



STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

“ALWAYS GROWING IN DEVOTION”:
THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IN THE LIFE OF
IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

CHRISTOPHER M. STAAB, SJ

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a word from the editor. . .

Theologians traditionally distinguish between ascetical theology and mystical theology. The first is a study of what human beings contribute to their own edification by freely exercising their natural powers of memory, intellect, and will. The second is a study of what God works in human beings by means of grace, and which is possible only by that grace.

For example, as probably all Jesuits know from experience, it is possible to bring oneself to sweet tears in prayer, and to stir up feelings of warm devotion within oneself, by freely calling to mind certain truths and then ruminating on them, by contemplating the love that Jesus has for human beings through his Sacred Heart, or by imagining that one is standing before Jesus and the whole heavenly court and then pleading unabashedly for what one desires. In those cases, the desired emotions are usually attainable at any time by anyone who makes the required effort, and the intensity of those emotions is fairly predictable.

Ignatius and the tradition before him held that it is highly conducive to one's edification to cultivate these warm interior movements by the application of one's will. And the more one cultivates these feelings, the more easily they come and the more habitually they remain, to the point that a Christian can then possess a long-lasting interior devotion that colors all of one's activities and discernments. For that reason, as Fr. Michael Ivens (1933–2005) rightly noted, wherever Ignatius uses the word *will* (*voluntad*) in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the reader usually can replace it with the word *heart*, and the meaning of the text will remain clear.¹

¹ See Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 1998), 5; see also 51.

But on many occasions, God instills in human beings such feelings as peace, love, certainty, or compunction for one's sins, all of which go beyond anything that the human beings can attain by their own efforts. The most obvious examples of this are mystical visions, raptures, ecstasies, and so-called "infused contemplation." When this happens, one might say that human beings experience a tiny bit of heaven while still on earth.

But God often grants these mystical experiences in a far more modest form. For example I remember one February morning when I was a nineteen-year-old student at the University of Missouri. For the previous several years, I had been thinking about joining the Society. And on that day, as I was walking back to my residence hall from economics class, with snow on the ground, I was filled, for the space of about five seconds, with an absolute certainty that I would be a Jesuit—a certainty that left me in great peace. In fact, the certainty was so profound that I could not doubt it, even if I had tried to doubt it as a kind of intellectual exercise. And then, just like that, the certainty was gone.

Because following this experience I returned to the usual doubts and fears about a religious vocation, I cannot say that the experience permanently changed my interior disposition. Nor did I feel compelled or obliged by the experience to apply to the Society a year later. But I can easily imagine that someone might apply to the Society as the result of such an experience. And for that reason, I believe this is generally what Ignatius has in mind by the First Time of Election in the Exercises.² When he writes that a person's will is moved in such a way that he or she is "without doubting or being able to doubt," I think he means it quite literally.³

On this point, when Ignatius uses the word *consolation* in the *Spiritual Exercises*, he consistently means it in the strict sense of a *spiritual* consolation, which is to say, one given by God as opposed to

² *Spiritual Exercises* 185, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*.

³ *SpEx* 185; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1992), 76. All quotations from the *SpEx* are from this edition.

the looser sense of ordinary human feelings of peace or happiness.⁴ So too, when he writes in his *Testament* (“Autobiography”) of his consolations, the contexts usually make clear that he means something extraordinary. For example, when he saw Jerusalem for the first time, he felt a joy “that did not seem natural.”⁵

Still, writers have long noted that the word *consolation* is conspicuously absent in the *Constitutions*. Indeed, it appears only once; and in that instance, Ignatius clearly has in mind an affective experience that Jesuits can attain by reading edifying letters written by other Jesuits.⁶ In the *Constitutions*, Ignatius prefers the word *devotion* to denote the desired interior state of Jesuits. And while he affirms that a Jesuit’s devotion depends *ultimately* on grace—as do all things, of course, unless one wants to be Pelagian—Ignatius clearly intends to emphasize that devotion is also a product of effort—that is, an act of the will—which as such is available to all Jesuits.

