



# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

WRITINGS ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY I

by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.

*Translated and edited by*

**PHILIP ENDEAN, S.J.**

45/3 • AUTUMN 2013

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, other priests, religious, and laity. Hence, the studies, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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*the first word . . .*

The cliché calls it a “blast from the past.” The motorman put his hand over the cashbox and waved me by. “This one’s on me, Father.” Greed getting the better part of principle, I smiled, put my Charlie card back in my pocket, thanked him, and sat down. Many years ago, when I was a young priest and electricity had all but replaced the horse on urban trolley cars, this was a standard courtesy in many cities. But that was then, and this is now. Gliding down Commonwealth Avenue in my green steel cocoon, I retreated into thought. Why should this gesture of friendship and respect lead to a vague sense of discomfort? Surely others in the car were harder pressed for the two dollars than I was. Did someone notice, and did it give one more reason for resentment? Was there a whiff of subconscious condescension in the motorman’s act? Was it simply a residue of old-time Boston and its once-famous Catholic tribal culture? Why should I be thinking these dark thoughts on a sunny Sunday afternoon, just because some guy tried to be nice to me?

This strange swirl of feelings led to a set of reflections that still don’t make much sense. Am I anticlerical at heart, harboring a touch of Jacobinism in situations most people, clerical or lay, would scarcely notice? If tonsure marks the opening day of the clerical state, then my season in the league has stretched through a bit over fifty years. In my case, a charge of simple anticlericalism would have to be diagnosed as schizophrenia. A few distinctions have helped. Surely like many other priests, I can’t abide the notion of clerical privilege. This takes several different forms. Some of the brotherhood expect to be treated differently and enjoy it. Not too long ago, in many areas people took for granted that priests dined regularly at the finest restaurants, vacationed in Florida, played golf at the country club, drove big cars, and wore well-tailored cassocks and clerical suits with French cuffs (homburg and silk scarf optional, but not unusual). In the clerical caste system of the day, the priestly standard of living ranked several notches above the lay people in their parishes or schools. And worse, many laypeople not

only condoned it but actually encouraged it. Was it their reverence for the priesthood, local custom, or just force of habit?

Personal interactions could reflect this state of assumed superiority as well. Such clergy assumed they knew more than laypeople in just about everything and have little to learn from them. Only the bravest of the laity would challenge, much less contradict, Father. Ordination brought a sense of entitlement: I *am* different; I earned it. A bit of compensation for giving up marriage and family? Yech! And in some instances there was a belief that priests were above the law: "I won't give you a ticket this time, Father, but make sure you drive straight home and go to bed." Painful events over the last decade or more have broken down many of the barricades of the clerical caste. In some ways it's led to cynicism about us and our work and given rise to a new anti-clericalism in some quarters. Clergy and laity alike have learned, slowly and painfully, that the mark of Adam's fall has stained us all. We are, every one of us, clergy and laity alike, on this human journey as equals before the Lord. We can all pray together, "Forgive us our trespasses." It was a hard way to learn how to be humble.

In its extreme forms, humility involves putting up with contempt from disillusioned Catholics as well as those who never have had much affection or respect for the Church in the first place. One stark example comes to mind. One Saturday afternoon, I had the radio tuned to a classical-music station. Each week the host invites prominent artists, other than musicians, to introduce the recording by explaining how this particular piece of music influenced their own artistry. The guest that day was the distinguished Irish actor, Fiona Shaw. The conversation began with music and theater, but Ms. Shaw returned again and again to the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. It seemed personal, almost obsessive. As far as I could tell, the host tried to keep her focused on the music, but he was only modestly successful. Several people with much more knowledge of Ireland than I have tried to help me understand her reaction. Many Irish artists and intellectuals, they tell me, have concluded that Joyce's characterization of the Irish as "a priest-ridden race" hit uncomfortably close to home. Especially in rural areas the parish priest was regarded as the leading citizen of the village and received all the prerogatives of minor nobility. When reports of abuse and cover-ups began to emerge, the backlash, similar to that experienced here in the United States, was doubly inflamed by a feeling of having been duped all those years. The higher the pedestal, the

more catastrophic the fall. If Ms. Shaw's sentiments are widely shared, I wonder if the Church will ever be able to reestablish its moral authority in Ireland. Just in the past few months the government closed its embassy in the Vatican to express its dissatisfaction with the Church's handling of the abuse crisis, and the Dáil defied the bishops by modifying the country's absolute prohibition of abortion. Could this have happened a generation ago?

No, I don't share Fiona Shaw's sentiments or even those necessarily of the Irish government. At the same time I must confess to an on-going discomfort with many of the trappings of the clerical state, like being above the law and free rides on a trolley car. As I think about it, it goes a bit deeper. Some years ago a superior told me, "You don't like liturgy." Wow! Think about that one for a moment. The remark particularly stung because, according to his understanding of liturgy, there is certainly a kernel of truth in his assertion. Brocade vestments, entry processions led by uniformed acolytes and accompanied by triumphant music, and the abyss that separates the sanctuary from the pews have always struck me as calling too much attention to the priest and away from the praying community. Given the choice, I'm really low church: like in-the-basement-of-the-Quaker-meeting-house-digging-tunnels low church. Don't panic. No, I haven't used a coffee-table altar since the anarchic seventies.

This may explain in some way my sense of alienation from some of the more operatic trappings of Rome. The Vatican represents a world much different from mine. During my two brief visits to the Eternal City, I was amazed at seeing so many cassocks and habits on the street. Distinctive garb seems incredibly important in that culture. Naive, wasn't I? Without a doubt many Catholics find the splendor of ceremonies in St. Peter's Basilica a deeply moving religious experience. They clearly have a dimension to their faith that I lack, and I feel all the more impoverished for it. Even more, I find the intrigue of the Vatican bureaucracy, with its dicasteries and congregations out-Byzantining Byzantium. Some clergy, Jesuits included, seem fascinated by this world: who's in favor and who's "under a cloud," who's in line to "get" which diocese or which important commission and who's being closed out. Of course, any organization needs a managerial class to keep the machinery running, but I'm intensely grateful not to be part of it.

My distance from the epicenter of the Catholic world became quite striking with the election of Pope Francis earlier this year. The

newspapers speculated on who would be elected, and oddsmakers even handicapped the field and picked a list of “front-runners.” Of course, they were all wrong. As the only cleric in the Art Department at Boston College, I became the center of supposed inside information for my colleagues. The write-ups of the likely future pope in the papers provided a few convenient talking points, since obviously I had no first-hand knowledge of any of them. As I made my way to a three-hour class one afternoon, the radio announced “white smoke over the Vatican,” but no one knew who had been chosen. As I staggered home that evening, a jovial tenant in the lobby of our residence greeted me: “Well, one of your guys made it.” What was he talking about? I had confidently told my colleagues and students that I had as much chance of being elected pope as any other Jesuit. Surprise. But who was the new pope? My ignorance appalled even me. Was there actually a Jesuit cardinal in Buenos Aires? I doubt it. There must be some mistake. Well, like most of the prognosticators in the press, I was ill informed and dead wrong. So much for all my inside information.

For the last few months, all of us outsiders to the Vatican, have been trying to fill in the lacunae in our knowledge of the man and his beliefs. Thanks to the efforts of Philip Endean, who tracked down, translated, edited, and annotated several of Father Bergoglio’s reflections as a Jesuit, *STUDIES* may be able to move that effort along a bit. These chapters give some insight into his thinking over several years as provincial and after during an unbelievably turbulent period for the Church and Society in Argentina. He directs his remarks to the Society itself and tries to uncover for his Jesuit brothers the underlying spirituality that sustains them. The material Philip selected and annotated could not be accommodated in a single unit. For this reason, the second half of the collection will appear in the winter issue. The two issues should be regarded as a single unit. We can all be grateful that Philip has selected *STUDIES* to bring his work to its readership.

Already as Pope he’s chipped away at some of my anticlerical, anti-Vatican sentiments. The process started when he declined to wear the ceremonial cape during his introduction to the people of Rome from the papal balcony. His choice of symbolic gestures was a big help for any of us who struggle with dark thoughts about the clerical world: from paying his own hotel bill to moving out of the papal apartments and including women during the Holy Thursday washing of feet. Particularly moving for me was his liturgy for refugees, on an altar fash-

ioned from the wreckage of boats that failed to complete the crossing. No, he's not in the Quakers' basement digging tunnels with me, but Pope Francis has shown that he will not be imprisoned by the clerical culture of the Vatican. I wonder how he would feel about a free ride on a trolley car?

### *a few second words . . . .*

The early warning signs are unmistakable. First young men the size and shape of telephone booths start to appear on campus. (Unless they've read Superman comics, readers from the cell-phone generation may have to ask their elders to explain the term "phone booth.") A symphony of grunts and thumps wafts up from enclosed practice fields. The sound eventually mingles with trumpets, trombones, and a maddening electronic metronome that paces the march of the energetic musicians. The days may still be steamy and the nights sticky, but fall is soon upon us, and with it ("The horror! The horror!"—according to Joseph Conrad and Marlon Brando) another academic year begins.

The new school year also brings not only football season but a change in the masthead of *STUDIES*. On behalf of all our readers, I'd like to take a moment to thank our graduating members for their many contributions—some visible to all, others known only to the Seminar—over the past three years. Michael Barber continues his role as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at St. Louis University, without the distraction (or respite) of refereeing manuscripts. Paul Janowiak will further his research in liturgy at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara and the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley. Tom Stegman will add to his already impressive list of achievements at the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College. Their painstaking analysis and lively discussion of submitted manuscripts were indispensable in maintaining the high level of quality set by George Ganss and continued by John Padberg over the years.

