



# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

WRITINGS ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY II

by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.

*Translated and edited by*

**PHILIP ENDEAN, S.J.**

## **THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY**

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

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

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

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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## *the first word . . .*

Fifty years have passed since the assassination of President Kennedy. Over these past few weeks, the media have been filled with various attempts to commemorate the man and his legacy. In this dark season of remembrance, a half century after the fact, those of us who actually remember those terrible November days of 1963 still find ourselves moved if not to tears, then at least to melancholy. We can all relive those moments, in striking detail, where and how we learned about the grim news coming out of Dallas, the agonizing wait for the final pronouncement, and those vacant hours sitting helplessly in front of the black-and-white television watching the rites for the dead, half hoping that someone would tell us there had been a mistake. How to explain this to a younger person? The experience cut even deeper than those acrid days of September 2001. The destruction of the towers and the many lives they took with them left us puzzled, frightened, and angry in turn. The murder of a president simply left us empty. Traumas that might seem so similar in their aftermath touch different parts of the psyche.

Jill Abramson, an editor at the *New York Times*, indicates a path for our reflection. In a lengthy article in the *New York Times Book Review*, October 27, Ms. Abramson notes that while over forty thousand books have appeared about the life and death of John F. Kennedy, none have managed to capture the essence of the man, and none would reach the status of a "definitive biography." That's right. Anyone from professional historian, to journalist, to graying "New Frontiersman" brings too much of the self to the story. Another generation has to pass before we can weigh the facts. John Kennedy, in his cruelly premature death, remains as much a legend as a man, a myth more than a political figure. In our current world of toxic polarization, it's hard to believe there was once a time when a president embodied a spirit of optimism and self-confidence. He was young, handsome, witty, and articulate; his wife beautiful and sophisticated; his interest in the arts seemed genuine. He surmounted the sadness of the death of his baby son. Learning from his mistakes around the Bay of Pigs, a few months later he faced down Khruschev and the threat of nuclear war and promised to put a man on the moon. That's what we remember.

The truth presents a fuzzier picture of the man. Staff and journalists at the time collaborated in masking the seamy areas of his private life. Later generations of reporters and political adversaries show no such respect for the presidency or the dead. In the weeks after the assassination, some even urged beatification for the “martyred Catholic president.” Subsequent revelations have surely validated the wisdom of the Church in making the path to sainthood a long, complicated process. Still more intriguing about the man is that long list of hypotheticals that preoccupies any author who addresses the subject. What would he have done had his life not ended as abruptly as it did? Would he have outgrown the rich playboy side of his character? Once reelected and no longer dependent on the Southern wing of his own party, would he have become more robust in his pursuit of civil-rights legislation? Would he have been quicker than Lyndon Johnson to realize the perils of war in Asia, and would he have found some other way to resolve the Vietnam conflict before it spiraled into a national tragedy? The continuing tragedy for the country is the sad fact that we’ll never know the answers to any of these questions.

Why not grant the man the same capacity for growth in wisdom, age, and grace we all try to find in ourselves? Anyone who shuffles through the years to compose an imaginary autobiography surely runs into embarrassing episodes, social miscalculations, and words best left unspoken or, in some cases, unwritten. (I’m eternally grateful that the editorials I wrote in *America* over many years remain unsigned and thus not attributable. More than a few, surely, would be an embarrassment today.) Haven’t we all misjudged a person or situation and acted stupidly as a result? Couldn’t we have done something to ease a situation or refrained from acting in a way that in fact made it much worse? The words of the Confiteor hit it perfectly: “in what I have done and what I have failed to do.” Little wonder that the Church urges us to say those words every day.

And our failures of nerve, insight, or language, whether deliberate or the result of limited perspective, compromise our professional lives as well. As priest, confessor, counselor, and junior-grade superior, I can compose a catalogue of miscalculations, advice and admonition phrased poorly, to the extent that the other is hurt rather than helped. And have many teachers been able to look back without regret because of troubled students they failed to help and those they might even have damaged by a clumsy attempt at “tough love.” Yet consolation from the exercise flows from a sense that maybe we’ve started to get better at our work. Perhaps we’ve learned from past mistakes. I like to think I don’t make the same blunders or, at least, not as frequently. As we get older and more secure, we’re less prone to impulsive gestures to demonstrate our strength; and we like to think we’ve grown more sensitive to the complexi-

ties of those around us. Some few of us sour with the years; most mellow. Vinegar, wine, or some mixture of both?

In addition to personal interactions, I like to think we grow more sensitive to the world's complexities as well. In the 1960s and 1970s, when I was a student and a young priest, the terms "liberal" and "conservative" simplified many issues. Happily, most of us try to avoid the words altogether these days. They've lost any definable meaning and spread more fog than sunshine. Perhaps the black-and-white terms "Communist" and "Free World" simplified the issues for President Kennedy as he decided to go ahead with the Bay of Pigs invasion. After only a few more months in office, as Soviet missiles made their way to Cuba, he learned to negotiate in a world tinted with a far-more-generous palette. I blush to remember some of my dogmatic pronouncements about the controversies of the 1960s and 1970s, especially in those days of confrontation after the Kent State tragedy of 1970. Marxist rhetoric was quite fashionable, especially among those of us who didn't know the first thing about Marx or Lenin. It was enough to put on a red armband and march around campus shouting "Power to the people!" Well, I've made full cycle in the Society: from being regarded as a young radical, to a trendy liberal, to establishment figure who "seems to be growing quite cautious and conservative in his middle years." Now, in the eyes of many younger Jesuits, I've probably become a harmless, burnt-out liberal with clandestine tendencies toward genteel anarchy. Full cycle. It happens if you live long enough.

John Kennedy did not live long enough to complete his full portion of the circle, much to the frustration of biographers and journalists who want a tag phrase to summarize his life. My near contemporary, Pope Francis, has. In the few pages of his splendid conclusion to this series of essays Philip Endean, translator and editor, points out areas of both consistency and growth in the Pope's thought. That's the point of publishing these pieces. Looking for a conversion moment of personal transformation in his life, a single event or encounter, does a disservice to the man and his thoughts. Growth comes upon us gradually, through many seasons. Contexts change, as does the historian's perspective. Surely, a young, inexperienced Jesuit provincial dropped into a world of frightening political, religious, and social unrest had to feel charged with the responsibility to hold the pieces together to get through the crisis. A seminary rector deals with the very young rather than a peer group and must project an idealized model of priesthood and discipline. A cardinal archbishop of a cosmopolitan city routinely collaborates face to face with a breathtaking variety of clergy, politicians, labor leaders, and the poor of his flock. Yes, most importantly, the poor. Different challenges force one to develop, not only different skills, but different mind-sets. One would hope, and I firmly believe,

that Pope Francis grew in wisdom and compassion through each of these stages in his life, and that he will continue to grow in his most recent ministry.

These primary sources that Philip has translated and annotated with such care help us to overcome that most seductive compulsion to simplify, to “get a handle” on the person, and to predict the directions of his papacy. Imposing today’s values and methods on the past and judging past controversies on the basis of present consensus do a disservice to the person. (Look at our ongoing and, at times, acrimonious reassessment of our slave-holding Founding Fathers.) These essays of Father Bergoglio, along with Philip’s wise and thoughtful commentary, help us in our understanding of our Jesuit pope. On behalf of American Jesuits, many thanks to our British colleague.

## *A few second words . . .*

As a true believer in consultation and collaboration—in theory, if not in practice—I try to create the illusion of democracy among members of the Jesuit Seminar. At our meeting at the University of Detroit-Mercy last September, the brethren staged a modest insurrection. Reasserting my belief that everybody in the Assistancy surely knows how to contribute to STUDIES, I dismissed their suggestion that I dedicate part of the editor’s column to the topic. Over dinner they eventually overwhelmed me with the argument that there may well be many Jesuits out there in readershipland who have an idea for an essay themselves or know of some colleague who could write for us, but don’t know how to submit something. Having learned a lesson from Marie Antoinette, I declined to suggest an order of cake to my adversaries and, over dessert and brandy, I capitulated before my head went bouncing into their well-situated basket.

Here goes. At its founding in 1969 by the Jesuit Conference as a project of the Institute of Jesuit Sources in St. Louis, STUDIES initially circulated papers generated by the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, a group of ten Jesuits, one from each province of the then American Assistancy, appointed by their respective provincials. The work provided a response to Vatican II’s call in *Perfectæ caritatis* for a renewal of religious life based on the founding documents of each religious institute. The curious can look at the list of back issues in the final pages of each issue for a sampling of the topics and note that the journal appeared five times each year, with the understanding that each member would prepare an issue every two years. This production schedule continued through the terms of George Ganss, the founding editor, and his successor, John Padberg.

By the time I came on the scene as editor in 2002, the initial purpose of the publication had clearly shifted, as the council and its immediate aftermath receded into the past. STUDIES became a quarterly, in keeping with the common practice for academic journals. The statement of purpose, something like a mission statement, on the inside front cover described the journal as dealing with “the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits” and “the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States.” Clearly, this is a huge umbrella that accommodated any variety of topics of interest to Jesuits and their collaborators. Over the past year we added another descriptor, which any casual reader can readily verify: “[STUDIES] gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world.” The journal now includes academic research on a par, I believe, with other historical and theological quarterlies. At the same time, it has welcomed more informal articles on pastoral experience and practice. Like the zombies now so popular on television and in the movies, the notion that STUDIES is interested only in commentaries on the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions will not die—despite all the bullets we have fired into that lumbering carcass.