To put this another way: spiritual consolations are an unmerited gift from God that he alone will give to Jesuits when and where he wills. For this reason, Jesuits can do absolutely nothing by means of their will to work themselves into a spiritual consolation properly so called, just as they can do nothing to work themselves into a mystical vision of the Blessed Mother. But as Ignatius made clear in a letter to Fr. Manuel Godinho (c. 1520–1569)—a Jesuit who complained that his tedious administrative work in a high school was rendering his prayer dry—*devotion is the only thing that a man needs to live his Jesuit vocation well.*⁷ And so, should God choose to grant spiritual consolations to a Jesuit, all the better; but Godinho should not consider the existence of spiritual consolations as the criterion

⁴ SpEx 148; ed. Ganss, 192–93.

⁵ *A Pilgrim’s Testament* 45, hereafter abbreviated *Test.*; *A Pilgrim’s Testament: The Memoirs of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. Barton T. Geger, SJ (Chestnut Hill, MA: IJS, 2020), 45.

⁶ *Constitutions* 673, hereafter *Const.*

⁷ Letter 2383, MHSI, *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones (Epp. et instruct.)*, 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–11), IV:126–27; in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2006), 367–68.

by which to judge the state of his spiritual life or how well he is living the Jesuit mission.

To be sure, Ignatius did want Christians to ask for spiritual consolations. But he and Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) both stated explicitly that spiritual consolations are a means to an end and not an end in themselves.⁸ Just like the heady feeling of falling in love with someone, spiritual consolations can give Christians renewed joy, energy, and confidence, and thus enable Christians better to fulfill their vocations. But as in the case of falling in love, it is very tempting for Christians to seek those feelings for their own sake or to become panicky when they are absent. On those occasions, Ignatius is clear that there is no reason to be distressed and much less to doubt the legitimacy of one's vocation. Devotion alone suffices.

Fr. Christopher M. Staab (UMI) addresses these themes wonderfully in the present issue of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. For his doctoral dissertation, he closely studied Ignatius's "Spiritual Diary"—a journal in which the superior general related in great detail the powerful interior movements that he experienced when presiding at Mass or praying over a certain point about Jesuit poverty. While Ignatius's language in the Diary is often obscure and elliptical, it makes clear that he received extraordinary spiritual consolations from God—indeed, it seems, almost daily. Furthermore, Fr. Staab discovered that Ignatius's devotion was not simply something that the saint "felt, as new": it also was something "he did"—an effort "to be present to God with his entire memory, understanding, and will."⁹ Ignatius desires to make his discernments while in this interior state, and he frequently writes of a Jesuit deciding things "according to one's own devotion."¹⁰ As Fr. Staab shows, this same expression appears frequently in the *Constitutions*.

⁸ E.g., *Epp. et instruct.* II:236–37; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 256; Jerome Nadal, "On Consolation," trans. Anonymous, *The Way* 43, no. 3 (2004), 49–55.

⁹ Christopher M. Staab, SJ, "'Always Growing in Devotion': The Grace of Devotion in the Life of Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2024): 2.

¹⁰ E.g., *Const.* 53, 59, 254, 258, 283, 598.

From my perspective, Fr. Staab's essay invites readers to reflect a little more deeply on what it means to have an authentic or personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, Christians tend to use those words "authentic" and "personal" rather casually, as if their meaning were clear. But is it? If one says that a "real" relationship with Jesus is marked by spiritual consolations, and that this counts as an "immediate" experience of God . . . well, I know from experience that such language often leaves Jesuits and colleagues feeling insecure and anxious about where they stand before God. This is because they may have difficulty identifying any spiritual consolations or "immediate experiences" in their own lives and so conclude that either they are doing something wrong or the Lord is displeased with them, when in fact they are serving God and the Church with great dedication and love.

On this point, I like to remind my students that Jesus repeatedly assured his friends, "By *this* you will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another and do what I tell you."¹¹ He never said anything about mystical experiences, spiritual consolations, or charismatic gifts. Nor do I think it coincidental that Ignatius wrote to Fr. Godinho, in essence: "By this you will know that you are a good Jesuit: if you cultivate a devotion to God and to your Jesuit vocation, and then do what the Society tells you."

Barton T. Geger, SJ
General Editor

¹¹ Mt 28:19–20; Jn 8:31–32; 13:34–35; 14:15; italics mine; see also Mi 6:8; 1 Jn 2:1–29; 3:23; 1 Co 13:1–13.