Like football coaches, my colleagues and I are confident that our recruiting efforts will enable us to replace our graduating seniors with another crop of potential All-Americans. Here's the line-up for the opening game. Kevin Cullen served with Jesuit Relief Services in Eastern Africa and L'Arche in Canada. He coordinated programs in Ignatian Spirituality at Regis University in Denver and was vice-president

for mission and ministry at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Mo. Currently, he serves on the provincial staff of the Missouri Province, as province treasurer and assistant for higher education.

After the success of his monograph on *The First First Jesuits* (STUDIES 44, no. 2), Bart Geger has agreed to become a member of the Seminar. After doing theological studies at Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass., and Heythrop College in London, he completed the S.T.D. at Universidad Pontificia in Madrid. He directs the Ignatian Program at Regis in Denver, where he recently published *What the Magis Really Means and Why It Matters*.

Gap LoBiondo brings an extraordinary background to the project. After ordination, he traveled to Chile, where his pastoral ministry among the impoverished shaped many of his ideas on social justice. He returned to the United States to do a doctorate in economics at American University in Washington, D.C. He directed the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown from 2002 until its closing earlier this year. Last year he coauthored, with Rita Rodriguez, the electronic book *Development, Values, and the Meaning of Globalization: A Grassroots Approach*. This year he begins his role as Promoter of Ignatian Identity and superior of the community at Gonzaga High School in Washington.

On behalf of the entire Seminar, the Jesuit Conference (our parent organization), the American Jesuits, and our readers around the world, I welcome the newcomers to the editorial board and thank them for accepting this invitation to serve a three-year term with us.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor

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# WRITINGS ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY I

*by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.*

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*Both during and after his term as provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina during a period of political and social conflict, the future Pope Francis reflected deeply on the role of the Society as a healing presence. In the midst of ideological divisions, he rejected facile characterizations and various factions; he also proposed a basis for unity in respect of the past and vision of the future based on the Gospels and the Spiritual Exercises.*

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## I. Translator's Introduction

When the cardinals of the Catholic Church met in March 2013 to elect the new bishop of Rome, they famously went to the end of the world. They elected the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina: Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the first member of a religious order to become pope since 1831 and the first Jesuit ever. Within two days the new Pope Francis was causing consternation by telephoning in person the Jesuit Curia in Rome, and arranging for Father General Nicolás to visit him.<sup>1</sup> Some months later, during his impromptu press conference on the plane while returning home from World Youth Day in Brazil (July 29, 2013), he said:

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<sup>1</sup> See "Pope Telephones Fr. General at the Curia" on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

I feel Jesuit in my spirituality, in the spirituality of the Exercises, the spirituality, that which I have in my heart. I haven't changed my spirituality, no. Francis, Franciscan, no. I feel Jesuit and I think like a Jesuit. Not hypocritically, but I think like a Jesuit.

As a Jesuit, Jorge Mario Bergoglio had been director of novices, rector of the house of studies, and provincial. Moreover, throughout the 1980s he had been on the editorial committee of an Argentinian journal, *Boletín de espiritualidad*—like *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*, a publication aimed at fostering the Ignatian renewal in the wake of Vatican II. During the first half of the 1980s, he published several articles in the journal, and his election as pope lends these texts an obvious new interest. This and the next issue of *STUDIES* will offer English speakers a chance to see what it might mean to have a pope who thinks like a Jesuit.

## The Writings

Of the thirteen pieces published under Father Bergoglio's name, these issues of *STUDIES* reproduce four in their entirety and the major part of a fifth.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest is a double piece, published in 1978. As provincial between 1973 and 1979, Father Bergoglio had presided over two provincial congregations, in 1974 and 1978, on each occasion giving an opening address. These two pieces were published together in April 1978 as *An Institution Living Its Charism*, alongside a major essay of Pedro Arrupe's under the title: *A Charism Which Comes to Be an Institution*. In that piece Arrupe passionately meditated on how the Society's charism led it to serve the Church through institutional means.<sup>3</sup> Father Bergoglio's addresses thus appeared as two complementary meditations on how an institution can overcome its tendency towards inertia and remain responsive to a divine, charismatic initiative.

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<sup>2</sup>A list is given at the end of this introduction. A publication of the Spanish originals is planned.

<sup>3</sup>The text in question was Father Arrupe's address at the end of the 1978 CIS course in Rome. See "Ecclesial Service," in *Pedro Arrupe: Challenge to Religious Life Today*, ed. Jerome Aixelá (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1979), 253-77.

“Permanent Formation and Reconciliation,” published in 1980, starts by suggesting that the retraining of religious that was by then very much in vogue needed to concentrate on the quality of people’s calling, on their relationship with their own institute. It sets out particularly clearly the provincial’s theology of authority and ecclesial belonging.

“On Uncertainty and Tepidity,” which appeared in 1982 and will appear in the winter issue of *STUDIES*, is an extended, even diffuse piece reflecting on the factors that lead religious and other committed Christians to lose enthusiasm and fervor.

“Directing the Great and the Small,” published in 1981, shows Father Bergoglio reflecting on the exercise of authority, with particular reference to an early Jesuit text by Pedro de Ribadeneira about Ignatius’s style of government. “The only way of saving life’s ambiguities for God is through discernment, seeking always and in everything ‘what is more conducive’”—and what we seek is not necessarily to be identified with theoretical perfection. With Benedict XVI we had a pope who had published widely and significantly on formal ecclesiology in his previous life. But perhaps not even he had reflected so closely on the actual practice of authority, and on the art of the possible, as our author does here.

Finally, “The Bad Superior,” published in 1983, begins with some rather complex and intricate scriptural material, which he uses to characterize bad religious leadership before ending with some suggestive reflections on how appearances may be deceptive.

The texts, interesting though they are both intrinsically and biographically, are not polished pieces of work. There is no reason to suppose that they are in any sense ghostwritten; the editors are careful to note where they themselves are adding a footnote. They give the impression of having originated as talks; occasionally the terseness suggests that we have notes on the basis of which the author expanded and improvised. He clearly repeated himself and recycled material; “On Uncertainty and Tepidity” in particular may be a compilation, not perfectly integrated, of material previously used in different places.

It is striking that at least in two places these pieces anticipate celebrated papal *bons mots*. Pope Francis’s first homily, on March 14, 2013, made the point that the Church was more than an NGO, just

as Father Provincial Bergoglio in 1974 was concerned to distinguish Christian mission from the international Rotary movement. Similarly, the Pope's telling the heads of women religious congregations that their chastity must be "fertile," mothers and not "spinsters" (May 8, 2013), is paralleled by a description thirty years earlier of bad superiors as "bachelor uncles" and "maiden aunts."

## The Context

Given that Fr. Jorge Bergoglio has become pope, an industry of scholarship and research will in time develop around him. Future historians will seek to make connections and write a coherent narrative linking whatever his papacy turns out to be with his past in Argentina, both as bishop and as Jesuit. He was provincial at a turbulent point in Jesuit history, between 1973 and 1979. The changes of Vatican II, GC 31, and the long 1960s generally finally destabilized practices of Jesuit religious life long assumed to be normative and unchangeable. Superiors the world over were dealing with the conflicts these problems provoked. In Latin America these problems were intensified by a new awareness, arising from the social sciences, of structural injustice calling for structural remedies. Argentinian politics in particular were complex: the controversial figure of Juan Perón even from exile in Spain continued to influence events. He returned as president in 1973, only to die the following year and be replaced by his widow and third wife, Isabel. In 1976 there was a military coup, installing a regime that was at once brutally repressive and supported by many elements in the Church. In that context—poorly reported and understood in the developed West—Fr. Jorge Bergoglio, appointed provincial at the age of thirty-six, just four years after his ordination, had to govern. His legacy was and is controverted, although the details remain inevitably obscure.

Future readers will be able to look at these Ignatian texts as major pieces of evidence for Father Bergoglio's vision and policies, and to situate them within the arguments going on in the Argentinian Province and the wider Society of Jesus at the time. It would be a mistake, however, to attempt that task now. We simply have

texts; we can make few secure judgments about their contexts and are, therefore, largely in the dark regarding interpretation. Appealing as it may be to conjecture that the provincial's accounts of Jesuit government may be some kind of apologia for his own ways of proceeding, or even an admission of where he had fallen short, conjecture is all that at this point is possible.<sup>4</sup>

Within that constraint, perhaps four observations from a translator may be of some use in guiding readers as they make their way through texts that are surely interesting, but in some ways now dated, alien, and obscure.

## Theological Independence

In the first place, Father Bergoglio comes across as an intelligent man, showing theological independence of mind in his approach to his difficult leadership tasks. He exhibits a good theological formation; he is able to draw, perhaps too briefly and allusively, on scriptural and early-Church sources, while his knowledge of Ignatian material is advanced for its time. The Church and its officeholders are entrusted with a heritage from Christ, received historically and mediated now primarily through the reality of people's lives rather than any theory. In his 1974 provincial-congregation address, he interestingly interprets the difference between what is really happening and what a theory says ought to be happening in terms of the subtle discernments of the Second Week, and their teaching that the will of God is not straightforwardly to be identified with my own vision or project of the good.

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<sup>4</sup>At the time of writing (August 2013), the most valuable sources on JMB's biography seem to be Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: The Authorized Biography—Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio* (New York: Putnam, 2013), which has foundational interview material; Evangelina Himitian, *Francisco: El Papa de la gente* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2013), which gives the fullest account of his career as bishop and seems to be written by a journalist who is a friend of Pope Francis's family; Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), which is the fullest account we have of Father Bergoglio the Jesuit provincial. Vallely's conjecture (especially pp. 127–47) that something of a conversion experience intervened between our author's time as Jesuit superior and bishop is elegant, attractive, and plausible, but—as with much religious biography—more surely indicative of its writer's convictions than its subject's.

