. After a six-month novitiate experiment at Holy Cross, and after vows in 1985, I was sent to Paris for philosophy, and I then returned to do regency at Holy Cross. Superiors seemed glad to encourage me in an academic direction that was, in any case, my natural inclination. Grace and obedience built on nature's foundations.

In the Society, I did only two years of theology, in preparation for ordination; I was given credit for my previous theological studies at Harvard and at Marquette. During my time as an S.T.L. student at Weston, news came in November 1989 of the assassinations in El Salvador. This painful event confirmed my sense of belonging to and gratitude for the Society; I was proud to be a part of a religious order that was courageous to the point of martyrdom, in defending the poor, the exploited, and

But some U.S. Jesuits imagine that full-time administration is the only place for the best and brightest to be; I tend to disagree.

the suffering. I was ordained a deacon in spring 1990, and I then went to California for a nine-month internship in spiritual direction and retreat work at Mercy Center, Burlingame. During that time, I commuted from St. Ignatius Prep in San

Francisco. Mercy Center, as one might guess, is sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, and it is a place where feminine experiences of God and of spirituality are given much attention. Of seven interns in 1990–1991, we were three men and four women; perhaps three-fourths of the center's staff were women, as were at least four-fifths of the people who came there for spiritual direction or retreats. Men and male experience were very much in the minority, and that "minority" experience I found very valuable for understanding how marginal many women, and some men as well, feel in relation to the Catholic Church.

My year at Burlingame was also valuable for genuine collaboration with women in ministry. Jesuits talk a lot about such collaboration; and such talk is important, especially when it reaches the level of our official documents, as at GC 34.¹¹ But at Burlingame it was more than just talk. Mercy Center drew on Ignatian spirituality as it emphasized the presence of God in creation and in nature; God was imagined as incarnational, and as present in the physical reality that is around us and that is us. This was not hard to imagine or experience when driving along Route 1 as the sun set over the Pacific, or when visiting Mount Tamalpais and the Marin headlands. The beauty of nature abounded, and God was surely present as the moon shimmered on San Francisco Bay, or as the sun broke through the fog caressing the Golden Gate Bridge. I loved working as a spiritual director, especially in directing several people on nineteenth-annotation retreats. That I have done very little of this kind of work since completing the Burlingame program is a source of some sadness. It is another path that might have been taken, but was not.

After priestly ordination, on a beautiful summer day in June 1991 at the College of the Holy Cross, I spent the summer working at St. Ignatius Church in Chestnut Hill, Mass. It remains my sole experience of anything like full-time work in a parish. It was already a church with significant memories: first vows, and then later ordination to the diaconate. To these were added my first experiences of hearing confessions, of baptizing, and of presiding at weddings.

The Life of Scholarship

I then went to Cambridge University to do a Ph.D. in European history. I found the graduate students at Cambridge to be amazingly international, even more so than at Columbia or Harvard: the whole world studies at Cambridge and the world is a very interesting place. The first Worcester to come to America, in 1639, was a Puritan clergyman—the Reverend William Worcester—and he had studied at Cambridge.¹² Though he would perhaps not have approved of my Jesuit vocation, I felt quite at home at Cambridge University. With a dissertation

¹¹See GC 34, d. 14.

¹²On Worcesters in New England, see *Life's Adventure: The Story of a Varied Career*, by Elwood Worcester (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), especially pp. 8–9. Elwood, an Episcopalian, was for many years pastor of Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street, Boston.

on the preaching of Jean-Pierre Camus, an early-seventeenth-century bishop and disciple of Francis de Sales, I also spent quite a lot of time in France doing research; I completed my work in just three years, and received the degree in 1994.

That year I accepted a tenure-track position in the History Department at Holy Cross. Because of my own sense of a vocation to scholarly work, and no doubt also because of my training at Cambridge, I have often put scholarly work first in use of time these past fifteen years,

Father Kolvenbach identified "witness of a community life of friends in the Lord" as one of the things that could attract vocations to the Society of Jesus.

with my teaching enriched by my scholarship and vice versa. I have never seen my work as scholar and teacher to be a stepping stone to administrative or other work. Not that I could not be an administrator, and a good one. As editor

or co-editor of several collections of essays, as a member of editorial boards for journals, and especially as a co-curator of two major art exhibitions, I have in fact dealt with a lot of administrative tasks, including planning, budgeting, publicity, recruitment of personnel.