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Christopher M. Staab (UMI) was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. After philosophy studies in Lima, Perú and theology studies in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, he completed an STD at Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid on the place of devotion in Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Diary. Fr. Staab currently teaches Ignatian spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

“Always Growing in Devotion”: The Grace of Devotion in the Life of Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus

Christopher M. Staab, SJ

This essay explores the spiritual experience of devotion in Ignatius of Loyola’s “Spiritual Diary.” The “warm,” “abundant,” and “intense” qualities of this experience guided him in his discernment regarding an issue related to the vow of poverty. Moving then to the Constitutions and to a selection of Ignatius’s letters reveals devotion as a grace in which the Jesuit is always growing in the freedom to offer his whole self to the glory and praise of God.

Ignatius of Loyola recorded many spiritual graces in the document that has come to be called the “Spiritual Diary.” One grace stands out for its prominent place in his discernment and the attention he gave to it: devotion. At times he felt “much” devotion, “new” devotion, and at some moments it was “intense,” even reaching “the most intense.”¹ Such descriptions bespeak his sensitivity to his inner experience. However, if devotion in his diary were only “abundant,” “new,”

¹ *Diary*, entries for Feb. 10, 1544; Feb. 12, 1544; Feb. 16, 1544; Feb. 8, 1544; Ignatius of Loyola, *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, ed. Ignacio Iparraguirre and Manuel Ruiz Jurado (Madrid: Biblioteca Autores Cristianos, 2013), 291–364, all translations mine. Among the available editions of the “Spiritual Diary,” this one most clearly indicates the changes that Ignatius made to the text.

or “intense,” perhaps a reader could gloss over it, but it assumes other resonances and dimensions in his prayer. For example, over a series of weeks, it appears as a presence which he felt as “warm or bright and soft.”² Its luminosity and softness suggest that it was a corporal sensation that soothed him or calmed him. These descriptions also convey the idea that devotion pervaded him warmly on what must have been cold winter mornings in early March in Rome. In short, the pages of his personal notes which detail his experiences in prayer between 1544 and 1545 disclose that this was no ordinary grace in his life.

This spiritual grace, however, was not only something that he felt as new, abundant, or warm. It was something that he did. In key moments of his election process, he indicated that he wanted to spend time in prayer with God because of his devotion. It appears that devotion was the way in which he understood his prayer and his celebration of the Eucharist. Consequently, not only was it a grace from on high (*de arriba*), which is to say, something that he received from God, but also it was an expression of his desire to be present to God with his entire memory, understanding, and will. In other words, it was what he wanted to do and to give to God in prayer. For this reason, though the term *devotion* may strike the reader as oddly un-Ignatian or as hearkening back to a pre-conciliar spirituality, it is a grace that takes us to the heart of Ignatius’s personal experience God. Its presence in the “Spiritual Diary” and in other Ignatian documents is intriguing and begs the question: What might the many facets of this grace in his life mean for us today? Or, borrowing from one of the more famous expressions on devotion in his life, what does it mean to be “always growing in devotion?”³

In this article, I will develop the following answer to this question. For Ignatius, devotion is like consolation: it was a felt experience that he received and that allowed him to sense God’s presence with him. As such, it was, as consolation is described in the *Spiritual Exercises*, a kind

² *Diary*, Feb. 20, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 311.

³ *Auto.* 99; Ignatius of Loyola, “Reminiscences (Autobiography),” in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (New York: Penguin, 2004), 63.

of spiritual language that he discerned to know God's will for him.⁴ But unlike consolation—and unlike all the other graces reported in the “Spiritual Diary”—devotion was also Ignatius's offering of himself to God, and indeed the very exercise of his fidelity and love to God in prayer. From this perspective, *devotion* contrasts with *consolation*: while the latter is always only something received from God, the former is relational in that it signals the gift *and* the sacrifice of one person to another, since both the person and God give and offer devotion. For this reason, I argue that no other term in Ignatius's vocabulary captures as does *devotion* the mutual communication and offering that Ignatius imagines taking place between the person and God. Indeed, in the estimation of Alfonso de la Mora (1919–2002), devotion was a dialogue wherein Ignatius looked for God and God revealed his presence.⁵ I would even suggest that in his devotion Ignatius expresses his love for God, and in feeling devotion, he felt God's love for him, thus signaling the “mutual communication” between lover and beloved.⁶

Given this, devotion's difference from consolation offers a salutary *aggiornamento* for our ongoing discernment of life in the Spirit. The difference suggests that Ignatian spirituality, though deeply attentive to interior movements, is more than feeling interior stirrings or cultivating our deep desires. Instead, devotion reminds us that the Ignatian charism invites us to offer the gift of ourselves in praise and reverence of God, such that feelings and spiritual sentiments find their rightful place in our journey to God as helpful but not constitutive for our growth towards a more loving, even mutual relationship with the Lord.

