



# STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

TEN THINGS THAT ST. IGNATIUS  
NEVER SAID OR DID

BARTON T. GEGER, S.J.

50/1 SPRING 2018

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

*STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* is a publication of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially US and Canadian 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.

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**BARTON T. GEGER, SJ**

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**50/1 • SPRING 2018**

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## *a word from the editor . . .*

**W**e need translators!

There is no need to re-invent the wheel. Numerous excellent essays on Jesuit history and spirituality, and numerous edifying reflections by Jesuits, already exist in a variety of languages besides English, all of them waiting to be translated. I think, for example, of the retreat-talks on the Jesuit *Constitutions* that Jesuit martyr Fr. Alfred Delp (1907–1945) gave to his companions. There is the groundbreaking essay that Fr. George Ganss (1905–2000) had recommended by Fr. François Courel (1924–2001) on the one end of the Society of Jesus: “La fin unique de la Compagnie de Jésus.”<sup>1</sup> And then there is the essay sitting on my desk by Fr. José Luis Sánchez-Girón Renedo (ESP), a summary of his award-winning dissertation on the Jesuit account of conscience.

Many Jesuits in Canada and the United States have shared with me their desires to give something back to their Jesuit companions by contributing an essay to *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. But, to be candid, the time-commitment required to write a monograph from scratch of 10,000 to 15,000 words can be prohibitive.

Thankfully, there is an alternative. What better gift, I suggest, can a Jesuit give to the Society than to make an amazing wealth of resources more widely available? I can imagine that these issues of *STUDIES* would become classics to which Jesuits and others continually return.

If Jesuits would like to offer their services for this purpose, or if they have suggestions about texts that would serve the English-speaking Society of Jesus, please contact the general editor at [JCUStudies.org](http://JCUStudies.org).

*Barton T. Geger, SJ*  
*General Editor*

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<sup>1</sup> *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 35 (1966): 186–211; George E. Ganss, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 78n11.



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# Ten Things That St. Ignatius Never Said or Did

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*For decades, many dubious accounts of what St. Ignatius said, wrote, and did have circulated among Jesuits and their colleagues and students. While some of these accounts cause no great harm or offense, others directly affect how one understands Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuit way of proceeding. In an age of electronic media, when the dissemination of misquotes and "fake news" has multiplied exponentially, those who conserve and pass on the Ignatian, Jesuit tradition have a greater responsibility than ever to verify what they attribute to St. Ignatius.*

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## Introduction

"There was no horse."

The professor said it casually, almost in passing, but not without a thin smile that betrayed an awareness of what he was doing. Then my stomach did that queasy little roll that people feel whenever the elevator in which they are standing suddenly drops beneath them.

"Well, of course there was a horse," I thought. "Everyone tells the story with a horse." I thought of Caravaggio's painting, *The Conversion of St. Paul on the Road to Damascus*. St. Paul lies flat on his back, two hands groping blindly at the sky. And there is the horse, its reins held tightly by an attendant, but still managing to look back at its fallen master with an expression of embarrassment.

Could it really be possible that Christians have been telling the story wrong for at least five centuries? I grabbed a Bible and searched the New Testament. In the Acts of the Apostles, I found three third-person accounts of Paul's conversion, and in Galatians and First Corinthians, I found Paul's own, first-person accounts.<sup>1</sup> Sure enough, no mention of a horse. Paul was knocked to the ground, and that was it.

That got me thinking. Why is the horse so engrained in the minds of Christians? Perhaps it is a matter of momentum. That is to say, perhaps it is the power of being told over and over that something is to be found in a text, so that, in the absence of a reason to suspect otherwise, it becomes a fact as obvious as gravity.

But that raises more questions. Why did the detail of the horse get added in the first place? Who added it? And why do people insist on repeating it? In the case of St. Paul, perhaps Christians unconsciously assume that, for a story so central to the birth of the Church, a fall from a greater height simply makes sense. Or even that such a fall is somehow *required*.

Strictly speaking, the lack of a horse did not bother me. The story had not changed in any essential respect. But something did unnerve me very much, and to tell the truth, it still unnerves me. Since my youth, I had heard the story of St. Paul's conversion read to me countless times at Mass. And if someone had asked me back then, I would have *sworn* that I heard the word *horse*.

In the same spirit, I would like to consider some false or problematic affirmations that Jesuits, lay colleagues, and spiritual writers often make about St. Ignatius Loyola.<sup>2</sup> My principal concern is not historical accuracy for its own sake. If people insist on making an assertion about Ignati-

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 9:1–10; 22:6–11; 26:12–18; Gal 1:13–17; 1 Cor 15:3–8.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the content of this essay appeared previously in "Myths, Misquotes, and Misconceptions about St. Ignatius Loyola," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal [JHE]* 5, no. 1 (2016): 6–20; and in my introduction to Richard J. Baumann, SJ, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits [SSJ]* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2017): iii–iv.

us that lacks a basis in the textual sources, or even that is contradicted by the textual sources, then there is a reason people are repeating it. At least subconsciously, they find the error attractive or useful, as far as it reinforces a preferred image of Ignatius or a particular spiritual worldview. If they repeat it often enough, they might come to believe that they see it in Ignatius's writings, and tell others that it is there as well.

For example, in the last fifty years, it has become almost standard for Jesuits and spiritual writers in the English-speaking world to describe Ignatian discernment in terms of identifying one's "deepest desires," "authentic desires," or "true self." People are often surprised to hear that this language appears nowhere in the *Spiritual Exercises* or in the remainder of Ignatius's written corpus. It was imported into Ignatian spirituality in the second half of the twentieth century, largely from the writings of Frs. Thomas Merton (1915–1968) and Henri Nouwen (1932–1996).<sup>3</sup>

Were one to re-read the *Spiritual Exercises* with that in mind, I am reasonably confident that one will see that Ignatius does not ask discerners to analyze their subjective desires per se—that is, the uniqueness, origin, depth, and intensity of those desires. Rather, Ignatius wants discerners to ask themselves about the *object* of their desires—that particular person, ministry, or state-of-life to which they are subjectively attracted—and then to ask themselves whether that object, objectively considered in light of their gifts, limitations, and circumstances, will serve the more universal good of souls.<sup>4</sup>

Or again, many spiritual writers give their readers the impression that Ignatius used the term *magis* to denote a component of his spirituality.<sup>5</sup> He did not.<sup>6</sup> When this point is left ambiguous, there can be only

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<sup>3</sup> See James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere: A Search for God through Awareness of the True Self*, foreword by Henri Nouwen (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1978); Will Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen and Spiritual Polarities: A Life of Tension* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012); James Martin, SJ, *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self by Thomas Merton and Other Saints* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> I return to this subject in "Myth 10," pp. 39–42 below.

<sup>5</sup> For reasons to be explained shortly, I do not cite specific examples here.

<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, the earliest reference to *magis* as an Ignatian term appears in

three reasons: the writers did so deliberately, the writers did not know the truth of the matter, or the writers failed to communicate a critical point with sufficient clarity. But whatever the reason, the result is the same: the writers effectively use a holy authority figure like Ignatius to legitimate their own ideas about the meaning of *magis*.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius counsels exercitants who discover that they have erred in their thinking, or who find themselves in desolation, to trace the train of their good thoughts backwards until they identify the moment when they were first deceived.<sup>7</sup> “The purpose,” he writes, “is that through this experience, now recognized and noted, the soul may guard itself in the future against these characteristic snares.”<sup>8</sup> In a similar fashion, I will endeavor to trace these errors to their sources and to suggest some reasons why people continue to perpetuate them.

For example, in “The First First Companions: The Continuing Impact of the Men Who Left Ignatius,” I wrongly asserted that Ignatius had travelled on foot from Paris to Azpeitia in 1535.<sup>9</sup> And so, shortly after the essay was published, two Jesuits called to inform me that Ignatius had ridden a pony on that trip, and that the “Autobiography” is explicit on that point.<sup>10</sup> They were correct on both counts.

An inconsequential detail? A totally innocent error? Not really. In retrospect, I see that I erred for a reason. I had been trying to emphasize the length of time that Ignatius was away from his companions, and the difficulties of his journey, because these served my larger agenda: to maximize the distress that the First Companions would have felt about the possible disintegration of their group in Ignatius’s absence. This

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a 1956 essay by Fr. François Courel, SJ, later translated as “St. Ignatius and the Greater Glory of God,” in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Ignatian Spirituality*, trans. William Young, SJ (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1958), 25–42. See also Barton T. Geger, SJ, “What *Magis* Really Means and Why It Matters,” *JHE* 1, no. 2 (2012): 16–31.

<sup>7</sup> *SpEx* 334.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, trans. George E. Ganss, SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992), 127.

<sup>9</sup> Barton T. Geger, SJ, “The First First Companions: The Continuing Impact of the Men Who Left Ignatius,” *SSJ* 44, no. 2 (Autumn 2014): 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Auto.* 87.



agenda created a blind spot, such that I failed to see what was clearly present in the text.

For a more substantial example, consider the wildly popular quotation attributed to the late Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991), which has found its way into innumerable books and websites on Ignatian spirituality:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

In fact, the true author is Fr. Joseph Whelan, SJ (1932–1994), former provincial of the Maryland Province and American assistant to the superior general. In 1981, Fr. Whelan gave a prepared talk to each community in his province, twelve pages in length, in which the above quotation appears verbatim.<sup>11</sup>

In November 2016, a Jesuit sent to me an e-mail, confessing that he “may have had a hand” in starting the Arrupe quote. He found it attributed to Fr. Arrupe in a vocations calendar for women religious, and then posted it on the website of the university where he was working. Years later, he noticed that the quotation was posted on many other Jesuit websites. By then, he had doubts about its authenticity, and so he contacted the webmasters of these sites, asking for their source. He discovered, much to his wonder, that all of them could be traced back to his original post.

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*Or again, many spiritual writers give their readers the impression that Ignatius used the term magis to denote a component of his spirituality. He did not.*

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on the original source of the quotation, see Geger, “Myths,” 11–12.

One might argue that the perpetuation of this particular quote is simply a matter of well-intentioned people repeating in good faith what they had read or heard elsewhere. For the most part, I believe this is accurate. But intellectual honesty requires that a question be asked. For over twenty years, researchers had tried to find the source of the quotation in Fr. Arrupe's writings and recorded talks. This means that people cared enough to know whether Fr. Arrupe had really said it; and given the popularity of the quotation, one may reasonably assume that news of its source would have been widely publicized. But when the evidence did not appear, Fr. Arrupe received the credit anyway. And so, the question: are correct attributions important, or are they not?

I began to understand that something more was at work when I informed a lay administrator at a Jesuit university that I was going to publish an essay in which I identified Fr. Whelan as the true author of this Arrupe quote. A wave of sadness washed over his face. "Is that really necessary?" he asked. "Please don't take this away from us." At that moment, I realized that what seemed to matter more, at least to some people, was not the content of the quotation, but the idea that Fr. Arrupe was supposed to have said it.