The members now constitute a self-perpetuating editorial board without reference to province. Each year we nominate three new members for a three-year term, but the Jesuit Conference, the legal publisher, submits the nominees to the individual provincials, who formally authorize their membership. The editor and chair has no fixed term. For good or ill, he serves at the pleasure of the publisher. We do try to balance geography, ministry, and academic discipline to bring a diversity of voices to our discussions. We meet three times each year to evaluate manuscripts. Each new member is expected to produce a monograph, but with the added expectation that he use his professional contacts to invite colleagues to submit their own work for publication. To pick an arbitrary time period, over the last ten years the Seminar has published forty monographs. A quick scan of the list of back issues indicates that nine have been written by non-Jesuits and ten by Jesuits who were not members of the Seminar at the time of their submission. The complete archive of back issues can be accessed through our website: <http://ejournals.bc.edu/jesuits>

Prospective authors contact us in different ways. As a seminar, rather than an editorial board that issues simple yes/no verdicts on the basis of final drafts, we work with potential contributors to try to produce the best-possible product. In addition to final drafts, some aspiring authors submit letters of inquiry, others formal proposals and outlines, and still others preliminary versions. These make the rounds of the Seminar members through e-mail. If the project makes it through this first round, the collaboration begins. The final

version is a monograph of between ten and fifteen thousand words, double spaced, using the *University of Chicago Stylebook*, and submitted electronically to the editor in Microsoft Word. Note: STUDIES publishes free-standing monographs, not articles, as do, for example, *Theological Studies* or *America*. The essay must be original, not a copy of “a well-received talk” or a term paper or thesis. Clearly, an author could incorporate research from earlier projects and update and rewrite previous works with STUDIES specifically in mind, but the final version should be significantly different from the Urtext. STUDIES is not a reprint service. The internet and provincials’ list serves now to make it so easy to circulate significant papers and documents, that STUDIES no longer fills that role. Due to the Society’s current use of modern technology, even Father General’s letters would have a tough time making it through the vetting process!

I hope publishing this placates the restive Seminar, informs our readership, and keeps me from the guillotine for another few weeks.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor

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# WRITINGS ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY II

*by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.*

## I. On Uncertainty and Tepidity (1982)

**O**n several occasions people have referred to the phenomenon of a certain falling off in the spiritual life. Slowly some are becoming less generous and less prompt in their service, to the point of what could be called torpor. They show few significant movements of spirit. These religious may be going through the motions with their normal work and leading a “good religious life,” but little by little they are losing their edge, their spiritual fervor. Here we are dealing with what the classics of the spiritual life call tepidity.

We can summarize the features of this state. There are men and women who once, at the outset of religious life or at peak moments within it, were very promising. But now that their first enthusiasm has passed, or now that they are not being challenged during a tough patch, their fire is going out, and they are settling for ever more limited, less ambitious, options. The best insight that religious orders have on this, garnered from what has come to be called “permanent formation,” suggests the need somehow to preserve some kind of interior rhythm in order to protect the individual religious from falling into tepidity and all its consequences: mediocrity and the dismantling of identity.

It would be wrong to be too cerebral and intellectual in our thinking. Nevertheless, at the basis of all tepidity and mediocrity there lies an element of doubt. When, as happens with all temptation, a person

seeks to justify this state of tepidity, this doubt or uncertainty can serve as a rationalizing legitimization.

So what are these uncertainties that we have to live with? What are the danger signs? What are the situations that make these uncertainties figure larger? This essay will try firstly to detect the uncertainties underlying every state of mediocrity and tepidity, and then to describe the various symptoms.

## **Paul VI and Two Types of Uncertainty**

Paul VI, in his Allocution to the Jesuits gathered for a General Congregation on December 3, 1974, expressed himself as follows:

And why then do you doubt? You have a spirituality strongly traced out, an unequivocal identity and a centuries-old confirmation which was based on the validity of methods, which, having passed through the crucible of history, still bear the imprint of the strong spirit of St. Ignatius. . . . Today there appears within certain sectors of your ranks a strong state of uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

The Pope's invitation to a serious examination of conscience focuses on the interior world, which is always so difficult to articulate clearly: the place of questioning and uncertainty. And though it is relatively easy to understand what "questioning" means here, the same does not apply to "the strong state of uncertainty."<sup>2</sup> What, then, is the Pope referring to when he speaks of uncertainty?

We might begin by supposing that he is pointing to the onslaughts that in various ways are attacking the cohesion of our fundamental identity. The Pope himself brings the point out:

It is true that there is today widespread in the Church the temptation characteristic of our time: systematic doubt, uncertainty about one's identity, desire for change, independence, and in-

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<sup>1</sup>*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 (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 384, 385.

<sup>2</sup>*Duda*: JMB's elaboration on Paul VI's coded use of "doubt" makes sense only because the Spanish *duda* is broader than the English "doubt" and extends to what we would designate as "question."

dividualism. . . . All of us must be vigilant so that the necessary adaptation will not be accomplished to the detriment of the fundamental identity or essential character of the role of the Jesuit. . . . This image must not be altered; it must not be distorted. . . . If your Society puts itself at risk, if it enters on to paths full of danger which are not its own, there suffer also thereby all those who, in one way or another, owe to the Jesuits so much of their Christian formation. . . . There appears within . . . your ranks . . . a certain fundamental questioning of your very identity.

Simplifying a little, we might say that the “uncertainty” in this first sense comes from outside” (*SpEx* 32)—from the social and cultural realities of our time that we are negotiating poorly.

But, inspired by the Pope’s words and without forcing their meaning, we can say that the word “uncertainty” has also a second sense. It would seem that this second kind of uncertainty comes “from within,” from how we manage the gifts we have received, the graces and temptations of each day. It does not come from outside influences. Rather, what normally underlies it is a spiritual attitude that is somewhat passive. Alternatively, it may arise out of the traces left by conflicts in the outer world in a soul that is not very sensitive or refined.

When people stop praying, give up the examens, stop being careful about how they treat their neighbor, or make small compromises with the vows, lying behind this is a lack of personal conviction. This lack of conviction, this uncertainty, increases as the conscience becomes less sensitive. It ends up legitimating and rationalizing states of mind that are very tepid and weak.

When the Pope refers to a general crisis, he is surely locating the Jesuits within the culture and the Church of this present time, and stressing the point because of the vanguard mission that the Church has entrusted to the Society of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> It would be futile to make comparisons and ask ourselves if the Society has been more damaged than other institutes in this connection—or at least it would not do us any

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<sup>3</sup>JMB’s footnote refers to the famous sentence from Paul VI’s address about Jesuit presence: “Wherever in the Church . . . there has been and there is confrontation between the deepest desires of humanity and the perennial message of the Gospel, there also there have been, and there are, Jesuits.”

good. Indeed it would be quite normal for this to be case, since it is always the advance forces that take the greatest hits. Nevertheless, let us leave the comparative sociology aside, if only because it will not be helpful to us.

In these reflections on tepidity, we can also set aside the first sense that we saw in the expression “strong sense of uncertainty.” The Church’s documents, especially in recent years, have warned about temptations against sound doctrine and insisted strongly on the Catholic sense in which we belong to the Church. It would of course be interesting to recapitulate this material, but that is not what I am going to do here.

In this essay, I will concentrate on the second sense of the expression “strong sense of uncertainty.” I do this because of the connections with the state of tepidity, as I indicated above. I also have more domestic reasons—I think that for the religious life of Argentinian Jesuits, this approach may be more relevant.<sup>4</sup>

## The Paschal Mystery and Ordinary Life

For some time in our province, we have been experiencing a special blessing of the Lord, manifested in a sharp increase of vocations, a certain recovery of values essential to our identity (a sense of mission, of belonging to the Church, renewal of our spirituality, and so forth). This may have given us the sense that we were out of danger and now on the right track. The pain that had got under the skin of the whole province some years ago, arising from the lack of vocations, many well-qualified people leaving, and a general unsettledness has now given way to overflowing joy in the Lord’s Passover. We were united in our suffering; now we are united in enjoying the triumph.

We are not alone in having had this experience. I think that every community shares in it if, in one way or another, it has felt the unifying

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<sup>4</sup>It may be questioned how far JMB’s second sense of “uncertainty” is really present in Paul VI’s coded text. Certainly there is some tension between the idea of a “strong” uncertainty and the subtlety of what JMB actually discusses, closer in character to the Second Week Rules for Discernment. In a footnote, JMB concedes that Paul VI does not directly refer to his second sense, but argues that there is implicit reference to it when the Pope speaks of spiritual decadence under the pretext of apostolic necessity. It may also be that this material, referring to Paul VI in the present tense, initially existed independently of what follows—the whole was published in 1982.

power that a living of the paschal mystery gives: the suffering of the cross and the resounding joy of the resurrection. Moreover, the same applies in one's personal interior life. Everything within us, what we are and what we can be, becomes integrated when the Lord visits us with his cross and with his risen existence's "office of consoling."<sup>5</sup>

But then, both for individuals and for institutions, life goes on. The unifying sorrow of the cross and the joy of the resurrection do not always last. And at this later moment too, we will be tempted—both individuals and institutions—but in a way different from how it was with the cross and the resurrection. There are the "afterglows of consolation" (*SpEx* 336), which must not be dealt with in the same way as consolation itself. For if we do that, we will fall into the trap of mistaking no longer the Lord for a phantom, but rather some fantasy for the Lord.<sup>6</sup>

Further, at these moments following on from peak times, there is a sort of regression. We tend in some way to return to where we were before—even to our sin. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves losing—little by little, under the sway of deceits and illusions—what had been gained in the paschal struggle as it occurred within us, and finally we end up in a worse place than where we started (Matt. 12:43–45).

To put it another way: individuals and institutions can, through God's grace, overcome the first uncertainty—that of their own identity—and its effects. But then later, because of a lack of prudence and fervor, they can come to feed off a sense of the victory already won. In a way, they rest on their laurels. And this emasculates all the benefit they gained from their first struggle.

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*To be faithful in the pain of battle  
and the triumph of victory is  
difficult enough. But it is much  
more difficult to be faithful in  
maintaining daily consolation, in  
whatever form it comes.*

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<sup>5</sup>JMB's footnote refers to *SpEx* 224. He expounds the teaching of *SpEx* 323-24, while remarking that the interplay of consolation and desolation in daily life may be far more subtle than Ignatius's rules suggest.

<sup>6</sup>The original plays on *fantasma* and *fantasia*.

In this later situation too there is a “strong state of uncertainty”—this in the second sense of the word. They have triumphed in both the joy and the suffering of war, but they do not know how to live out the peace that comes later. And then they become insecure, carping, passive, paralyzed. In the face of all this, our struggle against the state of uncertainty needs to reach, not only to what affects our basic way of being and identity (the first sense), but also to our daily conduct, our way of proceeding in the work of every day (the second sense).

