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**Our Jesuit Constitutions:
Cooperation as Union**

Richard J. Baumann, SJ

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a word from the editor. . .

One of the more popular myths about St. Ignatius currently making the rounds in Jesuit schools, and in books on Ignatian spirituality, is what he supposedly said to Jesuits: *Even if you do not have time for other prayer, do not omit the examination of conscience.* Ignatius never said that. Nor did Fr. Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) ever say it in his lectures to Jesuit communities.

Now, it is true that Ignatius considered the examen fundamental. When he and Nadal listed the prayers not to be dropped from a Jesuit's regimen, they consistently mentioned the examen alongside Mass, the Divine Office, and meditation and contemplation.¹ But they never gave the examen more weight than other prayers; nor did they ever insinuate that other prayers were relatively dispensable compared to the examen.

Both men affirmed that, with some accommodations for personal circumstances, Jesuits should strive to pray for sixty to ninety minutes a day. This would suffice for Mass, the Office, two examens, and some meditation and contemplation. For example, Nadal wrote in 1553:

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

For those in probation, more prayer will be necessary: at a minimum, one whole hour in the morning, then Mass and examen before lunch, and another examen before dinner, and another half hour of prayer before going to bed, so that they have a

¹ E.g., *Const.* 65, 261, 342–44, 649; Ignatius's letter to Antonio Brandão, in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* [MHSI], *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Iesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones* [Epist. et Instruct.] 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–1911), III: 506–13; trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2006), 339–45; Ignatius's letter to Francis Borgia (Epist. et Instruct. XII:632–54; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 266–83. See also Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young (Chicago: IJS, 1964), 66–68, 86–90.

fixed two hours for prayer, over and above exercises and meditations in Christian doctrine, in obedience, mortification, humility, and practice in the perfection of the virtues.

In the professed houses of the Society there can be more liberty regarding the time for prayer, with the warning that, over and above the Mass, the canonical hours, and one hour of prayer (or a half hour), all other prayer should be readily dropped for the sake of our ministry to others.²

Given all of this, the myth about the examen is probably an unconscious distortion of something else that Ignatius once said—namely, that “for someone who is truly mortified a quarter of an hour of prayer is enough to unite him to God.”³ But the context of that quotation makes clear that Ignatius was not recommending fifteen minutes as the ideal.⁴ Now, some Jesuits had complained to Nadal that ninety minutes were not enough. Indeed, on this note, during the sixteenth century, the conventional wisdom among religious orders was that four to six hours of daily prayer were necessary for contemplative union. So when Nadal returned to Rome, he asked Ignatius, who was sick in bed at the time, whether the complaining Jesuits might be right. Ignatius was incensed. He scolded Nadal for his doubts, gave him a severe penance, and then responded that fifteen minutes suffices for a mortified Jesuit.

How times change. If ninety minutes seemed hardly enough for Jesuits in the sixteenth century, then ninety minutes seems hardly possible for busy Jesuits in the twenty-first century. The shift in context reminds me of what a professor of moral theology once said: that the

² *MHSI, Monumenta Ignatiana. Regulae Societatis Iesu 1540–1556* (Rome, 1948), 488–89. My translation.

³ Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo: The Memoriale of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara*, trans. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ (Leominster: Gracewing Publishing, 2004), 116–17 (no. 196).

⁴ Later in the *Memoriale*, Gonçalves da Câmara provides an extended version of Ignatius’s statement: “The Father [Ignatius] said that [other Jesuits] would never change his opinion that one hour was enough for students, if one presupposed mortification and abnegation as well, which makes it possible for someone easily to pray more in one quarter of an hour, than a non-mortified person in two hours” (*MHSI, Fontes Narrativi de San Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*. 4 vols. (Rome: 1943–1965), I: 676–77; trans. Eaglestone, *Remembering Iñigo*, 149 [no. 255]).

church had instituted holy days of obligation in the Middle Ages to compel lords to grant their peasants an occasional half-day free from work in the fields; but today, the faithful frequently experience those same holy days as an imposition on their hectic schedules.

This is the tension that Fr. Richard Baumann, SJ, addresses so poignantly in the present essay. Many modern Jesuits, wholly dedicated to their apostolates, nonetheless report feeling guilt for not practicing formal prayer more consistently. Or they feel resigned to the idea that going without a sense of personal intimacy with God is the necessary price for their dedication to the apostolate.

That Fr. E. Edward Kinerk (ucs) addressed similar themes in a recent issue of *STUDIES* speaks to the reality of the tension—and the depth of the longing—in modern Jesuits.⁵ Fr. Kinerk suggested short, casual conversations with God to cultivate a deeper sense of union and intimacy. The conversations can take place inside or outside the context of formal prayer periods.

Fr. Baumann takes a slightly different tack. He focuses on two often-overlooked Ignatian virtues: pure intention and self-abnegation. In so doing, he argues that Jesuits who do not embody these will fall into the trap of identifying their self-worth with their labors. But if they practice pure intention and self-abnegation, then those same labors become the means for the very union they seek. The distinction in consequences is subtle but vital, since the first amounts to workaholism, while the second is contemplation-in-action.

Compared to the *Spiritual Exercises* and the “Autobiography” of Ignatius, the content of the Jesuit *Constitutions* remains relatively unfamiliar to many Jesuits. Thankfully, that is starting to change. On behalf of the Seminar for Jesuit Spirituality, I would like to offer our gratitude to Fr. Baumann for so ably demonstrating the treasure to be found within its pages.

Barton T. Geger, SJ, Editor

⁵ E. Edward Kinerk, “Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* [SSJ] 48, no. 3 (Autumn 2016).

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Richard J. Baumann, SJ (UMI) entered the Chicago Province in 1964 and was ordained in 1975. He received an MSW from The Ohio State University and an MDiv from the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago. He has served as vocation director, novice director, pastor, and provincial. For six years, he served as director of Ignatian programming and faculty member at the first studies program in Harare, Zimbabwe. Then, for the past seven years, he has served as co-director of the English-speaking tertianship program located first in Ghana and now in Nairobi, Kenya. For a number of years, he also has given eight-day, constitutions-based retreats in the US and elsewhere, both to men in formation and to those with final vows.

Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union

Introduction

My carry-on bag for airplane trips always contains one sure item: a well-worn, annotated copy of the Jesuit *Constitutions* translated by Fr. George Ganss in 1970. Pious perhaps, but true. I cannot imagine losing this longtime companion.

And yet the irony, that Jesuits could cherish a book that Fr. Nicolás Bobadilla (1511–1590), one of Ignatius’s first companions, once described as “a labyrinth altogether confused,” so that “no one, either subject or superior, can come to know them, much less to observe them.”¹ Indeed, what I wish to suggest in the following pages is that each Jesuit can find in the *Constitutions* a spiritual wisdom that resonates with his own experience of being called to the Society, and with his own deep desires to feel united to God.² In fact, as we shall see, the *Constitutions* can be a source of consolation and relief for Jesuits who find it difficult to remain

¹ *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* [MHSI], *Epistolae P. Hieronymi Nadal Societatis Jesu ab anno 1546 ad 1577*. 5 vols. (Madrid, 1898–1905) [hereafter *Nadal*], IV: 733; trans. George E. Ganss, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1970), 55. John W. O’Malley, SJ writes in *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993): “The combination of sheer length, the many escape clauses, the large number of detailed but qualified stipulations, and some confusing and not altogether consistent repetitions probably made the *Constitutions* seem a ‘labyrinth’ to Bobadilla” (336.)

² Although I wrote this essay for Jesuits, and I address what Ignatius called our “way of proceeding”—a phrase that appears more than sixteen times in the *Constitutions*—I believe that it might be helpful to others, especially lay colleagues of the Society. The essay developed over many years, drawing first from my work with novices of the former Chicago and Detroit Province. It also drew from my work as provincial, and from my time working with men in our first studies program in Zimbabwe, as well as with tertians in Kenya, Ghana, and the United States, and guiding eight-day, constitutions-based retreats in the United States over the past five years. My gratitude goes to all these brother Jesuits, as well as to the members of the *Studies* seminar, its editorial staff, and personal friends, all of whom who have offered me timely information, critical review, substantial comments, and general encouragement.

faithful to personal prayer, as well as a gentle corrective to those who say, “my work is my prayer.”

Today, the *Constitutions* continues to provoke a variety of criticisms, usually milder and more measured than those of Fr. Bobadilla. But the text also remains largely unfamiliar to many Jesuits. The two-year novitiate gives Jesuits a solid formation in the Jesuit heritage, including a general knowledge of the *Constitutions*. Yet the novitiate can offer only a simplified overview of the text, and novices can appropriate it only to a modest degree, given the many demands on their time and energy that they experience during their first two years of religious life—a “sweet whirlwind,” as one novice recounted.

Even after the novitiate, the *Constitutions* remains for many Jesuits a respected but generally unread text. It is like a cookbook full of recipes, always present on the shelf for consultation, but which one uses only rarely, except perhaps when Jesuits need an inspirational quote for a prayer service. We smile, knowing this to be a common enough experience and admission, yet also knowing that we are still alive and living well within our vocation.

Tertianship for many Jesuits is a time to become re-acquainted with this vital source of our patrimony, along with the Complementary Norms that describe “the appropriate way in which those *Constitutions* are to be lived out in the contemporary renewal of our life and our apostolates.”³ Nevertheless, once tertians return to full-time ministry, their engagement with the *Constitutions* can wane again. A fellow tertian instructor once told me of a Jesuit who had acknowledged the importance of the constitutions and said that he had no antipathy toward the text, but nevertheless the Jesuit considered it part of his past, and so he chose to move on.