Father Bergoglio lacks the resources that a career as an academic theologian might have given him, and his language is sometimes underdeveloped and eccentric, in ways that make a translator's task difficult.<sup>5</sup> But, just as much as Gustavo Gutiérrez's seminal *A Theology of Liberation*, our author's theology evinces a well-educated Latin American taking the best that Catholic theology, developed largely in continental Europe, had to offer in the middle of the last century, and applying it intelligently to a very different context.

### *Among the Liberation Theologians*

Secondly and consequently, one should beware of easy generalizations about Father Bergoglio's hostility to liberation theology, or general "conservatism." Obviously, the provincial shows caution about revolutionary theory and anything redolent of Marxism. Instead, in the 1974 provincial-congregation address, he encourages his province to follow the leads of the *pueblo fiel*, with their devotional life and their robust "class theory" centered on a distinction between "workers and layabouts (*zánganos*)." He speaks only rarely, selectively, and perfunctorily of GC 32, which he attended as provincial, and of the new emphasis in the 1970s on faith and justice. The exception that proves the rule is his questionably relevant use in "On Uncertainty and Tepidity" of Paul VI's rather abstract opening address, a text generally interpreted as sending a warning to Father Arrupe and the congregation about being too radical.

Much depends, of course, on how one defines "liberation theology." Given an option on that question broad enough to accommodate the lasting and ongoing legacy of the movement, it is probably better to see Father Bergoglio as a voice within what was inevitably a diverse and complex school of thought rather than an opponent on the outside. His opposition to the "utopianist laboratory" is paralleled by a hostility to the "restorationist workshop"; his critique of contemporary Zealots, "who substitute a human utopia for the Kingdom of God," is balanced by equal hostility to Pharisees who do not recognize that the deep intent of the law trumps a particular application of it, and that the newness of Christ transcends just everything. There is almost

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<sup>5</sup>I have probably erred on the side of refining rather than reproducing, interpreting rather than repeating.

no trace of manualist Scholasticism in Father Bergoglio's theology; his one quotation from Denzinger refers to a Vatican II teaching about the faith of the people of God that would surely have come across as "progressive."

Our author's invocation of popular piety may sound romantic and naive; in an Argentinian context it may be reminiscent of Peronist populism, while to a British reader it evokes Cardinal Heenan's leadership in the post-conciliar Church. But the simple evocation of popular piety does not in itself mark Father Bergoglio off from liberation theology, at least as it has developed in the longer term. In 1984 Juan Luis Segundo wrote a celebrated piece which gently and subtly explores the tension between Leonardo Boff's concern to "relocate in the mind of (common) people the cross in its true place" and his profession that the theologian must be evangelized by "contact with (grass-root) people." Segundo argued cogently that liberation theology had to find a place for both of these.<sup>6</sup>

Our author may be less open than others to the need for social analysis of Christianity's role in history, and to a claim that a Christianity historically linked to colonization represents part of the problem of structural injustice as well as a hope of solution. But his insistence on lived experience as a source of grace aligns him firmly with the majority positions at Vatican II. His willingness in principle to reassess forms of Christian life in the face of Latin American reality, resisting ideological oversimplification, aligns him with, rather than against, a figure such as Ignacio Ellacuría. Father Bergoglio's encomia of popular piety are probably best read as mythological and extravagant formulations of a point to which many, not just in Latin America, would testify about the evangelizing power of those in need. He would surely at some level have agreed, even then, with what Jon Sobrino has written about how the "*mysterium iniquitatis* is present among the poor," and how, just as the Church is patristically the "chaste prostitute," so the poor's status as a place of revelation is in no way compromised by their "raw reality" of sin.<sup>7</sup> Given that symbolic complexity of the mat-

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<sup>6</sup>"Two Theologies of Liberation," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), 353–66.

<sup>7</sup>See "*Extra pauperes nulla salus: A Short Utopian-Prophetic Essay*," translated by Joseph Owens, in *No Salvation outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays*" (Mary-

ter, there may also be space in the mix for the more deconstructive insights of social analysis, and for a hermeneutic of suspicion with regard to conventional piety.

### *Ascetical Rather Than Mystical*

Many readers will be disconcerted by what Father Bergoglio says about tiredness in “The Bad Superior”: tiredness is an indicator of laziness and fundamental infidelity. Even his qualification that there is a good tiredness sounds uncomfortably macho: “The tiredness that leaves you tired but happy: after a hard day’s faithful work you are brought to the Blessed Sacrament once again to intercede for your sheep—sheep of whom you are not ashamed, sheep for whom you go in to bat with the Lord.” More technically, when our author in “On Uncertainty and Tepidity” discusses spiritual consolation, his robust rhetoric encourages us to keep spiritually fit and to avoid temptation. “Consolation has to be sought and maintained at all costs.”

By preference, Father Bergoglio interprets desolation according to the first of the reasons Ignatius gives for why we might find ourselves desolate: “because of our being tepid, lazy or negligent in our spiritual exercises . . . through our faults spiritual consolation withdraws from us” (*SpEx*, no. 322). He obviously does not deny the primacy of divine grace, but his rhetorical stress falls on the efforts we make. Much of “On Uncertainty and Tepidity” deploys what might seem a rather artificial distinction between the dramatic moment when we share the drama of the paschal mystery and the time afterwards, when there is need for daily watchfulness and fidelity. One function of this distinction, whether or not consciously intended, is to locate the primacy of grace principally with the first of these, leaving the way clear for daily practice in ordinary time to be interpreted as a matter of constant effort.

Ignatius himself, of course, gives us two other reasons why we might be desolate, and the third is particularly significant and expressive: “to give us true acquaintance and knowledge, that we may interiorly feel that it is not ours to get or keep great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that all is the gift and grace of God our Lord.”

Here desolation is not a matter of our faith. Most, though not all, contemporary Anglophone Jesuits, particularly if they are working in ministries of spirituality, would now be more influenced by this rather different Ignatian idiom. A wise retreat director once introduced me to the Ignatian election by saying, “This is not about resolutions but fruit.” That statement implies a belief that the best things in the spiritual life are ultimately a gift, not within our control—what we “resolve,” even if devout, generous, and well-intentioned, is less important and may be positively unhelpful. Underlying the second approach is a sense of God’s power at work in our failure (including moral and spiritual failure) as well as in our virtue. Perhaps, too, we have become aware of unconscious motivations, and of how grace gradually confronts less worthy, hidden impulses only over time, as a vocation unfolds.<sup>8</sup>

For most of Jesuit history, authority figures have been “ascetics,” the approach which our author intelligently exemplifies. A major element in the twentieth-century Ignatian renewal has been the retrieval of an alternative, more “mystical” approach. It is surely a mistake to suppose that one has to choose between these two stresses; after all, Ignatius’s rule simply sets them alongside each other and leaves us to decide which is appropriate in a given situation. Effective superiors informally blended strict asceticism in their public statements with sensitive flexibility in their dealings with individuals; theoretically, the paradoxes of grace and freedom are notoriously intractable. Perhaps there is a place even now for the ascetical approach to Jesuit spirituality that has rather fallen out of fashion. At any rate, in reading these texts, contemporary readers, at least in the English-speaking world, need to be aware that their rhetoric is shaped by assumptions that are not now taken for granted in the way that they once were.

### *From the End of the World*

“Brothers and sisters, good evening! You know that it was the duty of the Conclave to give Rome a Bishop. It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get one . . . but here we are.”

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<sup>8</sup>A judicious, critical introduction to these issues is by Peter Egenolf, “Vocation and Motivation: The Theories of Luigi Rulla,” *The Way* 42, no. 3 (July 2003): 81–93.

*Buona sera*—“the ends of the earth.” Before closing, it is probably worth acknowledging more directly that Father Bergoglio’s spiritual texts come from a milieu different both from previous papal convention and from our own. Over and above the issues covered by the theological points made above, there is a residual foreignness in Father Bergoglio’s writing: some passages will come across to us as weird and strange. Some factors in this strangeness will be familiar enough from other confrontations between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin worlds: a Latin tendency to abstract expression and florid rhetoric that sound phoney when translated directly into English. But other disconcerting features in our author’s texts are stronger still, and more idiosyncratic. His use of military imagery—he could take for granted even when addressing sisters that religious life had a *sentido bélico*—will seem alienating to many, particularly when combined, as it is in the 1978 provincial-congregation address, with a tender use of family metaphors that cannot but, in an Anglophone context, sound excessive.

It may be important for us to let the foreignness of these texts—wherever we find it—stand as a reality in its own right, and not try to domesticate it or incorporate it somehow within what we think we can understand. In his first speech, Pope Francis described his papacy as “this journey, the Bishop and people, this journey of the Church of Rome, which presides in charity over all the Churches.” One of the themes evoked in that suggestive designation was the interplay of particular church and universal pastorate—an interplay that involves unresolved problems, administratively, humanly, and theologically. Quite independently of questions about primacy and collegiality, the fact that our popes now seem to be coming from outside Italy is bringing home to us that the Petrine universal office will always be exercised by a man with a quite particular personal and cultural history. It will be no bad thing if this selection of Fr. Jorge Bergoglio’s Jesuit writings brings out the tensions this interplay involves. Learning to manage it better will be an important part of the journey on which he has to lead us.