Jesuits and colleagues rightfully have a devotion to Fr. Arrupe, and many of them understandably want to promote this devotion among their peers and students. The problem they face, however, is that Fr. Arrupe is a somewhat obscure figure outside the Society, and the significance of his life and work is difficult to convey to those with little background in Catholic culture and religious life.<sup>12</sup> In such a context, one can hardly imagine a more expedient way to endear Fr. Arrupe to high school students and university professors alike than a charming sonnet on falling in love.

The present essay poses an unusual difficulty. If I am going to claim that a misattribution is being circulated, then academic credibility requires me to cite examples as evidence. I should not limit myself to vague claims that "people often say this." But I do not wish to embarrass anyone by calling attention to his or her work.

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<sup>12</sup> His appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine (April 23, 1973) notwithstanding.

After consulting with the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, I chose to limit my cited evidence mostly to deceased writers. On a few occasions, I do cite living writers; but when I do, it is simply to note that their work provides either a good example of a particular approach to the spiritual life, or a helpful resource for learning more about that approach.

Admittedly, citing deceased writers has limitations. In the first case, the writers are not here to defend their work. Furthermore, one might draw unfair conclusions about the quality of the writers' work as a whole. But if the readers of this issue of *STUDIES* agree that the subject of this essay is important, then I hope that they will pardon my minimal citation of contemporary literature and electronic media.

As for the deceased writers, some of whom were companions I hold dear, I believe that they already have pardoned me. From their perspective in heaven, gazing down on the Society, I think they would be delighted that their work still contributes to conversations among Jesuits about what it means to follow Jesus after the manner of St. Ignatius.

## Myth 1

*Ignatius told Jesuits that, even if they did not have time for other prayer, they were not to omit the Examination of Conscience.*

I have found no evidence in the documentary tradition that Ignatius ever said that. Nor, apparently, did Fr. Jerome Nadal (1507–1580), the man whom Ignatius entrusted to explain the Society's way of proceeding to Jesuit communities throughout Europe, ever say it.

Now, it is true that Ignatius placed great value on the Examen, and considered it essential to a Jesuit's spiritual regimen. When he and Nadal listed the kinds of prayer expected of Jesuits, they consistently included the Examen alongside Mass, the Divine Office, and some meditation and contemplation.<sup>13</sup> But Ignatius and Nadal did not explicitly

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., *Const.* 65, 261, 342–44, 649; Ignatius's letter to Antonio Brandão, in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* [MHSI], *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Iesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones* [hereafter *Epist. et Instruct.*], 12 vols. (Madrid:

give the Examen more weight than other prayers, nor did they insinuate that other prayers were relatively dispensable compared to the Examen.

In the *Constitutions*, for example, Ignatius provided a norm for the daily prayer of scholastics.<sup>14</sup> He first noted that scholastics should put the primary focus on their studies as opposed to mortifications and long hours of prayer.<sup>15</sup> Then he added:

Consequently, in addition to confession and Communion, which they will frequent every eight days, and Mass which they will hear every day, they will have one hour. During it, they will recite the Hours of Our Lady, and examine their consciences twice each day, and other prayers according to the devotion of each one until the aforementioned hour is completed, in case it has not yet run its course. They will do all this to the arrangements and judgments of their superiors, whom they oblige themselves to obey in place of Christ our Lord.<sup>16</sup>

Two points are notable about this passage. First, Ignatius seems more at pains to communicate that a Jesuit should spend a full hour in prayer than to specify the prayers that should fill that hour.

Second, the requirement of two Examens a day might give the impression that Ignatius was placing greater emphasis on that prayer. But weekly communion and confession were also unusual for his day.<sup>17</sup> Also unusual was his requirement that scholastics pray the Hours of Our

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1903–1911), III: 506–13; trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2006), 339–45; Ignatius's letter to Francis Borgia (*Epist. et Instruct.* XII: 632–54; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 266–83. See also Joseph de Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young, SJ (Chicago: IJS, 1964), 66–68, 86–90.

<sup>14</sup> In my text, the word *constitutions* appears capitalized and in italics when referring to the document that St. Ignatius composed, but in lowercase and plain font when referring to its content. Quotations from other authors preserve their formatting regardless of how they use the word.

<sup>15</sup> *Const.* 340.

<sup>16</sup> *Const.* 342; trans. George E. Ganss, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: IJS, 1970), 184.

<sup>17</sup> On frequent communion and confession, see John W. O'Malley, SJ, *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 152–59.

Lady: part of the Divine Office not canonically obligatory for scholastics, as Ignatius himself acknowledged several times in the *Constitutions*.<sup>18</sup>

In 1551, a scholastic named Antonio Brandão wrote the following questions for Ignatius:

1. How much should someone studying in a college devote to prayer and how much to conversing with his brethren, supposing the rector sets no limits to either?
2. Should he omit Mass on some days or say it every day even if it hinders his studies somewhat?<sup>19</sup>

Note that, regarding the second question, Ignatius sent the following response:

[R]emember that the purpose of a scholastic at his studies in the college is to acquire knowledge with which to serve God for his greater glory by helping his neighbor. This demands the whole man, and he would not be devoting himself completely to his studies if he gave himself to lengthy periods of prayer. Hence, for a scholastic who is not a priest (barring the intervention of disturbing agitations or exceptional devotion), one hour besides Mass is all that is needed. During Mass he can make some meditation while the priest is saying the silent parts. During the allotted hour he may as a general rule recite the Hours of Our Lady or some other prayer, or else meditate, as the rector determines. For a priest-scholastic all that is needed are the obligatory office of the hours, Mass, and the exams. He could take an additional half hour in case of exceptional devotion.<sup>20</sup>

In the citation above, Ignatius reaffirmed that daily Mass was obligatory even for busy scholastics. While here he does not mention the Examen, he makes clear later in the letter that it is indeed required:

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<sup>18</sup> *Const.* 343.

<sup>19</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* III: 506–13; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 339.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 341.

In view of the end of our studies, the scholastics cannot engage in long meditations. Over and above the exercises for growth in virtue (daily Mass, an hour for vocal prayer and the examination of conscience, weekly confession and Communion), they can practice seeking the presence of our Lord in all things: in their dealings with other people, their walking, seeing, tasting, hearing, understanding, and all our activities. For his Divine Majesty truly is in everything by his presence, power, and essence. This kind of meditation—finding God our Lord in everything—is easier than lifting ourselves up and laboriously making ourselves present to more abstracted divine realities [ . . . ] In addition, one can practice frequently offering to God our Lord his studies along with the effort that these demand, keeping in mind that we undertake them for his love and setting aside our personal tastes so as to render some service to his Divine Majesty by helping those for whose life he died. We could also make these two practices the matter of our examen.<sup>21</sup>

In 1553, Nadal wrote the following rules for Jesuit communities in Europe. Here he does not mention the Office for scholastics, but he otherwise reaffirms that an hour of prayer was expected, always with accommodations for particular circumstances:

And so, as a general rule [for scholastics], time for prayer will consist of one hour in addition to Mass; that hour can be divided up between two brief examens, and the rest for meditation and vocal prayer, whatever is more suited to them [ . . . ]

For those in probation, more prayer will be necessary: at a minimum, one whole hour in the morning, then Mass and examen before lunch, and another examen before dinner, and another half hour of prayer before going to bed, so that they have a fixed two hours for prayer, over and above exercises and meditations in Christian doctrine, in obedience, mortification, humility, and practice in the perfection of the virtues.

In the professed houses of the Society there can be more liberty regarding the time for prayer, with the warning that, over and

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 342.

above the Mass, the canonical hours, and one hour of prayer (or a half hour), all other prayer should be readily dropped for the sake of our ministry to others.<sup>22</sup>

In sum: It is entirely legitimate for spiritual writers to underscore the importance of the Examen for Jesuit spirituality. But it seems clear that, were any Jesuit to omit daily Mass, the Divine Office, or some time for meditation or contemplation, Ignatius would have been no less concerned than were the Jesuit omitting the Examen.<sup>23</sup>

Why has this myth about the Examen become so popular? At least two explanations seem likely.

First, as noted in two recent issues of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*, many modern Jesuits, wholly dedicated to their apostolates, report feeling guilt for not practicing formal prayer more consistently.<sup>24</sup> Or they feel resigned to the idea that going without a sense of personal intimacy with God is the necessary price for dedication to the apostolate. In a fast-paced, frenetic Western culture, it might be tempting for busy Jesuits and friends to believe that Ignatius had reduced the essence of Jesuit prayer to the Examen.

Second, the Examen lacks any explicitly Christian content; indeed, reflection upon experience can make sense to persons of any or no religious affiliation. As is well known, Ignatius did not invent the Examen;

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<sup>22</sup> *MHSI Regulae Societatis Iesu 1540–1556* [hereafter *Regulae*] (Rome: 1948), 488–89; my translation.

<sup>23</sup> Ignatius derived tremendous consolation not only from the Examen, but also from the Office and Mass, which helps explain the weight he placed on all three. In fact, he had so many consolations praying the Office that his companions feared for his health. Thus, Pope Paul III dispensed him and his confessor Fr. Diego Eguía (1488–1556) from that canonical obligation in 1539 (*MHSI Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis* [hereafter *Font. Narr.*], 4 vols. (Rome: 1943–1965), II: 157; *MHSI Scripta de Sancto Ignacio de Loyola* [hereafter *Scripta*], 2 vols. (Madrid: 1904–1918), I: 552–53. On Ignatius's consolations at Mass, see *Font. Narr.* II: 158; and *Gonçalves Mem.* 179, 183; Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, SJ, *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses into the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2004), 108–10 (nos. 179, 183).

<sup>24</sup> E. Edward Kinerk, SJ, "Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ," *SSJ* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 2016); and Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions."



the basic idea was familiar to Stoics and Pythagoreans and to Christians throughout the centuries.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the Examen can be especially appealing to Jesuit schools with a diverse student body. In 2017, a laywoman working in residence life at a Jesuit university said to me, “we like promoting the Examen because it assures all of our students, whatever their religious background, that they can practice the essence of Jesuit spirituality.”

## Myth 2

*Ignatius deliberately left the text of the Constitutions unfinished at the time of his death in order to make a spiritual point.*

For at least thirty years, some Jesuits have emphasized the fact that Ignatius did not formally finish his revisions of the *Constitutions*, and therefore, by implication, that all Jesuits may consider the constitutions

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***And so, the question: are correct attributions important, or are they not?***

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perpetually open to revisions in light of new experiences.<sup>26</sup> Some Jesuits go even further by affirming that Ignatius consciously intended to make that point. For example, Fr. Joseph Conwell, SJ (1919–2014) wrote that Ignatius “continued to

modify [the constitutions] and clarify them to the very end, not writing them in stone, leaving them open-ended, adaptable for the ever-changing needs of changing times.”<sup>27</sup> And in 1995, the late Superior General Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016) said to assembled members of General Congregation 34:

Ignatius never wished to consider [the constitutions] definitively ended. He did not wish to leave us a cut-and-dried system, a spirituality that was closed in on itself. Father Diego

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<sup>25</sup> Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 153n23; *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 2 vols. (Bilbao: Mensajero and Sal Terrae, 2007), I: 841–50, s.v. “examen de conciencia.”