But some U.S. Jesuits imagine that full-time administration is the only place for the best and brightest to be; I tend to disagree. I believe that one of the serious problems in the U.S. Assistancy is confusion of "leadership" with administration, as if they were synonymous. I am convinced that the quality and creativity of one's work makes one a leader; the position or office one holds does not. There is no such thing as an *ex officio* leader. Leadership emerges in part from a God-given charism and in part from very hard work. Recent efforts by the Jesuit Conference to train and recruit Jesuit "leaders" may not eliminate the confusion, as these efforts seem not to adequately distinguish leadership and governance, though they do distinguish leadership of individuals and leadership of organizations.¹³ Chris Lowney's book *Heroic Leadership* has at least the advantage of pointing out that many of the most significant Jesuit leaders, such as Matteo Ricci and Christopher

¹³See Jesuit Conference, "Strategic Implementation II: Leadership and Governance," dated July 3, 2008; and the letter of the Jesuit Conference on leadership, dated March 12, 2009.

Clavius, were not principally administrators.¹⁴ Perhaps we can glean something from Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B. In his memoirs, he recalls how he “learned firsthand that exercising leadership was not the same as having power, and that leadership cannot be given to one; it must be earned.”¹⁵

After receiving tenure at Holy Cross, I began to think about going to tertianship. My choice for tertianship was French Canada, in 2001–2. In Montreal we were seven tertians from as many countries (Belgium, Canada, Cameroun, Chad, Korea, Switzerland, USA); it was a wonderful experience of the international Society in its diversity and unity. My final vows followed in 2003. But those years were also the years of incessant press reports about clergy sexual abuse of minors. I have often been told that I tend to be a bit pessimistic about human nature and its sinfulness; if anything, I had perhaps been too optimistic. The Catholic Church, like human nature itself, is very fragile and very prone to sin. I remain appalled by the slowness of the American church to deal effectively with the abuse problem.

There are surely reasons to be despondent about the future. But there may also be abundant reasons for hope. What are the latter reasons? I shall mention four.

First, for Jesuits, things have been far worse in the past. I am a historian of religious culture in early-modern Europe, and this focus has led me to considerable study of the history of the “Old” Society. By the eighteenth century, the Society was relentlessly assailed, mocked, slandered, from right and left, by church and state, and to a degree that makes almost any problem today look like a pleasant picnic in the park. To Jesuits who have not yet read it, I highly recommend an account of the suppression and what led up to it, written by Giulio Cesare Cordara, S.J. (1704–85).¹⁶

Second, though the total number of Jesuits is declining slowly, the number of people outside the Society interested in Jesuit history is expanding rapidly. Our history has become a hot topic among scholars

¹⁴Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005), 63.

¹⁵Rembert G. Weakland, *A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church: Memoirs of a Catholic Archbishop* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 100.

¹⁶Giulio Cesare Cordara, *On the Suppression of the Society of Jesus: A Contemporary Account*, trans. John P. Murphy (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999).

of Renaissance Europe, specialists on the Reformation era, art historians and others interested in early-modern culture, and anyone interested in the rapid growth in global consciousness and contact, ca. 1500 to the present. The top university presses seem to have an unquenchable thirst for publishing more and more books on the Society.¹⁷ In 2004 Cambridge University Press asked me to be the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, a book that was published in 2008;¹⁸ most recently, CUP has asked me to take on a larger project on Jesuit history.

Third, global from its origins, the Society in recent decades has become more global than ever. Modern transportation and technology have made this far easier than in the past; the international and itinerant order Ignatius envisioned has at last become fully doable. Though Rome remains the center of our governance, we are otherwise scattered across the continents, and with a growing sense of equality and interdependence among assistancies, provinces, persons, and cultures.