## Editorial Principles

What follows is a straightforward translation, aiming to reproduce both the content and the tone of the original. Occasionally I discuss problems of translation in the footnotes, but in general I have

tacitly made what seemed the most appropriate decisions. Scholars working with these texts should refer to the originals.

When Father Bergoglio quotes some other source, the English version is generally based on his Spanish, though where possible with an eye to the original and to standard published English translations. References to primary sources are generally given within the main text, in keeping with the original's almost invariable practice, and, in order to facilitate use by a range of readers, by standard paragraph numbers rather than from particular editions.

Footnotes and subheadings are generally editorial—the author's own notes—or those of his Argentinian editors, are reproduced selectively, in a form adapted to the needs of contemporary Anglophone readers. The paragraphing and formatting in the originals is not always consistent; this version includes a fair element of editorial tidying. Ellipses in square brackets ([. . .]) indicate the few editorial cuts; ellipses without brackets reproduce ellipses in the original.

Background material in the public domain—for example, the nineteenth-century English translation of Ribadaneira's treatise on Ignatius's government, discussed in "Directing the Great and the Small"—can be downloaded from [www.philipendean.com/jmb.htm](http://www.philipendean.com/jmb.htm).

Warmest thanks are due to the present editors of *Boletín de espiritualidad* for graciously allowing the U.S. translation and publication of this material; to the interlibrary-loan staff at Boston College, especially Anne Kenny, for locating microform copies of the original and making them available to me; and to Professor John Edwards, Fr. Gustavo Morello, and Mr. Eric Southworth for advice on particular points. Errors obviously remain my responsibility.

Finally, this work is dedicated to the two Jesuit communities at Boston College, in gratitude for all I have received from them during my extended stays with them over the last few years.

Philip Endean, S.J.  
Oxford, UK  
August 2013

## Father Bergoglio's Publications in *Boletín de espiritualidad*

- "El sentido teológico de la elección," no. 4 (Oct.-Nov. 1968), 7–8.
- \*"Una institución que vive su carisma," no. 55 (April 1978), 27–50. Opening addresses at the provincial congregations of 1974 and 1978, complementing an address of Pedro Arrupe, "Un carisma que llega a ser institución."
- "Criterios de acción apostólica," no. 64 (January 1980), 3–26—a compilation by the author.
- \*"Formación permanente y reconciliación," no. 68 (December 1980), 3–13.
- "Frente a las futuras vocaciones," no. 71 (June 1981), 20–27.
- \*"Conducir en lo grande y en lo pequeño," no. 73 (October 1981), 17–27.
- "Formación en la vida comunitaria," no. 74 (January 1982), 12–31.
- \*"Sobre la incertidumbre y la tibieza," no. 78 (November 1982), 1–18.
- \*"El mal superior y su imagen," no. 84 (December 1983), 1–9.
- "Cruz y sentido bélico de la vida," no. 85 (February 1984), 1–10.
- "La acusación de sí mismo," no. 87 (May-June 1984), 1–18. (An introduction to a text by Dorotheus of Gaza—other pieces of a similar structure by other authors are there about this time.)
- "La cruz y la misión," no. 89 (September-October 1984), 1–8.
- "Unidos para que el mundo crea," no. 122 (March-April 1990), 1–10.

*An asterisk indicates that the piece is included in this selection.*

## II. An Institution Living Its Charism

### *Opening Addresses to Two Provincial Congregations*

#### 1. A Conviction, a Clarity, and a Desire

(February 18, 1974)

Our provincial congregation that gathers today has as its task the designation of electors for GC 32. It will also examine the *postulata* that have been put forward. This will be done, in the words of the *Formula for Provincial Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, “in holy peace and with edification” (no. 54). The *Formula* also says that Father Provincial can add a brief report on the state of the Province. So that is what I am going to talk to you about for a little while.

It is the task of any person of faith to reflect on their lives and to count their blessings. The same obviously applies to this body—the Society of Jesus—formed in the Contemplation to Attain Love (*SpEx*, nn. 230–237). It would take a very long time to go through the history of our Argentinian province, which is from beginning to end a history of grace. Rather, at the risk of being too schematic, I would venture to stress three points from our present reality that, at least for me, seem to be a sign of the Lord’s presence in our Jesuit life, signs indicating a structure within which we can build up the unity of the Province. These points are a conviction, a clarification, and a desire.

1. The *conviction* of a need to overcome sterile conflicts within the Church so as to commit ourselves corporately to an apostolic strategy that is realistic in view both of the enemy and of our forces when facing him.

2. The *clarification* about some wrong answers to our apostolic problems.

3. The *desire* to pursue once again the authentic paths of growth: those of our history, those where God is saving us.

### *A Conviction*

Regarding the first point—“the conviction of a need to overcome sterile conflicts within the Church so as to commit ourselves corporately to a realistic apostolic strategy”—there is no need, I think, for any exhaustive description. We need only recall our fruitless confrontations with the hierarchy, the distasteful conflicts between factions (“progressive,” “reactionary”) within the Church: in short, all those things in which we make an absolute out of what is secondary, in which, seduced by “a great chair of fire and smoke” (*SpEx*, no. 140), we end up placing greater importance on the parts than on the whole.

At this moment, when the body of the province is wanting to get beyond these conflicts, it would be good to increase the energy that this desire generates for the apostolate by situating it within the Ignatian strategy traced out in the meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards and in the consideration of the Third Manner of Humility (*SpEx*, nn. 91–98, 136–147, 164–168).<sup>1</sup>

If we go to the heart of this strategy, we discover that Ignatius is inviting us to free ourselves of any aspirations for what is not eternal, and to recognize that our greatness lies in the acceptance of the *Deus semper maior*—the “ever greater God.”<sup>2</sup> God’s plan trumps my “project.” The only real enemy is the enemy of God’s plan. The real problem is the problem raised by the enemy in order to impede God’s plan. This is the key that will enable us to distinguish what is essential from

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<sup>1</sup>See Hugo Storni, “Argentina,” in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, 1.230. Between 1965 and 1977 “as part of the crisis affecting the Church and the S.J., there was a period of closing operations down, owing to the departure of many Jesuits and the lack of vocations”: a journal was closed, the Society withdrew from two high schools and two universities, and the observatory was closed. “In the following decade the situation changed and new works arose.”

<sup>2</sup>JMB refers to Erich Przywara’s seminal work on the Spiritual Exercises.

what is secondary, what is authentic from what is false. This is the foundation on which our unity and our apostolic discipline depend.

In the “Letter to the Jesuits of Latin America,” we are told that the problem is “the problem of humanity itself.”<sup>3</sup> The enemy has sought to destroy humanity, sought to extinguish humanity’s sense of meaning, sought to replace the quest for justice and solidarity with that of the mean-spirited philosophy of *homo homini lupus*—humanity preying upon itself.<sup>4</sup>

If our apostolic tactics do not get beyond this divisiveness, this mean-spirited possessiveness, this individualism, this love-hate relationship with the defensive, where indeed shall we be?

### *A Clarity*

The clarity I was referring to in the second point—a clarity, as I put it, regarding wrong answers to our apostolic problems—I would spell out as follows.

I note that corporately as a province we are all the time better coming to understand that unity is not attained through abstract spirituality (the temptation to construct unity by avoiding the real problem), nor through pragmatic utilitarianism (which tries to find unity in means divorced from ends), nor through a false open-mindedness which would seek to downplay our problems, as if true universality (the “being turned towards one thing” implied by this word that is of such importance both for the Society and for the Church) could come about by acting like an international version of the Rotary Club.

In the temporal dimension of our apostolate, too, and in the sign-value this has for the people of God, we have acquired a certain

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<sup>3</sup>After a study week with Pedro Arrupe in Rio de Janeiro, May 6–14, 1968, the Latin American provincials wrote an open letter to Jesuits on the continent, cast as a response to Paul VI’s challenging 1967 encyclical, *Populorum progressio*. JMB is partially quoting the beginning of no. 3: “The social problem is the problem of humanity itself.” For the text of the letter, see *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Albert T. Hennelly (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1990), 77–83.

<sup>4</sup>The Latin tag—“humanity [is] a wolf to humanity”—which JMB can use in a direct Spanish translation, originates in Plautus. In Erasmus’s *Adages*, this tag is placed alongside *homo homini Deus* (1.1.69–70), a formulation which may lie influencing JMB’s thought here.

clarity. This clarity protects us by forcing us to face the temptations we already know all too well: an occasional moralism, a propensity to various forms of elitism, a fascination for abstract ideologies that sadly do not correspond to reality.

As for what is more specifically religious, this clarity is leading us to recognize that our situation has its own distinctiveness. We are recognizing that ways of putting problems arising in the dominant countries—secularization or disenchantment, the death of God, dialogue with what seem to us strange ideologies—are just not helpful in our situation. It is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Desire*

I see the desire I was referring to in my third point—that of pursuing once again the authentic paths of our growth, those of our history as Argentinians and Jesuits—coming through in some key attitudes. For example, I notice among us a certain healthy allergy every time people try to see Argentina in terms of theories that have not grown out of the reality of our nation. But more significant is a recognition of the significance of the religious resources that the *pueblo fiel*, the people of faith, has, a feel that we Argentinian Jesuits are gradually acquiring.

I would like, speaking personally, to express what this reality of “the believing people” means for me. By “the believing people” [*pueblo fiel*] I am simply talking about people who are believers, the people with whom our priestly mission and our religious witness lead us into particular contact. Of course *el pueblo*—“the people”—now has, among ourselves, different meanings, deriving from ideological assumptions operative whenever people talk about or engage with the reality the term refers to. But now I am talking, quite simply, about believers, the people with faith.