<sup>26</sup> As early as 1979, Fr. Antonio M. de Aldama referred to the fact that Jesuits make these claims, but he did not cite specific examples; see *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen (St. Louis: IJS, 1989), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph F. Conwell, SJ, *Impelling Spirit: Revising a Founding Experience, 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 405.



Láinez stated that Ignatius never published the Constitutions and that they were never brought to completion by him as if there were nothing more to be added to them. In every sense, since he conceived the *Constitutions* as a way toward God, Ignatius was unable to consider them as forever set and determined. On the other hand, since he wished to have the Constitutions share in the *magis*, in the greater service, Ignatius did not wish to limit their thrust, which was inspired by a loving wholeheartedness for the following of Christ. Father Láinez saw in this unfinished work of Ignatius a summons to a creative fidelity, to the Society's responsibility, when gathered in a general congregation, to renew, enrich, and clarify, with new apostolic experiences, demands, and urgencies, the way pointed out to us by the pilgrim Ignatius.<sup>28</sup>

If Ignatius really did leave the constitutions unfinished to make a point about the Jesuit way of proceeding, it would have remarkable implications for the self-understanding of the Society. But I found no evidence that Ignatius intended anything of the sort. In fact, the early sources often suggest something quite different—to wit, that both Ignatius and Fr. Diego Láinez (1512–1565), the second superior general of the Society, considered the constitutions closed, for all intents and purposes, years before the first general congregation formally ratified the text.

One should keep in mind that a perfectly sufficient reason already exists to explain why Ignatius left the constitutions unfinished at the time of his death—a reason already noted by Fr. Antonio Aldama, SJ (1908–2005)—namely, that Ignatius was required by the Formula of the Institute and the papal bulls to consult the First Companions about the text, and to leave the final, formal approval of the text to the first general congregation.<sup>29</sup> Ignatius could not have closed the constitutions by himself in any authoritative way, even if he had wanted to do so.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, "On Our Law and Our Life," in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2009), 690. Speech given January 7, 1995.

<sup>29</sup> Aldama, *Introductory Commentary*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> According to Polanco, Ignatius had wanted to promulgate a draft of the *Con-*

Therefore, if one is going to claim something beyond what is already a sufficient and reasonable explanation of the facts, then one is obligated to cite a source as evidence of that claim. There is a considerable difference, after all, between affirming that the text was unclosed solely in a juridical sense and affirming that it was left unclosed for the purpose of making a spiritual point. With this in mind, I propose three questions:

- Where did Ignatius indicate that he deliberately left the constitutions unfinished in order to make a point about Jesuit spirituality?
- Where did Laínez indicate that he thought Ignatius left the constitutions unfinished in order to make a point about Jesuit spirituality?
- Where did Laínez indicate that he (Laínez) saw in the unfinished constitutions an implicit statement about Jesuit spirituality?

Fr. Kolvenbach did not cite a source for his assertion that Laínez saw in the unfinished constitutions a summons to “creative fidelity.”<sup>31</sup> However, one sentence in Fr. Kolvenbach’s speech—“Laínez stated that Ignatius never published the Constitutions and that they were never brought to completion by him”—bears a similarity to something that Laínez wrote in a letter to Fr. Francis Borgia, SJ (1510–1572) on August 6, 1556.<sup>32</sup> So the letter merits some examination.

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*stitutions* as early as 1549, since many of the First Companions had already submitted their approval of it; but Ignatius chose to wait for a jubilee the following year, when he could show it to the professed fathers in Rome (Juan Polanco, *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits: Selections from the Chronicon of Juan de Polanco*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, SJ [St. Louis: IJS, 2004], 89–90). In 1551, Laínez wrote to Ignatius from the Council of Trent expressing his desire that the *Constitutions* was already finished and translated into Latin, so that he could show it to those who doubted the legitimacy of the Society (*MHSI Epistolae et Acta Patris Jacobi Lainii* [hereafter *Lainez*], 8 vols. (Madrid, 1912–1917), I: 197.

<sup>31</sup> One Jesuit reviewer of this essay observed that even the phrase “creative fidelity” used so extensively in recent writings on Jesuit spirituality was apparently co-opted from the writings of the Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973). See Xavier Tilliette, SJ “La “fidélité créatrice”: Gabriel Marcel,” *Communio* 4 (March 1976), 49–57; and Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, “Creative Fidelity in Mission,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 31, no. 3 (2000), 25–40.

<sup>32</sup> *Lainez* I: 284–8.

When Laínez wrote this letter, only one week had passed since Ignatius's death, and the professed fathers in Rome had named Laínez the Society's vicar general, who would be responsible for convoking the first general congregation. Laínez noted in the letter that, regarding the general congregation, "it will be necessary to put the final touches on the Constitutions and [common] rules, and to close them."<sup>33</sup> A little later in the letter, Laínez acknowledged the difficulties that Borgia and other Spanish Jesuits would have in travelling to Rome for a congregation. Laínez then wrote:

On this point, our Reverend Father [Ignatius] adverted that, if something should be noted by learned persons, whether they are professed, rectors, or whoever else, regarding the Constitutions, and rules, and the bulls, and other things pertaining to universal and important matters, that this can be put in writing and conveyed [to the congregation] by delegates from each province. And here too, diligence [*diligentia*] must be had in this regard, because it may be possible at that time, if God is thereby served, to conclude the business of the constitutions [*concluyr el negocio de las constituciones*], which in these parts [Rome], **our blessed Father never published nor brought to a close, and, as I believe, this was not without special providence of God our Lord.**<sup>34</sup>

Three points are notable about this paragraph. First, Laínez seems concerned that too many suggestions pouring in from all parts of the Society would make it impossible to close the constitutions at the general congregation, and for that reason, "diligence" was required. In sixteenth-century Spanish, *diligentia* meant an action that one takes to prevent something else from happening.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the fact that Jesuits would submit feedback about the constitutions does not necessarily mean that the delegates were eager to revise the text, since any clarifications could be accomplished through

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 285. My translation.

<sup>34</sup> *Laínez I*: 287; my translation and emphasis.

<sup>35</sup> See *Diccionario de Autoridades*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 2002), I: 282, s.v. *diligentia*: "vale tambien qualquiera acción, y en especial las que fe executan para prevencion de lo que puede fuceder."

decrees of the congregation, without changing the text of the *Constitutions* itself. After all, Ignatius also asked for feedback on the papal bulls, texts that Jesuits did not have authority to revise on their own, and that, in any case, they could never consider open to perpetual revision. And this is exactly what happened, as the delegates chose to approve “Text D” of the *Constitutions* as it stood, without a word changed.

Third, Laínez did opine, rather cryptically, that it was the special providence of God that Ignatius never published the constitutions or brought them to a close. But what did he mean by this? To suppose that he was affirming the need to modify the constitutions continually in light of new experiences would seem to contradict what he had just written about *diligentia*.

Luckily, the following paragraph clarifies Laínez’s meaning. His election as vicar general had created a constitutional crisis for the Society. A few years earlier, Ignatius had named Nadal vicar general during one of Ignatius’s long bouts with illness. Ignatius recovered, but he never rescinded Nadal’s title. Consequently, while Laínez was writing to Borgia, Jesuits in Rome were asking whether Nadal or Laínez was the true vicar general. Laínez wrote:

[The unfinished *Constitutions*] raises questions here, and doubts, concerning the authority that remains in members of the Society. In the order of St. Dominic, the authority of vicars expires [upon the death of the master general], whereas the authority of provincials remains, since the election of a vicar comes directly from the Master General, and that of provincials comes from a provincial chapter. Here, however, we [Jesuits] are more inclined to think that both vicars and provincials keep their posts, since the election of either one depends upon the general superior, and since even a vicar general is able to appoint provincials.<sup>36</sup>

So, when Laínez noted that the unfinished state of the constitutions was providential, he meant that it brought to light an ambiguity in the text that the first general congregation would be able to clarify. And the con-

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<sup>36</sup> Laínez I: 287–88; my translation.

gregation did just that, in decree 91, when it mandated that the office of vicar general, or “commissary,” ceases with the death of the general superior.<sup>37</sup> Again, one should note that the congregation chose to write a decree, instead of revising the text of the *Constitutions*.

Láinez’s real attitude toward the constitutions is further clarified by a letter that he wrote five months later, this time to Juan de Vega (1507–1558), Viceroy of Sicily, when the first general congregation was still a year away. Láinez explicitly affirmed, no less than four times in one paragraph, that the *Constitutions* was finished, and not only finished, but “very sufficient” to make a Jesuit a great servant of God:

Also, it will be advantageous to define and clarify that which is now available regarding the governance of the Society, and to promulgate widely its constitutions, because the Blessed Father left three things finished [*acabadas*], that he used to say he did not want to die before having completed [*cumplidas*]: One is the confirmation of the Society by the Holy See, with its special privileges. The second is the Spiritual Exercises confirmed by the same Holy See. Third, the *Constitutions* done [*hechas*], and these also left finished [*acabadas*], and in which, it seems to me, he left us a great treasure, because it contains a very holy and prudent policy, and a quite sufficient [*muy bastante*] one at that, as whoever wishes to live according to it will become a very great servant of God Our Lord.<sup>38</sup>

As for Ignatius, his correspondence often implies that years before his death he regarded the unfinished constitutions to be, for most practical purposes, normative and binding. Both he and his secretary Fr. Juan Polanco, SJ (1517–1576) frequently prefaced their assertions about the Jesuit way of proceeding with such expressions as “for as our *Constitutions* dictate,” or “according to our *Constitutions*.”

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<sup>37</sup> John W. Padberg, SJ, Martin D. O’Keefe, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ, eds., *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations* (St. Louis: IJS, 1994), 91.

<sup>38</sup> *Lainez I*: 636; my translation.

An especially striking passage appears in a letter that Ignatius wrote in 1551 to Fr. Simão Rodrigues (1510–1579) a full five years before Ignatius’s death:

Another thing that it occurs to me in our Lord to write to you, is that, before the Constitutions are brought to a close and published [*se cerrasen y publicasen*], I would like the two rectors formally of the college in Coimbra, Luís González and Luís de Grana, to make profession into your hands. I have been informed of their good qualities and merits, but I do not believe that they have all the studies that the Constitutions require in theology. And therefore I would like, by way of exception, that these two become professed; because, once the Constitutions are closed [*cerradas*], it will not be so easy to dispense those who have not finished the requisite theology studies.<sup>39</sup>

Here Ignatius clearly believed, albeit wrongly, that the formal closing of the constitutions was imminent—so imminent, in fact, that it required Rodrigues to expedite the profession of two Jesuits. Furthermore, Ignatius believed that he himself, as general superior, was going to be bound by the constitutions once they were closed, or at the very least, that he was going to be inconvenienced. Either way, Ignatius felt it necessary to circumnavigate the implications of a document that had not even been formally approved! None of this sounds like a man who was inclined to continually revise the *Constitutions* in light of later experiences.

To be clear, I do not deny that Ignatius continued to revise the *Constitutions* until his death; much less do I suggest that the text should go unrevised or unclarified after five centuries. My point is simply this: the long-standing claim that Ignatius deliberately left the text unfinished in order to make a spiritual point does not seem to have any basis in the sources. Surely a claim of that nature requires one.