Fr. André de Jaer wrote, “even though we acknowledge that the *Constitutions* are clearly necessary, we do not see them as penetrating

³ John W. Padberg, SJ, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: IJS, 1996), vii. In *Const.* 516, Ignatius refers to tertianship (or “third probation”) as *la escuela del afecto*, or “school of the heart” (Ganss 234). Hereafter, all translations of the *Constitutions* are taken from Ganss.

all that deeply into the heart of our vocation."⁴ Surely that is what Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach desired as one fruit of the renewal of Jesuit law in General Congregation 34, namely, that the *Constitutions* would become increasingly treasured and efficacious in Jesuit life.⁵ Just as the *Spiritual Exercises* ascended in Jesuit consciousness and apostolic practice in the late 1960s and 1970s, so too Kolvenbach wanted the *Constitutions* to assume greater prominence. Fr. János Lukács noted that "we seem to draw on our two major Ignatian sources in a very uneven way, as if one wing of our contemporary Jesuit spirituality were full of life and the other lame."⁶ Any wonder, then, that General Congregation 36 exhorts Jesuits "to appropriate ever more fully the gift of . . . the Constitutions that animate our Society"?⁷

Surely, these very *Constitutions* have shaped the life commitment of each Jesuit, as captured in the formula for first vows: "And I promise that I shall enter the same Society to lead my entire life in it, *understanding all things according to its Constitutions*."⁸ Fr. Michael Buckley puts it simply and clearly: "If you ask what is the document that is just for the Society, that defines the Jesuit, that specifies what a Jesuit is and what a Jesuit life is insofar as that can be done by a classic document, you would talk about the *Constitutions*."⁹

It is more difficult to find the value and joy of the *Constitutions* if Jesuits perceive it to be solely a technical reference book or a dry manual

⁴ André de Jaer, SJ, *Together for Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Francis C. Brennan, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2001), 1.

⁵ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, "On Our Law and Life" (introductory discourse to General Congregation 34), in John W. Padberg, ed., *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: IJS, 2009), 687–90.

⁶ János Lukács, SJ, "The Incarnational Dynamic of the Constitutions," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits [SSJ]* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 3.

⁷ GC 36, d. 1, n. 18; trans. John W. Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: IJS, 2017), 21.

⁸ *Const.* 540 (Ganss 241–42); my italics.

⁹ Michael J. Buckley, SJ, "Revision of Our Law and of Our Life," an address given at the Jesuit Institute, Boston College, Chestnut Hill (November, 1993), 1.

of rules, an idea that Jesuits can interiorize all too easily. Jesuits know that manuals and laws tend to be laborious, often lacking appeal, and with little spirit and vigor. No doubt, the book of the *Constitutions* is to a certain degree juridical, but it is also bequeaths prized heritage, a comprehensive vision, an attractive identity, an apostolic strategy, a corporate grace, a spirituality, and last but not least—granted the considerable assistance of Fr. Juan Alfonso Polanco (1517–1576) and others—the thoughts of a saint and mystic.¹⁰

It is, according to Fr. Howard Gray, a “wisdom text,” full of a spiritual vitality and depth, instructive for generations. Indeed, Jesuits need to search for that wisdom and vitality, and not focus exclusively on this document as a mere collection of rules.¹¹ If it were merely that, then how surprising that “Ignatius’s *Constitutions* . . . use the word *caridad* on fifty-six occasions [and] the word *amor* on fifty-eight occasions.”¹² Just how legalistic could a text be that uses the words *charity* and *love* that often?

In this essay, I wish to suggest several ideas to further Jesuit understanding and appreciation for the *Constitutions*. Specifically, an idea that I have developed, and which means much to me personally, is what I call *cooperation as union*. It is inspired by two individual constitutions in the text as a whole. As means to that union, I will attend to three things in particular: personal prayer, pure intention, and self-abnegation. These are three basic ingredients of Jesuit life, as the *Constitutions* makes clear, and they deserve special intention.

Part I begins with an historical overview of the composition and approval of the *Constitutions*. In it, I will provide some inspiring descriptions of the text by our brother Jesuits. Part II focuses on coopera-

¹⁰ Fr. Juan Alfonso de Polanco, SJ of Spain entered the Society in 1541 and became Ignatius’s secretary in 1547.

¹¹ Howard J. Gray, SJ, “What Kind of Document?,” *The Way Supplement* 61 (1988): 22.

¹² John M. McManamon, SJ, *The Text and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola’s “Autobiography”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 133.

tion—cooperating with and laboring in God’s work—as articulated in the Preamble of the *Constitutions*, no. 134. In Part III, I will examine the additional nuance of cooperation as *union* with God, as articulated in *Const.* 723.

Finally, in Part IV, I will pro-offer a question that I intend to be provocative, and offer further comments of a practical nature about how cooperation as union with God can impact a Jesuit’s daily life. The question is not the one that Jesuits typically ask themselves—*how is my life of prayer?*—but rather the more expansive query, *how is my life of union with God?* As we will see, the second question permits one to disavow the simplistic and misleading assertion that “my work is my prayer,” in favor of the more holistic assertion that “my work is union” with God.

I. Historical Background

In the First Companions’ desire to serve the Lord and the church, they offered themselves to the pope in 1538, which resulted in the dispersal of many of them to papal missions throughout Europe.¹³ Knowing that this dispersal was imminent, the companions gathered for a special period of discernment now called the “Deliberation of the First Fathers,” during which time they met to decide prayerfully whether they were going to remain together as “one body with special concern” for one another and, secondly, whether they would “pronounce a third vow, namely, of obedience” to someone in their group.¹⁴ It was that deliberation which clarified their desire and intention to be formally established as a religious community in the church.

¹³ In 1538, Ignatius and his companions, now ready for service as priests, made an offering of themselves to the church for any mission that the pope requested, something that the companions had intended to do from the time of their private vows at Montmartre, had they not been able to go to the Holy Land. Beginning in 1539, some of the first papal missions were these: Paschase Broët and Simão Rodrigues to Siena, Pierre Favre and Diego Lainez to Parma, Nicolás Bobadilla to Naples, Claude Jay to Brescia, Simão Rodrigues to Portugal (1540), and Francis Xavier to Portugal and India (1540).

¹⁴ The Deliberation of the First Fathers (*deliberatio primorum patrum*), which took place from March to June 1539, was a time of discernment with respect to whether they would remain together as a group and whether they would submit in obedience to one of their members, as well as discussion about other key features of their group’s identity. See Jules J. Toner, SJ, “The Deliberation That Started the Jesuits,” *SSJ* 6, no. 4 (June 1974).

As a means to that goal, in 1539 they drafted an initial sketch of their purpose and petition. These five chapters (*quinque capitula*) evolved into the Society of Jesus' official way of life (*forma vitae*), as articulated in the Formula of the Institute of 1540, although only after it was subjected to a lengthy emendation and approval process by the Holy See. In particular, two cardinals raised a number of concerns, which led to struggles, compromises, modifications, and a surge of intercessory prayer on the part of Ignatius, his companions and friends, and advocates for the Society.¹⁵

Pure intention and self-abnegation are always possible when longer personal prayer is not so prescribed or feasible.

Those efforts and prayer were efficacious, to the point where the solutions and revisions with respect to the 1540 Formula satisfied Pope Paul III, who then formally established the Society with a papal document. He gave the companions permission to expand on the Formula of 1540 by writing the *Constitutions*, a text that now includes the General Examen and Declarations.¹⁶

Thus the First Companions forged for themselves a corporate spirituality that was missionary, discerning, and ecclesial, as outlined in the

¹⁵ Cardinal Girolamo Ghinucci (1480–1541) raised concerns about the fourth vow, the exemption from praying the Divine Office in common, and the exclusion of obligatory penances. All three were innovations in the monastic and religious life of that time. And the exemptions, if granted, would have looked like a capitulation to the Lutherans, who saw choir and penances as examples of vain works that Catholics mistakenly thought would contribute to their salvation. For his part, Cardinal Bartolomeo Guidicioni (1470–1549) argued, in accordance with the decrees of two church councils in the thirteenth century, that no new rule was to be allowed, and that any initiatives were to be subsumed under one of the four existing rules — *to wit*, of Basil, Augustine, Benedict, or Francis. Ignatius and the companions persevered successfully in their determination to establish the Society, honoring the unique charism and corporate grace that God gave to them.

¹⁶ The General Examen is an introduction to the Jesuit Institute, which Ignatius wanted to be given to men inquiring into the Society. It provided a process for mutual acquaintance and discernment of a candidate's decision and suitability for the Society. A "particular examen" is a more specific introduction pertaining to a particular grade in the Society. Finally, a declaration is an official clarification or explanation of a constitution. It carries the same juridical authority as the constitution to which it refers. In the Ganss and Padberg editions of the *Constitutions*, declarations are identified by italics.

Formula that contains the Society's core identity and principal features. This document effectively constituted the Jesuit "rule," although Jesuits usually do not use that term, and a license to operate officially as a religious order in the church. The *Constitutions* then functioned to "expand, apply, and further determine the provisions contained in the canonically approved *Formula* of the Institute."¹⁷ In other words, the *Constitutions* was to be an embodiment of the spirit of the Formula and the structural, organizational, and spiritual means to keep that spirit alive and strong in a corporate body.

Step by step, the First Companions experienced a movement and process from their foundational inspiration to the codification of that inspiration, so that others could enter into the same Company under the leadership of Ignatius, who always was riveted upon knowing and executing the will of God. He did this with a style of leadership that Fr. Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) described like so: "Ignatius was following the Spirit, he was not running ahead of it . . . the road was opening up before him and he was moving along it, wisely ignorant, with his heart placed very simply in Christ."¹⁸

A. The Writing of the *Constitutions*

Once the First Companions had established the Society, they entrusted Ignatius and another of their group, Fr. Jean Codure (1508–1541), with the task of composing the *Constitutions*. But Codure died only five months later. As Ignatius had innumerable other tasks before him with respect to the nascent Society, he did not make substantial progress with his writing until Polanco became his secretary in 1547. Then the tasks of both researching and compiling began in earnest, and by 1550 Ignatius and Polanco had authored the first draft text of the *Constitutions*.

From there, due to consultation with some of the early companions, plus more lived experience and an interactive promulgation of the

¹⁷ Ganss 37.

¹⁸ *MHSI, Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Jesus initiis*. 4 vols. (Rome: 1943–1965) [hereafter *Font. Narr.*], II: 252; translated in Pedro Arrupe, SJ, "The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism," *SSJ* 33, no. 3 (May 2001): 21.

draft primarily by Nadal in a few countries, revisions of the text continued until Ignatius' death in 1556. Finally, in 1558—almost two years after Ignatius had died—the Society officially approved the *Constitutions* at the first general congregation. The text had been shaped by eighteen plus years of lived corporate experience, deliberation, revision, and apostolic evolution. Together with a revised version of the Formula of the Institute in 1550, it became the bedrock “way of proceeding” (*modus procedendi*) of the Society.¹⁹

With this official backing from the congregation, Ignatius's task was completed posthumously, but not without a great deal of previous spiritual labor, prayer, and trust in God, as we know from the dictation of his “Autobiography” during the years shortly before his death.²⁰ Fr. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1520–1575) noted that “when [Ignatius] was writing the Constitutions, he had [visions] quite frequently. . . . For the most part they were visions that he had had [*sic*] confirming certain points in the Constitutions.”²¹ And again, “the method [Ignatius] followed when writing the Constitutions was to celebrate Mass every day and present the point under consideration to God and to pray over it.”²²

The content of the *Constitutions* unfolds in a developmental manner, following a man from his entrance into the Society to his full incorporation in the Society. Ignatius refers to this as the *order of execution*.²³ According to this order, a candidate shows interest, then is examined

¹⁹ The Formula of 1550 was a revision of the first Formula of 1540. Included in the papal bull *Exposcit debitum*, it canonically superseded *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* of 1540 as an authoritative confirmation of the Society.