Fourth, Father Kolvenbach identified “witness of a community life of friends in the Lord” as one of the things that could attract vocations to the Society of Jesus.¹⁹ I am not sure how well we offer such a witness in the Jesuit community at the College of the Holy Cross, but some ten Holy Cross alumni have entered Jesuit novitiates in recent years. I have found it very consoling to attend the vow Masses of several of these men. Companionship with Jesus is the heart of Jesuit life: both a personal, individual relationship with Jesus, and a fraternal relationship with each other that is grounded in our common companionship with Jesus. It is these bonds that make possible mutual support, even if we disagree, at times, about many things.

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¹⁷See, e.g., Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Yasmin Annabel Haskell, *Loyola's Bees: Ideology and Industry in Jesuit Didactic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Liam Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1570–1724* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸Thomas Worcester, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). As in the case of other books in the Cambridge Companions series, there are hardcover, paperback, and electronic versions.

¹⁹Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *Men of God: Men for Others*, trans. Alan Neame (New York: Alba House, 1990), 23.

IV. Michael A. Zampelli, S.J.

The Shape of Our Vocation

Were I not a member of the Jesuit Seminar, I would likely not be contributing to this piece on “the Kolvenbach generation.” I would have been sought out neither for my potent insights into the generational approach to history nor for my particularly astute observation of trends in U.S. Jesuit life. Truth be told, though I feel a deep connectedness to Jesuits “around my time,” I do not consider myself especially typical or representative of men whose lives in the Society began after the generalate of Father Arrupe. I am writing, as any student in any seminar would, to learn more about the subject by presenting independent research for consideration by the participants. In this case, the subject is the shape of our Jesuit vocations, the research is the data of experience, and the participants are not only those of us who are writing but also those of us who are reading this essay. And, as the success of a seminar is gauged less by the successful performance of one or another participant and more by the quality of the discourse, this issue of *STUDIES* will have served its purpose (to my mind, at least) if, in honest and lively conversation, we grow in our understanding of one another and of the lives we place at the service of the Church and the world.

I was born into a proud, immigrant Catholic world at the height of the Cold War, though at the time I did not feel besieged by threatening forces, whether religious, political, or cultural. Pious and devout (meaning that we kissed our share of relics and religious articles), my family wore its Catholicism with as much ease as our ethnic heritage (that is to say, “*southern Italian*”) or nationality (pointedly “*American*,” that is). Though we were not fanatical, we were certainly observant in faith—allowing the rhythms of our weeks and years to be determined by the Church’s holy days and the feasts of saints (like the martyred brothers Alfio, Filadelfo, and Cirino, venerated with great pomp and ceremony by the Sicilian community in Lawrence, Mass.). Since images of St. Anthony, Mother Cabrini, St. Rita, St. Dymphna, et. al. shared shelf space with pictures of my aunts, uncles, and cousins, I presumed we were all blood relatives. I remember living in a fundamentally benevolent religious universe in which the heavenly court was more an extension of my extended family than it was a homogeneous tribunal of perfect people sitting in judgment of our lives. An example of this attitude in action might be helpful: My mother was a daily communicant, conve-

nient for her because the factory where she and her sisters worked for over forty years sat directly across from our parish church. But because Sunday mornings were taken up with preparations for Sunday dinner, my father (in the era before the Saturday evening vigil Mass was “allowed”) would see to our getting to Mass while my mother, grandmother, and aunts cooked. There was never any sense that the Holy Family was holding the women for downs; somehow, we all knew that they understood the obligations and lifestyle of our earthly family. I begin here because, for the most part, I have always reckoned my Catholicism as integral to my identity as any other foundational element—not something easily put on or off, but simply a given. There was an expansiveness to our practice of the faith, an expansiveness that included a clear distinction (made in practice if not in theory) between our relationships with God and with the Church’s all-too-human ministers.

Most important for all the observations that follow, however, is my having come of age squarely in the post-Vatican II Church. Though I vaguely remember the liturgical transitions, they were present to me only as a kind of “snow” characteristic of the analog television era; once the antennas were repositioned, the fuzziness disappeared and I saw clearly a liturgy and Church that would form me in faith. By the time of my First Holy Communion in 1967—an event to which we young people wore robes that looked like chasubles²⁰—Holy Rosary Church in Lawrence, Mass., was singing “Sons of God” (in addition, of course, to the Italian tunes that remained part of the congregation’s repertory).