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<sup>39</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* IV: 12; my translation.

## Myths 3 and 4

*The Spiritual Exercises invite the retreatant to ask, “what more can I do for Christ?”*

*St. Ignatius composed the Prayer for Generosity.*

Fr. David L. Fleming, SJ (1934–2011) made the question “what more can I do?” the title of a short book intended to guide persons through an eight-day Ignatian retreat.<sup>40</sup> He then linked the question to the “Prayer for Generosity” commonly attributed to Ignatius. Fr. Fleming wrote:

I believe that in each retreat, we are asking ourselves, at least implicitly, “what more?” What more can I, should I, be doing for Christ? What more is God asking of me? The same question is before us till the end of our lives. As I interact with the Jesuits in our own province infirmary, I am always edified by their willingness, even eagerness, to try to make sense of their own response to that question “what more?” at this time of their declining years.

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There is a long tradition that has associated a prayer titled “A Prayer for Generosity” with Ignatius Loyola. The prayer reads: *Lord, teach me to be generous. / Teach me to serve you as you deserve. / To give, and not to count the cost. / To fight, and not to heed the wounds. / To toil, and not to see [sic] for rest. / To labor, and to ask for no reward, / Save that of knowing that I am doing your will.*

The spirit of this prayer is Ignatian.<sup>41</sup>

Actually, the question that Ignatius poses in the *Exercises* is not “what more can I do for Christ?” but rather *lo que debo hacer por Cristo*, or “what ought I to do for Christ?”<sup>42</sup> In other words, the point for consideration is not *how much* one is doing, but *what* one is doing.

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<sup>40</sup> David L. Fleming, SJ, *What More Can I Do? An Ignatian Retreat for People Somewhere on the Way* (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 8, 9.

<sup>42</sup> *SpEx* 53; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 42. See also *SpEx* 197.



All the principal, modern English translations of the *Spiritual Exercises* render this question correctly—that is, the translators use *ought* instead of *more*—which makes it more remarkable that people continue to misquote Ignatius.<sup>43</sup>

Neither did Ignatius write the “Prayer for Generosity.” All evidence points to it having been composed by French Jesuits in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its earliest known appearance is in a book by Fr. Xavier de Franciosi (1819–1908), *La devotion à saint Ignace*, the second edition of which appeared in 1882.<sup>44</sup> In *Pratique de l’oraison mentale* (1905), Fr. René de Maumigny (1837–1918), tertian master and spiritual writer, likewise attributed the prayer to Ignatius.<sup>45</sup> Then the venerable Fr. Jacques Sevin (1882–1951), who, after meeting Lord Baden Powell, established the Boy Scouts in France, set the prayer to music and promoted it as the Scouts’ official prayer.

Nevertheless, doubts about the authenticity of the prayer are almost as old as the prayer itself. In a 1903 issue of *Woodstock Letters*, Fr. Matthew Russell (d. 1912) penned a short piece entitled “A So-Called Prayer of St. Ignatius.”<sup>46</sup> He noted that that the prayer was familiar to many Jesuits, and that he found it, in English, on an ornamental card that had been printed in Tours, France. On the back of the card, in an “Oxford handwriting,” someone had translated the prayer into Latin. Russell opined, probably incorrectly, that the English version was a

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<sup>43</sup> Specifically, Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*; Elder Mullan, SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1909), 39; Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ, and Philip Endean, SJ, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 296; and Louis J. Puhl, SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), 48.

<sup>44</sup> Xavier de Franciosi, SJ, *La devotion à saint Ignace: en L’Honneur du Fondateur de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 2nd ed. (Nancy: Société Nancéienne de Propagande, 1882), 79. Elsewhere, Fr. Ignacio Iparraguirre, SJ, had identified a 1897 edition of the same book as the earliest known appearance of the prayer (*Orientaciones Bibliográficas sobre San Ignacio* [Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1957], 111, no. 531). The year of the first edition is unknown; presumably the prayer is there as well.

<sup>45</sup> Fr. Maumigny’s two volume *Pratique de l’oraison mentale* (Paris: 1905) was translated into English by Fr. Elder Mullan, SJ, as *The Practice of Mental Prayer* (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1903, 1915). The Prayer for Generosity appears in volume 1, pp. 81–82.

<sup>46</sup> *Woodstock Letters* 32, no. 1 (Sept. 1, 1903): 43.



translation of the Latin original. In 1941, Dutch Jesuits denied the Ignatian origin of the prayer, as did, more recently, British Jesuits Fr. Michael Ivens (1933–2005) and Fr. Joseph Munitiz.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, the renowned Jesuit scholar Fr. Ignacio Iparraguirre (1911–1973) concluded that the spirit of the prayer is authentically Ignatian, as did Fr. Fleming, as evidenced in the above citation.<sup>48</sup> But with all due respect to their expertise, I contend that the truth is otherwise, since almost every line of the prayer contradicts what Ignatius had instructed Jesuits strenuously and repeatedly.<sup>49</sup>

Ignatius made it clear that he wanted Jesuits—and, by implication, all those who live his spirituality—to make the greatest impact on God’s people that they could over the course of their lifetimes.<sup>50</sup> This would require Jesuits to pace themselves rather than burn themselves out in a brief blaze of quixotic zeal. Jesuits should eat properly, get enough rest, take regular retreats and vacations, avoid excessive asceticism, heed their wounds, allow themselves an hour and a half for Mass and prayer daily, and choose their ministries carefully, considering their gifts, limitations, and circumstances.

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*Where did Ignatius indicate that he deliberately left the constitutions unfinished in order to make a point about Jesuit spirituality?*

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For the mature Ignatius, it was not a question of doing quantitatively more work for its own sake, or of making sacrifices for its own sake, or of suffering for its own sake, as if those somehow demonstrated

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Munitiz, SJ, “A Pseudo-Ignatian Prayer,” *Letters and Notices* 97, n. 426 (Autumn 2004), 12–14.

<sup>48</sup> Iparraguirre, *Orientaciones*, 111 (no. 531).

<sup>49</sup> Some Jesuits defend the prayer’s Ignatian spirit, arguing that, because (1) the prayer praises generosity, and (2) Ignatius valued generosity, then (3) the spirit of the prayer is Ignatian. By the same logic, most every prayer ever written could be described as Ignatian in spirit.

<sup>50</sup> See Barton T. Geger, SJ, “*Cura Personalis*: Some Ignatian Inspirations,” *JHE* 3, no. 2 (2014): 6–20.

the depth of one's love for God.<sup>51</sup> Rather, he wanted Jesuits to choose the one option that they believe will serve the greater glory of God, and then have the courage to let the other good options go, both physically and emotionally. That is why discernment and indifference were so central to Ignatius's spirituality. From this perspective, to refuse to make hard choices—to refuse to heed one's limitations—"to give and not to count the cost"—does far more damage than simply leading to burnout. It betrays a failure to acknowledge one's creaturehood, and to remember that only God is God.

On this point, Ignatius wrote in 1547 to the Jesuit scholastics in Portugal:

Without this moderation, good turns into evil and virtue into vice; and numerous bad consequences ensue, contrary to the intentions of the one proceeding in this way. The first is that it makes a person unable to serve God over the long haul. If a horse is exhausted in the early stages of a trip, it usually does not complete the journey; instead it ends up making others have to care for it.<sup>52</sup>

Likewise, Ignatius wrote in 1551 to a young priest:

Warn Father Leonard (and consider the same as said to yourself) not to overwork himself, even out of genuine charity, to the point where he appears to be neglecting his bodily health. Even though situations sometimes occur where an extra exertion is unavoidable, he should nevertheless not deprive himself of sleep by spending the night in prayer or staying up much of the night, as those close to him report to us that he is doing. What holds for sleep applies also to diet and whatever else is needed, as I have said, for the preservation of health. *Moderation has staying power; what puts excessive strain on the body can-*

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<sup>51</sup> In an encyclopedia article about Fr. Maumigny, the authors make a telling observation about his spirituality: "for a long time he had guided himself by the principle that 'the harder something is, the more perfect it is'" (H. Beyard, SJ, and P. Duclos, SJ, "Maumigny, René de," in *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, vol. 3, eds. Charles E. O'Neill, SJ, and Joaquín María Domínguez, SJ (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2001), 2580–81; my translation.

<sup>52</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* I: 504–05; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 171.

not last. Understand, then, that Father General's mind on this matter is that, in whatever spiritual, academic, or even bodily exertions you undertake, *your charity should be guided by the rule of discretion* [i.e., discernment], that you should safeguard the health of your own body in order to aid your neighbors' souls, and that in this matter each of you should look out for the other, indeed, for both of you.<sup>53</sup>

And again to Fr. John Pelletier in 1551:

Although many options for helping the neighbor and many holy works are possible, you must use discretion when making your choice, it being taken for granted that you cannot do everything. But look always to the greater service of God, the common good, and the good name of the Society.<sup>54</sup>

Ignatius liked to remind Jesuits that "it is impossible to do everything," or that "there is not time to do everything."<sup>55</sup> Scholastics, for example, cannot dedicate themselves equally to academic study and service of the neighbor. *Caritas discreta* requires that they focus on the first.<sup>56</sup> When scholastics said to Ignatius, "yes, but I want to labor and not to seek for rest," he responded, "you are demonstrating *zelo non secundum scientiam*. . . a zeal that is well-intentioned but short-sighted."<sup>57</sup>

Jesuit schools are a ministry where the promotion of the Prayer for Generosity can be especially problematic. The advice that freshmen often hear from well-intentioned teachers and administrators is: "Get involved! Get busy! You can do anything you want: sports, clubs, ser-

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<sup>53</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* III: 485; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 334; my italics. On the importance of moderation, see also Palmer, 628, 657, 666, 697; on a substantial, balanced diet, see 312, 626, 661.

<sup>54</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* III: 546; my translation.

<sup>55</sup> E.g., *SpEx* 18; *Const.* 451, 542.

<sup>56</sup> *Const.* 361.

<sup>57</sup> This medieval axiom, inspired by Romans 10:2, appears in the papal bulls of 1540 and 1550, and in the earlier Five Chapters written by the First Companions in 1539; see Antonio M. de Aldama, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: The Formula of the Institute*, trans. Ignacio Echániz, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1990), 4, 5. See also *Epist. et Instruct.* I: 717; II: 213, 317; VII: 179; IX: 531.

vice projects. It's not just about studies!" The problem, however, is that students are already inclined to over-extend themselves, which can lead to exhaustion, anxiety, and depression.

Twenty-first century US culture is marked by hyper-activity and a temptation for people to judge their importance by how busy they are. Urging students to "give and not to count the cost, to labor and not to seek for rest" plays into the worst of that culture. For Jesuit schools to be truly counter-cultural *and* wholly consistent with Ignatius's spirituality, formators must teach students that they cannot do everything.<sup>58</sup> Instead, students must learn how to recognize their limitations, how to pace themselves, and how to say *no* on occasion, both to themselves and to others. But most importantly, they must learn the proper criterion for all those choices: the greater glory of God.<sup>59</sup>

## Myth 5

*St. Ignatius was a layman.*

Jesuits and spiritual writers frequently refer to St. Ignatius as a layman during the period of time from his conversion in 1521 to his priestly ordination in 1537, thus giving greater credence to the idea that Ignatian spirituality is essentially a "lay spirituality." There is some truth here, but without significant qualifications, it misleads as much as it reveals.