²⁰ All translations of the “Autobiography” will be taken from Joseph N. Tylanda, SJ, ed., *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985).

²¹ *Auto.* 100 (Tylanda 187). Fr. Gonçalves da Câmara of Portugal was another second-generation companion; he entered the Society in 1545 and was the one to whom Ignatius, at intervals between 1553 and 1555, related his spiritual journey, popularly known as the “Autobiography.”

²² *Auto.* 101 (Tylanda 188). A tertian once remarked to me that he would not be inclined to pray with the *Constitutions*, a legal document, since for him it would be like praying with the *Code of Canon Law*. And yet the constitutions were a subject of profound prayer for Ignatius.

²³ *Const.* 135 (Ganss 120).

and admitted if he is suitable, and experiences the initial formation of the novitiate to make progress in spirit and virtue. He then moves along in academic, spiritual, practical, and apostolic pursuits to the point of incorporation with final vows, having grown in self-abnegation, pure intention, and an alacrity for ministry. All these steps effectively usher a man into the corporate body of the Society—into its mission of the “greater service of God and the more universal good,” its worldwide brotherhood and the union that calls us to be “friends in the Lord,” and its preservation, which is accomplished “through the omnipotent hand of Christ, God and our Lord . . . for His service and praise and for the aid of souls.”²⁴ This goal is reflected in Ignatius’s own words, when he describes the purpose of the constitutions as aiding “the body of the Society as a whole and also its individual members toward their preservation and development for the divine glory and the good of the universal Church.”²⁵

B. Descriptions of the Constitutions

If Ignatius’s description of the constitutions sounds too staid or predictable, then consider the ways in which some notable Jesuits have described the constitutions in their own words:

- Fr. János Lukács: “The *Constitutions* concern themselves with the question of how an initial, fragile . . . spiritual movement [so evident in the *Exercises*] can be embodied in concrete situations of daily life.”²⁶
- Fr. John O’Malley: “In their content and structure, [the *Constitutions*] differed from the constitutions of older orders in that they presented

²⁴ The key criterion for Ignatius for all missions is “the greater service of God and the more universal good” (*Const.* 622; Ganss 274). See Ignatius’ letter to Juan de Verdolay, dated July 24, 1537 (*MHSI, Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones*. 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–1911) [hereafter *Epist. et Instruct.*], XII: 321, 323; trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions* (St. Louis: IJS, 2006), 28. See also *Const.* 812 (Ganss 331).

²⁵ *Const.* 136 (Ganss 121).

²⁶ Lukács, “Incarnational Dynamic,” 16.

a clear orientation toward ministry as the purpose of the order and as the context in which the members would attain their own 'salvation and perfection'.²⁷

- Fr. Dominique Bertrand: "The *Constitutions* . . . are not a guide to living the way some giants might have lived by way of example in the beginning. . . . In the *Constitutions* the institute is proposed for all, first companions and new companions, as the future; there is one continuing end to be realized by all the companions . . . an end both ultimate and primary: God who works for the salvation of the human race."²⁸
- Fr. Pedro Arrupe: "The charism which is latent in the *Constitutions* develops, adapts and strengthens the organism which is sustained by them—the Society of Jesus—in its continual 'coming-into-being' in history."²⁹
- Fr. André Ravier: "What characterizes the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus is that they are . . . essentially missionary and that this missionary itinerary faithfully reproduces the long experience of the group of the first companions."³⁰
- Fr. Howard Gray: "The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus retain a privileged place in the heart of every contemporary Jesuit because they are a touchstone for his authenticity. . . . the Exercises offer a programme of conversion, discipleship, and dedication; the *Constitutions* offer a specific way for living out the values of the Exercises."³¹

²⁷ O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 337.

²⁸ Dominique Bertrand, SJ, *Un corps pour l'Esprit* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974), 57. Source of translation unknown.

²⁹ Pedro Arrupe, SJ, *A Planet to Heal* (Rome: International Centre for Jesuit Education, 1977), 273.

³⁰ André Ravier, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Maura Daly, Joan Daly, and Carson Daly (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 252.

³¹ Gray, "What Kind of Document?," 21–22, 29.

- Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach: The *Constitutions* of St. Ignatius form “a privileged expression of the foundational spiritual and apostolic experience of the first companions . . . to inspire and govern our entire present-day lives.”³²
- Fr. Pedro Ribadeneira: “These *Constitutions* contain our Society’s sinews, our order’s supporting walls, the bonds that fasten and weld this whole body together to be a dwelling for the heavenly Spirit and the grace of God, which is the real life of any religious order.”³³
- Fr. André de Jaer: “The *Constitutions* are a spiritual volume meriting as much attention as the Exercises. Far more than the Exercises, the *Constitutions* define the Jesuits and tell them who they are. For although the Exercises points out a path open to all human beings who choose to direct their lives toward God, they do not specifically define the identity of the Jesuit.”³⁴
- Fr. Carlos Coupeau: “The *Constitutions* witnesses to the early process by which Ignatian spirituality became Jesuit spirituality.”³⁵
- Fr. Brian O’Leary: “Central to any understanding of the *Constitutions* is the recognition that Ignatius (and the early companions) expressly wished to pass on to later generations of Jesuits the particular experience they had shared with one another.”³⁶
- Fr. Walter Farrell: “The *Constitutions* might be thought of as a methodological instrument. Just as the *Annotations* are the methodology assisting one giving the Exercises, so the *Constitutions* serve as a

³² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, in Padberg, *Constitutions*, xii.

³³ Trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ; cited in Padberg, *Constitutions*, xviii. The above citation originally appeared in a prefatory letter to the first published edition of the *Constitutions* in 1559. The letter was unsigned, but widely attributed to Ribadeneira. See Palmer’s appendix to James J. DiGiacomo, SJ, “Ministering to the Young,” *SSJ* 23, no. 2 (March 1991): 33.

³⁴ De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 1.

³⁵ J. Carlos Coupeau, SJ, *From Inspiration to Invention: Rhetoric in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: IJS, 2010), 12.

³⁶ Brian O’Leary, SJ, *Sent into the Lord’s Vineyard: Explorations in the Jesuit Constitutions* (Oxford: The Way, 2012), 21.

method for members of the Society showing them how to live the Jesuit life they are called to.”³⁷

- Fr. Michael Buckley: “The *Constitutions* are a genius document, in my opinion. They map the life of a Jesuit like a pilgrim’s progress moving toward God. You can chart the gradual evolution of the Jesuit as you move through the *Constitutions*.”³⁸
- Fr. Joseph Veale: “The *Constitutions*, then, are a kind of law. But they are a law that provides explicitly for the transcendence of the law by giving first importance to the interior law of charity and love, to the Holy Spirit.”³⁹

Whichever articulation describes our constitutions most accurately, the task Ignatius faced was the same: to incarnate and institutionalize an inspiration, a grace, a charism, and a vision, without losing any of their spirit and strength, or as Fr. Veale put it, “without turning a lion into a kitten.”⁴⁰ Ignatius needed to organize and articulate a charism—given that “the charism (which is spirit) needs a body”—and, at the same time, not to have it, when put down on paper, ossify before one’s very eyes.⁴¹ After all, as Arrupe attests, the *Constitutions* is to be “a book of life” for the Society and its future companions.⁴²

While Ignatius was criticized for his plodding language, plentiful details, and the large size of the document, he had nonetheless proceeded in his task in an experiential, consultative, and innovative manner. This medieval-on-the-verge-of-the-Renaissance man gave Jesuits a solid and complex piece of work—nothing flimsy about it—that was comprehensive, orderly, spiritual, and strategic for the sake of virtue and

³⁷ Walter L. Farrell, SJ, “The *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* and Their Complementary Norms: Introduction to a Reading,” 8 (from an address given to tertians while he was co-instructor for the Detroit Province tertian program from 1990 to 1996).

³⁸ Buckley, “Revision of Our Law and of Our Life,” 2.

³⁹ Joseph Veale, SJ, “How the *Constitutions* Work,” in *Manifold Gifts* (Oxford: Way Books, 2006), 95.

⁴⁰ Veale, “How the *Constitutions* Work,” 79.

⁴¹ O’Leary, *Sent into the Lord’s Vineyard*, 22.

⁴² Arrupe, *A Planet to Heal*, 273.

mission. The text sprang from his organizational ingenuity but, first and foremost, it was the fruit of his prayer. As Ignatius orchestrated the formation and movement of men in the Society's far-flung missions for the greater glory of God, he punctuated the *Constitutions* with much wisdom and with many ascetical and spiritual tactics—signs not so much of a doctor of the church, which he was not, but more of a skilled practitioner readying an apostolic “instrument that it may be wielded dexterously by [God's] divine hand.”⁴³

[Fr. Ganss] repeatedly spoke about Ignatius's desire, as well as his own desire, to cooperate in human ways to further the glory of God—the very raison d'être and finality of Ignatius's life.

II. Cooperation for the Glory of God

I wish to make several observations about the *Constitutions* that highlight certain Ignatian or Jesuit graces. If Bobadilla's criticism is correct—along with the milder misgivings about the constitutions, expressed by first companions Simão Rodrigues and Alfonso Salmerón—then perhaps these observations can offset such negative perspectives, and highlight the genius of both the document and Ignatius himself.

For me, two individual constitutions do just that. They helped me to appropriate the constitutions in ways that affect my daily Jesuit life. These two constitutions can be seen as interrelated.