⁴ In this interpretation, I follow Alfonso de la Mora, who understands devotion as a kind of consolation. See Alfonso de la Mora, *La devoción en el espíritu de san Ignacio* (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1982), 32. Mora's work, to date the only study of devotion in Ignatius's spirituality, is based on his doctoral dissertation, which he submitted to the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1960.

⁵ Mora, *La devoción en el espíritu de San Ignacio*, 26.

⁶ *Spiritual Exercises* 231, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1992), 94. All quotations from the *SpEx* are from this edition.

To explore further this grace in Ignatius's life, I will turn principally to the autograph text of the "Spiritual Diary," in which he registered his prayer over a period of thirteen months. While difficult to read, it reveals the intimacy of Ignatius's life with God. As such, to read his personal journal—a text that he never intended for the purview of others—is to enter sacred ground. And so, while I will analyze the different manifestations of devotion in it, my critical commentary aims to deepen our reflection on his spiritual experience so that devotees of the Ignatian charism can draw profit from it.

One final comment before beginning. While it is something of a cliché to affirm that the "Spiritual Diary" is not a well-known document, it is worth affirming here that the text has yet to be integrated into the critical conversation on Ignatius's spirituality. Still, the "Spiritual Diary" is not the only Ignatian text in which *devotion* appears. To fill out my analysis of the "Spiritual Diary," I then will examine key passages in the *Constitutions* and some letters that indicate to what extent Ignatius encouraged others to live in and with devotion. This is not to suggest that he prescribed *his* way of proceeding as the way of proceeding for his companions. Ignatius was said to have considered that the greatest error in the spiritual life was to "seek to direct others according to one's own way."⁷ In short, he was aware of the way that the Spirit worked with each person and, as a result, he remained conscious of the limitations of imagining that his spiritual experience was prescriptive for another. Nevertheless, it is fascinating to find a clear place given to devotion in the life of the Jesuit. Discovering the many aspects of that grace in his life and the way he imagined it configuring the life of a Jesuit to that of Jesus will help us see the place of offering, sacrifice, and conformity to the Lord that so characterize his thinking on life in the Spirit.

⁷ Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, *Memoriale*, 256, hereafter abbreviated *Gonçalves Mem.*; *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. and ed. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2004), 149.

I. Historical Context of the “Spiritual Diary” and the Place of Devotion in It

First, a brief background to situate the “Spiritual Diary.” The story begins in 1541 in Rome, where Ignatius, though dramatically less itinerant than his companions, appears to have been on the move. In a period of four years, he initiated three apostolic works: an orphanage named Holy Mary of Aquiro; the house of St. Martha for prostitutes, along with the Society of Grace, which is the fraternity that would care for it; and a house for catechumens in which Jews and Muslims could be catechized for reception into the Catholic Church.⁸ At the same time, his duties as superior general involved him in a vast and ever-growing correspondence with his men and with a host of others regarding their respective missions. In addition, with the official approbation of the Society in the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* in September 1540, Ignatius was charged with drawing up constitutions for the order. Such a workload makes us see the literal truth of what he wrote to Peter Faber in 1542: “busy as some members of the Society may be, I am sure that I am, if not overly so, at least no less busy than anybody else—and with poorer physical health.”⁹

In March of 1541, he and Jean Codure (1508–1541) drafted a text of the *Constitutions* that has come to be known as the “Primitive Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.”¹⁰ They first addressed the issue of poverty, declaring that “the sacristy may own income for all that is needed,” thus representing a change from the Formula, which had stated that they would refuse all income or revenues for their apostolic works.¹¹

⁸ For a description of these works, see Letter 85, *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola, Societatis Iesu fundatoris, epistolae et instructiones*, (*Epp. et instruct.*), 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–1911), I:304–307; no published English-language translation available.

⁹ Letter 58, *Epp. et instruct.* I:236–39 at 238; in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2006), 90–93 at 92.

¹⁰ “Constitutiones anni 1541,” in *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola: Constitutiones Societatis Jesu (Constitutiones)*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1934–1938), I:33–48; in Joseph Munitiz, “The Primitive Constitutions of 1541 and Other Preparatory Documents for the Jesuit Constitutions,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 13–25.