To be faithful in the pain of battle and the triumph of victory is difficult enough. But it is much more difficult to be faithful in maintaining daily consolation, in whatever form it comes. We are invited not just to persevere in watchfulness and prayer at the cross, and to accept with humility the joy of the victory, but also to seek consolation, and to remain in it. Consolation has to be sought and maintained at all costs.

## The Seduction of Comfort

Deuteronomy tells us that

[w]hen the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deut. 6:10–12)

Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and

in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." (Deut. 8:11–17)

This warning focuses on the temptations proper to the time of prosperity and peace that comes once we have emerged from the painful trial of slavery and the desert, and also from the triumph of the liberation.

In the Gospel, there appear various passages that can be read in this light. The disciples do not manage such times well and show that they have still not really understood the heart of Jesus's message. "It is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings: (Mark 9:4); "Do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven?" (Luke 9:54); "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6); "They were about to come and take him by force to make him king" (John 6:15). What happens here is odd. It is as though all the work the Lord had done up to that point had not been able to change the hearts of his own. The same goes for the people of Israel.

Just the same pattern occurs when you have the phenomenon of people regressing to the attitudes they had before their conversion. The heart can accept easily enough the Lord's Passover in the cross and the resurrection, but there is still something which has not yet been surrendered to this love. And this something reemerges in time of peace. True fidelity appears not so much in the peak experiences of suffering and triumph, but in the moments of daily consolation, when you have to make the salvation received actually work, hold on to it, and take responsibility for it.

## **Seeking the Lord**

Complete fidelity, then, has to be sought in this phase of peace that follows on from the cross and the triumph. How is such fidelity typically expressed? During the trial of the cross, fidelity consists in "watching and praying"; in the joy of the resurrection, it consists in the faith-filled abandonment to the "office of consoling" that the Lord bears. By contrast, in the time of peace, fidelity is expressed through the continual seeking of the Lord. Moreover, this seeking has a certain dimension of what I would term "resistance." I shall explain.

The Deuteronomy texts cited above invite us not to forget that all the achievements gained were the work of the LORD. Israel's wisdom knew that all human selfishness brings with it a capacity to forget. And those same texts were also admonishing us not to place our security in our own capacities, as if forgetfulness could make us think we were in control of what had happened. "Remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18). The reminder here implies a real joy in God's deeds, leading constantly to renewed expressions of the desire to seek Him, so that He continues to bring these deeds about.

The first temptation in the time of peace and prosperity consists precisely in an absence of this desire to seek God, or for the quest to be somehow less than authentic. For example, one might really want

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to possess something else—focusing not so much on the saving God's sovereign lordship, but on the benefits, the sense of achievement, that these saving deeds bring.<sup>7</sup>

When things are going nor-

*There is a particular name for this generosity in time of peace: the discerning magis.*

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mally and peacefully, a faithful person typically seeks and finds. Unfaithful persons either do not seek at all or else seek simply in order to gain or maintain what they receive—it goes no further.

What is it that the person wanting to be faithful is seeking? Quite simply: the Lord and the consolation, in whichever form (*SpEx* 316), that accompanies everyday service. And seeking consolation requires us to stretch ourselves, to be trying various things out. It requires a continual and serious examination of consciousness so as to become aware of the movements of spirits arising over the course of the day. It requires vigilance of a kind rather different from that proper, for example, to the moment of the cross. It requires a sensitivity to the inner life and a watchful eye that does not go to sleep.

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<sup>7</sup>JMB's footnote lists two ways in which Ignatius, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, uses the word *buscar* (seek). "Seek in order to find" is positive, typically referring to God; "seek in order to possess" is negative, typically referring to created goods. "The first sense always opens up to an encounter, which does not necessarily imply possession, and may even involve dispossession."

## Resistance

I mentioned too that this quest of God in the time of prosperity and peace had a particular characteristic: a certain dimension of resistance. What does this mean?

When St. Augustine is speaking of Christians who are sickly, he says that there are two sorts. One sort, the *ægroti*, as he calls them, are now definitively sick and are indeed being motivated by heresy (which is the problem he was discussing at the time), while the other group, whom he calls the *infirmi*, are susceptible to this final sickness that will take them into a state of heresy. And this is because of their lack of resistance. He says that they are people desirous of doing good, but incapable of resisting evil.<sup>8</sup> And thus this incapacity undermines them from within. While not removing them from membership in the Church (for they still have the appropriate desire and capacity to do good), it nevertheless weakens their ability to confront matters and they enjoy, in a bad sense, “the peace of the times.” Whenever difficulties or persecution come, they fall away.

In the histories of the eighteenth-century persecution in Japan, it is recounted that the leaders of the Catholic communities, particularly priests, were kept in relatively comfortable prisons for some days before their crucial interrogation and provided with privileges. The intention was obvious: to weaken their resistance. In the Exercises, St. Ignatius warns us about an exercitant in apparent peace, to whom nothing happens. And Blessed Pierre Favre recommends that to souls already in God’s service, apparently doing all the right things, one should suggest something challenging, because in the reply that they give, the spirit they really have will become manifest.<sup>9</sup> These counsels do nothing other than take up the Gospel tradition about the rich young man. All his goodness becomes confused when faced with an

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<sup>8</sup>JMB cites Augustine, “De Pastoribus,” Sermon 46, 13 (CCL 41.539–40), more easily available as the second reading in the Office of Readings for Sunday of Week 25. Alfonso Gómez, S.J., reports that JMB as a teacher of Pastoral Theology “would focus on the sermons of St. Augustine to Pastors.” (“What I Learned from Pope Francis,” *New Jesuit Review* 3, no. 10 [2013]).

<sup>9</sup>JMB cites *SpEx* 6 and Favre, *Memoriale*, nos. 301–2. He does not document his reference to the Japanese martyrs.

invitation to do more difficult things. His interior peace had been undermined without his being aware.<sup>10</sup>

## Recapitulation

To recapitulate. There are three fundamental phases of spiritual experience: that of the cross, that of the resurrection, and that of the peace that comes later. In this last phase, we do not always find enough spiritual wisdom to be able to move forward. There is a danger of progressive, imperceptible weakening, which leads—inevitably—to our regression to the attitudes we had before the passing of the Lord purified and converted us. The fidelity to the Lord appropriate in these phases of peace consists in taking special care to keep one's heart seeking the Lord, and this with a certain sense of resistance.

This resistance can take various forms: patience, apostolic steadfastness, a serious commitment to examine one's conscience, a focus on the interior life, penances, and so forth. All these imply a refusal to rest on one's laurels and a certain proactivity in envisaging for oneself "greater things" in the service of God. There is a particular name for this generosity in time of peace: the discerning *magis*. Being active in the apostolate—making conquests, being expansive—this in itself is no guarantee of fidelity in these phases. You have to look for the person's ability to resist, in the sense just given. In times of peace, the sign of fidelity is more a Pauline *hypomonē* (steadfastness) than *parrhēsia* (confidence).

## Peace and Identity

Before embarking on a description of the typical signs of infidelity in times of peace, I shall make a digression that may give us a little more light.

It would seem that there is a close relationship between how we comport ourselves in this time of peace and prosperity and our growth in identity. Both the letter to the Thessalonians and the letter

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<sup>10</sup>JMB's note refers to Ignatius's "Autograph Directory," 23: Where the state of life is already settled—this is how JMB sees the situation of a faithful person in the time of peace—a person may choose "where it is equally for God's service and without scandal or harm to the neighbor, to desire injuries, opprobrium, and abasement in all things with Christ."

to the Hebrews stress a state of peace after the triumph of the resurrection. “So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). “[W]e will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thess. 4:17) This state is the end point of our pilgrimage. The homeland to which our ancestors aspired and which they greeted from afar (Heb. 11:13) is the place of rest. There God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Christ, by virtue of his office, will inaugurate this rest, now without connection to sin, when he hands over—in this final priestly offering—all creation to the Father.

St. Paul envisages this definitive peace to which we aspire as something within the daily life of the Christian:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . . And the God of peace will be with you. (Phil. 4:4–7, 9)

We are not dealing now with the God of the cross, the victor in the paschal mystery, the one who triumphs in the resurrection. It is the God of peace, the one whom we shall rejoice in and enjoy eternally on the day of definitive rest.

In our lives we have to leave room for this God of peace, in the realization that we are already participating in the “rest.” St. Augustine, curiously, when speaking of the day of definitive rest, says: *Dies septimus nos ipsi erimus*—we ourselves shall be the seventh day.<sup>11</sup> He makes the fulfillment of our identity dependent on our ability to enter into the sphere of this “seventh day,” the day of rest. “In that place there will be given the identity of God’s people, the complete identity of our human existence, between action and suffering, beyond pro-

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<sup>11</sup>*City of God*, 22.30.4. JMB’s footnote quotes a passage from Augustine’s *Sermons on the Psalms*, recommending that Christians now exercise themselves in the life to come. Our author sees this as equivalent to our seeking consolation, and within that consolation the service of the Lord, on a daily basis.

ress and losses, beyond what is owed and suffered, beyond what can be done and what has been done: in the inexpressible rest of God.”<sup>12</sup>

So the peace which we are seeking (as a kind of consolation) in the times of prosperity has nothing to do with a quiet life or with idleness—the *dolce far niente*. It is a crucible in which our fundamental identity is established and consolidated. And this to the point that doubts can gain access, doubts which little by little degenerate into the fundamental uncertainties (in the first sense of the word) that end up dissolving the person’s identity.<sup>13</sup>

## Indicators of Infidelity

After this digression on the theology of rest and peace, we can now ask ourselves about the possible signs of infidelity in times of peace and prosperity. Deuteronomy indicates two: forgetfulness and the attribution to ourselves of the great deeds that have liberated us. Obviously, indeed, this forgetfulness and vainglory lie deep at the root of every expression of infidelity. But what I want to do here is to look for some signs on the surface that can be more immediate than the two indicated by Deuteronomy.

In my judgment the most central sign is a sort of malaise: a failure to rejoice fully in the graces received. There is a kind of sadness which—without having the characteristics of spiritual sadness—exhibits some of its elements: a lack of enthusiasm, quietism, laziness. But

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<sup>12</sup>JMB refers to the final chapter of Jan Milič Lochman’s exposition of the Apostle’s Creed, *The Faith We Confess: An Ecumenical Dogmatics*, trans. David Lewis (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984 [1982]). It is noteworthy that he was reading a new German Protestant book in the early 1980s.