The first one, concerning the theme of cooperation with God, is found in the Preamble of the *Constitutions*, no. 134. Ignatius begins by stating that Christ “deigned to begin” the Society and that he will “carry [it] forward in His divine service.” He then explains that “what helps most on our own part toward this end must be, more than any exterior constitution, the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit

⁴³ *Const.* 813 (Ganss 332).

writes and engraves upon hearts.”⁴⁴ Ignatius then makes an assertion of utmost importance for our purposes: **“the gentle arrangement of Divine Providence requires cooperation from His creatures.”**⁴⁵

Here, in *Const.* 134, lies the first and vital reference to an idea that, for me, constitutes the heart of the constitutions and the Jesuit charism: cooperation with God our Lord. By means of the responsible use of his freedom, a Jesuit labors with God our Lord “to help souls” (*ayudar a las almas*), a phrase that dates to the earliest writings of the First Companions, and which Fr. O’Malley called the “best and most succinct description of what [the Jesuits] were trying to do.”⁴⁶

The Lord wants Jesuits’ free cooperation as creatures—however limited that cooperation is or appears to be—not only with regard to writing constitutions, but also to all Jesuit apostolic efforts in the service of a needy world. In fact, according to Ignatius, the Lord *requires* this cooperation, so much does he want it.

To this end, the Trinity gently arranges and invites Jesuits to cooperate and work for the spread of the gospel through the use of our talents and personalities, human potentials, energies, and personal freedom, or as General Congregation 32 proposed, “for the building up of a world at once more human and more divine.”⁴⁷ Fr. Kolvenbach asserted this in a striking way: “If the inspired monk contemplates, the inspired Ignatius works—adhering with all his heart to the designs of the Trinity, offering himself to act in synergy with the Trinity so that his work is for the Trinity’s glory.”⁴⁸

And indeed, Jesuits *have* worked and cooperated. Most Jesuits are probably able to remember the “gentle” and providential “arrangement” of the call that he experienced years ago, and to extol the masterful way in which that call unfolded in God’s design. What Jesuit who

⁴⁴ *Const.* 134 (Ganss 119–20).

⁴⁵ *Const.* 134 (Ganss 119); my italics.

⁴⁶ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 18.

⁴⁷ GC 32, d. 2, n. 41; trans. Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today* (2009), 96.

⁴⁸ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, *The Road from La Storta* (St. Louis: IJS, 2000), 23–24.

received that personal invitation did not want to “cooperate” with that grace for his own good and salvation, as well as—and chiefly—for that of others? That is so much the Jesuit charism: to seek our salvation, but not to seek it independently of our apostolic purpose—in fact, “with that same grace” to seek the salvation of others.

Ignatius, at one point in the *Constitutions*, even boldly states that the singular “end which the Society seeks [is] the perfection and aid of its fellowmen [*sic*] unto glory to God,”⁴⁹ and that a candidate ought to be disposed to “better save and perfect his own soul by helping other souls, his neighbors.”⁵⁰ O’Leary supports this: “in the debate about whether the Institute has one end or two, we must come down uncompromisingly on the side of the former. The Institute exists . . . to help souls, to engage in mission. This is its only end.”⁵¹ And Nadal says it this way: “Alas, then, for us if we strive only for our own salvation! That is not our grace; that is not our vocation. It is a good occupation, indeed, but not ours.”⁵²

Whether one prefers the word *cooperation* or *partnership*, Ignatius refers to it in the Preamble and throughout the *Constitutions*, and stresses it once again as an *inclusio* of sorts in Part 10, when writing about the use of natural and acquired gifts.⁵³ There, in *Const.* 814, Ignatius employs almost the exact words as in the Preamble: “that we may *cooperate* with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord”—something, in my mind, at the heart of the Cardoner grace when he saw all things anew in their proper place glorifying God.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Const.* 765 (Ganss 317)

⁵⁰ *Const.* 52 (Ganss 91); see also *Const.* 3 (Ganss 77–78).

⁵¹ Brian O’Leary, SJ, “‘Hither I Must Come to Draw’: Mary Ward and the Ignatian *Constitutions*,” *The Way* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 10.

⁵² Trans. Joseph F. Conwell, SJ, *Walking in the Spirit: A Reflection on Jeronimo Nadal’s Phrase ‘Contemplative Likewise in Action’* (St. Louis: IJS, 2003), 139.

⁵³ *Const.* 814 (Ganss 332–33).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* “As he sat there the eyes of his understanding were opened, and though he saw no vision, he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an elucidation so bright that all these things seemed new to him” (*Auto.* 30; Tylenda 78–79).

Jesuits are not to be domesticated observers, but rather active participants for the good of souls and the glory of God; a glory that is visible in life as the very presence, manner, and beatitudes of God for the advancement of our world today. And we participate by employing our unique liberty and will—the deepest gift we have to offer—in the “help of souls.” This cooperation for the glory of God is preeminently the lens through which the grace and dynamic of the constitutions reveals itself.

Cooperation with God was the particular angle on Ignatian spirituality that Fr. Ganss emphasized with me when he welcomed me to Saint Louis to study the *Constitutions* with him after my first year as novice director for our province. He repeatedly spoke about Ignatius’s desire, as well as his own desire, to cooperate in human ways to further the glory of God—the very *raison d’être* and finality of Ignatius’s life. Fr. Ganss so well embodied the exhortation that Catholics hear at the conclusion of the Eucharistic liturgy: “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” Everything that fulfils its created purpose in cooperation with God’s design and grace redounds to the glory of God.

A. God’s Grace and Jesuit Efforts

Surely, Ignatius and the early companions were apostolic—cooperating and laboring—as is clear from just one sentence of the Deliberation as they gathered in 1539 to pursue the future of their companionship: “we began, therefore, to expend every human effort.”⁵⁵ Yet, as Jesuits also hear, they placed their trust first and foremost in the Lord: “we settled on this, that we would give ourselves to prayer, Masses, and meditations more fervently than usual and, after doing our very best we would for the rest cast all our concerns on the Lord, hoping in him.”⁵⁶ In this sense, it is Jesuit cooperation and labor, but always cooperation and labor in the Lord. As Fr. O’Leary affirms, “God’s active providence is mediated through rightly ordered and benevolent human activity.”⁵⁷ And mere workaholism is not rightly ordered and benevolent human activity.

⁵⁵ Toner, “The Deliberation,” 187.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵⁷ O’Leary, *Sent into the Lord’s Vineyard*, 142.

The interplay between God's grace and human effort is an important dynamic in the *Constitutions*. Innumerable Jesuits have written about this dynamic and blessed dance, but one recollection of Ribadeneira, in his biography of Ignatius, is especially noteworthy:

With regard to all the things that [Ignatius] undertook in the service of God our Lord, he made use of all human means available to carry them through, with such care and efficiency as if a good outcome depended on them; and he trusted so much in God and was dependent to such an extent on Divine Providence that it was as if all those other human measures that he was putting into practice were of no avail.⁵⁸

Or in simpler terms, a Jesuit might say, "in my trust, let me not forget to cooperate; in my cooperation, let me not forget to trust."

Of course, the primary laborer is the Lord. Nevertheless, "since the gentle arrangement of Divine Providence requires cooperation from His creatures," Jesuits labor with him.⁵⁹ The cooperation is neither a voluntaristic pelagianism predicated on one's own efforts, nor a *lo que será, será* quietism wherein a person moves into a passivity and one's use of freedom ends up superfluous. Instead, it is a required cooperation—a "loving and effective cooperation with Christ toward achievement of the redemptive plan, unto greater praise or glory from men to God."⁶⁰ Indeed, it is a full and riveting engagement of ourselves with utmost energy and passion in the spiritual quest of the gospel, at the same time always holding ourselves and our efforts lightly. In so doing, we let the Lord's presence and power take precedence and be the sacred energy that matters, with ourselves being, in the end and always, unworthy servants.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Font. narr.* III: 631; trans. in Pedro de Ribadeneira, SJ, *Treatise on the Governance of St. Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ (Oxford: Way Books, 2016), 34.

⁵⁹ *Const.* 134 (Ganss 119–20).

⁶⁰ Ganss 7.

⁶¹ Luke 17:10.

B. Cooperation and Labor in the *Spiritual Exercises*

This cooperation surely relates to and specifies the same labor and service called forth from Jesuits in the *Spiritual Exercises*, most especially in the Call of the King: “therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this

In the Society, God labors for Jesuits in and through their Jesuit companions, stirring a feeling of affection, and a sense of belonging.

enterprise must be willing to labor with me.”⁶²

Jesuit spirituality does not have a person primarily contemplating Jesus under the trees of

Galilee; rather, it places a person with Jesus on the road—contemplating and journeying, strategizing, reconciling, laboring, serving, and imagining to serve more. So central is this service to Ignatius that he employs the term “the service of God” (*servicio de Dios*) or its equivalent more than one hundred forty times in the *Constitutions*.⁶³

Jesuit cooperation—our labor and service—follows from who God is for us. And, according to a key image in the Exercises, God is a God who labors. In the third point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, God “works and labors for me in all creatures,” and “conducts Himself as one who labors.”⁶⁴ This image of God is affirmed for Jesuits by General Congregation 34, in that “the God of Ignatius is the God who is at work in all things: laboring for the salvation of all.”⁶⁵ General Congregation 36 added, “looking at reality with the eyes of faith, with a vision trained by the *Contemplatio*, we know that God labors in the world.”⁶⁶

⁶² *SpEx* 95; trans. Louis J. Puhl, SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), 44. See also *SpEx* 9, 11, 116, 206 (Puhl 4–5, 53, 85).

⁶³ Joseph de Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1964), 84.

⁶⁴ *SpEx* 236 (Puhl 103).

⁶⁵ GC 34, d. 26, n. 541 (Padberg, *Jesuit Life* [2009], 660).

⁶⁶ GC 36, d. 1, n. 3 (Padberg, *Jesuit Life* [2017], 17).

Michael Ivens refers to this laboring of God as exemplifying a pivotal movement from a static to a dynamic image of God's presence.⁶⁷ He adds that God "continuously 'uses' his creation in order to give himself to us, and through all things to meet our needs and to enrich us."⁶⁸ For instance, I remember that God labored for me when my mother gave to me, during my sophomore year in high school, a copy of *The Imitation of Christ*—possibly the only thirteen-year-old in the world to receive it. Reading that book was one of the actual graces that prompted me to consider my vocation in life.