Since I attended public schools, my regular religious instruction came from CCD classes taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Every Wednesday throughout the school year, we Catholics (and there were many of us) would be dismissed from class a half hour early so that we could form a patrol and walk down to the parochial schools for religious education. Of course, we learned about the sacraments, the Church, Catholic practice; most important to me during those years, however, was my encounter with a God of love—a Father whose embrace was bigger than I could imagine, a Son who was always in the company of those most in need, and a Spirit who was still setting the world on fire. I was never afraid of the sisters or of the Augustinian

²⁰The practice was discontinued because there was some concern that the faithful would be “confused” by seeing the youngsters dressed as priests. For some reason, the age of the communicants wasn’t sufficient to underscore the “difference in kind” between the priesthood of the faithful and the ordained priesthood.

priests (though I didn't particularly want to be like them); I have no tales of ill-treatment or disrespect. Slowly but surely, my religious education was fostering in me a love of God and a deep desire to be connected to the Church and its ways of marking the human journey through time and space.

This context remains important because it grounds the fundamental orientation with which I would eventually approach religious life and priesthood (that is, *aggiornamento* as a constant way of living religious identity and not a discrete historical moment). Also, in naming this context I am hoping to provide a corrective, albeit small, to recreation-room analyses that liken this transitional era in Church history to the last days of Pompeii. My religious instruction, *pace* my more rigorist brothers, was not all about making collages (though I am still proud of the ones that I *did* make), and neither did my immersion in "God as Love" do permanent damage to my moral sensibilities (except that I *do* find it difficult to withhold understanding from those who most require it).

My approach to the Society was conditioned by my undergraduate years at Georgetown University, for it was there, beginning in 1978, that I met *my* "first Jesuits." Though I had gone to a Catho-

lic high school run by the Marist Brothers, and though I had a very positive experience interacting with those mostly young men in and outside the classroom, I never seriously considered joining their number. The question of a religious vocation surfaced only gradually during my time at Georgetown. Until then, I had known about Jesuits primarily through a course in Western Civilization, the activism of Fr. Dan Berrigan, S.J., and the political career of Fr. Robert Drinan, S.J. From almost my very first moment at "swift Potomac's lovely daughter," the several Jesuits I knew began dismantling the categories that, until that time at least, had described my religious experience, my understanding of the Church and religious life, my interaction with the world. From the first, I was intrigued how these rare birds that lived in a variety of "worlds" (theater, music, theology, literature, politics, and so forth) could inhabit

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the same cage without devouring one another. Eventually, I was able to name my attraction to what seemed to be a deeply engaged kind of living that spoke, more eloquently than anyone had up until that point, of God-with-us. I experienced Jesuit relations with the world in the manner of Terence: "Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto"; "I am a human being; I consider nothing human strange or irrelevant to me."²¹ At Trinity Theater or the Washington Opera, in trips to Nicaragua or at conferences on Teilhard and the Unity of Knowledge, Jesuits spanned the distance between church and world in ways that commanded my attention.

I "came to myself" during my undergraduate years. These days we talk ourselves blue in the face about the "Jesuit advantage" in education; my experience at Georgetown, though seemingly less systematic than what we might find today, demonstrated this advantage in providing me with an integral education. I was changing personally, so-

I wondered if I was too quickly being domesticated, losing the desire to go beyond familiar territories toward new frontiers. .

cially, religiously, intellectually, creatively; and all of the changes were bound up with one another. Fortunately for me, there were usually Jesuits lurking around somewhere to help pick up and/or rearrange the pieces of my consistently

shattering life. Though I had never thought of myself entering religion, let alone becoming a priest, I entered the Society upon my graduation in 1982 because I wanted to participate in what I perceived as the Church's very exciting attempts to become more expansive, particularly within the Jesuit *modus* of "finding God in all things."

This desire, however, has for the last twenty-seven years existed alongside the emerging need in religious circles to redefine boundaries. Despite the dour cover photo and sobering article appearing in a February 1982 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* on the state of the Society in the wake of Pope John Paul II's intervention into its ordinary governance,²² I felt myself to be at the narrower end of the "less-than" sign (" $<$ "), looking at a future of increasing possibilities regarding the Church's engagement with contemporary culture. In reality, however, I was standing at the wider end of the "greater-than" sign (" $>$ "),

²¹Terence, *Self-Tormentor*, when Chremes is being told to mind his own business.