<sup>13</sup>JMB’s footnote: “Identity is not something static achieved once and for all. Identity is fidelity and—as such—is won in battle each day. . . . Identity presupposes relationship with the social body to which one belongs. Fundamentally, identity is belonging. Hence its dynamic quality. Belonging to a body which must be faithful to its fundamental charism, to the great traditions of its history.” More static conceptions are a trivializing perversion. If “tepidity and mediocrity” lead to “uncertainties” in JMB’s second sense, legitimating a certain fatigue, this will ultimately lead to the first sort of “uncertainty”—the distinction between the two is “quantitative or chronological, not qualitative.” We can also fool ourselves that our tepid fatigue, which will inevitably lead to our decay, is sabbath rest.

probably the clearest indicator of this state would be a complaining spirit.<sup>14</sup>

This complaining attitude appears not just in complaints about things. It goes further—it involves also a restless heart. Typically any problem gets shifted to spheres where no solution is possible or where the solution does not depend on the individual concerned. Moaners cut their minds and hearts off from anything that might help. They know that if they want to preserve some of the realities manifested in their lament, they need to protect their “dark places,” their blind spots—places where the light of grace, or indeed the clarity that comes from civilized human interaction, cannot penetrate. It is odd—they run away from any direct discussion of what they think, and prefer to communicate it indirectly, in such a way, as they know perfectly well, that their positions cannot be brought to light and dealt with. Obviously there is a deep-down attraction to being blind, to the lie whether great or small; there is no intention of sorting things out. They are holding on to the “ducat” that has been questionably, if not sinfully, acquired (*SpEx* 150). St. Teresa used to admonish those of her nuns who fell easily into complaints about “what they’ve done to me for no reason,” because she saw in this a sign of infidelity in time of peace.<sup>15</sup> These querulous types exercise a kind of spiritual hypochondria. They choose to amass small injustices, ways in which they have been wounded whether in reality or in their imagination, and they care for their collection with a tenderness worthy of something far better.

This clinging on to unfair injuries—real or imaginary—amounts indeed to another sign: being opinionated about problems that are not the person’s concern. The result is a spirit that is always saying what needs to be done, in a way that disguises the person’s own laziness.

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*Deep down, these unfaithful people feel attracted to desolation; they are nostalgic for the time of slavery. They dream of idealized onions and garlic.*

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<sup>14</sup>JMB does not fully clarify the (psycho)logical relationship between forgetfulness, vainglory, malaise, and a complaining spirit. The following two paragraphs are repeated almost verbatim in the original version of “The Bad Superior.”

<sup>15</sup>Teresa of Avila, *Way of Perfection*, 13.1.

Strangely, they are always creating problems which they themselves cannot solve. Their favorite phrases are, “we don’t do that,” “we need to confront that sort of thing,” “we need to . . .”—and all the time they are avoiding the daily challenges which fidelity to consolation requires of them. Deep down, these unfaithful people feel attracted to desolation; they are nostalgic for the time of slavery. They dream of idealized onions and garlic, because they too, like the Israelites in the desert, are forgetting that these vegetables were served at the table of slavery (Exo. 16:1–3).

Another characteristic of an individual religious or group (community, province, the whole order) being unfaithful in time of peace is a loss of fervor.<sup>16</sup> Fervor here does not mean youthful enthusiasm (John 1:35–51), or being in communication with the Lord in dark moments (Luke 22:39–46) or moments of glory (Mark 9: 2–10). Rather it is a following of the Lord in consolation, patiently, enduringly, in the whole of daily life.

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go. (John 21:18)

This kind of following of the Lord requires abandonment, as can be seen in the text just quoted. It also permits the possibility of temptation. Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” And Jesus replied: “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You—follow me!” (John 21:21–22). Peter is complaining here, which is an indication of his being tempted. This is why he is interfering with someone else’s life. The Lord points out the way to him unequivocally: to follow him without reservation, ignoring the interior faculties that make you judge others.

When people do not follow this path marked out, they lose fervor. Then the individual religious or the institution just gets stuck. All they can do is react to life as it comes, instinctively. They lose any abili-

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<sup>16</sup>JMB refers to Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 80.

ty to draw on their interior lives, and they are no longer aware of what is passing through their minds.

## **Infidelity and Uncertainty**

Now we might think about the realities underlying the infidelity characteristic of this time of peace. The normal state of a religious should not be desolation nor “consolation without cause” but simply “consolation.” And this consolation has to be sought. We saw that, at the root of the conflicts when identity was lost, there lay a strong sense of uncertainty. And uncertainties also inspire infidelity at a time of peace. These infidelities are not as visible or scandalous as those which lead to the loss of identity and sense of belonging, but that does not make them any less dangerous.

When we go back to where we were before, when there is lacking a loyal and constant seeking for the Lord and his consolation, when people lose their feeling for Christian resistance, when fervor is quenched, when we isolate ourselves and mope, individually or in groups, then undoubtedly there is also a strong sense of uncertainty at the bottom of all this, goading and enabling it. If we do not fight against this uncertainty with the weapons of light, it will become the expanding center of an interior state incompatible with daily consolation.

It is at this point, then, that we should undertake the examination of conscience that Paul VI was pointing out in his allocution, when he was referring to the strong state of uncertainty in the second sense given here. It is at this point that we should consider the drama of those who do not “persevere until the end,” and who in the time of peace and prosperity—little by little—get tired. This is the state of tepidity. This always involves some basic doubt clouding an identity that needs to be unequivocal, clearly marked out, and publicly acknowledged.

## **Identity and the First Love of God**

When a person or institution, in time of peace and prosperity, discovers that they are entering into this sort of state of tepidity and uncertainty, that is when they need to return to the fundamental values of their identity. They will be following a path similar to that of the person strongly tempted toward uncertainty in the first of our senses.

Subjectively and practically, a good way for them to concentrate on recovering identity is to recall their first love of God.

If you forget your first love of God, then there is always an affective deficiency, and you are in a state of tepidity—even if you are still struggling valiantly for the Kingdom of God.

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. . . . But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. (Rev. 2:2, 4)

When the strong state of uncertainty and disorientation brings about tepidity within us, our first task must be to recover this first love: “how you followed me in the wilderness, at the time of your love as a bride” (Jer. 2:2).

This first love has the power to rid us of our lethargy.

But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. . . . [Y]ou cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. (Heb. 10:32–36)

When we recover our first love, the uncertainties that nourish our less generous attitudes vanish. We stop having recourse to complaint. Our service of God becomes once again more generous—there is no slacking off, we are sensitive to what is going on within, we are patient and sacrificial. When we recover our first love, we are learning that in time of peace and prosperity we may not live off past glories or battles recently won. Rather the memory should strengthen our apostolic edge. Our first love, remembered and thus recovered, also teaches us our vocation actively to make peace. It protects us from the temptation of being just those who enjoy the peace: an attitude of mind and heart that can lead us gradually to lose everything gained by the power of the cross and resurrection.

## II. Leadership: The Big Picture and the Tiny Detail (1981)

**I**gnatius's so-called "funeral epitaph" expresses a happy balance in the heart's attitude towards things great and small: *Non coerceri a maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est* (Not to be coerced by what is greatest, yet to be contained by what is least—that is divine).<sup>1</sup> The motto is more than a rule of conduct. It draws us into a way of sensing the things of God from within God's own heart.<sup>2</sup>

Already in the Gospel, in the solemn Trinitarian scene of Luke 10:20–22,<sup>3</sup> the Lord brings together the great and the small in a context of liturgical and eschatological praise, repeating in a more discreet way the mystery of the Transfiguration. Here is the fullest illustration of what Jesus had said prophetically in connection with John the Baptist: "[B]ut the least in the Kingdom is greater than he." Perhaps, as a way of filling out the picture, it would be good to remember a maxim that John XXIII loved so much to quote: *Omnia videre, multa dissimilare, pauca corrigere* (See everything, gloss over much, correct little).<sup>4</sup> What at first sight appear big things—the *omnia*—are now the least important, because they do not need correcting now. What seem little

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<sup>1</sup>The tag's source is not a real epitaph, but a poem, "Elogium sepuchrale S. Ignatii," in the 1640 jubilee volume, *Imago primi sæculi Societatis Jesu*, 280. On this text, see Hugo Rahner, "Der Grabschrift des Loyola," in *Ignatius von Loyola als Mensch und Theologe* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 422–40.

<sup>2</sup>Compare "A Big Heart Open to God," *America*, 209, no. 8 (September 30, 2013): 15–38, especially 17, the section "What Does It Mean for a Jesuit to Be Bishop of Rome?"

<sup>3</sup>Here Jesus moves from a statement that the spirits submit to the disciples and their names are written in heaven to Luke's version of Jesus' thanks that the mysteries are revealed only to children, and that "no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." See also Luke 7:28. The passage exemplifies JMB's sophisticated, allusive use of biblical texts.

<sup>4</sup>John XXIII's fondness for this phrase is widely documented; the original source is variously given as St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Gregory the Great.

things—the *pauca*—are now the most significant, because it is on these that the activity of the one directing first concentrates.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of these initial thoughts, we can raise the broader question about how the one directing should act when faced with big things and small things, and about how this attitude should shape the director's everyday practice. We know all too well how an institution can suffer both from oppressive micromanagement and from the daily reinvention of the wheel.<sup>6</sup>

## The Ignatian Witness

It is striking how Ignatius distinguishes between types of issue in the Constitutions. He puts forward the central principles, while also leaving space for how these principles can play out in the different “places, times, and persons.” His refusal to legislate on details may seem a matter of common sense. However, he proceeds in this way, not because details as such are not worth thinking about, but because he recognizes matters of detail as *applications* of those central principles. By contrast, he has no hesitation about descending to details when writing the “Rules of Modesty,”<sup>7</sup> because in this case he is aware that these tiny details, precisely as such, all contribute to the principle—however much the expression is limited to one particular place or time. In other words, Ignatius’s strategy of leaving open how principles are to be specified according to “places, times and persons” is not the prod-

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<sup>5</sup>JMB’s use of *conducir* and its cognates is here translated consistently in terms of “direct,” in order to preserve a nuance of direction towards a goal that would be lost in more conventional renderings such as “manage,” “lead,” or “govern.” The resulting echo in English of the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises, though in keeping with JMB’s thought, is not present in the original. In an Argentinian context, JMB’s usage may have had Peronist associations. A standard collection of Perón’s talks was called *Conducción política* (downloadable from [www.generalperon.com](http://www.generalperon.com)), and he is quoted as saying: “Gobernar es fácil, lo difícil es conducir” (Governing is easy, what’s hard is giving a direction).