When I was studying theology, when I, like you, was going through Denzinger and the textbooks in order to find arguments for the theses we had to defend, I was very struck by one formulation in the Christian tradition: the *believing people* is infallible *in credendo*—in

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<sup>5</sup> *Ver matrimonios un ñandú con un faisán*—literally, “to see a rhea and a pheasant married.”

its act of believing.<sup>6</sup> From this I have derived a formula that may not be very precise, but which has been very helpful to me: when you want to know *what* Mother Church believes, go to the magisterium; but when you want to know *how* the Church believes, go to the people who believe. The magisterium will tell you who Mary is, but it is our believing people who will teach you how to love Mary.

Our people has a soul. And because we can talk of the soul of a people, we can talk of their take on things, their way of seeing reality, their sensitivity. I notice in our Argentinian people a strong sense of its own dignity. This awareness goes back in history. Its features do not derive from an economic system (you cannot, for example, recognize the people of Argentina in the abstract categories of bourgeoisie and proletariat). Their collective personality has gradually been molded through significant moments. It is not a conclusion emerging from a theory, but a reality of lived, radically Christian, life.

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*This is a primal reality for a Jesuit: to accept right from the start that he will be tempted. Woe betide us if we do not accept the pain of being tempted, if we do not accept that in our very activity we have to suffer the cross of temptation and bear it like the Lord.*

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Perhaps we will only understand deeply why our people are the way they are if we go back to our Jesuit family memories—to the courage and the capacity for discernment and decision-making—of the first Jesuits who came to these countries. It was all far from clear; they were being sent to people about whom there were serious questions as to whether they even had souls. But they were able to glimpse the apostolic potential before them. The result: the only continent in the world that is Catholic.

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<sup>6</sup>The teaching here is in fact from Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, no. 12, which would have been published in the 1967 edition of Denzinger: “the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27), cannot err *in credendo*.” The official English translation, “in matters of belief,” obscures JMB’s point.

Obviously my aim here is not to be triumphalist, nor to beat the drum for our predecessors' merits. Let us not forget that all this apostolic activity was part of a broader policy, inspired by the humble counsel of the bishop of Badajoz to Charles I: "You will make happy peoples, with familial bonds of justice, without some exploiting others."<sup>7</sup> But the result of this sense they had of apostolic potential is that God is present in the heart of our people, and will never depart from there. It follows that our more authentic liberative projects will privilege unity over conflict, because, as you will have noticed, the enemy divides and rules. We are dealing with a truly national project, not the accommodation of one particular class.

I also notice that work is, for our people, a source of dignity. If we did want to explore our people's class theory, we would find a very simple but very real division: between workers and layabouts. For our people, when they make judgments, do so on the basis of a morality, the principles of which are solidarity, justice, and work.

This believing people neither separates its religious faith from its historical aspirations, nor does it confuse the two in a revolutionary messianism.<sup>8</sup> This people believes in the resurrection and the life: salvation, work, bread, everyday understanding. For their country, what they believe in is peace. There are some who think that this is not revolutionary. But the people themselves, who are asking for peace, know full well that this peace is the fruit of justice.

### *Conclusion*

I began by saying I was noticing in our province signs of life, which I characterized as a conviction, a clarity, and a desire. But these realities do not exist in chemically pure forms, nor as ready-made realities or incorruptible achievements. They are given to us through struggle, through temptation. A desire can be extinguished; a convic-

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<sup>7</sup>Pedro Ruiz de la Mota (d. 1522), tutor and counselor to Charles I (later the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V), bishop of Badajoz (1616–20), though he never visited the diocese. He articulated in Charles's name a vision of empire to the Cortes in 1520. The precise source of the quotation is obscure; JMB refers us to a seminal essay by the historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "La idea imperial de Carlos V" in a book with the same title (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Caspe, 1941).

<sup>8</sup>The idiom echoes the Chalcedonian definition regarding the divine and human natures in Christ.

tion can weaken; a clarity can become obscure. The way of this clarity, conviction, and desire is carved out in our hearts. But let us be aware that the enemy of human nature—as St. Ignatius likes saying (*SpEx*, nn. 7, 8, 334, etc.)—will not allow us to grow in peace. If these realities in the province are to grow, our unity of doctrine—what we learned in the Exercises—has to become stronger each day.

The main criteria for directing processes: unity comes before conflict; the whole comes before the part; heritage comes before variety.<sup>9</sup> These are what must inspire our work. Only thus will we be able to do things together.

This capacity has to be built up gradually in our communities and our working groups. Nothing can happen at province level that has not first been done in local communities and working groups. Thus local superiors and directors of work are important in managing the process. In the clarity with which they discern, in the effectiveness with which they get things done—that is where the energy is, not just of a community or team, but of the whole province.

I think that—just as in the La Storta vision that Ignatius had a few miles from Rome before founding the Society<sup>10</sup>—we need to pray to the Blessed Virgin, so much loved as she is by our people, that she should be willing to place us with her Son, and also thereby, in this simple request, to recover our identity as men of the Church.

I know all too well that this will require us to be very astute. I also know that there are many places where we can bury our heads and avoid issues. But I believe that the Lord loves us, and that he is greater than our contradictions.

## 2. Holding the Tensions (February 3, 1978)

We can say that our “least Society of Jesus,” as part of the Church, is itself also something that the Lord willed for himself and took as his

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<sup>9</sup>The force of the original, “el tiempo es superior al espacio,” a formulation which comes up in other places, is a matter of conjecture from the wider context. These sentences in particular read like notes for a talk rather than an elaborated text.

<sup>10</sup>JMB gives conventional references to Ignatius’s *Autobiography*, no. 96, and *Spiritual Diary*, no. 67 (February 23, 1544).

bride in faith and mercy. It is consoling to contemplate how what constitutes us is faith that the Lord is holding us, and the mercy which saves us.<sup>11</sup>

St. Ignatius puts this constitutive, gratuitous act of the Lord before us in the Principle and Foundation of his Spiritual Exercises: God our Lord creates us, saves us, and constitutes us as directed towards an end. And this end, because it transcends us, gives us an identity.<sup>12</sup>

Service to this Lord needs to be fed by the desire of seeking him, of receiving his blessing and allowing ourselves to be saved by his

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*As symptoms of a lack of fervor, the Holy Father sees fatigue and disappointment, just fitting in the background, lack of interest, joylessness, hopelessness.*

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mercy. To think of the Society, and of ourselves as its members, is to contemplate the Christ who roots us, because he is our “principle and foundation.” It is also to let ourselves be overcome by the consoling and strengthening image of this Lord

who says in the Apocalypse: “I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades” (Rev. 1:17–18).

For me, one of the indicators of our being well rooted in the Lord is when we can hold together the tensions involved in our being Jesuits, tensions summed up in the classical “contemplative in action.” Breaking down this formula, I would point to four areas in which we are most clearly called to be men of synthesis.

### *Availability and Apostolic Perseverance*

The first of these lies in the scope of our apostolic action: the Society’s universality which, as such and essentially, affirms particularity. This requires of the Jesuit a practice of availability and of apostolic

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<sup>11</sup>JMB refers to GC 32, d. 2, no. 1: “What is it to be a Jesuit today? It is to know that one is a sinner yet called to be a companion of Jesus.”

<sup>12</sup>Underlying this compressed formula may be a Thomist philosophical argument akin to the so-called cosmological proof of God’s existence: the distinction between substantial and accidental change in a reality cannot be located wholly within the reality itself; it presupposes a purpose specified by something external.

perseverance, both at once, so that the Jesuit becomes neither barnacle nor butterfly.<sup>13</sup> The inculturation that the Society of Jesus is asking of us requires an interior agility so that we can recognize what must remain constant and what can vary. There must also be a great austerity in our contemplation, enabling us to avoid confusing what has real backbone from what is just floppy. To put it more simply: to live this tension in a way that brings salvation is a discipline to be learned: Ignatian indifference, letting oneself be led by the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

### *Spiritual Union and Apostolic Dispersion*

Spatial distance is another test of the Jesuit's ability to maintain tensions. For, on the one hand, he is a member of a body, a *communitas*; but this community is *ad dispersionem*—for dispersion. A person who maintains this tension well bears fruit: not just any old union, but a union “of hearts,” hearts of soldiers fighting in the trenches of the Kingdom. Our Lord becomes for us the Eternal King who is calling us to a great conquest, pointing out the dangers coming from the enemy camp, and teaching us both the tactics and the strategy of spiritual combat.<sup>15</sup>

This unites us because it constitutes our family ethos. We are not talking so much of qualities that make us more or less brilliant in this war, but of attitudes which mark us out as more active—active in the sense of a desire to follow the Lord more . . . to love him more, and for him to be called together to go to the blind, the lame, those with leprosy, the dead, and the poor—and this without being scandalized at him (Matt. 11:4–6).

This martial mysticism may lead us to think more in terms of the goal to be achieved and to neglect our companion in the fight. But it is also true that if we think of the true triumph to which the Lord wants

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<sup>13</sup>*Ni topo ni mariposa*: literally “neither mole nor butterfly.” The English phrase is a *bon mot* of the notoriously forthright British provincial, Jock Earle (1925–2003). JMB refers to Pedro Arrupe's 1977 letter “Apostolic Availability” (*Challenge to Religious Life Today*, 227–38), and to GC 32, d. 4, no. 69.

<sup>14</sup>JMB's footnotes refer repeatedly in these sections to various texts of GC 32.