In 1515, when Ignatius was twenty-four years old and six years before his conversion, he received tonsure—which, according to church law, made him a member of the minor clergy. This ancient rite, whereby the crown of his head was shaved and he was invested with a surplice, invested him with all the duties and privileges of that clerical state, including exemption from prosecution in civil courts. At the time, any man on track for priestly ordination had to receive tonsure, although the reception of tonsure did not in itself obligate that man to pursue a priestly vocation. In any case, while it is unclear whether Ignatius at the

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<sup>58</sup> See Diane Dreher, "What to Do About It: Cura Personalis and the Challenge of Work-Life Balance," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 41 (2012): 30–33.

<sup>59</sup> Regarding the related expression, *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, see p. 44, below.

time of his own tonsure had any real intentions of being a priest, the record shows that he did not hesitate to take advantage of his clerical status both before and after his conversion.<sup>60</sup>

Alright, but was Ignatius a layman in spirit? If by calling him a *layman* one wishes to underscore that laypeople can practice fruitfully his distinctive ministries of spiritual conversation and directing people in the Exercises, then this is obviously correct. Vital features of Ignatius's spirituality—his attention to everyday experience as a primary locus of God's interactions with each person, his emphasis on finding God in all things, and his insistence that laboring in "the world" is no less a means to sanctity than long hours of prayer—all serve to empower lay vocations in the church.

But that being said, confusion arises when one forgets that the term *laity* signifies something richer and more positive today than simply not being ordained or not belonging to a religious order. It denotes a particular manner of living the gospel, typically within the context of marriage, family life, and secular employments. Until the Second Vatican Council, Catholics tended to speak of "having a vocation" with reference only to priests and religious. The council fathers, however, reminded Catholics that laity have a vocation as well.<sup>61</sup>

It is anachronistic to suggest that Ignatius was a layman in this newer sense. He would not have thought of himself that way. When he left home for Jerusalem, he had surrendered, for the sake of a greater good, all the legitimate goods that belong to laity. He renounced a wife and children by a private vow of chastity, he gave away almost all his money and possessions, he relinquished a home of his own, and he

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<sup>60</sup> In 1515, Ignatius appealed to his clerical status to avoid prosecution in court; see *MHSI, Fontes documentales de S. Ignatio de Loyola* [hereafter *Font. Doc.*], (Rome: 1977), 229–46; and in 1522, about a year after his conversion, he identified himself as a cleric of the diocese of Pamplona to obtain papal permission for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (*ibid.*, 289–90).

<sup>61</sup> See Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (21 Nov. 1964), nos. 30–38; trans. in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols., ed. Norman P. Tanner, SJ (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), II: 874–80; and *Apostolicam actuositatem* (10 Nov. 1965); trans. Tanner, *Decrees II*: 981–1001.

broke off almost all communication with his family, because they were pleading with him to give up his new life.<sup>62</sup> Most Catholics probably would not associate this behavior with a normal or healthy lay vocation today. True, Ignatius was not yet a member of a religious order; but he had consciously chosen what in those days they called “evangelical perfection,” meaning a radical commitment to poverty, chastity, and—when possible—obedience to another human being.<sup>63</sup>

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius juxtaposed explicitly the lay vocation and a vocation to the counsels:

We have already considered the example which Christ our Lord gave us for the first state of life, which consists in the observance of the commandments. He gave this example when he lived in obedience to his parents.

We have also considered the example he gave us for the second state, that of evangelical perfection, when he remained in the temple, separating himself from his adoptive father and human mother in order to devote himself solely to the service of his eternal Father.

While continuing our contemplations of his life, we now begin simultaneously to explore and inquire: In which state or way of life does the Divine Majesty wish us to serve him?<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ignatius’s vow is not mentioned in the “Autobiography,” but it is attested in other early sources; see J. Iriarte, SJ, “Fijando el sitio del ‘voto de castidad’ de San Ignacio de Loyola,” *Manresa* 3 (1927). Also, note that Ignatius wrote a letter to his brother Martín in June 1532 in which he explained his reasons for not writing more often (*Epist. et Instruct.* I: 77–83; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 3–7). When Ignatius returned to his hometown of Azpeitia in 1535, he tried to avoid spending a single night at Castle Loyola. He finally agreed to one night there after family and friends applied considerable pressure.

<sup>63</sup> For many Catholics at this time, a private commitment to the evangelical counsels seemed an attractive alternative to joining an ecclesiastically-approved religious community, as the latter often suffered from a reputation for laxity and decline. Ignatius alludes to this in *Auto.* 12.

<sup>64</sup> *SpEx* 135; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 64. In accordance with classical theology, Ignatius understood the term *perfection* in a relative sense. Christian perfection consists of the presence of grace within a person and the desire to preserve it, and a habit of charity; but the capacity for all these increases to the degree that one pursues

## Myth 6

*St. Ignatius habitually referred to himself as “the pilgrim.”*

Today, many Jesuits’ favorite nickname for Ignatius is “the pilgrim”—a preference fueled to some degree by the belief that Ignatius preferred this term for himself. For example, Fr. Kolvenbach wrote that “we recall that St. Ignatius was pleased to call himself ‘the pilgrim,’” and again, that Ignatius “had a passionate attachment to the image of the pilgrim.”<sup>65</sup> Likewise, Fr. Conwell affirmed that “something deeper” stirring in Ignatius “made him call himself ‘pilgrim.’”<sup>66</sup>

But did Ignatius really call himself a pilgrim?

In the 7,000 preserved letters composed by Ignatius and his secretaries, Ignatius calls himself a pilgrim once. Only once! That instance appears in the very first letter, which Ignatius wrote in 1524 to his friend and benefactress Agnès Pascual (d. 1548), and which he signed, “the poor pilgrim, Iñigo” (*el pobre peregrino, INIGO*).<sup>67</sup> At least to judge by his correspondence, Ignatius would not refer to himself as a pilgrim again for the next thirty-two years of his life.

Had Ignatius been in the habit of calling himself a pilgrim, one might reasonably expect to find evidence in the documentary tradition that early Jesuits also called him that, at least occasionally, in deference to the devotion in which they held him. Yet a search of the letters written by the First Companions and by Nadal, Polanco, Borgia, Ribadeneira, and others has unearthed only one use of *pilgrim* as a moniker.<sup>68</sup>

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the greater service of God and withdraws from anything that would impede that greater service. St. Thérèse of Lisieux used a metaphor of two cups of different sizes, both filled to the brim, and thus both perfected to the degree that their respective capacities allow (see *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, 3rd ed., trans. John Clarke, OCD. [Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996], 45).

<sup>65</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, “A Certain Pathway to God,” in *The Road to La Storta* (St. Louis: IJS, 2000), 207, 213.

<sup>66</sup> Conwell, *Impelling Spirit*, 172.

<sup>67</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* I: 73; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 2

<sup>68</sup> Numerous references to pilgrimage appear in the MHSI volumes: either Ignatius’s trip to Jerusalem, or pilgrimages of other persons, or the idea of pilgrimage



Borgia wrote to Fr. Diego Carrillo six weeks after Ignatius's death:

Now I have firm hope that the Society once again will begin to expand, and with new graces from heaven, won for us by its new denizen [*renovabitur vt Aquila[e] iuventus*],<sup>69</sup> because if the pilgrim [while on earth] was able to fight and to attain a blessing so gracious from the Lord, how much more can we expect him to attain for us [in heaven], now that he is free of all earthly bonds and limitations of our mortality?<sup>70</sup>

In fact, Jesuits began to refer habitually to Ignatius as “the pilgrim” only after the Second Vatican Council. This owes to the fact that Jesuits were not widely familiar with the “Autobiography” of Ignatius until the 1970s, when in response to the council’s directives they began to study and return to the original charism of their founder.<sup>71</sup> And it is here, in the “Autobiography,” that Ignatius is called a pilgrim—and no less than eighty-five times!

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***But did Ignatius really call himself a pilgrim?***

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But did Ignatius really refer to himself as *pilgrim* when dictating his memoirs to Fr. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1519–1575)? Or did Gonçalves add it as a rhetorical flourish of his own when he made his final redactions of the text?

The idea that Ignatius would refer to himself consistently in the third person for hours on end when speaking to Gonçalves seems odd. Not only would the dictation come across as artificial and affected, but Ignatius would be promoting himself in a way superfluous to his pur-

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in general. On several occasions, Ignatius is called *pilgrim* in the context of his trip to Jerusalem (*Font. Narr.* I: 3; *Scripta* I: 731, 732, 734). Ribadeneira also referred once to Ignatius’s “pilgrim travels” in general, and again to Ignatius’s life as a “pilgrimage” (see Pedro de Ribadeneira, SJ, *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavor [St. Louis: IJS, 2014], 330, 327).

<sup>69</sup> “His youth renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps 103:5).

<sup>70</sup> *MHSI, Sanctus Franciscus Borgia quartus Gandiae Dux et Societatis Iesu Praepositus Generalis tertius* [hereafter *Borgia*], 5 vols. (Madrid: 1894–1911), III: 266; my translation.

<sup>71</sup> Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (28 Oct. 1965), nos. 2–4; trans. Tanner, *Decrees* II: 940–41.



pose of relating his story. One must remember that he had postponed dictating his memoirs for years from fear that he would draw more attention to himself than to God.<sup>72</sup> In that light, it seems improbable that he would give himself an endearing moniker.

It also seems improbable that Ignatius would call himself *pilgrim* eighty-five times in the “Autobiography,” but not refer to himself even once as such in the hundreds of letters that he wrote during that same period. The question immediately arises: why the inconsistency?

To be sure, the image of a pilgrim beautifully captures certain key emphases of Ignatius’s spirituality—such as finding God in one’s daily experiences, adopting a simple lifestyle, trusting in God, engaging in a peripatetic ministry, and cultivating devotion. What is more, Ignatius clearly understood his predilection for pilgrimages to have been inspired by his mystical illumination at the Cardoner.<sup>73</sup> For when Gonçalves asked him “the reason for pilgrimages,” he replied:

Because I had myself experienced how advantageous they were, and I had found how well they suited me. . . . And for all these things there will be an answer with *some experience that I underwent at Manresa*.<sup>74</sup>

Now that being said, the metaphor of the pilgrim, like all metaphors, does have its limitations, especially when it is emphasized to the exclusion of other, equally-important terms, such as priest, mystic, ascetic, consecrated religious, or administrator. On that note, the Jesuit historian Fr. Thomas McCoog (MAR) has observed:

Today [Ignatius] is portrayed most frequently as a pilgrim, a man on a quest. But his years as a pilgrim were significantly fewer than those spent at his desk in Rome as an administrator,

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<sup>72</sup> See John M. McManamon, SJ, *The Text and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola’s “Autobiography”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 2–4.

<sup>73</sup> *Auto*. 30.

