STUDIES
IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Friends in the Lord, Then and Now: Simão Rodrigues and Our Life in the Society of Jesus

Christopher M. Staab, SJ

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In the Beginning…

For some twenty years, it has been my privilege to study the writings and hagiography of saints of the Society of Jesus. Some of these men, such as Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), offer us a way of life. Others, such as Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1649) or Isaac Jogues (1607–46), show us that love is stronger than death; while others still, like Francis Xavier (1506–52) or Peter Claver (1580–1654), invite us to explore new frontiers.

While each saint of our order represents a distinctive witness to profound relationship with God, all of them together express, either on the written page or in the example of their lives, two transcendent facts that shape their course on earth: a profound, almost crushing self-awareness of their sinfulness, along with the experience of the crucified and risen Christ raising them into service and beckoning them to follow him.

In my experience, it works best when studying saints or praying alongside them to hold in tension these two realities of sin and salvation and to remember that each saint appeared to do the same throughout his life. This perspective provides an ideal context to appreciate the excellent article in the current issue of Studies by Fr. Christopher M. Staab (umi) entitled "Friends in the Lord, Then and Now: Simão Rodrigues and Our Life in the Society of Jesus." Through the lens of Rodrigues, the author reflects upon the complex relationships among the First Companions of the Society. Furthermore, Fr. Staab invites us to learn from these relationships as each of us today, with his own experience of struggle and sanctity, shares his life with fellow Jesuits as "friends in the Lord." In this way, recognizing the complexities and graces of our paragons can enrich their witness and make our own journeys all the more real as we labor to grow in holiness together.

Of course, we do not accomplish this labor of love in a single day or even after many years but rather in a lifetime that includes our final days preparing to meet the Lord face-to-face. On this note, in a new online only section of Studies called "First Studies," scholastic Taylr Bahr

(UMI) reflects on how the journeys of men missioned to pray for the church and the Society create spaces of new depth and spiritual transformation for themselves and others. Here, inspired by a STUDIES issue written by two such men, the recently-vowed Mr. Bahr brings his newfound knowledge of our tradition to bear upon his novitiate experience accompanying our elders at a retirement center.[1] Regarding this new feature of STUDIES, please look for these sorts of reflections from time to time as a welcomed addition to our online publication, and do engage the authors on the topics they raise.

Certainly, we feel blessed by the submissions we continue to receive and welcome your own proposals as we grow together in knowledge and experience of our common life.

Michael L. Knox SJ
General Editor

[1] E. Edward Kinerk, SJ, and Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, "*Orat pro Eccl. et Soc.*: Reflections on an Essential Mission," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2024).

God, I give you thanks
for the gift of my vocation.
In it I have experienced great consolation
at being placed with your Son in his labors for the Kingdom.
I also have experienced hardship;
sometimes my vocation in the Society of Jesus has not been easy.
As I read the story of Simon Rodrigues's vocation,
a vocation filled with joy as well as difficulty,
help me to embrace the totality of who I am
as a companion of yours, keeping my eyes fixed on you
in the midst of everything I live.

1. What aspects of the lives of Ignatius and the first companions encourage me in my vocation?
2. As I look at my Jesuit brothers and others with whom I have ministered, what causes me consolation? What are the moments of desolation and difficulty that come to mind?
3. Are there aspects of the life of Simon Rodrigues that help me enter more deeply into my vocation?