<sup>15</sup>JMB refers to *SpEx*, no. 135, introducing the Two Standards: “We will see the intention of Christ our Lord, and by contrast that of the enemy of human nature.” This strategy, he says, “becomes a ‘charism,’ since the ‘charism of the Society is to serve Christ poor and humble’” (GC 32, d. 12, no. 2).

to take us, this will force us to be very appreciative of any good contribution made in this enterprise, and indeed positively to venerate those who were left injured. War wounds are not condemned but kissed.

### *Past Memories and Future Boldness*

Another problem arising from what it is to be a Jesuit I would put like this: how do we relate to time? What meaning do we find in our work? How do we distinguish between what is passing and what lasts? How can we tell the difference between the steps that make history and a slip, or a mere clicking of heels?

This is important when it comes to choosing our ministries and also for setting priorities for our institutions. We need to stay with those ministries that promise reconciliation with the past, creativity regarding the future, and clear answers for the present—and all these at once. Which is very different from retreating to “what we have always done.”

Our mysticism seeks for us to be both faithful to our history and courageously open to the future. The temptation is ostrich spirituality, burying our heads in the sand, whether in a restorationist workshop (as the traditionalists want of us) or a utopianist laboratory (as those claim who, carried forward by their souls’ superficiality are always seeking to be “on the crest of the wave”). Neither of these will do—neither traditionalism nor utopianism.

The path is not an easy one, but the province is beginning to see it: both faithfulness to history and courage in face of the future. And when we say faithfulness to history, we mean fidelity to the sources of our spirituality, fidelity to the synthesis achieved by the first fathers in our lands.

This is what it is to live out of what is “classic.” All this is quite different from cheap recourse to the “traditional,” from an empty traditionalism concerned simply to keep the peace—the peace which ends up being the peace of the grave. “Classic” here means those key moments of experience, of theological reflection, and of culture that make history—make history because in some way they touch into irreversible milestones in the development of a people, of the Church, of an individual. It is a matter of keeping in view the central essence of what constitutes and defines us (see Heb.

10:32 ff; 13:7 ff), in such a way as to be able to move forward in the way that the specific situations of the present time demand without deviating from our identity.<sup>16</sup> From the “classics” we can draw inspiration so as to move forward with these two attitudes that seem to be opposite but which together spell out our way of being: memory of the past and courage to open up new spaces for God.

The “classic” figures were strong enough to hold things together at moments of conflict. We are not talking here about easy compromises or cheap irenicisms. We are talking about ways of synthesis which—without denying the oppositions inevitable in crises—nevertheless succeed on a higher plane in resolving the conflicts within some mysterious form of understanding, and of fidelity to what is perennial in history. That is why “classics” have this double force: faithful to history, inspiring new paths to follow.

Perhaps there is no better evocation of what it is to be a “classic” than what Cervantes puts into the mouth of Bachelor Carrasco in part 2, chapter 3 of *Don Quixote*, as the character praises the story of the knight errant: “The children turn its leaves, the young people read it, the grown men understand it, the old folk celebrate it.” A “classic” is just like this. Its message has a particular sort of simplicity, so that as the years pass, as a person grows and comes to understand it better, “the old folk celebrate it.”

Our time, the time that is fruitful in God, the time that saves us from the bondage of the moment—the time that sets us within the history of the holy, faithful people, making us fruitful in our apostolate and freeing us from the barren “historicism” that traps us in the contradictions of the moment. This time speaks to our memory, to our imagination, to our abiding identity. A memory of the past anchoring us in our family history; an imagination hopeful in face of the future; a steadfastness in face of a present that, with its constraints, often humiliates us, but which—on the other hand—anooints us with the sharp realism our vocation requires.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Both references encourage Hebrews’ readers to recall the past: their endurance of a hard struggle and the leaders who had spoken to them the word of God.

<sup>17</sup>JMB refers to a talk of Pedro Arrupe’s to Jesuit alumni in 1977 at Padua, not available easily in English. What is required is a continual conversion of heart that

### *Gospel Foundations*

The Jesuit thus has a focus, a horizon: the universality of his mission that as such draws individual elements into solidarity. He has a place from which he acts: that place defines him as a member of a body, and works, paradoxically, both centrifugally and centripetally (*communitas ad dispersionem*). He has a sense of time that energizes his activity. When the Jesuit has this focus, this place from which to act, this sense of history, then he is also allowing the initiating forces of the Society's Institute to pass through his heart. These forces give him a grounding, an identity, a sense of belonging.

The man who lets himself be guided by these principles is building on rock and not on sand (see Matt. 7:24–27). But that general statement can easily remain just abstract and up in the air if we do not look at it more closely and work out what it means—what it is to be a man who builds, what it is to be a man of the quagmire. Perhaps by looking at the Lord's parables, where the symbols bring out more clearly the source of the Gospel, we will be helped to understand.

a. A first parable: the parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard (Matt. 21:28–32). More specifically, we should focus on the son who starts by saying no and then, oddly, ends up going. In our Jesuit language, we could perhaps say that when he said no, he was under the influence of temptation. But then, so it seems, he read what was going on rightly, and detected the enemy, and indeed the enemy's strategy, as Ignatius would do in the Two Standards. And his Election, an election of the second "time," was good.<sup>18</sup>

This is a primal reality for a Jesuit: to accept right from the start that he will be tempted. Woe betide us if we do not accept the pain of being tempted, if we do not accept that in our very activity we have to suffer the cross of temptation and bear it like the Lord. This is what

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"transforms subjective sentimentalism into objective realism."

<sup>18</sup>See *SpEx*, no. 176, describing the second "time": "when enough light and knowledge are received by experience of consolations and desolations, and by the experience of the discrimination between various spirits." The Argentinian editors opt "to underline the depth of this point": temptations are not simply to be rejected or even counteracted, but, as a negative indicator, can heighten our awareness of what God's will is.

gives us our identity, a sense of belonging to a company in battle, embracing fully the dramatic character of the Kingdom (see Luke 16:16; Matt. 11:12).<sup>19</sup>

b. We are soldiers of the Kingdom, but not just ascetics. We can count on a triumph that will certainly take place. The day and the hour have not been revealed to us—a point that reveals something of the scale of the battle.<sup>20</sup> But, nevertheless, it is quite certain that we will not be tempted beyond our powers, and also that the Kingdom is not given in proportion to our efforts. For it was the Lord's will to speak to us of the Kingdom through a symbol pregnant with hope: he spoke of it as being like the seed which grows alone (Mark 4:26–27).

It is not just that the solid and perfect virtues take on real shape in our daily struggle; rather they only acquire their solidity and perfection when “they place their hope in Him.”<sup>21</sup> This process grounds the Jesuit, because it puts him in the way of the true hope and, amid the blood and the sweat of the struggle, opens him up to the breadth of heaven.

c. But it is memory that provides the most radical grounding for a Jesuit's heart. When St. Ignatius says that we should bring things to our memory (*SpEx*, no. 234), he is speaking to us about a retrieval of our history of grace. And the graces, given our sinful condition, are always gifts of mercy. It is the awareness of being grounded in the paternal mercy of the Lord making us sons that grounds us as true Fathers. For me, this meaning is also there in Ignatius's desire that we should be “familiar with God”: the Jesuit familiar with God can be son, brother, and father.

In the Gospel parables, the fathers of families are characterized in this way: one is the one who knows how to bring together the new and the old (Matt. 13:52); another image of the Father is of not hesitating to sacrifice his own son. Do you remember the parable of the tenants in the vineyard (Matt. 21:33–42)? The inalienable inheritance,

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<sup>19</sup>JMB's references are both about violence: everyone trying to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by force, the Kingdom suffering violence, and the violent taking it by force.

<sup>20</sup>The translation here is conjectural; the text may be corrupt.

<sup>21</sup>JMB plays on *Constitutions*, X.1 [812].

almost like the oil of the ten virgins, should bear fruit so as to provide an abundance of bread for people who appreciate it and do not waste it. Another father is the one who never ceases to see hope of growth in the small crop of wheat, perhaps weakened by many tares (Matt. 13:24–30). Therefore he is waiting on the road, as Luke tells us in his parable of mercy, because he knows too that God is Father also of those who arrive only at the eleventh hour (Matt. 20: 1–16).

Our memory makes us who we are. By making us sons and fathers at once, it founds a family in our hearts, and makes us “founders” of the Church, which is itself a family, and which for St. Ignatius has the warmest name that we can stammer or whisper when we are talking about the family: the name of a Holy Mother (*SpEx*, no. 353).

### *Devotion and Apostolic Zeal*

Because our memory forms us into a family, I would say that there is something running all the way through this image of the Jesuit, moving within a particular setting, with his gaze focused in a characteristic way, and with a particular sense of time.<sup>22</sup> This constant element is a hallmark of the well-grounded Jesuit who has let himself be shaped by the principles of the Society’s Institute. What is this indicator, this sign? I would say simply that this Jesuit is devout,<sup>23</sup> and that the flame of his devout fidelity has an unmistakable name: apostolic zeal.<sup>24</sup>

In the Spiritual Exercises, our devotion too comes from its own place, with its own focus and sense of history. The originating place of Ignatian devotion is, in particular, the “colloquies”: to our Lady, to the Son, to the Father. It is driven by the Spirit’s sense of time. Its focus is zeal for the Kingdom.

In the First Week Ignatius raises us up again—out of our sins—in his “colloquies” to mercy. In the *Anima Christi* he places us in contact with the Lord’s sanctifying body in such a way that we are hidden

<sup>22</sup>JMB here links, rhetorically rather than logically, the end of the excursus with the three tensions he had named earlier.

<sup>23</sup>“Devotion” translates *piEDAD*—a policy carried through with the cognates. In some places, it seems advisable to add a reference to fidelity.