<sup>6</sup>[T]anto el detallismo que opriñe como el cotidiano desmadrarse de los cauces.

<sup>7</sup>A text originating in 1555; see *Rules of the Society of Jesus* (Woodstock, Md.: privately published, 1956), 41–42. It begins with a general statement that Jesuits’ “actions should be characterized by humility and a pleasing reserve, accompanied with a sense of religious dignity,” but can descend to “wrinkles on the forehead, and much more about the nose, should be avoided,” and “the lips should not be kept closely shut, nor yet noticeably apart.”

uct of a mind incapable of understanding and managing details. Rather, it affirms an unstinting desire to invite others in, entrusting to *them* the elaborations of the grounding he has been able to set within their hearts.

How is all this possible? Because St. Ignatius teaches us that the only way of saving life's ambiguities for God is through discernment, seeking always, and in everything, "what is more conducive." This is not always the same as going for the whole package. Nor the same as "the big issue" or "the tiny detail."

Big things and little things in the life of an institution, and especially in its director, give rise over time to styles of behavior both weak and firm. A frequent mistake is to be weak when one should be firm, or vice versa. There is a good weakness and a bad weakness. There is a good firmness and a bad firmness. For St. Ignatius, good firmness is *fortaleza*—and for him this virtue is so much key that he mentions it quite expressly at two central points in the Constitutions: when dealing with the personality of the general (who has to direct the Society) and when talking about the death of a Jesuit (*Cons.* 728, 595). Moreover, both these passages refer explicitly to death as the ultimate instance of *fortaleza*—a point that brings out the combative character of the mindsets required of us. *Fortaleza* comes into its own at this sort of moment: it is about struggle, daily endurance, and therefore also fidelity.

St. Ignatius was fond of calling our weakness "*impedimento*":

[A]lthough the creature may often put impediments on its part for what the Lord wants to work in his or her soul . . . before this kind of grace and action of our Lord comes, we place impediments, and after it has come it is just the same. . . . For my part, I am convinced that before and afterwards I am nothing but impediment; and from this I feel greater contentment and spiritual relish in our Lord because of not being able to attribute to myself anything which might seem good. There are few in this life . . . (or none) who can completely determine or assess how much they are impeding things from this side, and how much they are being uncooperative with what Our Lord wants to bring about in their soul. (Letter 101: Ignatius to Francis Borja, late 1545)

If we manage these “impediments,” our weakness, badly, this will ally us to the devil, whose work consists in “putting forward impediments” (*SpEx* 315). Managing impediments badly consists in making them out to be assets—for example by undermining the joy there is in life, or by encouraging feelings of sadness or failure.

Every day a director comes across the temptation to mismanage this interplay of strength and weakness, whether in his or her own self or in the members of the institution.<sup>8</sup> The result will always run counter to God: the breaking of the bruised reed, and the extinguishing of the promise, lying within every smoldering wick, to become flame once more.<sup>9</sup>

“Small,” “great,” “weak,” “strong”: St. Ignatius handles these as elements not within a functionalist worldview, but within the conception of life as spiritual. The temptation to reduce these elements in

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a supernatural vision to other dimensions is a daily event. Only the wisdom of discernment saves us, because this wisdom presupposes an abandonment to the Will of God, with all that this implies for renouncing merely human control of what happens, for avoiding reductionism. When

*Regarding the second feature, we can say that the director is called to interpret and evaluate what his or her subjects do, even quite small things, according to Gospel criteria.*

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we are to take a good decision, St. Ignatius counsels us to think as if we were at the hour of our death (*SpEx* 186). There the abandonment to God’s designs is clear; our fantasy cannot control time.

It follows that “big things” and “little things” in St. Ignatius’s thought are reckoned as such, not in and of themselves, but rather with reference to the body of the Church, the Society . . . to the growth of an institution. It is the role of discernment to reduce the negative impact of big things (which may look small) by correcting them, and of

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<sup>8</sup>The original of this essay generally begins this word with an upper case letter. In English, this would appear sinister. Since JMB is not wholly consistent in this usage, and in other pieces does not follow it at all, this version, debatably, does not reproduce it.

<sup>9</sup>Isa. 42:3.

little things (which may be high profile) by glossing them over. Values can be promoted or undermined—but only with reference to the *body's* growth.

## Correction

In this light, we can ask about the criteria for action which a superior should hold to, bearing in mind the growth of the body over which he or she is presiding. More specifically, I would like to talk about the criteria for correction.

One fundamental principle might be expressed as follows: not to require more or less than what is necessary, and to require it at the *kairos*, the favorable time—the time when this demand can be transformed into grace. Good order requires you to be able to understand the limitations of people and groups, helping both of these to articulate reality in terms of plans that are realistic, with the limitations factored in.

Thus it is of crucial importance for the direction of orderly growth that you think carefully about how much energy the institution and its members have in reserve. In other words, do not make the typical mistake of aggressive idealism and abuse what is limited. This is the problem that arises whenever systems, mechanical or human, are operating at the edge of their capacities. This is the problem of “idealism” of every kind: the temptation will always be to impose the ideal scheme onto reality—whatever that reality is—without taking into account the limitations of that reality. In ascetical matters, too, this danger can exist: by demanding too much (requiring things without consideration) or too little (being too weak, not setting due boundaries).

If a weak link is damaged, the chances of continuing progress are damaged and the whole process is damaged. For the director—and this at every stage of the directing (including the formulation of a problem)—wisdom consists in knowing how to move between the expression of affection and the limit-setting proper to correction. When a limit is set, it can never be absolute, an end in itself; rather, it must always have an openness to the horizon of the charity and the love defining the good spirit that moves us. Even when the limits are painful, you have to try to make the person being restricted feel—at least implicitly and “in hope”—a sense of something more than a block on

their activity that at the moment they cannot understand. That's why you need warmth and charity: to give this perspective. To oversimplify: a limitation is abusive if the limits become ends in themselves. This is to answer the bad spirit (the shortcoming you are trying to correct) with another bad spirit (the limit you are trying to set).<sup>10</sup>

Setting limits so as to create order involves at some point saying, "That's enough." You often have to say that. But if this becomes the only way in which you create order, the result is death. So there has to be another criterion: waiting.<sup>11</sup> That same *fortaleza*, fortitude, which makes the director set a limit must also, often, make that director hold back and wait. It will be painful for her or him; but it will symbolize hope in how it is the Lord of all who is guiding the processes.

This holding back is demanding. It must not be confused with a naïve waiting for something to turn up, a kind of laissez-faire. Holding back in processes, waiting, hoping—this expresses a belief that God is greater than oneself, that "the same Spirit is governing us" (*SpEx* 365), that it is the "Lord of the harvest" who is making the seed grow. When a director holds back on the members in hope, it is as if they are "lengthening the prayer and some way of doing penance" (*SpEx* 319).<sup>12</sup> It shows that "in Him alone must be placed the hope" (*Cons.* 812).

This combination of "setting limits" and of "hope" is what enables a person directing an institution to appear strong, to have an image

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<sup>10</sup>In a footnote here, JMB refers to Ignatius's adding "*amor*" (love) to Polanco's drafts, based on the rules of older orders, of what are now *Cons.* 270, 727, 791. A further, rather tortuous footnote placed later in fact belongs here. "This provokes a breakdown not only in the subject but—more importantly—in the unity between subject and superior. If the subject has a limitation, normally this limitation will be a preferred place for the bad spirit to tempt (*SpEx* 327). If the superior has to put a limit on such a temptation (in the sense of not allowing it to grow), he or she must be careful not to do it in a spirit itself shaped by the temptation. For then, oddly enough, the subject's limitation causing the problem will only grow and be strengthened as a result of the limit set by the superior. The superior's aggression will thus serve the purposes of the evil spirit, crystallizing the bad attitude. This is why there is need for love and charity when setting limits on a person."

<sup>11</sup>The Spanish root *espera* can indicate waiting, hoping and expecting—the English equivalents are more definite in nuance.

<sup>12</sup>JMB hints here at an analogy between personal frustration at one's own fragility and managerial frustration with the constraints on collective enterprises

of *fortaleza*. A childish way of thinking will tend to make us identify “strength” with setting limits and “waiting in hope” with kindness or weakness. But this will not do if we are looking at matters from a position of maturity. For whenever the director makes a decision to wait in hope, this is an act of *fortaleza*; and paternal warmth is always able to find ways of setting limits with kindness. For the members of an institution, the figure of a director who is not afraid to set limits, and who can, at the same time, hand himself over to the dynamic of hope expressed in his waiting on the Lord’s action as things

proceed—this is the image of a strong man, directing something which is not his own but his Lord’s. Such a man is not intimidated by great enterprises; and yet nor does he think little things beneath him. *Non coereri a maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est* (Not to be coerced by what is greatest, yet to be contained by what is least—that is divine).

From this it follows that a director needs to be particularly careful not to break any individual or group. Breakdown can result from too much pressure, from when limits are imposed too one-sidedly and without sensitivity to context. It can also arise from a failure to acknowledge the need to set limits: order collapses, and in this case breakdown takes the form of breakup.