²²Paul Hoffman, "The Jesuits," *New York Times Magazine*, February 14, 1982.

looking at a future of consolidation in a range of areas, from politics to Church order to gender to sexuality.²³ Likely, I should have known that my yen for expanding boundaries was going to bump up against someone else's for reinscribing them when I read that "the immediate task of the Vatican is to re-establish its authority over the Society of Jesus by tightening control over its members."²⁴ That I either did not notice this state of affairs (or chose to ignore it) reveals the extent to which I was taken up with my own enthusiasm for traveling the Jesuit way. Likely, my passing over this potential conflict also indicates the general unpredictability and/or illogic of a "calling" (less like brokering a business deal and more like falling in love). In short, my *felt* understanding of what it means to be part of the Kolvenbach generation is "tension," a thoroughgoing tension that affects my life as a human being, a Jesuit, a priest, a theater person, an academic. When my better angels take hold of me, I can see how the tension has been creative and life-giving. When these angels are on holiday, the tension is more painful.

Self-Discovery through Ministry

By way of illustrating this vocational chiaroscuro, I would like to reflect on two categories of experience that help me understand myself as a member of the Kolvenbach generation—that is, a generation simultaneously aware of tension, the need for bridge building, and the requirements of diplomacy. The first centers on a field-education placement that I undertook during my theology studies at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. In 1990, thanks to the example set by a close Jesuit friend, I enrolled along with another Jesuit scholastic in an AIDS Ministry Training program sponsored by Sojourn, the Episcopal Chaplaincy at San Francisco General Hospital. While the Catholic Chaplaincy in the hospital was taken up, for the most part, with sacramental ministry, the Episcopal Chaplaincy employed a clinical-pastoral education model to train an international group of interns in accompanying those

²³ For example, there seems to be a world of difference between the climate that produced the *The Challenge of Peace* in 1983 and *Economic Justice for All* in 1986 and the climate prevailing at the time of the 2008 national elections. Also, in addition to my work as a faculty member at Santa Clara University, I am heavily involved with the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community at the university, in local dioceses, and through a national Catholic networking organization. In these involvements, I have experienced among not a few ministers and ministries a creeping fear of censure simply for being part of this work.

²⁴ Hoffman, *The Jesuits*.

living with HIV/AIDS.²⁵ In addition to visiting patients in the by-then-famous hospital Unit 5A, we spent time with patients in the day clinic. The visiting was complemented by a rigorous schedule of meetings that immersed us in the realities of HIV/AIDS—physical, social, medical, emotional, spiritual, economic.

Sojourn's ministry was grounded in "invitational presence." The chaplains' sole duty was to be present to the patients inviting them, simply by virtue of our physical presence, to share themselves in whatever way they most needed. We were never to "do" things "for" the patients. At the time, I remember being stymied by the approach. "What could be the problem," I thought, "with getting the patient some water or helping him organize for his return home?" I soon discovered, however, that even the most insignificant task served as a way for me—as a chaplain—

For hundreds of years in the West, the theater has proven to be—not unlike religious life—a safe haven for a wide range of "types."

to distance myself from the uncomfortable and disturbing realities sitting before me. Getting a glass of water became a way for me to slip out from under the penetrating stare of a person who, because he was experiencing his third opportunistic

infection, sensed that his death was closer than he ever thought it would be. Shuffling through the papers left by the social worker made *me* feel better because I did not have to engage the vexing question of why the Church's presence to this person became understanding and benevolent only when his life seemed to be slipping away. "Invitational presence" helped me cultivate the discipline of "being" in complex situations without trying to resolve them with easy answers or superfluous activities. "Invitational presence" invited me to be present, not only to my patients but to myself, and to recognize my own tendency to swerve away from naming difficult realities.

As with all such programs, the journey toward encountering the one in need involved a journey inward. My categories for understanding sexuality, gender, God, and the work of the Church were dismantled by the self-implicating nature of the training. As most of the patients were gay men (of varying economic classes) or poor women of color,

²⁵It is worth noting that three of the four participants in the program were Catholic religious, reflecting the Church's increasing pastoral presence so greatly needed in this area.