<sup>24</sup>JMB refers to Pedro Arrupe’s 1976 letter, “Genuine Integration of the Spiritual Life and the Apostolate,” in *Challenge to Religious Life Today*, 191–200.

in his wounds and thus have our own wounds and sores healed. Only then, “in case we forget his eternal love,” does he put us in hell. And it is there, when he has put us down in hell, that he then speaks not only of mercy but also of *piedad* (*SpEx*, no. 71).<sup>25</sup> The Lord’s faithful devotion, the warm and tender hand of his mercy, has shaped itself for us into the image of Mary with her Son in her arms, dead and broken for our sins. God looks at our sin with a mother’s warmth; so infinite is His mercy that here, where human logic would have set mere abhorrence and repugnance, he placed tenderness. And this tenderness awakens our devotion and fidelity.

In the key meditations of the Second Week, the “colloquies” might seem to imply the image of beggars, stretching out their hands, shameless in the face of their God about their need. And what do they ask for? To be armed with the weapons of the Kingdom, to be enlisted under the Standard of the Lord. In short, [Ignatius] opens our devotion out into the mission of our Mother, the Church. And to the “colloquies” we add the offering that reaches its climax in the Contemplation to Attain Love: “Take, Lord, and receive” (*SpEx*, no. 234). Our devotion thus emerges from thanksgiving, from Eucharist. We are following Jesus to the place where he has made himself a complete act of thanks to the Father who is in heaven.

And Ignatius situates our devotion within the only possible understanding of time: the time of the Spirit, forming the history of the saving God. It might seem odd—but Ignatius does not want our decisions to be taken only through the “third time” of election, without being confirmed—in other words without submitting them, in some way, to the first or second “times.” For here, in these first and second “times,” the Spirit is at work—consoling, confirming, freeing us from temptation, strengthening.<sup>26</sup> Ignatian devotion moves within the

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<sup>25</sup>At the end of the colloquy, “I will consider how up to now he has always had so great pity (*piedad*) and mercy on me”—which JMB proceeds to gloss in terms of Mary and the Pietà.

<sup>26</sup>JMB’s footnote here refers to the three “times” of Ignatian election (*SpEx*, no. 175). In requiring the third to be confirmed by the other two, he is following a common, though questionable, interpretation. See Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God’s Will* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 216–54. JMB is surely right, however, in resisting any account of the third “time” as simply “the product of an ideology or of a mere chain of reasoning.”

world without being of the world; but this does not exempt it from being subject to temptation. And in terms of our triad, we might say that every temptation is towards turning our mission into an activity of the moment;<sup>27</sup> it undermines the space from which it should move; and it weakens the focus of our mission.

I also said that Ignatian piety lights the flame of apostolic zeal. In the language of Paul VI, this apostolic devotion is named fervor: “the sweet and strengthening joy of evangelization, even when it is in tears that we have to sow . . . with an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 80). As symptoms of a lack of fervor, the Holy Father sees fatigue and disappointment, just fitting in the background, lack of interest, joylessness, hopelessness. But where he spends more time is on the “pretexts”<sup>28</sup>—pretexts of those who in the end believe more in their conscience and in their human conceptions and elaborations than in the teaching of the Church and in the requests of the people of faith.<sup>29</sup>

Fervor will make us recall the Lord’s recommendation to his apostles: “Do not take the road of the Gentiles. . . . Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food” (see Matt. 10:5–14). As workers among the Lord’s flock, we will find our food in the teachings of the Church which missions us, and in the sense of devotion of our faithful people who are calling on us, and wanting

to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world. (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 80)

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<sup>27</sup> For JMB, the mission takes place in the Spirit’s time.

<sup>28</sup> See again *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 80, which addresses the claim that “to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty,” and also the question, “Why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart?”

<sup>29</sup> JMB cites *Evangelii nuntiandi*, nn. 3–4, which sees as the “central axis of evangelization” fidelity both to “a heritage of faith that the Church has the duty of preserving in its untouchable purity” and to “a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact.”

We have recalled how our evangelization is inevitably dependent on mediations. We must also be very clear on how we need to be helped in the proclamation of the Kingdom. But it is in this business of the mediations and the people who help us that sometimes the devil puts his “tail” in (*SpEx*, no. 334) and makes them no longer helps but sacred cows, “favorites” in a bad sense. And we—who in our task have only one Lord, who is our Lord Jesus Christ, and one specific flock, our faithful people—might find very suggestive what her mother said to Queen Isabella: “Ah, Queen, my little queen—woe to the sovereign who has a favorite other than their people.”<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusion

With these words, I have tried to introduce one of the tasks for this provincial congregation of the Argentinian Province of the Society of Jesus: that of articulating together the state of the province. The framework I suggest is that which has run through these reflections. The brief way I would put it is this: to review our awareness that we have in the province of our focus, the space from which we operate, and our sense of time. This comes down to the following four tensions:

- availability and apostolic perseverance
- spiritual union and apostolic dispersion
- past memories and future boldness
- devotion and apostolic zeal

We will do this in an atmosphere of devotion and of hope that the faith which the Lord has put within us will inspire us, since, as I said at the beginning, the Lord has taken us to himself as his bride in faith and through mercy.

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<sup>30</sup>A biography of Cisneros recounts that as Queen Isabella, before her betrothal to Ferdinand, was visiting her demented Portuguese mother, the latter, who herself had had problematic favorites at court, grabbed her by the arm and uttered this saying in Portuguese (see Luis Coloma, S.J., *Fray Francisco* [Madrid: Razón y fe, 1914], 1.87–88).

### III. Permanent Formation and Reconciliation (1980)

In recent times religious institutes have paid increased attention to what goes by the name of permanent formation. They have recognized the need for people to get some new ideas, to get some updating on pastoral questions after years of life in ministry, to discover more effective channels for apostolic zeal, and so on. All this provides ample justification for the efforts being made to get religious to accept what is called permanent formation.

But this kind of permanent formation remains incomplete and superficial unless it goes to the heart of the matter: the affiliation of religious to their own Institute. There are some religious whose needs are more in this area than in one or other aspect of theology or pastoral care: they need to be reconciled with their own Institute, to renew their sense of belonging, to reconstruct their identity. What follows is intended as a reflection on this aspect of permanent formation.

#### *The Need for Corporate Belonging*

Our theme presupposes, crucially, that we need to identify ourselves as Christians and as religious in terms of belonging to a body, and I shall try to explain this.

We have to be able to think of the Church as a body, as an institution, and get beyond false oppositions of every kind. At a time when Christian elites have lost their sense of direction and wasted their energy on fruitless discussions, we need to look in the shipwreck for the message which, contained in a bottle, as it were, is floating on the ocean. (How many religious there are who think of themselves as somehow shipwrecked from the Institute to which they belong!)

The Church's history tells us that it was often from such a position that it found salvation. It did not find its way through the endless disputes about the Trinity, for example, as a result of long ideological speeches masquerading as dialogue, but rather through the pastors who were close to the life of the believing people. They discovered that these faithful people were preserving their faith—they knew it deeply, they had a nose for the things of heaven and were in touch with them.

This awareness may not have been set out in rational categories, but its aim was right on the mark.

In dealing with this issue, we must make the effort to sense the breadth and depth of what it is to be religious. We can start by sketching the derivation of the term: it is about people who are bound.<sup>1</sup> There cannot be an authentic religion without reconciliation. For human beings bound up with each other are able to take a good look at themselves; human beings bound up with each other have a particular way of looking at reality; human beings bound up with each other share common convictions. It is on this basis, too, that we need to discover the real meaning of “institution”—it is about people whose love transcends the passing of time and the dispersion this entails by making themselves an institution. Being reconciled, then, with our own Institute is also to bind oneself again to the institution that gives us a sense of belonging.

### *God's Salvation in History*

Whenever a deed breaks in on human time, that time becomes history and there arises an institution.<sup>2</sup> We are not talking here about just any deed. The deeds in question are those whose meaning renders them inexorable—not just things done in the past that cannot be present to us now. Nor is it merely that these past deeds are irrevocable. They have a continuing presence, establishing landmarks for the future.

But when an institution in this sense occurs in a Church context (as with a religious institute), then these events with permanent effect are sacred events. As such they enact God's impregnation of history with the fullness of reality. These events are eschatological, salvific. They are God's way of being institutional.

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<sup>1</sup>Latin *ligare*.

<sup>2</sup>JMB is using words idiosyncratically here, investing everyday terms with technical meaning that they cannot really sustain. But the thought pattern reflects a standard theology. The Incarnation, God's entry into history, changes what it is to be human, irrevocably and with lasting effects. That transformation is embodied in the Church, the sacrament of salvation. The argument depends not on what he denies but on what he affirms; it is the last sentence of this paragraph that is significant.

God's salvation happens every time that human efforts come together to bring about the family of God.<sup>3</sup> It is in the light of this way of thinking about institution that you have to assess positions taken up, whether critical or creative, regarding any Church institution. And religious institutes are an institution of the Church.

### *Questions—and How to Discern Them*

The specific questions that we could put to ourselves might run as follows. My general attitude—is it constructive or destructive? Does it make for unity or division? Does it strengthen the foundations or is it just decoration of the battlements? And what effect is this attitude having on my own self? Is it making me grow or regress? Is it integrating me or dividing me? Making me stronger or weaker?

In answering these questions, it is only looking at the Gospel that will help. The Gospel is a school of discrimination, enabling us to sort out the authenticity of our attitudes towards institutions. Perhaps in this family atmosphere that the Gospel creates for us, where we are not feeling threatened from outside, it will do us good to look at the Lord's disputes with the different groups within Israel, who had quite pronounced attitudes towards institutions.