<sup>74</sup> *Gonçalves Mem.* 137; Gonçalves, *Remembering Iñigo*, 84. On the significance of Ignatius’s statement, “something I underwent at Manresa,” see Charles J. Jackson, SJ, “Something That Happened to Me at Manresa: The Mystical Origin of the Ignatian Charism,” *SSJ* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2006).

an armchair pilgrim delighting in the missionary journeys of his disciples.<sup>75</sup>

And so, while the concept of the pilgrim can help us to understand certain aspects of Ignatius better, it can be overlaid in at least two ways. First, a pilgrimage properly so-called denotes a journey taken in some sense for its own sake, and from which a person expects to return.<sup>76</sup> The pilgrim hopes to experience enlightenment or redemption during the journey itself, even if the ultimate destination is a holy site that warrants a visit for its own sake. From that perspective, only Ignatius's trip to Jerusalem may be called a pilgrimage.<sup>77</sup>

In fact, after he returned to Spain, and for the rest of his life, every journey he took had a specific goal that could be achieved only by reaching that destination, whether it was travelling from university to university or hiking from Paris to London to beg monies for tuition. There is little indication that Ignatius travelled as a spiritual seeker. Rather, he always travelled to accomplish a mission. Indeed, once he became superior general, he remained in Rome for the last sixteen years of his life.

Fr. Conwell has made a similar observation:

When we ask why Ignatius called himself “the pilgrim,” we should not put much stock in his many travels. On all his journeys, after Manresa, his whole intent was to help his neighbor. He was constantly seeking the will of God. The outer journey was simply an external expression of what was happening in the depths of his being. When this much-travelled man re-

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<sup>75</sup> Pierre Emonet, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality*, trans. Jerry Ryan (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2016), viii.

<sup>76</sup> The exception being, of course, the journey to heaven, which makes of Christians, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, a “pilgrim Church” (*Lumen gentium* 48; cf. *Gaudium et spes* 45, 57).

<sup>77</sup> One could argue, however, that even the trip to Jerusalem did not constitute a true pilgrimage. Although Ignatius's original intention seems to have been a pilgrimage in the traditional medieval sense—that is, to win merit, indulgences, and greater devotion—at some point he conceived the plan to remain in Jerusalem for the rest of his life to convert Muslims to Christianity and thereby, he hoped, to become a martyr. From this perspective, Ignatius was a man on a mission rather than a spiritual seeker. Fr. Conwell seems to agree in the above citation.

turned to Rome his outer journey ceased. One suspects that it was the interior journey more than anything else that made him refer to himself as *pilgrim*. He had found stability in pilgrimage, but in Rome he found pilgrimage in stability.<sup>78</sup>

Second, it is possible to romanticize the purpose of pilgrimages in Ignatius's mind.<sup>79</sup> While one might reasonably presume that his primary motivation in promoting pilgrimages had to do with instilling positive values in Jesuits, the early sources contain numerous references to Ignatius using pilgrimages for other, less idealistic purposes.<sup>80</sup> For instance, he often imposed them as penances for men who had misbehaved or who were thinking of leaving the Society.<sup>81</sup>

Ignatius also used pilgrimages to identify those candidates whose physical stamina or whose subjective commitment to the Society were dubious. As early as 1541, the First Companions determined to send candidates on a month-long pilgrimage, on foot and without money, because "it seems that whoever cannot endure and walk a single day while sleeping rough and without food, cannot persevere in our Society."<sup>82</sup> Thirteen years later, as Polanco seems to indicate in the following passage, Ignatius was still of the same mind:

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<sup>78</sup> Conwell, *Impelling Spirit*, 174.

<sup>79</sup> I ask readers not to interpret this observation as any antipathy toward the practice of pilgrimages. I hiked both the Camino de Santiago and Camino Ignaciano, and they were such edifying experiences that I would require them for every Jesuit if I could.

<sup>80</sup> See *Gonçalves Mem.* 58, 384, 398; *Gonçalves, Remembering Iñigo*, 38, 211, 216; *Font. Narr.* I: 567, 733, 737–39; *Scripta* I: 185, 423, 458. The effects of infection, exhaustion, injuries, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and bandits meant that many medieval pilgrims never returned home. The Camino de Santiago was lined with hospitals for sick and dying pilgrims; and a month on the Camino, under guard, was offered to criminals as an alternative to prison. Gonçalves reported that Ignatius consented to a physician named Arce, who begged Ignatius not to send Jesuits on pilgrimage due to the health risks (see *Gonçalves Mem.* 339, 137; *Gonçalves, Remembering Iñigo*, 193, 84; see also *Const.* 748 and *Scripta* I: 497). And on one occasion, Ignatius gave a penance to several Jesuits because they had enjoyed themselves on pilgrimage by indulging in bread and wine! (*Scripta* I: 519–20).

<sup>81</sup> In a letter dated 1573, sixteen years after Ignatius's death, Salmeron refers to a pilgrimage given to two "incurable" ex-Jesuits (*Epistolae P. Alphonsi Salmeronis*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1906–1907), II: 335).

<sup>82</sup> *Const.* I: 54; my translation.

It is not [Ignatius's] custom often to carry into practice these two tests of the pilgrimage and the hospital, unless with those who are already half-dismissed from the Society. Experience has shown that the good men exhaust themselves by giving themselves to it with too great fervor, suffer much, and fall ill. Therefore with those who are good and edifying he makes little use of these tests. With the others, it does not seem much better to send them to serve in the hospitals, at least in the name of the Society, because they usually make a bad impression. On the other hand, [Ignatius] does use the pilgrimage with these, reckoning that either they will go away under God's care or, if they do come back, they will return humbled and helped.<sup>83</sup>

Why is the image of pilgrim so attractive to so many today? In addition to the benefits mentioned earlier, let me suggest that it sits better with a postmodern generation that regards truth-claims about God as divisive rather than unifying, and constrictive rather than open-minded. In other words, portraying Ignatius as a lifelong "seeker of truth" can make him seem more attractive to students and colleagues who are wary of religion and dogmatic assertions.

If one were to employ the image of Ignatius as pilgrim in that sense, then I would argue that a line has been overstepped. Why? Because regarding all the most important questions in life, Ignatius already believed that he knew the truth. And one cannot understand the man or his deeds apart from that fact.

## Myth 7

*Before the founding of the Society, Ignatius was an obscure figure.*

Sometimes, Jesuits and others appear to assume that Ignatius was relatively unknown in the time between his spiritual conversion in 1521 and his election as the first general superior of the Jesuit order in 1541.

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<sup>83</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* VI: 203; trans. De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 103.

For example, Fr. William J. Young (1885–1970) commented upon a letter that Ignatius had written in 1537 to Cardinal Gian Petro Carafa (1476–1559). In the letter, Ignatius had presumed to give Carafa some unsolicited advice about the Theatine order that Carafa had co-founded. Fr. Young observed:

It seems that the frank observations of Ignatius, which were given in all sincerity, were not well received by the retired dignitary, who looked upon such language coming from so unknown and supposedly inexperienced a person as daring, not to say impertinent.<sup>84</sup>

Another example appears in a biography of Ignatius by Fr. José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras (1928–2008). In 1535, Ignatius returned to his hometown of Azpeitia for the first time in fourteen years. Fr. Idígoras wrote that “if Ignatius Loyola were to return to his native land unrecognized [*incógnito*], as he did in 1535, he would recognize his hometown only with great difficulty.”<sup>85</sup>

But Ignatius made clear in the “Autobiography” that the opposite was true about his return home. Far from being *incógnito*, he was recognized on the road by two men who began to follow him. Those two men in turn had been alerted by others who had recognized Ignatius in Bayonne:

These, after they had gone a little past him, turned around, following him at a great speed, and he became a little afraid. But he spoke to them, and learnt that they were servants of his brother, who had ordered him to be met, for, apparently, there had been some word of his coming from Bayonne in France, where the pilgrim had been recognized.<sup>86</sup>

To be sure, one cannot know just how well-known Ignatius would have been in Spain and France, either among the upper classes or among

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<sup>84</sup> William J. Young, SJ, ed., *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 28.

<sup>85</sup> J. Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, SJ, *Ignacio de Loyola, solo y a pie* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2000), 21; my translation.

<sup>86</sup> *Auto.* 87; trans. Munitiz and Endean, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, 56.

the common people. But the “Autobiography” and other early sources drop repeated hints that he was far from anonymous.

After Ignatius’s conversion, he quickly won the friendship and support of many noble ladies and was put up in the house of a nobleman named Ferrer.<sup>87</sup> And the fact that Ignatius himself was a nobleman whose family name was in all likelihood familiar to them probably led to his receiving these kindnesses. In a similar vein, Ignatius noted that while in Venice, en route to Jerusalem, he refused to go to the house of the imperial ambassador for support, implying that he had the name-recognition to make use of that support had he chosen to do so.<sup>88</sup> While in Alcalá, he had such public status that he could go over the head of the inquisitor, Juan Rodríguez de Figueroa, by appealing his case directly to the archbishop of Toledo.<sup>89</sup> And in Barcelona and Azpeitia, bishops allowed Ignatius to reform convents and the secular clergy respectively—a sacred trust that would not have been given to just any commoner with religious fervor.<sup>90</sup>

The presupposition of Ignatius’s obscurity may stem from the pious belief that he relied solely on God for his support, as opposed to the more pedestrian truth that, at times, his connections to the wealthy and powerful made his life easier. Or perhaps people wish to emphasize the idea that anyone might go from everyday anonymity to great holiness?

## Myth 8

*Not until 1539 did St. Ignatius and his companions consider forming a permanent group.*

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<sup>87</sup> *Auto.* 34; see also 35.

<sup>88</sup> *Auto.* 42.

<sup>89</sup> *Auto.* 63. On Ignatius’s early prominence, see also Philip Endean, SJ, “Who Do You Say Ignatius Is? Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond,” *SSJ* 19, no. 5 (1987): 27–28.

<sup>90</sup> On Azpeitia and the secular clergy, see *Auto.* 88–89. That Ignatius reformed convents is not noted in the “Autobiography.” See Paul Dudon, SJ, *St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young, SJ (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1949), 98–100.

Today, one often hears that the First Companions never considered forming a permanent group until their plans to go to the Holy Land fell through, or even more strongly, that the thought never even crossed their minds. For instance, in the excellent “Olive Video” produced by Fairfield University Media Center, the narrator says with a certain emphasis that, “though they never intended on forming an organized group, on September 27, 1540, Pope Paul III gave formal approval to the brand new order of the Society of Jesus.”<sup>91</sup>

And yet, it hardly seems plausible that the First Companions could spend years together at the University of Paris, endure repeated investigations by the Inquisition, dedicate their lives so selflessly to others, and make lifelong vows of poverty and chastity at the chapel at Montmartre, and not once contemplate the formation of a permanent group—if not a canonical religious order, then perhaps a confraternity of some sort. In fact, as soon as he returned from Jerusalem, Ignatius was passionate about gathering companions. His first group of followers was rebuked by the inquisitors in Alcalá for wearing outfits that resembled the habits of canonical religious.<sup>92</sup> And in 1539, shortly after the Pope gave verbal approval for the Society, Ignatius wrote a revealing letter to his brother:

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*It is possible to romanticize  
the purpose of pilgrimages  
in Ignatius’s mind.*

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And since I recall how you urged me during my stay with you there [in 1535] that I should carefully let you know about the Society [*Compañía*] that I was looking forward to, I am also convinced that God our Lord looked forward to your own taking an outstanding role in it. . . . To come to the point: despite my unworthiness I have managed, with God’s grace, to lay a solid foundation for this Society of Jesus [*Compañía de Jesús*], which is the title we have given it and which the Pope has strongly approved.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSvOPtq30Xw>.