In the Society, God labors for Jesuits in and through their Jesuit companions, stirring a feeling of affection, and a sense of belonging. And God labors for us by raising up competent and deeply spiritual men to become our superiors general. Fr. Joseph Tetlow writes that Jesuits are truly "created momentarily by our God and Lord in all concrete particulars and that we are listening to God's summons into life when we let ourselves hear our most authentic desires."⁶⁹ In this sense, God labors through a Jesuit's desires to develop a particular talent, to foster a particular relationship, and to welcome into consciousness a particular item of self-knowledge.

Two more Ignatian scholars emphasize God as one who labors for us. First, Cardinal Jean Daniélou (1905–1974) states that "the Ignatian God is a God who acts, who accomplishes marvelous and holy deeds," and that "this is a God at work" in the *magnalia [Dei]* of creation and redemption.⁷⁰ He goes on to say that the "man of Ignatian spirituality will be essentially a 'worker with God, *operarius*'."⁷¹ Fr. Veale adds that the "culmination of the Exercises is a contemplation of God who is at work

⁶⁷ Michael Ivens, SJ, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1998), 176.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁶⁹ Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, "The *Fundamentum*: Creation in the Principle and Foundation," *SSJ* 21, no. 4 (Sept. 1989): 7.

⁷⁰ Jean Daniélou, SJ, "The Ignatian Vision of the Universe and of Man," *Cross Currents* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1954): 357–66.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

in his world.”⁷² One is reminded of Paul’s words to the Corinthians that “we are God’s fellow workers,” and of Jesus’s words which relate to this same third point of the Contemplation: “my Father works, and I work.”⁷³

It is this image of God as one who labors that relates to my way of distinguishing the purpose of the Exercises from that of the constitutions. The purpose of the Exercises is to offer an *individual* a strategic pathway toward order, election, and cooperation with God in the enterprise of redemption, while the constitutions offer a *corporate body* a strategic pathway toward the same goals in the enterprise of redemption.⁷⁴ In this way, the Exercises and the constitutions have in common both cooperation and the subsequent labor it implies. Together with the Trinity, Jesuits look upon the needy world and labor together. We are therefore sons of both the Exercises and the constitutions.

C. Cooperation and Labor in the Constitutions

“Labor”—the stuff of cooperation—is as evident in the *Constitutions* as it is in the *Exercises*.⁷⁵ For example, entrants to the Society are to make progress “in such a manner that there is also proper care for the health and bodily strength necessary to labor in the Lord’s vineyard” (243). The Society seeks members who are “both good and learned [...] because of the great labors and the great abnegation of oneself which are required in the Society” (308). Regarding Jesuit mission, “members are dispersed to any part of Christ’s vineyard to labor in that part of it and

⁷² Joseph Veale, SJ, “From Exercises to Constitutions: A Spirit in Search of a Body” 3–24; in *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Incorporation of a Spirit* (Rome: Secretariatatus Spiritualitatis Ignatianae, 1993), 12.

⁷³ 1 Cor. 3:9; John 5:17.

⁷⁴ “The *Constitutions* were conceived according to the model of the *Exercises*; they are more than a juridical text and they propose an itinerary of discernment regarding the structuration of a group” (Pierre Emonet, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality*, trans. Jerry Ryan [Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2016], 89.)

⁷⁵ *Const.* 149 (Ganss 128), *Const.* 159 (Ganss 129), *Const.* 216 (Ganss 146), *Const.* 243 (Ganss 153), *Const.* 308 (Ganss 172–73), *Const.* 339 (Ganss 183), *Const.* 603 (Ganss 267–68), *Const.* 659 (Ganss 286–87), *Const.* 732 (Ganss 311), *Const.* 769 (Ganss 318), *Const.* 797 (Ganss 326).

in that work which have [*sic*] been entrusted to them" (603). Labor also appears in the General Examen which presents to candidates the purpose of the Society, namely, "to devote itself with God's grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members' own souls, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbors."⁷⁶

Ignatius loved the adverb "strenuously" (*intensamente*), as if the idea of labor by itself was not sufficient. It is a word that we Jesuits need to hear and ponder in a discerning way. Strenuously bespeaks magnanimity—a greater service with fortitude of soul—but Jesuits ought to keep alert that this "greater" does not move them to a frenzy of work that goes beyond what is truly work "in the Lord."⁷⁷ We are to "desire with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced," but moderation and *discreta caritas*—a spiritual reasonableness—are needed.⁷⁸ Jesuit must give priority to God's initiative of grace.

Ignatius highlights this value often in the *Constitutions*. Though he places great emphasis on our natural and human gifts as means of cooperation for anyone who wishes to be an instrument of God, he places even greater emphasis on the spiritual and supernatural gifts by which those human gifts gain their effectiveness and fruitfulness.⁷⁹ Our natural and human gifts are to be honored, but Ignatius makes clear that Christ the Lord is the Alpha and Omega of the Society's life and mission: "the Society was not instituted by human means. . . . therefore, in him alone must be placed the hope that he will preserve and carry forward what he deigned to begin for his service and praise and for the aid of souls."⁸⁰

Christ is the one who sustains Jesuits. I am reminded of a time when I was a little boy in the playground, trying to swing myself on the swing. I strained tirelessly to gain momentum, but it was only my

⁷⁶ *Const.* 3 (Ganss 24).

⁷⁷ See Brian O'Leary, SJ, "Magnanimity: An Ignatian Virtue," *Religious Life Review* 50, n. 267 (March–April 2011): 107–16.

⁷⁸ *Const.* 101 (Ganss 107).

⁷⁹ *Const.* 813–14 (Ganss 332–33).

⁸⁰ *Const.* 812 (Ganss 331).

father's timely push from behind that truly got me going and made the difference.

Lastly, and most significantly, Jesuits cannot forget that the reality of cooperation and labor relates inherently to Part VII of the *Constitutions*, on the topic of mission. As such, Fr. Jaer rightly affirms that it "is truly the nucleus of the Constitutions."⁸¹ Everything prior to it prepares an individual Jesuit for cooperation and labor in the body of the Society, and everything after it provides for the preservation of the corporate body as an effective instrument in its cooperation and labor.

III. Cooperation as Union

Ignatius brings yet another nuance to the idea of Jesuit cooperation with God, and that is Jesuit cooperation as *union* with God. Notably, Ignatius makes it the first quality to be sought in any superior general: "**to be closely united with God our Lord and intimate with Him in prayer and all his actions.**"⁸² This is the second individual constitution that helps me appropriate the constitutions as a whole. The goal described therein is one that every Jesuit ought to emulate. Fr. Thomas Clancy states that the portrait of the general "is really a portrait of the good Jesuit, for there is no virtue demanded here which Ignatius has not already prescribed for all members of the Society."⁸³

To ponder the meaning of union with God, I will first consider that fundamental and privileged means of union, namely the practice of personal prayer. Then I will turn to two other practices, also important to Ignatius, that permeate the constitutions: pure intention and self-abnegation. I believe that focusing upon this triad will suggest an answer to the overriding question that I posed in the Introduction: *how is my life of union with God?* That answer, in turn, will point the way to a more holistic spiritual and ministerial life for Jesuits, thereby hopefully affording them some spiritual relief and peace of soul.

⁸¹ De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 136.

⁸² *Const.* 723 (Ganss 309); my italics.

⁸³ Thomas H. Clancy, SJ, *An Introduction to Jesuit Life* (St. Louis: IJS, 1976), 104–05.

A. The Practice of Personal Prayer

By “personal prayer” I mean prayer that Jesuits formally practice at reserved, regular times of the day, albeit with flexibility as needed. Personal prayer happens when we are reverently disposed and responsive to the God of all life, the God of creation and redemption, of Scripture, of our experience, and of our hearts and minds at any given moment. It is the time for prayer that often involves the examen. It is a happy opportunity to be alone with God. Whether it is consoling or ordinary, it conveys our fidelity to God and enhances the life of the Spirit in us. Fr. Karl Rahner speaks to this fidelity so poetically: “Prayer in daily life. . . is not a grand oratorio in a cathedral, but just a pious folksong. . . . a prayer of fidelity. . . . Sometimes it seems to come merely from the lips, but it is better that at least the lips should continue to give praise to God rather than that a person should become silent altogether. When the lips speak, though the heart is silent, there is still hope that one day the heart will speak also.”⁸⁴

Personal prayer offers a principal means to become spiritually free and united with God. Besides the reference above to Fr. General being “closely united with God our Lord and intimate with Him in prayer,” the *Constitutions* mentions daily personal prayer with respect to the novices (*Const.* 277); for those in studies after the novitiate (*Const.* 342); and, according to what “discreet charity dictates” (*Const.* 582), for the formed members.⁸⁵

One of the Complementary Norms allows for a promising and inviting variety of personal prayer: “All should recall that the prayer in which God communicates himself more abundantly is the better prayer, whether it is mental or even vocal, whether it consists in meditative reading or in an intense feeling of love and self-giving.”⁸⁶ It mirrors what Ignatius wrote to Fr. Francis Borgia in 1548. The best prayer is simply the way in which:

⁸⁴ Karl Rahner, SJ, *On Prayer* (New York: Paulist Press, 1958), 50.

⁸⁵ See CN 67.2, 225 (Padberg, *Constitutions*, 145, 257), for a similar practice today.

⁸⁶ CN 225.2 (Padberg, *Constitutions*, 257)

God our Lord most communicates himself through a manifestation of his holy graces and spiritual gifts. For he sees and knows what is best for the person and, knowing all things, points out to him the way. To discover this way it is useful for us, with the help of his grace, to seek out and try a number of ways so as to tread the one made clearest to us, as the happiest and most blessed in this life.⁸⁷

Hence Jesuits' experience of personal prayer can be more kindly and connatural than what they might at times suspect. It is a pathway that beckons Jesuits to be at home with themselves and the unique spiritual temperament that is theirs, knowing that the Holy Spirit in them is nudging them to be relaxed and united with the God who welcomes them. In this sense, prayer is not so much a high mountain to climb—something to achieve—but rather a level place of ease where self-criticism ideally has no chance to breathe. Fr. Peter Paul Kennedy, former tertian director of the British province, once remarked, “We don't give ourselves to prayer, but to God.” Indeed, into the arms and presence of a good and gracious God.