Some of the stories told by Ribadeneira in his “How St. Ignatius Governed” can illustrate what I have just been saying.<sup>13</sup>

When an impulse of temptation was so vehement as to throw a novice off balance and beside himself, our Father used generous

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*The first step towards “edifying” others is for ourselves to learn to be edified by them, bringing others’ goodness to light, showing how, if it is nurtured through good direction, this goodness can redound to the benefit of the whole institution.*

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<sup>13</sup>“P. Petri de Ribadeneyra tractatus de ratione quam in gubernando tenebat Ignatius,” in MHSJ, FN 3.606-38. An ET was serialized in the then English province internal journal, *Letters and Notices*, in 1880–1881 (13, 246–52, 336–44; 14, 63–72). JMB cites in the text by chapter and paragraph.

means with great sweetness, and sought to conquer the fierceness of the evil spirit by gentleness. (1.11)

But his recourse to sweetness was such that, when it did not help the person tempted and afflicted, then at least no harm came to others. And so, when necessity required it, he mingled severity with the sweetness, rigor with the gentleness, so as to provide example and warning to the others. (1.12)

He much desired that all the rules should be observed very strictly, and inflicted penances on those who were negligent in their observance; but he made exceptions with those for whom, for special reasons, it was appropriate, according to discriminating charity. (2.9)

## Two Characteristics

These criteria enable us to put together an ideal description of the director. I would point out just two features of this picture. Firstly, a director must be a person who addresses problems. Secondly, he must not be ashamed of his subjects and of their capabilities.

It would be very nice if direction could happen without problems. But I think we have all been disappointed in functionalism's promises to solve all our problems for us definitively. The work done by each member of the institution has to be taken on board by the director and loved as his or her own, and for this very reason, the problems touch the director too. Perhaps the grace the director needs to ask and wait for in humble hope is that of coming to the point of liking and loving their subjects' problems, and indeed—more difficult still—liking and loving their problematic subjects as people.

Regarding the second feature, we can say that the director is called to interpret and evaluate what his or her subjects do, even quite small things, according to Gospel criteria. Such interpretation cannot but refer to the institution's apostolic strategy, founded in the institution's documents. Interpreting and evaluating the smallest deeds of the institution's members in this way will lead directors to place a high value also on the small things they do for their own people. Then, little by little, the joy of the Kingdom will prevail over the querulous, depressive attitude that those of us who have the function of directing

know so well. In saying this, I do not want to imply that the director should be a fusspot about detail<sup>14</sup> nor that institutions should become narrow-minded and conformist. The value the director places on “the little things” comes from the wide horizons of the Kingdom. It is from there that he or she has to encourage growth and apostolic boldness.

The director is a man or woman of vision, who must help shape an institution in which the members share a broad vision. At the same time, he or she must be realistic enough to know that it is very easy to mistake imaginary mirages and small-minded reductionisms for the true vision of reality. The fruitfulness of directors able to move their institution forward in an apostolic spirit will be in large part a function of their ability to move forward the sterile discussions that get caught up in all these kinds of inauthenticity (whether petty or megalomaniac) into the sphere of reality, where one thinks about a problem and finds a solution that is realistically possible. And only a person who is not frightened of facing problems, and who does not despair of his or her subordinates and their capacities, can do this.

Ribadeneira underlines this attitude of St. Ignatius very well:

[I]t is very necessary that the one dealing with our neighbors in order to cure them should be like a good physician—they should neither be frightened at the neighbor’s illnesses nor be repelled by their wounds. They should accept with great patience and gentleness the neighbor’s weaknesses and importunities. To this end, they should regard our neighbors, not as children of Adam, and vessels of frail glass or clay, but as images of God, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. For themselves they should take care to use the aids they have, and dispose themselves through good works to receive the Lord’s grace or grow in it. He it is in whom they must hope: that since He has called them to so high a ministry, He will make them a worthy minister if only they learn to shift their confidence away from themselves and place it in the goodness of the same Lord who has called them and made them a member of this religious order. (5.12)

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<sup>14</sup>[C]ollectionista de miniaturas

## Three Ways of Proceeding

Taking into account these criteria and features described so far, I would like to end by bringing out three aspects of the director's way of proceeding.

The first is care for edification among our neighbors. St. Ignatius used to say that there was no one in the house from whom he did not draw edification.<sup>15</sup> The first step towards "edifying" others is for ourselves to learn to be edified by them, bringing others' goodness to light, showing how, if it is nurtured through good direction, this goodness can redound to the benefit of the whole institution. This is the attitude put forward in the "Presupposition" of the Spiritual Exercises (*SpEx* 22) and of the Contemplation to Attain Love (*SpEx* 230–237). Contemplating the good that is in the members and the promise all this goodness represents for the body of the institution, the director learns to avoid the temptation of the fatal mistake regarding which St. Ignatius used to say: "No error is more pernicious in teachers of spiritual things than to want to govern others according to themselves, and to think that what is good for themselves is good for all."<sup>16</sup>

Another point, following on this track, is that the director learns to be sensitive and conscientious without causing injury, helping the person to whom they are talking feel good, and provoking in them a desire to grow in virtue. In this connection, Ribadeneira has this to say:

Marvelous too was the skill our blessed Father had in gaining the good will of persons with whom he used to deal, and by this route attracting them more easily to God. With his words, but more with his example, he taught us the care that we must take in this regard. He used to say that it helps greatly to have a true and sincere love, showing it with loving words and with deeds, doing for them whatever can appropriately, that is, in keeping with our customs and profession and prudent charity, be done. And we should gain the confidence of these same people as we converse about the matters in hand . . . taking and accepting their ad-

<sup>15</sup> Recorded by Ribadeneira: MHSJ FN 2.478, though Ignatius makes one exception: himself.

<sup>16</sup> Recorded by Gonçalves da Câmara, *Memoriale*, 256. JMB cites this and the previous quotation from an unspecified collection of *Dichos* (sayings).

vice when it is good, adjusting to their circumstances and yielding to them in all that is not against God, and in some things at the beginning to dissemble so as to go in at their door and out at our own, making ourselves “all things to all” as St. Paul used to do, *“ut omnes lucri faciamus”* (to gain them all).<sup>17</sup> But since the prudence for getting this right must have so much regard for circumstances, of times, of places and especially of the people with whom one is dealing, as well as for the matters themselves that are being handled, you need to look very carefully indeed at the situation and nature of the person with whom you are having to deal, especially if they are important and very noble, before entrusting yourself to them and handing yourself over to them and becoming very intimate with them. (5.8)<sup>18</sup>

The second aspect would be the awareness the director has of being an agent of unity in the body of the institution. We are not talking here about “winning the argument” or “being in control”—the point is rather that his or her vision of fruitfulness should bring the director to the point of being able to “sum up” or express within themselves a whole body which is in harmony. This attitude appears on repeated occasions in St. Ignatius’s way of proceeding. For example,

[H]e used to take great care for the good reputation of all his subjects, and this in two ways. The first was that he would always speak well of them himself, demonstrating the positive opinion that he had of all. He did not reveal anyone’s faults except when there was a specific need to consult about something in order to put it right—and then, if consulting one person was enough, he would not consult two, and if two was enough, he

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<sup>17</sup>Ribadeneira is adapting 1 Cor. 9:22 (Vulgate); JMB inserts the translation in parenthesis.

<sup>18</sup>JMB’s footnote indicates the following paragraph in Ribadeneira, which redresses a balance by insisting on the need for “reserve and circumspection.” “We must not be flatterers, nor make them esteem our ministry lightly, but, on the contrary, make them understand that we chiefly acknowledge these services as coming from God, and that they themselves gain much in the good which they do to us for His love.” He then notes that 5.8 illustrates John XXIII’s maxim cited at the beginning: the “pauca corrigere—correct little” can be understood not so much quantitatively as with reference to the superior’s humility in correcting while avoiding every kind of aggression.

would not consult three. He would not elaborate on the fault, but would simply recount what had happened. The other way was to punish severely those who spoke evil of others who were their brothers,<sup>19</sup> or whose words might cause a lower opinion to be held of them. (3.6)

The awareness St. Ignatius had of how the superior is probably, after God our Lord, the major agent of unity appeared clearly in the delicacy of his procedures. Let us look at two of them.

When a report was made to our blessed Father of something that had been done badly, in such a way that would disturb others, he would say not a word until he had recollected himself interiorly and considered what he should say in reply. (6.9)

When two people were not in agreement, he would report to the one all that he had heard about the other person that might calm him down and unite him more with the other, while remaining silent about whatever might provoke him. (6.16)

The third aspect would be, in my judgment, the source and inspiration of the other two, and of the superior's whole way of operating, because it depends on an attitude of heart within the director before the Lord. I am talking of a fundamental humility, particularly when under attack and in difficulty. When St. Ignatius thought about the Society, he thought of it as something that would last in history, though beset with opposition—and he was not afraid of a fight. His total desire to imitate Christ humiliated and crucified inspired him with the path to follow (*SpEx* 167). On this point he was brutally frank.

He used to say, further, that in order to undertake great things in the service of God our Lord, you have to overcome empty fear, making nothing of poverty, discomforts, injuries and insults, nor

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<sup>19</sup>JMB's footnote: "On this point the most usual temptation for the one directing is to justify his or her own angers and losses of control, or anxieties, by speaking badly of some people to others. In this case the intention, conscious or unconscious, is obvious: the director is putting his or her own prestige or authority ahead of the unity of the institution's body. No longer are they 'mediators,' uniting and building up the body by spending themselves, but rather 'middlemen,' creaming off something for themselves."

of death itself; neither should you get irritated or develop hatred or abhorrence against the people opposing us or attacking us. (5.2)

He used to add, further, that we should take care to avoid two very dangerous rocks in this voyage. The first was that of pride and vain presumption about ourselves, taking on very difficult things out of proportion to our capacities. The other (which often ensues on that first one) was timidity and lack of confidence amid the labors and difficulties that arise when things are not working out as we wanted and planned. But he counseled above all that we should, with great effort, make sure to uproot any drive toward ambition, toward seeking for ourselves honors and dignities, the friendship or favor of princes, praise from people and general acclaim. Thus we should neither do anything in order to be praised, nor refrain from doing it (assuming it is good) for fear of being insulted. (5.3–4)

We could continue exploring St. Ignatius's mind regarding his approach to matters great and small. But I think that for the moment what has been put together here can do quite enough to help us think about the criteria for directing and—especially—for correction.



### III. The Bad Superior (1983)

**T**here are lots of ways in which you can tell that a religious superior is not up to the job, when they are not the sort of person who can build others up and bear fruit as a spiritual father or mother. Jesus, especially when talking about the leaders of Israel, has pointed up for us many of the features of the bad religious superior, and it can be very useful for us to reflect on these. Probably the best known is that of being the hireling—in it just for the money—rather than the good shepherd.<sup>1</sup>

But I would like in this reflection to take another image—one that is perhaps less well known, but for our purposes richly suggestive. We can think of bad superiors as men or women who sell off the inheritance that they have received by way of gift.