I became hyperaware of the ways sexuality, gender, race, and class—even independent of HIV/AIDS—separated people from institutional religion. The more I immersed myself in this experience, the more I recognized myself in it and the more I realized that I could never deny the emerging truths revealed by this growing solidarity with the patients. Let me be clear here: San Francisco General did *not* give me permission to engage my personal issues (like sexuality); my own college experience and Jesuit formation had provided ample opportunity for me to reflect honestly on my way of being in the world. Rather, the Sojourn chaplaincy raised the stakes in the project of living an integrated life. In the same ways that my family of origin provided the raw materials from which I would come to understand faith, the patients at San Francisco General helped form my interior life in the years proximate to my ordination, challenging me to live in fidelity to the truths discovered when one meditates on the depth of human experience.

Obviously, this insight continues to create tension in my Jesuit life because I feel claimed by realities that, on some levels at least, seem incompatible with one another (for example, the institutional church and the world of sexual/gender difference). Because of my history, however, I do not consider the tension something that needs to be resolved by eliminating one or another of its constitutive terms. This would seem akin to my mother's canceling Sunday dinner or my simply sidestepping the challenging AIDS chaplaincy. In fact, I wonder whether a mark of the Kolvenbach generation is a persistent attraction to those places where tensions surface, where there is a revealed need for living bridges between religion and continually evolving varieties of human experience.

Rather than turning around and running away in order to save myself more headaches, I find myself longing to be in those places where bridges between the Church and the postmodern world are necessary but in short supply. In my better moments, this desire fills me with creative energy by which I can construct meaningful and honest conversations between parties who are prone to caricature each other. My diplomatic energies are at their best when I focus them on concrete pastoral situations rather than on wide-ranging theoretical discussions. In my darker moments, though, I feel as if the work is doomed to failure because there is so little willingness (on the part of some in the Church, for example) to receive honestly the data of human experience and (on the

part of some in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community, for example) to believe that religion has anything relevant to say to them if they are anywhere but on death's door. Rather than feeling like a diplomat or ambassador at these times, I feel like someone who has sold *everyone* out.

The second category of experience concerns my work as a faculty member at Santa Clara University. I have been teaching and directing in the Department of Theater and Dance for eleven years. I have been involved in residential learning communities and have served on various university, college, and department committees. A theater historian and director, I teach courses in performance and culture, theater history, gender/sexuality and performance, medieval and early modern theater, and acting. Though I am only one of several U.S. Jesuits working in the performing arts, I am aware that even my academic discipline situates me in a "border culture." For hundreds of years in the West, the theater has proven to be—not unlike religious life—a safe haven for a wide range of "types"; hence, my apostolic involvement in this area has fed my desire to stand with those who are, more often than not, cultural outsiders.²⁶ Not surprisingly, I have committed myself to the same work that introduced me to the Society of Jesus—the work of transformative and integrative education. After receiving tenure, however, and moving more deeply into the workings of the institution, I found myself asking, "Is this it?" Please do not misunderstand me; I love my work on almost all levels. I was beset, however, with a kind of panic when I realized that my life, my vocation, seemed to be "contained" by an institution that required ongoing expressions of fealty—particularly in regard to the search for the elusive grail of "Jesuit" or "Catholic" identity. And though my penchant for bridge building has positioned me to offer some constructive thoughts on the practicalities of "Jesuit education" (in, for example, a revised core curriculum), I wondered if I was too quickly being domesticated, losing the desire to go beyond familiar territories toward new frontiers.

To my mind, the generation of Jesuits before me worked long and hard to bring institutions like Santa Clara to a new professional level, building countless bridges connecting Jesuit traditions with the evol-

²⁶Running off to join the circus is, likely, the most familiar trope describing this tendency. There are people who, for whatever reason, simply do not "fit" the culturally dominant categories. Hence, they find their niche in the often itinerant world of performance (and perhaps even preaching) where a different order of things obtains.