Ignatius gave himself regularly and fervently to set times for prayer. According to Fr. Gonçalves da Câmara, “after Mass [Ignatius] remained in mental prayer for two hours,” even during his later years.⁸⁸ While few Jesuits may be the mystic that Ignatius was, like him, Jesuits do need to practice personal prayer to some degree if they are to grow in the sensitivity needed to be “contemplative likewise in the midst of action” (*simul in actione contemplativus*), or to find God our Lord in all things, or to live cooperation as union.⁸⁹ Personal prayer is of paramount importance!

⁸⁷ See Ignatius' letter to Francis Borgia, dated September 20, 1548, in Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 255.

⁸⁸ Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, SJ, *Remembering Iñigo: The Memorials of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara*, trans. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph Munitiz, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2004), 108 (no. 179).

⁸⁹ CN 224 (Padberg, *Constitutions*, 257); Nadal IV: 651. See also *Const.* 288 (Ganss 165) and the letter written by Polanco on behalf of Ignatius to Father Antonio Brandão on June 1, 1551 (*Epist. et instruct.* III: 510; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 339–45).

Recently, my experiencing of giving retreats based on the constitutions, whether for Jesuits in formation or those with final vows, suggests that praying with the *Constitutions* helps them to appreciate more deeply their content and spirit. In an eight-day retreat, praying with a single paragraph or a single turn of phrase can open a Jesuit to the mind and heart of Ignatius, which in turn allows the Jesuit to identify and articulate similar stirrings in his own mind and heart.

I remember when one Jesuit in formation acknowledged, at the conclusion of the retreat, that he finally understood what he did, and why, when he entered the novitiate five years previously. In this sense, engaging the Jesuit religious heritage in a prayerful way can allow a man to experience once again a confirmation of his calling to the Society. It is something like a homecoming, whereby he permits the deep roots of Jesuit spirituality to intertwine with the realities and graces of his original call.

*Ignatius loved the adverb
“strenuously” (intensamente),
as if the idea of labor by
itself was not sufficient.*

B. The Practice of Pure Intention

Another means to become spiritually free and united with God is the practice of pure intention, as articulated in the *Constitutions* and other early sources.⁹⁰ Ignatius writes that “all should make diligent efforts to keep their intention right, not only regarding their state of life but also in all particular details” (*Const.* 288). This practice is at the heart of making progress spiritually. “He desired very much that all members of the Society should have an intention completely right, pure, and unmixed, without any mingling of vanity or stain of self-will and self-interest.”⁹¹ Pure intention is a matter of attitude, as simple as saying throughout one’s day, *Lord, may all the human effort of my day be for love and praise of you.* It is keeping one’s focus, motive, and desire not on self-aggrandizement, but always on the end, namely, the greater honor, praise, and

⁹⁰ *Const.* 288 (Ganss 165), *Const.* 340 (Ganss 183), *Const.* 360 (Ganss 190), *Const.* 61 (Ganss 190), *Const.* 618 (Ganss 271–73), *Const.* 813 (Ganss 332).

⁹¹ *Font. narr.* III: 613.

glory of God.⁹² Clearly, Ignatius was a man riveted on the ultimate end of human existence.⁹³

Pure intention corresponds with living the gospel exhortation to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33). It corresponds with “hallowed be thy name,” and with the doxology of the eucharistic liturgy, “through him, and with him, and in him . . . all glory and honor is yours.” Likewise, it parallels with the Formula of 1550, which states: “let any such person [who desires to serve in our Society] take care, as long as he lives, first of all to keep before his eyes God.”⁹⁴ Indeed, a pure intention, one not “mixed with human motives” (*Const.* 180), is what we pray for repeatedly while making the Spiritual Exercises—namely, “that all my intentions, actions, operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty.”⁹⁵

Pure intention is not some strained fixation of the mind, but an attitude orienting our daily life and daily efforts toward a finality. Fundamentally, it is a gift of heart and mind, honed in us by the Holy Spirit. Fr. Ivens puts it this way: “God-centered intention does not imply the elimination of other intentions, but the integration of all immediate intentions into our ultimate intention . . . not measured by one’s capacity for introspection, nor by one’s insights into the ways of the mind, but by the strength of the desire to follow the Spirit.”⁹⁶

Pure intention does not ask that a person always be consciously thinking of God, because, for instance, in the context of studies, Ignatius states that “learning . . . in a certain way requires the *whole* person.”⁹⁷ And the whole person is the whole person! Which is to say, when our immediate intention is aligned with God’s ways, we are pleasing to the

⁹² “In Ignatius’ usage, ‘glory,’ ‘praise,’ and ‘honor’ to God are synonyms. They occur some 133 times in the *Constitutions* and accompanying *General Examen*” (Ganss 8).

⁹³ *SpEx* 23 (Puhl 12).

⁹⁴ *Formula of the Institute* 1550, no. 1; Padberg, *Constitutions*, 4.

⁹⁵ *SpEx* 46 (Puhl 25).

⁹⁶ Michael Ivens, SJ, *Keeping in Touch: Posthumous Papers on Ignatian Topics* (Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2007), 150–51.

⁹⁷ *Const.* 340 (Ganss 183); my italics.

Lord and united with him. Indeed, Ignatius affirmed explicitly that pure intention can “unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded dexterously by His divine hand.”⁹⁸

Union with the Lord through a right and pure intention is crystallized by an example that Ignatius gives in the *Constitutions* when writing about Jesuit scholastics, that “their devoting themselves to learning which they acquire with a pure intention . . . will be not less but rather more pleasing to God our Lord during this time of study.”⁹⁹ And later he states again that “they cannot do anything more pleasing to God our Lord than to study with the pure intention mentioned above.”¹⁰⁰ Such is the grace and power of pure intention: in this example, rather than studies being a millstone around one’s neck, a hoop to jump through, or merely a sidetrack to life and holiness, they are a good in themselves and a work that bears apostolic fruit.

In addition, supported by a pure intention, the studies themselves can be a means of union with God. When I was discussing this with men in formation during a constitutions retreat, some of them admitted that they had seen their studies as a time of merely putting their heads down and plowing through, in order to get on with life and ministry. How unfortunate, that until that moment, they had not understood that studies done with pure intention—and with all the self-abnegation that it requires—could have been a means of rich spiritual union with and in the Lord.

In this vein, Fr. Joseph Conwell advances that, for Ignatius, “works withdrawing one from explicit attention to God, if undertaken out of love of God, not only were equivalent to the union and recollection of contemplation, but could be even more acceptable.”¹⁰¹ Fr. Conwell arrives at this conclusion from Ignatius’s own words to a fellow Jesuit who served as community treasurer:

⁹⁸ *Const.* 813 (Ganss 332).

⁹⁹ *Const.* 340 (Ganss 183).

¹⁰⁰ *Const.* 361 (Ganss 190).

¹⁰¹ Joseph F. Conwell, SJ, *Contemplation in Action* (Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1957), 7.

[A]lthough responsibility for temporal business may appear and be somewhat distracting, I have no doubt that your holy intention and your directing everything you do to God's glory makes it spiritual and highly pleasing to his infinite goodness. For when distractions are accepted for his greater service and in conformity with his divine will as interpreted to you by obedience, they can be not only equivalent to the union and recollection of constant contemplation, but even more acceptable to him, since they proceed from a more vehement and stronger charity.¹⁰²

C. The Practice of Self-Abnegation

Thirdly, and lastly, another means to become spiritually free and united to God is the practice of self-abnegation, a counsel that itself stems from various places in the *Constitutions*.¹⁰³ Self-abnegation is a salutary setting aside of self out of a love for God or others. In a sense, it is the practical manifestation of a pure intention—sacrificial and self-giving gestures of love coming forth from someone who is ordered to the praise of God. Imagine, for instance, parents adjusting their weekend plans to attend to the social and athletic activities of their children, or someone remaining at table to be company for an elderly brother religious who is more limited health-wise. Self-abnegation is not about control, rigidity, or self-perfection, in which case it would become an idol of sorts. It is a means to spiritual freedom and love.

What could be more telling with respect to the centrality of self-abnegation than Ignatius's exhortation at the end of the General Examen to a man entering the Society, namely, that his "chief and most earnest

¹⁰² See Ignatius's letter to Manoel Godinho, dated January 31, 1552 (*Epist. et instruct.* IV: 126–27; Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 367. Fr. Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ, wrote, "It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, whitewashing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in his grace you do it. . . . He is so great that all things give him glory if you mean they should. So then, my brethren, live" (ed. Christopher Devlin, SJ, *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins* [London: Oxford University Press, 1959], 240–41).

¹⁰³ *Const.* 103 (Ganss 109), *Const.* 284 (Ganss 164), *Const.* 307 (Ganss 171–72), *Const.* 516 (Ganss 234).

endeavor should be to seek in our Lord his greater abnegation and continual mortification in all things possible?"¹⁰⁴ The mortification Ignatius mentions here is the very specific "food" of self-abnegation—the concrete decisions and/or actions that make evident and advance spiritual freedom and love.¹⁰⁵

What could be more motivating to a docile and eager soul seeking God's holiness than what Ignatius puts forth so strikingly in the *Spiritual Exercises*: "for every one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests"?¹⁰⁶ Fr. De Guibert concurs: "after the person has once passed through the training of the Exercises, that essential and prerequisite condition [for obtaining continual prayer and habitual union] consists in . . . the abnegation of self."¹⁰⁷

To say the least, then, Ignatius greatly prized this self-abnegation. It is essential for novices.¹⁰⁸ It is prized as well by Jesus in the gospels, and by saints who tried with the grace of baptism "to be no longer concerned with self except to keep it continually turned towards God."¹⁰⁹

Fr. Conwell notes that, "to Ignatius mortification was a far more basic element in the spiritual edifice than prayer, or, at least, so it seems. . . . as a matter of fact, Ignatius preferred to speak of a man as mortified rather than as prayerful."¹¹⁰ Fr. Ribadeneira adds that Ignatius "seemed rather to put more value on the spirit of mortification, even though those spirits [prayer and mortification] are so linked and bound

¹⁰⁴ *Const.* 103 (Ganss 109).

¹⁰⁵ Antoine Delchard, "Continual Mortification," in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Ignatian Spirituality*, ed. William J. Young (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1958), 240.

¹⁰⁶ *SpEx* 189 (Puhl 78).

¹⁰⁷ De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 90.

¹⁰⁸ *Const.* 307 (Ganss 171–72). See also Matt. 16: 24–25.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., St. Thérèse Couderc, R.C., foundress of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle, in "Self-Surrender" (June 26, 1864); reprinted in *Anthology of Congregation Documents* (Chicago: Sisters of Our Lady of the Cenacle, 1985).