And you can situate the solemn threat in the Letter to the Hebrews in the context of such an image.

For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy “on the testimony of two or three witnesses.” How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb. 10:26–31)

Those who spurn the Son of God and profane the blood that has saved them—this surely comes about because, in their heart, they have sold off, sold off too cheaply (because any sale of this inheritance is

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<sup>1</sup>John 10:12–13.

too cheap), the heritage received from their elders.<sup>2</sup> Then for Jesus, the person who sells off the inheritance and does not shepherd the people with loyalty to the promises received is a “blind guide.” There are many texts on this—the Scriptures go so far as to see the drama of Jesus’ rejection in terms of blindness (John 9:39–41).<sup>3</sup>

Salvation history presents the first members of the faithful people as fundamentally custodians of an inheritance received, who leave this inheritance to those coming after so that these latter can carry it to its fullness: “God disposing in his providence something better regarding us, so that they would not arrive without us at the consummation” (Heb. 11:40). But the Scriptures also—for the history of God’s faithful people is a history of grace and sin, and if that is the case with God’s faithful people, so it is also in the heart of the superior—tell stories about men and women who sold the inheritance. Samson (Judg. 16:4–21) is led astray by his sexual desire, and worn down by the nagging that plays on it. He becomes “tired to death”: bored with life, and giving in to the boredom, he sells the inheritance. . . .

## The Superior

If we accept this way of looking at things, we can use all this rich biblical imagery to ask ourselves about how a religious superior can act in a truly paternal or maternal way when it comes to receiving, safeguarding and handing on the inheritance received. In particular, inspired by the biblical passages I have quoted, I shall focus on the underlying dynamics causing a religious superior to become one who sells off the heritage.

### *A Shirker*

In the first place, superiors who sell off the heritage are always, without fail, trying to avoid their real work. They are lazy. This lazi-

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<sup>2</sup>JMB here embarks on an extensive, dense, and allusive review of Scripture texts illustrating the points he wants to make about bad superiors. Given its difficulty and given the absence of direct Ignatian reference, this material is largely omitted here; some passages appear in footnotes.

<sup>3</sup>“Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’ Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see,” your sin remains.’ . . .”

ness appears and flourishes in many different ways: the overwhelmed superior becomes an over-occupied superior and ends up all over the place. This is just laziness: the use of the demands placed on one as an alienating pretense to justify ineffectiveness; getting locked into one's occupation instead of attending to (in the root sense, stretching out towards) the difficulties of each person in the community; getting lost in the thousand and one things that are not important in order to avoid doing what we have to do. When you are all over the place (in the apostolate too), this is always from the bad spirit.

Then there are superiors who feel an inner need to be always on the move in order to avoid real work. They know nothing of apostolic staying power or daily fidelity. A sign of this laziness is a bad tiredness. The lazy superior, in any of these variations, is always suffering from bad tiredness: being overwhelmed, burnt out, with a face like our Lady of Sorrows, insomniac. . . . But they have no idea about healthy tiredness, the tiredness that leaves you tired but happy: after a hard day's faithful work, you are brought to the Blessed Sacrament once again to intercede for your sheep—sheep of whom you are not ashamed, sheep for whom you go in to bat with the Lord. For the true apostolic steadfastness (*hypomonē*) of a superior, this resistance to pressure that any good Christian has, and which is the ultimate touchstone of a person's quality—this is the only thing that enables true *parrhēsia*,<sup>4</sup> the apostolic courage which draws the superior both to intercession before God our Lord and to undertake great things for His kingdom among people. Both these qualities, *parrhēsia* and *hypomonē*, go together—the one presupposes the other.

#### *Forgetfulness and Ennui*

Secondly, superiors who have sold off the inheritance are people who have lost their memory: the memory of their religious family, the memory of their life as a son or daughter of this family and—definitively—of the Lord. Once they have been afflicted with this sort of amnesia, they can no longer tell the difference between the inheritance and other sorts of good. And that means they lose the capacity to discern what the good of the inheritance requires; this can lead to their making a plaything of any fashionable theology or trendiness floating round

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<sup>4</sup>Two Pauline words that JMB cites in transcribed Greek.

the margins of the Church's doctrine. Because they cannot tell the difference, they are blind.

But perhaps the most revealing sign of superiors who have lost their memory is a sense of ennui and world-weariness—like what Samson had, because he did not have the capacity to withstand the continual assaults of sensuality. He played with fire, he became curious . . . and all curiosity ends up in ennui, an ennui indicating fatuity.

### *Loss of Family Devotion*

Lastly, superiors who have sold off the inheritance lack family devotion<sup>5</sup>—because they have lost their memory and their capacity for constructive work, they have lost family devotion too. They re-

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produce the basic attitude of Esau, whom Scripture characterizes in just these terms: “an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright” (Heb. 12:16).<sup>6</sup>

*The valor of those who have not sold their inheritance is always marked with the sign of humiliation, with the cross.*

*Susanna in her fidelity was thus to be punished by being stoned—just like those who were unfaithful, the prostitutes.*

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Church itself—as a daughter, or a son. And once you have forgotten how to be a son or daughter, you cannot be a mother, father, brother or sister either. It is just like with the vows: if you are failing in one, then you're always fundamentally failing in the other two. You cannot be a father unless you are a son. And then these religious, caught up with whatever project happens to take their fancy, join the swelling ranks of bachelor uncles and maiden aunts who claim to be offering leadership, but do so not as fathers or mothers but as uncles or aunts. They

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<sup>5</sup>[P]iedad.

<sup>6</sup>An excised passage alludes to Esau selling his birthright to Jacob in return for food (Gen. 25:29–34).

have desexed themselves, and from their own sterility they are trying to hold on to the illusion of fruitfulness.<sup>7</sup>

The sign of a superior without family devotion is always a complaining spirit. Jesus had already drawn the attention of the “adulterous generation” of his own time to this spirit.

To what then will I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market-place and calling to one another, “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.” For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, “He has a demon”; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children. (Luke 7:31–35)<sup>8</sup>

### *Appearances to the Contrary*

We have seen the most characteristic attitudes of a superior who sells off the heritage: laziness, forgetfulness of the charism, lack of family devotion. Before I finish, I want to dwell on a [further] aspect, one that is rather ambiguous, and that appears in the texts I have cited.<sup>9</sup> The valor of those who have not sold their inheritance is always marked with the sign of humiliation, with the cross. Susanna in her fidelity was thus to be punished by being stoned—just like those who were unfaithful, the prostitutes (Dan. 13). Like Jesus, she appears as an evildoer.

Curiously the same thing happens, though the other way round, with sinners: they are taken to be just. This is what lies at the heart of Pharisaism. As the just defend their belonging to a heritage they re-

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<sup>7</sup>Compare “A Big Heart Open to God,” 26, the section entitled “A Religious Order Pope”: “[T]he vows cannot end up being caricatures; if they do, then—to take examples—community life becomes hell, and chastity becomes the lifestyle of old bachelors. The vow of chastity must be a vow of fruitfulness.”

<sup>8</sup>JMB here reproduces material from “On Uncertainty and Tepidity” (pp. 13–14 of this edition). The duplication is acknowledged in the Argentinian edition.

<sup>9</sup>Earlier JMB has referred to Stephen (Acts 7) and Susanna (Dan. 13). Paradoxically, their fidelity involves them both with the penalty of the unfaithful: death by stoning. “If you want to preserve the inheritance, you have to be prepared to carry the mark of unfaithfulness (they called Jesus a Samaritan).”

fuse to sell off, they appear evil (circumstances cause this). The unjust, like Ananias and Sapphira, sell things off in order to look good (Acts 5:1–9).<sup>10</sup> In both cases, values are twisted—in sinners this arises from the dark sphere of lies, and in the just from the cross. The Pharisee has a permanent need to create rules of perfection so as to cover over his corrupt heart. The mediation of the cross for the just person is, in Jesus, the messianic secret, because of which Satan has no control over their soul. God's great deeds are carried out in the silence of this secret, as St. Ignatius of Antioch tells us:

[T]he prince of this world had no knowledge of Mary's virginity, of her giving birth and also of the death of the Lord: three plangent mysteries that were accomplished in the silence of God. (*To the Ephesians*, 19.1)

What is at stake here is the crucible of trials which any superior wanting to be fruitful has to pass through. And we can say still more: either they pass through this with a sense of being purified, in which case it will be a cross, an imitation of the Lord; or they pass through with a spirit of vanity and pride—then this will be for them a Pharisaism that leads them on to sterility, incapable of arousing anyone.

Religious superiors should ask themselves often about what gives them pain, what bothers them, what saddens them: what are these indicating? Are they leading the persons to become ever more detached from themselves, ever closer to Christ crucified? If so, they are from God: they are the crucible of the passion. . . . Are they feeding some kind of resentment? Are they holding out some future ambitions as compensation for present failures? If so, they are from the bad

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<sup>10</sup>JMB's exposition of this passage earlier in the original is striking: "Oddly enough, these two were selling something in order to become more perfect (as Jesus told the rich young man) and thus to preserve their true inheritance, 'a treasure in heaven' . . . but because they were afraid, in the end they went for an insurance policy. The Lord punishes them because they have lied to the Holy Spirit, and they have ended up with some property of their own which is precisely not the inheritance that they were purporting to conserve. You cannot play games with the heritage that has been entrusted to you. With God, this sort of insurance policy does not work. There is something sacred—consecrated, sacred-with—in taking charge of the inheritance and passing it on. In this sphere, the Lord does not put up with lies."

spirit, engendering pharisaism in the soul. *Homo cum in honore sit, quasi asinus* (An honored person is like an ass).<sup>11</sup>

### *Seeing from Afar*

In this crucible you have to deal with the conflict arising from “not seeing” or “being blind.” If superiors accept the inheritance received and want to transmit it faithfully, they can only simply accept the fact that they will not see the fullness of such an inheritance. For fidelity to any inheritance in principle involves handing it on, and letting go of the joy of its fullness. The one handing it on has to die so that it passes on, with the patrimony intact, to those who will take it forward.

Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. (Heb. 9:16–17)

“Not to see” the fullness of the inheritance, to dare bravely “to greet it from afar”—this requires of superiors daily deaths, great and small, preparing them for the final dispossession. In this connection, we cannot but remember the image of those who, in the Gospel narrative, appear as people mature enough to take their leave, those who sing the *Nunc dimittis*: Simeon and Anna. Their lives illustrate how to be faithful to the inheritance and pass it on: in the Temple, in the presence of God, in patient and confident prayer. There both accept that they will not see the fullness of the salvation that they “have seen” in this Child (Luke 2:22–38). This not seeing in no way implies a darkness; on the contrary, it is the moment of light, shining with its promise that moves on before us. In accepting the small candle, they

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*Superiors have to pass through the crucible of this not seeing, of letting themselves be blind. They therefore need to go frequently to the Temple, to the hope-filled presence of God, to trustful prayer. There, in the temple, they will forge their sense of filial belonging.*

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<sup>11</sup>JMB may be half-remembering a medieval tag attributed to John of Salisbury: *Rex illiteratus est quasi asinus coronatus* (An illiterate king is like a crowned ass).

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are greeting and celebrating from afar the paschal candle in all its majesty.

Superiors have to pass through the crucible of this not seeing, of letting themselves be blind. They therefore need to go frequently to the Temple, to the hope-filled presence of God, to trustful prayer. There, in the temple, they will forge their sense of filial belonging; because they will look to the rock from which they were hewn, and to the quarry from which they were dug, and will contemplate Abraham their father and Sarah who bore them (see Isa. 51:1–2). As they accept the load of this identity, the identity already received for them, they will pass it on, as from father to son, mother to daughter, to those who will take it forward. They will rejoice to dream of this fullness—a fullness that for now they accept they will not see. Contemplating it from afar, “they will leap with joy” (John 8:56).

## IV. Translator's Afterword

I sent the text of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's "Writings on Ignatian Spirituality" to the editor on August 12, 2013. Part I then went through its usual process of editing, printing, and distribution—the kind of leisurely process proper to a niche-market quarterly. But during those six weeks, Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., editor of *La civiltà cattolica*, had three meetings with Pope Francis that led to the publication, simultaneously in sixteen Jesuit journals, of the interview that so quickly became a worldwide talking point. By the time Part I appeared, it could only be read in a context quite different from what we were anticipating.

It might have been fun for an issue of *STUDIES* itself to have become a media sensation. But it is probably just as well that we were scooped, and that these talks from thirty years ago merely fill out something far more appropriately packaged for the world's needs today. Moreover, in Father Spadaro's interview Pope Francis stated clearly that in some important respects he has moved beyond Father Provincial Bergoglio. He confirmed authoritatively Paul Vallely's conjecture that he had undergone a significant growth and conversion, "a great interior crisis when I lived in Córdoba":

In my experience as superior in the Society, to be honest . . . I did not always do the necessary consultation. And this was not a good thing. My style of government as a Jesuit at the beginning had many faults. . . . I found myself provincial when I was still very young. I was only thirty-six years old. That was crazy. I had to deal with difficult situations, and I made my decisions abruptly and by myself (*in maniera brusca e personalista*)<sup>1</sup>

That said, Father Bergoglio's writings from the 1970s and 1980s anticipate several striking ideas and turns of phrase in the August 2013 interview, as some of the footnotes in this second installment can point

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<sup>1</sup>"A Big Heart Open to God," 20.

up.<sup>2</sup> One might initially marvel at the consistency of thought that the repetition exhibits, or even worry about a personality so prone to self-repetition. But there is probably a more prosaic explanation: the six hours of conversation between Father Spadaro and Pope Francis, inevitably written up rather selectively, did include some discussion of this early material, and Father Spadaro had it to hand throughout the process.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, whatever the process by which the conversation between Pope Francis and Father Spadaro issued in a printed text, Pope Francis in 2013 does differ in one important respect from Father Bergoglio. In introducing this selection before the interview was given, I speculated that Bergoglio's reading of Ignatian spirituality was "ascetical," prone to stress human effort and the following of authority. Pope Francis in August 2013, however, all but directly contradicts this idea. He identifies himself precisely with "the mystical movement" over against "an interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises that emphasizes asceticism, silence and penance."<sup>4</sup>

As far as the language of spiritual theology goes, I must of course stand corrected. But my conjecture, though articulated in terms of the ascetical and the mystical, arose less from Bergoglio's reading of Ignatian sources than from my sense of how a superior was dealing too harshly with his subjects, in particular with less robust personalities,

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<sup>2</sup>Besides the connections noted here, the first installment of these "Writings on Jesuit Spirituality" shares tropes from *Lumen Gentium* and *Don Quixote*, as well as the difficult idea of time being prior to space (on this, see also the last sentences of *Lumen Fidei*, 57).

<sup>3</sup>Information from Father Spadaro himself, posted, as is only fitting for a pioneer exponent of Cybertheology, on my Facebook page, 10/04/13.

<sup>4</sup>"A Big Heart Open to God," 18: "The Jesuit must be a person whose thought is incomplete, in the sense of open-ended thinking. There have been periods in the Society in which Jesuits have lived in an environment of closed and rigid thought, more instructive-ascetic than mystical"; ibid, 20: "Ignatius is a mystic, not an ascetic. It irritates me when I hear that the Spiritual Exercises are 'Ignatian' only because they are done in silence. The truth is that the Exercises can be perfectly Ignatian also in daily life and without the silence. An interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises that emphasizes asceticism, silence, and penance is a distorted one that also became widespread in the Spanish world. I am, rather, close to the mystical current, that of Louis Lallemant and Jean-Joseph Surin. And Favre was a mystic."

and with people who thought differently from himself.<sup>5</sup> There is, surely, a marked difference in leadership tone between Pope Francis's interview and Father Bergoglio's exhortations. The *maniera brusca* has modulated into a patient, vulnerable docility.

In "An Institution Living Its Charism," Bergoglio's contrast between left-wing political theories and the poor's everyday values degenerates into a sarcasm that may well have left good Jesuits feeling unheard and demeaned. What was needed was a serious engagement with the Marxist point about false consciousness and ideology, rather than a populist jibe about the poor's real belief being in hard work.<sup>6</sup> Bergoglio's suggestion that a tired superior is always avoiding his work will not amuse those of us who have been asked to lead communities with members who make great demands on our energy. But more significant is the whole argument of "On Uncertainty and Tepidity." Here, Christian fidelity in the everyday appears in all but Pelagian terms, as the decisive factor in divine consolation. Bergoglio characterizes daily consolation as the moments "when you have to make the salvation received actually work, hold on to it, and take responsibility for it."

The rhetoric of "On Uncertainty and Tepidity" is convoluted. As it stands (for the written text may be stitched together from earlier material), its account of general slackness depends on a moral psychology more theoretical than experiential, and on a strained reading of Paul VI's exhortation to GC 32. Moreover, the whole piece is couched within a strangely artificial reading of the downturn and recovery of the Argentinian province in the 1970s. That torrid period is contrasted with the calm alleged to have set in as Bergoglio is speaking, with its attendant danger that vigilance might lapse. Though one might admire Bergoglio's strong-mindedness and his ability to make his case on the basis of Ignatian sources, his conclusions for many will be disempowering. Indeed, his reasoning may even appear as a form of subtle bullying, through which the evil spirit can "bite, sadden and put obstacles, disquieting with false reason."

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<sup>5</sup>One might, however, compare the hurt and letdown felt by some Catholic activists on life issues in the face of Pope Francis's insistence that ethical demands must be set within a wider context of mercy and of effective communication.

<sup>6</sup>Bergoglio, "Writings on Ignatian Spirituality I," 18.

Pope Francis in 2013, while still drawing on battle imagery for the encounter with God, is different.<sup>7</sup> He is gentler, less forbidding, in his account of what the aftermath requires:

I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. . . . And you have to start from the ground up.

What Bergoglio published in 1982 was like water falling on a stone; what Pope Francis says in 2013 feels more like water on a sponge.<sup>8</sup>

On the plane back to Rome from Rio last July, Pope Francis insisted that he thought like a Jesuit. Though he immediately denied any connection with hypocrisy, he was nevertheless surely speaking of the spiritual and managerial pragmatism illustrated, not only by some powerful passages in the August 2013 interview, but also in "Leadership: The Big Picture and the Tiny Detail." The grace of God works through time, and can only be apprehended as a process. The better is often the enemy of the good; conversely, the ultimate good requires us to live with present compromise. Some, too, may see a Jesuit trait in Pope Francis's avoidance of any wholesale critique of modernity or of technical rationality. We may, however, do well to be cautious before speaking too quickly about Francis as a distinctively Jesuit pope. His timely, sensible and refreshing ministry expresses, not some arcane Jesuit lore, but rather Christian common sense.

Pope Francis's ministry will obviously continue to unfold and perhaps keep surprising us. Whatever we make of him and of his Jesuit identity, he is surely right to insist that we find the life of grace only through engagement with the realities, however challenging, of our contemporary world. We experience the anointings of ordination and baptism only if we go "to the 'outskirts' where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to

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<sup>7</sup>Perhaps for Europeans and North Americans, whose cultural experience is massively overshadowed by the experience of world war, such language has become awkward in a way that it is not for a Latin American—though there is an irony in a British editor making this point about an Argentinian text published in 1982.

<sup>8</sup>The Ignatian allusions in this paragraph come from *SpEx* 315, 335.

many evil masters.” There we give “what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all.” Thus the faithful disciple, preserving the inheritance, may need, as is suggested in “The Bad Superior,” to be comfortable with not looking pure, to work with “what little we have” even if we seem to be compromising on values of great importance. Bishops, says Pope Francis, must know not only how to support creativity, but also “to be patient in supporting the Lord’s movements through His people so that no one is left behind.” There is an echo here of Nadal’s account of Ignatius as one who followed, rather than anticipated, the Lord’s leading. We need to be generous and patient with others and, indeed, with ourselves. The challenges of the Gospel must be issued only at “the *kairos*, the favorable time—the time when this demand can be transformed into grace.”<sup>9</sup>

**Philip Endean, S.J.**

Paris, November 2013

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<sup>9</sup>Quotations from Pope Francis’s Chrism Mass homily in 2013; from “A Big Heart Open to God,” 24; and from “Leadership: The Big Picture and The Tiny Detail.”

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