<sup>92</sup> *Auto*. 58.

<sup>93</sup> *Epist. et Instruct.* I: 150; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 44.



There are several reasons for the prevalence of this myth today. To some extent it seems to be an over-reaction to another myth, centuries old, that the future Society with all its distinguishing characteristics had been divinely revealed to Ignatius in his mystical illumination at the Cardoner. There is no record that Ignatius ever said anything of the sort. But early Jesuits made this claim in order to justify the Society in the eyes of detractors who had accused it of being ill-conceived or heretical.

Another factor seems to involve a desire on the part of some writers to extend as much as possible the length of time in Ignatius's life during which he might be considered an itinerant layman with an unconventional ministry. Again, wanting to make the First Companions resonant with the post-Vatican II emphasis on lay vocations, these writers imply that the Companions decided to create a canonical order—a priestly institute, no less—only at the last minute, after their plans to go to the Holy Land were foiled. As a result, the innovative lay character of their ministry was supposedly compromised. No less a scholar than Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) writes in this mode:

So [Ignatius] began the path of studies: for a long time he thought, not of the priesthood, but of the tools he needed in order to proclaim the Kingdom of God as a kind of itinerant preacher—for this is how he saw himself. He gathered a couple of disciples, laymen like himself, and he would have followed the plan he had at that time and sent them singly into the world to proclaim doctrine and give spiritual exercises as he himself wished to do if they had remained faithful to him. It was only conflicts with the Inquisition that opened his eyes more and more to the necessity of finishing his studies, that is, of becoming a priest, in order to be able to work as he had planned. Moreover, he saw that he had to form the companions who shared his vision into a more stable group if he was to give coherence to the movement that he wanted to start. Thus, the Society of Jesus became a priestly Order much more because of the world of education, which at that time was still organized in a medieval manner, than because of the intention of the founder.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission to the World*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 82.



While there could be some truth here, the documentary evidence on this point is too sparse and vague to state with any certainty what Ignatius was really thinking at the time. Considering that Ignatius fiercely resisted a female branch for the Society, and that unlike the mendicant orders he never instituted a third order of lay companions to help Jesuits in their ministry, and that the Society at the time of its papal approbation in 1540 did not include Jesuit brothers, the claim that Ignatius settled on the Society as a compromise of his preferred form of lay ministry appears rather dubious.<sup>95</sup>

## Myth 9

*St. Ignatius coined the expression “the enemy of human nature.”*

St. Ignatius’s well-known expression for the Devil in the *Spiritual Exercises* is “the enemy of human nature,” or simply “the enemy.”<sup>96</sup> To modern ears it can sound like a metaphor for the dark but otherwise natural impulses of the human psyche, and perhaps for this reason many writers seem content to continue using it, without being entirely clear about whether they mean it to refer to something supernatural.

For example, in *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, Fr. Dean Brackley (1946–2011) repeatedly refers to “the enemy.”<sup>97</sup> While he does not explicitly deny the existence of fallen angels, he does assert that “we must avoid scare tactics” and “we must sort out what is essential and what is not.”<sup>98</sup> In this vein, he writes: “we may consider the ancients primitive dupes for personifying evil. That is not the most serious issue.

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<sup>95</sup> Pope Paul III permitted the Society of Jesus to receive Jesuit brothers (“temporal coadjutors”) in the 1546 bull *Exponi nobis*.

<sup>96</sup> In Spanish, usually some form of *enemigo de natura humana*; in Italian, *nemico della natura umana*; in Latin, *inimicus* (or *hostis*) *humanae naturae*: see *SpEx* 7, 10, 136, 325, 326, 327, 334; and *Const.* 553. For the latter expression, see *SpEx* 8, 12, 217, 274, 314, 320, 325 (3 times), 329, 345, 347, 349 (2 times), 350 (3 times); and *Const.* 622.

<sup>97</sup> Dean Brackley, SJ, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2014).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

It is far more dangerous to miss what the ancients understood: that our minds and moral resources are no match for the “mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7).”<sup>99</sup>

Later, Fr. Brackley describes the “enemy” in a manner that leaves ambiguous whether it is supernatural or psychological:

The Spirit heals us psychologically and even physically and enlightens us intellectually. The “enemy” targets our moral weaknesses and our neuroses in order to dehumanize and destroy. Since these subtle forces work through who we are and, especially, through our emotions, our psychological makeup conditions their operation.”<sup>100</sup>

As these quotes suggest, many modern Catholics are uncomfortable with the doctrine of personified evil. Even those spiritual writers who believe in the Devil’s existence can find it difficult to broach the subject in their books a manner that does not generate more anxiety or confusion than enlightenment. Consequently, it might be tempting for writers to imply that Ignatius coined the longer phrase “enemy of human nature” in order to express an insight into human psychology. To be fair, I am not aware of any writer who explicitly credits Ignatius with coining the phrase. But neither have I found a writer who acknowledges that the phrase had a history before Ignatius. When one considers that any internet search quickly reveals that history, the collective silence of writers on this point does not seem entirely coincidental.

In fact, “enemy of human nature” and “enemy of the human race” were recurring names for the Devil in ancient and medieval Christian literature. In his first homily on Genesis, St. John Chrysostom (349–407) described the Devil as “an evil spirit and enemy of our nature.”<sup>101</sup> Likewise, St. Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446) used the term in a letter to Armenian bishops, in which he urged the condemnation of certain theological propositions: “our soul was greatly confused while our mind

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>101</sup> *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 23.

was grieved by the report of the budding tares of deceit that the enemy of human nature has recently sown in your land."<sup>102</sup>

Seven centuries later, Edward Grim, a monk present at the murder of St. Thomas Becket in 1170 and who nearly had his arm severed in the attack, wrote in his *Life of St. Thomas* of "the enemy of human nature."<sup>103</sup> And closer to Ignatius's own time, Giovanni Boccaccio used the phrase in *De las mujeres ilustres en romance* (1494), as did Pedro de Cieza de Leon in the *Crónica de Perú* (1553).

It was also common, from the early Middle Ages, to refer to the Devil as *hostis humanae salutis*, meaning "enemy of human health" or "enemy of human salvation." The Venerable Bede (672–735) used this expression in his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, as did St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in the *Summa Theologicae*.<sup>104</sup> And it also appears in the 1614 Rite of Exorcism.<sup>105</sup> And finally, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius refers once to *enemigo de nuestro provecho y salud eterna* ("enemy of our progress and eternal salvation").<sup>106</sup>

## Myth 10

*Ignatius wrote in the Spiritual Exercises of discovering one's "deepest" or "authentic desires" and one's "true self."*

As noted earlier, the language of "true self," "authentic desires," and "deepest desires" was imported into Ignatian spirituality in the second half of the twentieth century. Frs. Merton and Nouwen provided prominent inspiration, although the surge in popularity in the 1970s and 1980s

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<sup>102</sup> *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5*, Trans. Nicholas Constas, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 66, ed. J. Den Boeft et. al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 31n90.

<sup>103</sup> Edward Grim, *Vita S. Thomae* (c. 1180); in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 190, 8.a; see also 6.c.

<sup>104</sup> Venerable Bede, "Commentary on Mark," ch. 5; *ST III* q.71 a.2.

<sup>105</sup> *The Roman Ritual: In Latin and English, with Rubrics and Plainchant Notation*, trans. Philip T. Weller, 3 vols. (Boonville: Preserving Christian Publications, 1946–1953), II: 228.

<sup>106</sup> *SpEx* 334; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 127.

of writings on the relationship between spirituality and psychology also exerted a strong influence.<sup>107</sup>

Existentialist philosophies, which reached the peak of their popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, also contributed to the usage of this language.<sup>108</sup> If Aristotle called human beings rational animals, then the existentialists generally emphasized human beings' capacity for desire.

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*In other words, More dies in order to remain true to his authentic self.*

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Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), a thinker sometimes credited as the father of the existentialist tradition, was convinced that most European Christians spent their

lives unreflectively, routinely, passionlessly, and without a true grasp of the radicalism of the Christian gospel. "The present age," he wrote, "is essentially a *sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudently relaxing in indolence.*"<sup>109</sup>

In that context, existentialist philosophies often suggested that what a person desires is secondary to the fact that a person *has* strong desires that make a person alive, passionate, and unique. "Now if you are to understand me properly," wrote Kierkegaard through a pseudonym, "I may very well say that what is important in choosing is not so much to choose the right thing as the energy, the earnestness, and the pathos with which one chooses."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Literature on this subject is extensive. For a helpful overview, see Carter Haynes, "Identity, Transcendence and the True Self: Insights from Psychology and Contemporary Spirituality," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016), <https://jessup.academia.edu/CarterHaynes>.

<sup>108</sup> For an accessible introduction to existentialism, see William Barret, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existentialist Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1958); reprinted by Anchor Books, New York, 1990.

<sup>109</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and The Present Age: A Literary Review*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton University Press, 1978), 68. Emphasis original.

<sup>110</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Part II*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton University Press, 1987), 167. For Kierkegaard's most extended exposition on subjectivity and desire, see *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton University Press, 1992).

Existentialist philosophers generally took a similar position regarding beliefs. From this perspective, what a person believed mattered less than having beliefs that were deeply appropriated and to which a person remained faithful. The play *A Man for All Seasons*, first performed on stage in 1960, provides an excellent illustration of this point.<sup>111</sup> In the play, atheist playwright Robert Bolt (1924–1995) subtly changed St. Thomas More from a hero of faith to a hero of conscience. The real More died for his belief in the objective truth of papal primacy. But in the play, Bolt depicts More as one who seems to die for the sake of remaining consistent with his personal belief rather than for the content of that belief. In other words, More dies in order to remain true to his authentic self. As he says to the Duke of Norfolk, “but what matters to me is not whether it’s true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather, not that I believe it, but that I believe it.”<sup>112</sup>

Largely as a result of these twentieth-century influences, Ignatian discernment is often explained today—at least in the English-speaking world—in terms of identifying, acknowledging, evaluating, cultivating, and appropriating one’s desires. That, and God’s will is often identified with a person’s deepest or most authentic desires, provided of course that the desires are for something good and morally permissible.<sup>113</sup>

Now what I wish to propose for consideration—but without being able to elaborate it sufficiently here—is that this language of “authentic desire” and “true self” has become so predominant in the last fifty years,

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<sup>111</sup> Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play in Two Acts* (London: Samuel French, 1960).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 49 (Act II, Scene 1). Italics original.