### *The Pharisees*

For example, what did the Lord do with the Pharisees, as zealous as they were for their institutions? What is Jesus' response when the Pharisees condemn the disciples as they pick corn on the Sabbath? It is certainly not that of an anarchist, automatically resisting institutions that are the fruits of people's accumulated love and patience. Nor is it that of compulsive critics, arbitrarily putting things in place or pulling them down as the mood takes them. Jesus leads the Pharisees towards distinguishing what is central from what is secondary: the interpretations of one commentator at a particular moment from what would have been the deep content of a commandment. When in his answer he presents them with the scene of the bread of offering, taken

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<sup>3</sup>The theological difficulty here, one that should be acknowledged even when it cannot be resolved, is that of reconciling this formulation of the matter "from below" with a version of the divine event "entering" or "impregnating" time "from above" sufficiently realist to sustain JMB's decidedly strong conception of special divine institution.

from the history of the chosen people under the leadership of David, he is calling them to look to what promotes human dignity rather than mere servility.

But, as I understand it, this promotion of dignity is not to be identified with a liberal individualism that concentrates on humanity's peripheral needs and stifles the deepest one: the need for God. And perhaps this is a criterion for distinguishing an authentic loosening-up of institutions from what is nothing more than a servile bondage to a hedonistic, selfish, and competitive society. For the deepest thing the Lord says in this dispute is that no institution may obscure the newness of Christ. And this newness of Christ, which is the measure of all things, is obscured by what is retrograde and by what is pure novelty alike.

But perhaps the deepest feature of the Pharisees' temptation regarding institutions is that of denying God his prerogative of being the Father who summons all. That is what the Pharisees' arrogance is about; there is where the conflict lies. For human efforts are pillars that are too weak to sustain God's power. And thus the Pharisaic spirit cracks up and breaks. Pharisaic attitudes, like Pharisaic institutions, have feet of clay. The Pharisee usurps, arrogates to himself, God's eschatological judgment.

### *The Sadducees*

Another sort of wrong attitude regarding institutions is that of the Sadducees. The world of the Sadducees, those who denied the resurrection of the dead, is, as such, that of the defenders of institutions, even when these feed on injustices. It is the dead who bury the dead. They try to rob God of his power; but their version is a poor caricature, incapable of being a seed of the Kingdom. For them, institutions are tombs, and therefore they defend the institutions as a way of denying the reality of time and of claiming control over their own death.

### *The Zealots*

There is another way of denying the reality of time: the utopia temptation, the temptation to substitute a human utopia for the Kingdom of God. Doing this is like not measuring the foundations before building the house. It is a failure to accept a basic fact about creation: to achieve an end you have to consider the means. It is a magical way

of thinking, changing real morality into abstract moralism. This is the philosophy of the Zealots. They deny the true glory of God, and put in its place a perversion, along the lines of a triumphalist caricature. Though the Zealots fight to destroy structures that oppress humanity, history shows that they were fighting for other structures that proved equally inadequate.

What Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots have in common is the same elitist attitude: of wanting to do everyone's thinking about everything for them. Each of the three groups has its own way of denying the fullness of God, be it God's glory, power, or final judgment. And in so doing, they also deny their own brothers and sisters the power to make decisions, the right to move a process forward and organize themselves to do so, the right to form their own institution.

### *The Novelty of Christ*

I said that what was most fundamental in the Lord's attitude amid his disputes would lead us to discover what was new about him. Discovering Christ's newness requires us to be able to get beyond nostalgia and the wrong sort of novelty alike. It requires us to take a look at what is really happening. This is where it gets difficult.

If you get bogged down in the past, you cannot see the movement, the faces, the specific signs—they get blurred in the distance. It is as if you are turning life into a restorer's workshop. But equally, a real vision of Christ's newness also eludes those who are planning their utopias under laboratory conditions, uncontaminated by reality.

Restorationists and idealists, conservatives and revolutionaries will always be fighting to get power, get control, run the institution. The argument remains put in such a way that there are just two possible alternatives. Our institutions have to be either restoration workshops or antiseptic laboratories. Meanwhile, while we are arguing and wasting time on these arguments, we do not see the real movement going on among God's faithful people. It is with these people that effective power, wisdom, real problems, serious suffering move forward—and here too is the movement of salvation. Then, as always, the restorationist and idealistic ideologues, incapable of smelling the sweat of the real advance, will get left behind. They are cut off in their elitism and hold on to their tired, gray cartoon-book narratives. Thus

they fail to join in the march of the history where God is saving us, God is making us a body, an institution. God's power enters history so as to make of human beings one single body.

Behind the attitudes of the Pharisees, the Saducees, and the Zealots regarding institutions, there is no desire to form a body. The ambition is sectarian—the aim is to hold on to a privilege of power: a privilege of spiritualized power in the case of the Pharisees, a privilege of reactionary religious power in the case of the Saducees, and a privilege of pseudo-revolutionary religious power among the Zealots. And this power is, as such, divisive. It is not unifying, like the power of God.

### *Ecclesial Institution—The Essential*

By following this path, by trying in this way to re-imagine the counter-evangelical ways of thinking and how they relate to institutions, we have reached the point of being able to see what is really essential in any Church institution: helping people become united within the scope of the plan that constitutes them as the one people of God. And the evangelical thing for us to do, I think, is to make an effort to recognize where we are amid these postures. Then the Lord can release the airlock on our capsules and get us to breathe the pure air of freedom.

This can also help us understand that every Church institution is open to hope. For the root of any lack of hope I would venture to see in our disengagement from the movement of the body. It is when we no longer say “our God” but “my God,” when the Lord who calls us together is no longer the God of all but the God made to my measure. Within that sort of isolation, the only thing left is the cold ritual of a timeless idol. It knows nothing of the past or of the future. It has locked itself up in a narcissistic projection.

### *Reconciliation with Institutions*

I think that what reconciles a man and a woman with institutions, with their religious Institute—assuming that this latter is reconciled with the Church—is when their attitude to the institution stresses—just as Christ did—the idea of the body and the idea of time. And I would go so far as to say that the Beatitudes of the Kingdom mark out for us the attitudes to let go of and the attitudes to let take flesh, so that the Kingdom becomes an institution among ourselves.

Happy the poor, because they need to be made united so as to carry forward their project of liberation. Happy the poor, because for them justice is a reality which absolutely must be sought, because they need it, because they thirst for it. And they are happy because they are aware of time and of hope, and because they do not repress the suffering that leads to the resurrection. And because they have been wounded (persecuted), they know where the real enemy is. They are not at war with anyone, because the quest for peace and justice has given them clarity, has purified their hearts. And because they accept their deepest weakness, that of sin, they are prepared—given the slightest glimmer of good will—to offer an alternative. They are merciful, and they are people of hope, in and beyond time, because they are wise and know that only God satisfies.

### *Belonging to the Institute*

If we come back to the way of life of so many members of religious orders who, gradually, almost imperceptibly, have been drifting away from their affiliation to their Institute, completely or partially, what we discover is that often their lives have been obscured through categories driven by other ideologies, other programs of life that camouflage what is distinctive and creative about the Kingdom of God. Thus in religious groups we talk about “right” and “left”; the “play safes” (those who seek the wrong sort of safety) are called “middle of the road” (neither go-go nor no-no, but so-so). And this is not of God. This divides.

I would venture to suggest another way of characterizing people that may be useful. I really want this to be useful, and therefore I do not want to use it as a way of excluding anyone. Rather, I am inviting us to a salvation in the Body of Christ, going beyond sectarian disputes.

I would put it like this: is the stance being taken by this Institute, or the critical attitude being adopted by a religious regarding his or her Institute—is this posture elitist and therefore divisive, alienated from real history, without hope? Is it a cheap compromise, lumping things together without really producing unity, and covering over history and hope with an empty optimism? Or is it the posture of people who feel themselves members of a body—unifying, without denying conflict, but knowing that life is more than conflict? A person who prefers

real history over their gray cartoon-book narrative, one who knows that love judges history, and that hope is more than our expectation?

*Conclusion: Christian Principles of Reconciliation  
with One's Own Institute*

What has been said here could remain like a mere glossy catalogue of nice ideas cut off from history unless we situate it within the horizon of our own Institute's religious experience and in the bosom of the Church, the faithful people of God. I think all reconciliation must be rooted in the faith of our fathers, as we received it in the Church and in our own religious Institute. If we look attentively at the faith of our fathers, the desire that made them into our Founders, and the special wisdom of the people whom we call faithful, the people which is the people of God—we will see that with regard to institutions it maintains four Christian principles around which reconciliation can revolve. The whole comes before the part; unity comes before conflict; reality comes before ideas; history comes before variety.

People not reconciled with institutions, religious who have lost in their hearts a sense of belonging to their own Institute, place their hope in one side of the conflicts, in ideas, in the little spaces they have managed to hold on to for themselves. These men and women prefer to be loners. They feed their hearts on conflicts (they really are collectors of injustices—those nuns about whom St. Teresa used to say that they spent their lives saying, "They did this to me without reason").<sup>4</sup> They dream of ideas that have no connection with reality, or of projects that will not work. They seek the harvest of the moment, not the true riches that come with time.

To be reconciled with our own Institute is to make our own the deep preference for time, for unity, for the whole, for reality—all this before the trivial interests of one's own spaces, of polarizing conflicts, of the smaller parts that stop us from really seeing things as they are, and of ideologies that have nothing to do with reality.

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<sup>4</sup>Teresa of Avila, *Way of Perfection*, 13.1.



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