ing American academy. I wonder, though, if “my” generation is called to continue working on the same bridges or to begin building some new spans. The desire to explore this latter possibility has led me to convene a group of interested Jesuits in what has been a two-year-long conversation about our desires for the work of higher education. Together, we have considered whether the Nativity / Miguel and Cristo Rey Schools in elementary and secondary education have anything to teach us about alternative models for transformative and integrative Jesuit education. The group generated a white paper on the Crossroads Project, a proposal for weaving the work of Jesuit higher education and existing institutions into an inter-apostolic program that would discern and address pressing educational needs among particular populations. Again, the tensions inherent in this experiment are obvious. At a time when the number of Jesuits committing to tenure-track involvements in existing institutions seems to be on the wane, a proposal to do “something different” can seem unrealistic. What is more important, the desire to move across existing boundaries can seem like an expression of ingratitude toward the very people and institutions that nurtured us in our ability to be educators. Yet, in the better moments, the willingness to endure the tensions yields creative ways of linking traditional institutions with newer initiatives to the benefit of all parties involved. In the darker moments, I experience a tendency toward extremism: the only solution is the rejection of one or the other possibility. It is simply *easier* that way.

Is it fair to conjecture that this generation’s particular gift to the Society and to the Church might very well be the desire and ability “to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach”?

Let me reiterate that my purpose in this essay has not been to make sweeping statements about the nature of the Kolvenbach generation. There are many subgroups within this generation whose attitudes are quite different from one another,²⁷ and this issue of *STUDIES* might prove that point without need for further discussion. Like that of the other contributors, my aim has been analogous to National Public Radio’s *This I*

²⁷For example, the pertinent question for my group during theology studies was, “How are we, as soon-to-be priests, the *same* as all other Catholics?” Not long after, the question became, “How are we, as soon-to-be priests, *different* from other Catholics?”

Believe—to reveal and explain core elements of my own vocational experience and offer them for your consideration. I grew up in a Church defined by Vatican II and my memories of the prior era are, at best, vague. Coming of age in a Church that still had the windows open means that I am most at home when I am looking *out* rather than in. Even in extreme circumstances like the sex-abuse crisis, I rarely see the Church as besieged by hostile forces (particularly since as an institution and a community of believers we have done our share of besieging). More commonly, I see us sojourning in a world whose terrain is constantly shifting. Despite all evidence to the contrary, I believe that, in head and members, we are indeed interested in engaging the world in its complexity.

Through my own Jesuit education and formation, I have come to understand the Society of Jesus as that organ in the Church's body that helps it remain an "invitational presence" to the world—receiving whatever experiences the world shares (no matter how uncomfortable they

Accustomed as we may be to holding competing goods in tension and attracted as we may be to building bridges to some rather far-off places and people, is it fair to conjecture that this generation's particular gift to the Society and to the Church might very well be the desire and ability "to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach"?

make us) without running to get a glass of water or shuffle papers. I understand the Society as that urge in the Church that finds life and hope in the myriad conversations taking place between center and periphery, conversations that require our compiling new dictionaries of language and custom. Perhaps most important of all, I believe that being a "companion of Jesus" requires me to inhabit this human life as integrally and passionately as he, confident that God's love is the source and

goal of all that is, was, and ever shall be. Because of him, "tension" and "bridge building" are categories that make sense to me, since he himself "stretched out his arms between heaven and earth in the everlasting sign of God's covenant."

At the end of a STUDIES like this one, what issues, observations, questions arise? Have we four authors engaged in idiosyncrasy, or have we given voice to certain themes peculiar to the Society during the Kolvenbach era? Have we highlighted vocational "differences in kind"

from other generations of Jesuits, or have we succeeded simply in articulating “differences in degree”? Do the categories of “tension,” “bridge building,” and “diplomacy” help at all in describing the tenor of Jesuit lives begun in the era of Father Kolvenbach? Accustomed as we may be to holding competing goods in tension and attracted as we may be to building bridges to some rather far-off places and people, is it fair to conjecture that this generation’s particular gift to the Society and to the Church might very well be the desire and ability “to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach”?²⁸ At the risk of putting words in the other authors’ mouths, let me conclude by observing that this issue of *STUDIES* has been, itself, an exercise in bridge building. We offer these reflections on our Jesuit vocations for the sake of lively, intergenerational conversation about things that really matter.

²⁸Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Thirty-fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 822.

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