¹¹⁰ Conwell, *Contemplation in Action*, 6.

together that it is difficult to uncouple and separate them.”¹¹¹ Ignatius himself told Nadal that “for someone who is truly mortified a quarter of an hour of prayer is enough to unite him to God.”¹¹² And why is that? Because a person’s will is already united with God. No long runway is needed for prayerful flight; the person can take off quite quickly and easily.

To put it more positively and probably more palatably for our culture today, we can refer to self-abnegation as self-transcendence or even self-mastery in the sense of an emptying—an everyday *kenosis*—fundamentally a loving self-giving, both in small and in sizable ways. Think of it as exercising discipline in one’s life, or sacrificing for some greater good, or letting go of one’s own preference and inner agenda, or “unoccupying the self,”¹¹³ or diminishing “certain desires or fears, but only in order to free our energies to act on the desires of our choice,”¹¹⁴ or taking “special care to guard with great diligence the gates of [one’s] senses from all disorder” (*Const.* 250), or overcoming with a proper lowliness one’s ever-ascending ego, which former Fr. General Adolfo Nicolás once described to us as tertian directors as the “last frontier” to conquer.¹¹⁵

Fundamentally, self-abnegation renders one more and more interiorly free. It is a ready docility and obedience to the best and holiest spirit and movements in us—“the appeals of the Spirit”¹¹⁶—needed clearly for our living of the vows, and for our discernment individually, communally, and in the wider Society or, as General Congregation 36 states, a “discernment . . . integral to our personal and corporate apostolic life.”¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Pedro de Ribadeneira, SJ, *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavor, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2014), 347 (no. 518).

¹¹² Gonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo*, 117 (no. 196).

¹¹³ Conwell, *Walking in the Spirit*, 59.

¹¹⁴ E. Edward Kinerk, SJ, “Eliciting Great Desires: Their Place in the Spirituality of the Society of Jesus,” *SSJ* 16, no. 5 (Nov. 1984): 13.

¹¹⁵ Adolfo Nicolás, “Address to Jesuit Tertian Directors” (Rome), August 2014.

¹¹⁶ Delchard, “Continual Mortification,” 238.

¹¹⁷ GC 36, d. 2, n. 4; trans. Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today* (2017), 27. See also “Complementary Norm” 223.3, 223.4 (trans. Padberg, *Constitutions*, 255, 257).

Self-abnegation entails everything from restraint when on the verge of divisive gossip to being disposed to a superior's well-considered initiative in one's community. It means everything from moderation in one's consumer impulses to setting aside work to attend a funeral. It implies everything from restraining a poor first impression of someone, to moving beyond self-absorption to notice those in need. It is everything from caution with the improper use of media and other unhealthy stimuli, to accentuating praise rather than negativity. It involves everything from the acceptance "with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced" to the "poverty as opposed to riches" of this world.¹¹⁸ It means not manipulating a personal relationship for a self-serving end, and adapting one's plans when a provincial asks one to an assignment that is not one's first interest.

In a Jesuit context, self-abnegation is not chiefly about taking a smaller portion of dessert, but about the interior freedom and availability needed to be sent on mission. It is letting go of one's self-will, and being properly disposed, so that the Lord may have his way in us, as life and grace allow. When we do so, and our will is aligned with God's ways, we indeed are pleasing to and united to the Lord—when, as Ignatius says, "our souls shall be completely penetrated and possessed by Him, and our wills thus perfectly conformed, or rather transformed into His will."¹¹⁹ Clearly, Ignatius was interested primarily in a mortification not of the flesh, but of the will.¹²⁰ And when the wills are aligned, we abide in, and savor the taste of, that union, that consolation, that desire to serve.

Ignatius believed that self-abnegation is a means of union with God. Fr. Gonçalves da Câmara wrote, "[Ignatius] considered mortification and abnegation of the will to be the only foundation [of the spiritual

¹¹⁸ *Const.* 101 (Ganss 107); *SpEx* 146 (Puhl 62).

¹¹⁹ *Epist. et instruct.* I: 627.

¹²⁰ "If you have a yearning for mortification, use it to break your own will and submit your own judgment to the yoke of obedience, rather than by enfeebling your bodies and afflicting them without due moderation, particularly now during your studies." See Ignatius's letter to the fathers and scholastics at Coimbra, May 7, 1547, in Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 172.

life].”¹²¹ Fr. de Guibert echoed the same point: “more than anything else, the disordered passions and the personal interests springing from love of self are that which prevents persons from keeping united with God and from finding Him in all things.”¹²² Any wonder, then, that in Ignatius’ *Suscipe* prayer, he begs “take, Lord . . . my *will*”?¹²³ And any wonder that Ignatius described the purpose of the Exercises as “the conquest of self and the regulation of one’s life”?¹²⁴

D. Action as a Means of Union with God

It seems that, when Jesuits speak about and seek union with God, they usually honor—besides charity and love—personal prayer as the chief and preferred means to that union. In addition, they most often view activity and work as second best, if not actually an unfortunate distraction.

Pure intention does not ask that a person always be consciously thinking of God, because, for instance, in the context of studies, Ignatius states that “learning . . . in a certain way requires the whole person.”

But based on everything that has been affirmed above, Ignatius would say to Jesuits that where there is pure intention and abnegation of self—both of which originate from God’s grace—then *any* activity whatsoever can be a means of union with God. That is a

big *if*, but one quite inviting and feasible. Ignatius wrote to Francis Borgia, “it is not only in prayer that God makes use of a person . . . the fact is that there are times when God is served more by other things than by prayer, so much so that for their sake God is happy that prayer be relinquished.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Gonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo*, 150 (no. 255).

¹²² De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 90.

¹²³ *SpEx* 234 (Puhl 102).

¹²⁴ *SpEx* 21 (Puhl 11).

¹²⁵ See Ignatius’s letter to Francis Borgia, dated July 1549, in Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 281–82.

On this point, Cardinal Daniélou wrote that Ignatian prayer:

is found at the meeting point of the two essential traits of the Ignatian man: he ought to be a saint and he ought to live in complete activity. Previous spirituality opposed these two aspects. Activity seemed to be an obstacle to holiness which was conceived as contemplation. The revolution accomplished by Ignatius showed that that which appeared to be an obstacle could become a means [to union].¹²⁶

Fr. Michael Buckley puts it this way:

[T]hat is why . . . division between union and service ultimately breaks down in Ignatian spirituality. It is not that 'the orientation of this mystic [is] toward service rather than union.' It is rather that God is at work; and that to be united with Him the way that He is, is to be with Him in this labour. In this understanding of the providential God, the dichotomy between union and service is collapsed into a single *comigo*. One is with God in His work."¹²⁷

Many citations from modern Jesuits reaffirm this idea.¹²⁸ Fr. Conwell writes that Ignatius "was not opposed to prayer; what he insisted on was union with God, and union, he maintained, could be found in anything whatsoever. . . . [that] contributes to the salvation of souls."¹²⁹ Fr. Giuliani adds that for Ignatius, "on the one hand, prayer is considered as a particular and definite 'exercise' and, on the other, the continu-

¹²⁶ Daniélou, "The Ignatian Vision," 5–17.

¹²⁷ Michael J. Buckley, SJ, "*Semper crescendo in devotionem*... Jesuit Spirituality as Stimulus to Ecumenism," *CIS* 60 (1989): 63–101 at 72, cited in Veale, "From Exercises to Constitutions," 23, n.21. Veale adds, "To labour for the sanctification of others is at one and the same time to be united with God. The action and the union are one. They coincide. One includes the other Works or activity are not what St. Ignatius means by mission if they are not the actions of an instrument united with God. The sanctification of the instrument and the operation of the instrument are indivisible" (*ibid.*, 107–08).

¹²⁸ Friends of mine, a middle-aged couple, say it this way: "When we are alone and whisper sweetly to each other, we are united in love; when we spend ourselves tirelessly all day for the sake of our children, we are united in that same love."

¹²⁹ Conwell, *Contemplation in Action*, 8.

ous union with God in activity.”¹³⁰ Fr. Ganss wrote, “Thus he [Ignatius] found and pleased God sometimes by prayer in solitude and sometimes by means of the most distracting or vexing occupations undertaken for the love of God and his neighbor.”¹³¹

These two intertwined practices—pure intention and self-abnegation—can sound old-fashioned to some degree. But they also represent, either individually or together, one strategy of being united with God. It is basic but reliably effective, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic facilitate the basic process of learning. They are essential to Jesuit spirituality. Why? Besides the unquestionable need for personal prayer—and, of course, other acts of faith, hope, and love—pure intention and self-abnegation are perfect for a religious order of men who are less monastic than apostolically mobile.

Pure intention and self-abnegation are always possible when longer personal prayer is not so prescribed or feasible.¹³² Several tertians told me that one concrete result of this understanding is their renewed practice of beginning each day with a pure intention: repeating it often during the day, and explicitly asking for an ordering and a strengthening of their will. Indeed, self-abnegation demands not only knowing what to do, but also having a strong enough will to carry it out. The tertians again see how these two virtues and means of union with God are—besides personal prayer—fundamental pillars of Ignatian devotion.¹³³

¹³⁰ Maurice Giuliani, SJ, “Finding God in All Things,” in *Finding God in All Things: Essays on Ignatian Spirituality*, trans. William J. Young, SJ (Chicago: Regnery, 1958), 11.

¹³¹ Ganss 23.

¹³² *Const.* 582 (Ganss 259–60).

¹³³ “In the Ignatian vocabulary ‘devotion’ is intimately linked with other key phrases . . . such as union with God, consolation, familiarity with God, charity, discreet charity, love, fervor, finding God in all things, and the like.” See *Const.* 250, footnote 5, (Ganss 155–56). “What is needed is a new word. . . . it would encompass not only the prayer that opens the spirit to God and leads towards union with him but, over and above that, all those other things that equally open one to God and to his action within one and lead towards union with God . . . whatever draws the focus away from ourselves, whatever beauty and goodness so absorbs us that we entirely forget ourselves, whatever strengthens hope and makes us more loving—all these equally with prayer can be purgative and illuminative and unitive.” See Joseph Veale, SJ, “St. Ignatius

IV. Cooperation-as-Union as Integration

These reflections about the place of pure intention and self-abnegation in our religious and apostolic lives happily lead to a pivotal question. The question ceases to be *how is my life of prayer with God?* but becomes rather, *how is my life of union with God?* Again, Ignatius would want Jesuits to experience union with God not only in personal prayer, but also in mission, through the alignment of our will by the means of pure intention and self-abnegation (*Const.* 618).