<sup>113</sup> Again, literature on this subject is extensive. See Kinerk, “Eliciting Great Desires”; Michael Ivens, SJ, “Desire and Discernment,” *Way Supplement [WaySupp]* 95 (1999): 31–43; Thomas McGrath, “The Place of Desires in the Ignatian Exercises,” *Way-Supp* 76 (1993): 25–31; William A. Barry, SJ, “What Do You Want? The Role of Desires in Prayer,” *Review for Religious [RR]* 48, no. 1 (1989); Denis Donoghue, SJ, “God’s Will: Where Desires Commingle,” *RR* 60, no. 6 (2001). Books in this vein that do not focus specifically on Ignatian discernment are Philip Sheldrake, SJ, *Befriending Our Desires* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1994); and Diarmuid O’Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002). Notably, the back cover of O’Murchu’s book features the teaser: “What is most basic, most fundamental to our existence? What makes us human? Desire.”

that it effectively creates a blind spot with regard to what Ignatius actually writes in the *Spiritual Exercises*. If one re-reads the text while mentally bracketing those twentieth-century emphases, I believe that one will find a model of discernment that is (1) quite similar to what Ignatius writes in his letters and the *Constitutions*, but which is (2) quite different from what is often called “Ignatian discernment” today.<sup>114</sup>

For example, spiritual writers today are fond of quoting from the *Spiritual Exercises* the Latin refrain *id quod volo et desidero*, which translates as “[I will ask for] what I want and desire.” These writers frequently imply or affirm that the expression denotes either the exercitant’s unique dreams and desires, or the exercitant’s self-determined goal, or what the exercitant desires most. But in point of fact, Ignatius always follows *id quod volo et desidero* in the *Spiritual Exercises* by telling exercitants what the object of their desire *should* be.<sup>115</sup>

[T]o ask God our Lord for what I want and desire. What I ask for should be in accordance with the subject matter. . . . In the present meditation, it will be to ask for shame and confusion about myself.<sup>116</sup>

[T]o ask for the grace which I desire. Here it will be to ask grace from our Lord that I may not be deaf to his call, but ready and diligent to accomplish his most holy will.<sup>117</sup>

[T]o ask for what I want and desire. Here it will be to ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> See Gerard J. Hughes, SJ, “Ignatian Discernment: A Philosophical Analysis,” *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990): 419–38.

<sup>115</sup> *SpEx* 25, 55, 65, 91, 130, 139, 152. In the few instances where Ignatius writes of an exercitant’s desires without a specification of what those desires should be, he does so as instructions about prayer in general, as at *SpEx* 76, 87, 89.

<sup>116</sup> *SpEx* 48; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 40–41.

<sup>117</sup> *SpEx* 91; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 53.

<sup>118</sup> *SpEx* 104; trans. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 56.

## Conclusion

The promotion of Ignatian spirituality in Jesuit schools and other apostolates is one of the great success stories of the Society of Jesus since the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to the dedicated labors of innumerable Jesuits and laity, the apostolates of the Society are arguably better able to articulate their distinctive mission—and they are certainly more deliberate about it—than at any point in the past. Books on Ignatian discernment have soared in popularity, so that non-Jesuit writers on the subject appear to outnumber by far the Jesuit writers.

But a mission to promote Ignatian spirituality has its own occupational hazard. A heartfelt desire to endear Ignatius to successive generations of students and colleagues, or to promote the meaning of Jesuit education to people with little or no religious sophistication, can easily lead to oversimplifying Ignatius and his values, or to reducing his spirituality to catchphrases rather far removed from what Ignatius had in mind. This occupational hazard looms all the more largely in an age of electronic media, when claims about Ignatius can be hastily cut-and-pasted from one website to another, or disseminated to thousands on Twitter with the push of a button.

Precisely because Ignatian spirituality has powerful effects in the lives of so many, and speaks so directly to the needs of the modern age, the time has come, I respectfully suggest, for Jesuits and colleagues to raise their game. One cannot maintain that Ignatian spirituality has the capacity to change lives profoundly, and then continue to perpetuate claims about Ignatius without citing the sources and checking the facts.

If readers know of early Jesuit sources that either qualify or refute anything that I have affirmed here about Ignatius or anything else, then please notify me in writing.<sup>119</sup> I am willing to be corrected publicly, and in subsequent issues of *STUDIES*, I will publish that information as “Letters to the Editor.” If the present issue succeeds in generating a conversation among Jesuits and friends about what it means to promote Ignatian spirituality responsibly, then any crow that I eat will be worth it.

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<sup>119</sup> At [JCUSTudies@jesuits.org](mailto:JCUSTudies@jesuits.org)



The Jesuit scholar Fr. Walter Ong (1912–2003) anticipated some of these challenges as early as 1952. And so I leave the final word to him:

By a kind of irresistible momentum, as an expression becomes more and more widely circulated in the form of a byword or motto, it tends to lose its original identity. There is an externality attendant on all human communication, which is involved with the external senses and spoken words, and this externality becomes only aggravated on the lips of a crowd. By the time an expression becomes widely quoted, its sense tends to be controlled not by the purpose of those who originally drafted it, and gave it its identity, but by the shifting kaleidoscope of external contradictions.

...

When we try to give them close attention, to discover their real identity, spiritual sayings have a way of tripping us up unawares—and the tripping up is done not only by what we might take for recondite spiritual maxims but by what are downright spiritual commonplaces. It comes as a shock for us to realize that the particular manner in which we employ even so basic a motto as the *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, or “To the Greater Glory of God,” associated with St. Ignatius of Loyola does not quite correspond to the older use of the term.

...

[U]sed as a motto, the A.M.D.G. is perhaps a little disconcerting in the way it points to the interior of our own hearts. Inscribed on a building, it does more than point to the building and more than point the building to God. It points to our own interior life. In effect, it says that this object represents somehow a choice we have made with our eyes on God.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Walter Ong, SJ, “A.M.D.G.: Dedication or Directive?” *RR* 11 (1952), 257–64; reprinted in *RR* 50 (Jan.–Feb. 1991), 35–42. The citations are taken from the reprint, pp. 35, 36, 42. For a similar observation by Fr. George Ganss, SJ (1905–2000), see *The Jesuit Educational Tradition and Saint Louis University: Some Bearings for the University’s Sesqui-centennial, 1818–1968* (Saint Louis University, 1969), 8–9.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

Fr. Dick Baumann's fine reading of the *Constitutions and Complementary Norms* attends to our inner life: prayer, self-abnegation, and union with God. It differed significantly from Fr. Adolfo Nicolás's last exhortation: total detachment, total commitment, and total collaboration, which urges the connection between our interior and our apostolic development.

Since Fr. Baumann stressed our inner life, it was surprising that in his lucid paragraphs ending with "personal prayer is of paramount importance" (p. 24), he did not raise the issues around *how* Jesuits typically pray. Our prayer does not typically lead to nuptial union, as Fr. Baumann correctly points out. Rather, it is the union of Michael Buckley's citation. "God is at work"; so, to be "united with Him the way that He is, is to be with Him in this labor" (p. 33). *This labor*—that is, the labor that I do this day and these days united to God laboring.

If the God whom we seek is a *busy* God—creating and redeeming in each instant—then what do Jesuits *do* in our prayer? If we are thinking with the church, then we

attend to Pope Francis's urging in *The Joy of the Gospel*. We pray with Jesus in the gospels, daily. But our *lectio divina* is not the Benedictine Option: *lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*. The Jesuit prayer rather goes *lectio, consideratio, oratio, discretio* [discernment].

Fr. Baumann did not have the space to reach into the experience of the [Spiritual] Exercises. In them, the serious Jesuit considers the "Contemplation to Learn to Love the Way God Loves": God gives gifts, remains in them, and *acts in His gifts*, including my life, my vocation, my day, my graced choices this day. Jesus taught us: the night He spent in prayer before choosing the Twelve was not a transfiguration without all the light. It's sensible to believe that He was wondering whether to include Andrew with Peter. Would Levi be acceptable to people at his level? Thanking the Father for these men, He would puzzle: would [Judas] the Iscariot contain his impatient zeal? Jesus would have asked the Father's blessing on His choices. This is the prayer of consideration.

So, in the morning, I look at my To Do list and take it to the Lord in prayer. Do I agree to perform that

alumna's wedding? Lord, how can I help Fulano? I am concerned about my part in today's conference. Then, when the Spirit allows me, I make choices and offer them to the Lord for His blessing and ask His consolation.

This is the prayer of consideration, weaving the Word of God with this world of ours. Master Ignatius urged the prayer of consideration explicitly nearly sixty times in the *Spiritual Exercises* (*contemplation*, some ninety times). The *Contemplatio ad Amorem* rather surprisingly calls for *ponderando* and *considerando*, and not *contemplando*.

I believe I am suggesting that Fr. Baumann's separation of "how is my prayer going" from "how is my union going" has to be handled carefully. He makes this distinction in section IV, "Cooperation-as-Union as Integration" (pp. 35–37). But we can no more separate our prayer from our union than we can separate heat from fire. If we are *contemplativi in actione*, our prayer is to our work what yeast is to French bread.

Joseph A. Tetlow (ucs)

Editor:

I am very grateful to Fr. Joe Tetlow for his comments to the editor of *STUDIES* with respect to my essay "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union." Let me respond to what I believe are two of his points.

First, Fr. Tetlow states that more could have been written in the section on prayer about "how Jesuits typically pray" and "what Jesuits *do* in their prayer." He suggests that Jesuit prayer most properly moves to *discretio* (discernment) and action. His point is well taken, and I agree. When speaking about prayer as being "responsive to the God of all life . . . the God of redemption" (p. 23), I mean a prayer that is discerning and apostolic—prayer that has to do not only with my inner life with the Lord but also intentionally with the choices I make in my labor and cooperation with God in the endeavor of "helping souls."

This clearly matches up well with the assertion on that "Jesuit spirituality does not have a person primarily contemplating Jesus under the trees of Galilee; rather, it places a person with Jesus on the road—contemplating *and* journeying, strategizing, reconciling, laboring, serving, and imagining to serve more" (p. 18). All the "coop-

eration" highlighted in the essay stems from a prayer full of *discretio*. My making that more explicit in the section on prayer would have been an apt and additional benefit.

Secondly, if I'm understanding correctly, Fr. Tetlow states that the essay seems to suggest a separation between prayer and a union with God, when it presents two distinct questions: "how is my life of prayer?" and "how is my life of union?" This might be, in the end, a matter of nuance, since I agree that the questions are related, although emphasizing that personal prayer is simply one (privileged) means of union. Moreover, when I speak of "how is my life of union" as a more promising question than "how is my life of prayer"—within the context of this particular essay—and add that for me personally the former question about union is a "richer," more "expansive," more "heartening," and more "useful" one, I do so with no intention of saying that the question "how is my life of prayer" is not in itself an understandable, proper, and centrally key one also. Good to clarify this. They surely both are valuable, timely, and dynamically related. They can coexist. No sharp separation is needed; though, in my mind, the question about union—for the rea-

sons given—appears to be a more far-reaching, holistic, integrative, and consoling one.

I thank Fr. Tetlow very much for the time to offer me an enriching review in my thinking, and also a way of improving, for all of us, what the essay proposes.

*Richard J. Baumann (UMI)*

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