Therein lies the possibility of a more accessible and integrated Ignatian and Jesuit spirituality—a user-friendly one, a labor-friendly one. And therein lies the challenging ideal that Jesuits pursue and, in their human weakness, only begin to approximate, of being “contemplative likewise in the midst of action” who “find God in all things.”

Consequently, for Jesuits to say that “my work is my prayer” is not really so accurate, even though Ignatius and St. Thomas Aquinas seem to use such language; but rather that “my work is union” with God, which presumes to some degree the attitudes of pure intention and self-abnegation.¹³⁴ Our work signifies our cooperation, and my cooperation signifies an ever deeper and richer union.

Such union, as we have seen, is what Ignatius desired as the first quality of the Jesuit superior general: “to be closely united with God our Lord and intimate with Him in prayer and all his actions.”¹³⁵ All Jesuits can desire it again and again in our daily examen, by moving away from self-absorption, self-convenience, or willfulness, and closer to a self—a laborer—shaped by the pure intention of the glory of God, “always with one foot raised, ready to hasten from one place to another, in conformity

Speaks about ‘Ignatian Prayer’,” *SSJ* 28, no. 2 (March 1996): 16.

¹³⁴ “In the midst of actions and studies, the mind can be lifted to God, and by means of this directing everything to the divine service, everything is prayer” (*Epist. et Instruct.* VI: 91). St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “As long as a man is acting in his heart, speech, or work in such a manner that he is tending toward God, he is praying; and thus one who is directing his whole life toward God is praying always” (“Commentary on Romans” ch. 1, lect. 5; cited in Ganss 183, n.4).

¹³⁵ *Const.* 723 (Ganss 309).

with our vocation and our Institute."¹³⁶ It is no easy feat; but day by day, from entrance into the Society to entrance into eternal life, with God's grace, Jesuits can keep trying to choose it.

At least for me, and hopefully for other Jesuits, that richer question of *how is my life of union?* brings relief and solace of soul. Relief, because many Jesuits can feel perennial angst or discouragement with the state of their spiritual lives. They lament, *my spiritual life is minimal; I have no energy left to pray. Because I am busy most of the day, I have no time for the Lord. I am so distracted by my work, I feel a spiritual malaise. There is no balance or prayer to my day; my studies consume me.* But notice! So much of the attention and focus in these comments are on one's fidelity to personal prayer—a prized and important means to be sure, and one that we cannot overlook; but at the same time, it is only one means to union.

At times, Jesuits come to our tertianship program feeling a disconnect in their relationship with the Lord because their life of personal prayer has faltered amid so much activity. They assess themselves as religious lightweights, or even less lovable in the eyes of the Lord, and they walk with a certain cloud of spiritual inadequacy or diffidence over their heads, rather than with a confidence in the Lord that stems from their best attempt to "love and serve" in all things.¹³⁷ And that condition applies not only to some tertians, but also perhaps for many of us Jesuits.

Meanwhile, these same men who feel discouraged because of their lack of personal prayer are daily spending themselves in self-giving work and praiseworthy labor for the "help of souls." They are sacrificing themselves late at night in preparing a university or high school class, or listening intently to a counselee or retreatant. They are patiently fundraising, or empathizing with the sorrows of the poor whom they meet. They engage in toilsome studies, or write a dissertation or book. They administrate a complex institution, prepare a meeting for their Jesuit community, and dialogue with someone of a different religion. They advance just legislation for the needy of this country, and prepare

¹³⁶ *Epist. et instruct.* II: 581.

¹³⁷ *SpEx* 233 (Puhl 101).

parishioners for the sacraments. They feed the hungry, visit the sick, practice works of mercy.

Why should these generous men, who give themselves to such endeavors of cooperation in the redemptive harvest, not feel united with God? Why should they not feel encouragement and peace in their spiritual lives? For they are filled with love, zeal, trust, perseverance, surrender, and many other virtues that are open to and prompted by the purest of intentions, and that signify clearly a self-abnegation.

So once again, the more heartening and useful question is not *how is my life of prayer?* but rather, *how is my life of union?* Therein lies integration and, hopefully, some greater ease of soul. *O activity, where is thy sting?*

Conclusion

William Faulkner wrote, “the past is never dead. It’s not even past.”¹³⁸ For Jesuits, the *Constitutions* is neither dead nor past. In fact, it is my conviction that some word, phrase, or sentence between the covers of the book captures the same spirit and motivation that was in each Jesuit when he felt the light nudge to join the Society. Would that every Jesuit pick up the book of the *Constitutions*, search for and find that word, phrase, or sentence!

For me personally, it begins there in the Preamble: “since the gentle arrangement of Divine Providence requires cooperation from His creatures.”¹³⁹ Somehow, ever so “gently,” preserving my freedom, the Lord “arranged” this specific vocation for me as I sifted through the inclinations of my life in the circumstances that surrounded me at that time of choice as a youth. And to my amazement, with that grace *de arriba*, it has become for me, as a creature, the pathway of one who wishes to “cooperate” in that definitive enterprise of all life: the enterprise of redemption in Christ to God’s glory. Furthermore, my wish is that, by that laboring in the twists and turns of daily life—amid my gifts and weak-

¹³⁸ William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92.

¹³⁹ *Const.* 134 (Ganss 119).

nesses—to be “closely united with God our Lord and intimate with Him in prayer and all [my] actions.”¹⁴⁰

All of this suggests that the Jesuit way of proceeding is not chiefly characterized by a nuptial mysticism, though closeness to Christ is surely foremost for Ignatius, but rather by a loving “mysticism of service” preserved and sustained by a pure intention and self-abnegation, where we abide in cooperation-as-union.¹⁴¹ In summary, the

As a matter of fact, Ignatius preferred to speak of a man as mortified rather than as prayerful.

constitutions provide Jesuits with a spirituality of cooperation where, in the very act of cooperation, there is union. I like to say: *Today, O Lord, in my labor, labor. There we shall be together.*

Two final thoughts. First, while the constitutions represent a distinctly Jesuit spirituality and way of life, they also express many values and an apostolic orientation that many of our colleagues find both attractive and motivational. Fr. Gray affirms that the *Constitutions* can and ought to be shared with others as a part of our specific effort of collaboration. He suggests that we have not “utilized this dimension of the *Constitutions*, that is to say, their ability to be transferred to our colleagues in the ministry. That transfer cannot, of course, be done mechanically, making ‘Jesuits’ out of people who are not called to be Jesuits. That would be presumptuous and manipulative, robbing the Church of the specific alternate charisms.”¹⁴²

Some of the Jesuit values more relevant to lay colleagues are expressed more prominently in the *Constitutions* than in the *Exercises*. They include the emphasis upon the purpose and finality of life, care for the individual person, and the privileged place of experience. They include blessed efforts to learn, purity of intention, abnegation of self, optimistic engagement in human endeavors, and attention given to the greater need and the more universal good. The chief values, of course,

¹⁴⁰ *Const.* 723 (Ganss 309).

¹⁴¹ De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 50.

¹⁴² Gray, “What Kind of Document?” 29.

are the centrality of Jesus Christ, cooperation with the Trinity by means of our natural and acquired gifts, and serving the glory of God by serving others. By sharing these values with colleagues, we answer one of their oft-unspoken queries: what exactly is the inner life of this corporate religious body, the Society of Jesus?

Second, cooperation-as-union in the *Constitutions* needs to be regarded, even more importantly, as a grace given not only to Jesuits as individuals, but also to the Society as a corporate body. Fr. Carlos Coupeau articulates it well:

while other religious legislators understood the terminus of the spiritual quest as purification, contemplation, or mystic marriage, the author of the *Constitutions* thought of it as union with the divinity in terms of cooperation; precisely to this end, he thought of the Society of Jesus as a Body surrendered to the Holy Spirit and, one may consequently surmise, he would concur that ‘gloria Dei, cooperans homo’.¹⁴³

This is to say that the constitutions are ultimately fashioned for the growth and union of the whole body. That is the trajectory of the *Constitutions* from parts 1 to 10: the ongoing incorporation of an individual into the life, mission, union, development, and preservation of the entire body of the Society. The individual member of the Society is to become a human instrument united with God (*instrumentum coniunctum cum Deo*) so that the whole body can become a corporate instrument united with God (*instrumenta coniuncta cum Deo*)—to love my vocation; but also, to love *our* vocation.¹⁴⁴

With this in mind, when Fr. General Arturo Sosa was elected, before the morning Mass of Thanksgiving in the Gesù in Rome, in a special ceremony in the chapel of the rooms of St. Ignatius, he was handed the Formula of the Institute and the book of the *Constitutions* by the oldest and youngest members of the congregation. These words were addressed to him:

¹⁴³ Coupeau, *From Inspiration to Invention*, 242.

¹⁴⁴ *Const.* 813 (Ganss 332).

receive the Formula of our Institute and the book of the Constitutions of which today you have become the custodian: be attentive to the universal welfare of the Society.

It has been said that a classic is something that everyone praises but no one reads. Though an exaggeration, some might say this about our Jesuit constitutions. But when Jesuits do read what they have inherited from Ignatius, we can find in it what touches each of our experiences and hearts. Then such a spiritual patrimony can afford us a chance once again to be, to a greater degree, at home in our vocation.¹⁴⁵ And in that contentment, Jesuits can feel an added sense of belonging in the Society, along with confirmation that this vocation is our truth and our fitting way to “praise, reverence, and serve” the One who first gave us breath, unto the glory of that God.¹⁴⁶

May Jesuits find themselves reading, praying, and appropriating the constitutions, for therein lies the possibility of searching for and realizing a greater personal grasp, articulation, and appropriation of this heritage. And, in so doing, may we find more strength of spirit, integration, ease of soul, and even a certain joy. Let us, in the words of Ribadeneira, “vie with each other in learning them, pondering them, and keeping them. If we do so, our name will be matched by our lives and our profession made manifest in deed.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Gray, “What Kind of Document?,” 22.

¹⁴⁶ *SpEx* 23 (Puhl 12).

¹⁴⁷ Cited in Padberg, *Constitutions*, xx.

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