¹¹ Munitiz, “The Primitive Constitutions of 1541,” 14.

Though the modification seems small, it refers to an important development in the life of the order dating from November 1540, when the church of Our Lady of the Way had been entrusted to the Society.¹² Specifically, the papal bull that gave the church to them declared that the Society could use to maintain the church any and all income and profits received from ministry there. Given this new apostolic responsibility, Ignatius and Codure changed their thinking on the reception of income.

Nevertheless, Ignatius and Codure do not seem to have been convinced that this was the right way to proceed. Their uncertainty can be seen in the beginning of the document, where they wrote, “For now the question is raised if it will be good not to have any sort of income. Second, if it will be good to have income for everything. Third, if it will be good to have income for some things and not for others.”¹³

These are the questions that Ignatius will discern in the “Spiritual Diary” three years later. In the first part of his notes, he recorded the movements that he felt in his prayer and celebration of the Mass as he searched for God’s will on the question of receiving all, part, or none of the income that came attached to sacristies of churches entrusted to the Society. Ignatius began this discernment in February of 1544, and the process lasted for forty days. He continued registering his prayer for another eleven months, though it is not clear what points, if any, he was discerning. Thus, the autograph manuscript is an uneven document: one notebook of twelve pages covers the first forty days and a second notebook of thirteen pages that covers the remaining 352 days. Note too that, although one scholar has suggested that Ignatius would have shown his diary to others or perhaps read passages of it to his confessor, I have found no documentary evidence to that effect.¹⁴

¹² Though the papal bull granting them the church is dated June 24, 1541, Ignatius and his companions seem to have foreseen receiving this church earlier. See “Bulla Secunda Pauli III,” in *Constitutiones*, I:69–77; Philip Amidon, “Papal Documents from the Early Years of the Society of Jesus in English Translation,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 52, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 8–14.

¹³ Munitiz, “The Primitive Constitutions of 1541,” 13–14.

¹⁴ José García de Castro Valdés, “El *Diario Espiritual* y el Epistolario de San Ignacio de Loyola. Aspectos lingüísticos y léxicos” (PhD diss., Universidad de Salamanca, 1999), 55–65.

In this poverty-related discernment, Ignatius attended to a range of spiritual movements, principal among these being devotion. During that forty-day period, he used the term 159 times, reporting an experience of devotion on all but three days of that process. Moreover, in a document that is replete with deletions and insertions, “devotion” is only crossed out once in the text while he inserts the term in twelve different instances. This suggests that Ignatius was looking for devotion in his prayer and that, as he examined his prayer and reread his notes—a frequent habit of his—he continued to look for it.

Note too that, across the two notebooks that comprise the “Spiritual Diary,” devotion is not the grace that he most often reports receiving—that place is held by tears—yet devotion is the one that he most nuances. Furthermore, his deep attention to devotion and its importance in his election process conveys his trust in it. As José García de Castro Valdés (ESP) has opined, devotion in the “Spiritual Diary” appears as an exceptionally important grace and one that Ignatius took as the criterion of the truth of his spiritual experience.¹⁵ On this point, Ignatius seemed to sense that the experience of devotion indicated that God was at the origin of what Ignatius was thinking and feeling, and for this reason devotion seems to be the spiritual experience that most guided him in his discernment.

II. Devotion: the Offering, the Grace, and the Experience of God’s Presence

To develop Ignatius’s understanding of devotion, I will indicate in this section three aspects of this spiritual experience: devotion as the exercise of Ignatius’s promise to God, devotion as the sign that guided him in his discernment, and devotion as the awareness of God’s non-objective presence in his life.

¹⁵ José García de Castro Valdés, “Encarnación y gloria, la arquitectura ignaciana del cielo,” in *El Cielo, historia y espiritualidad*, ed. María del Mar Graña Cid (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2018), 281–302 at 298.

A. Devotion as Ignatius's Offering to God

Though Ignatius seemed to see devotion as primarily a grace that he received from God, he also used the term to describe what he wanted to do and to give to God. Of the one hundred and fifty-nine uses of *devotion*, three refer to an action that he will carry out. These three references are fascinating in that they reveal Ignatius considering how to move from one stage of his election process to another. More concretely, in each of these moments he was pondering how to transition from the phase of discernment to that of offering and then awaiting God's confirmation. Given the nature of these passages as points in which he is making a transition in his process, they allow us to see him reflecting on his prayer.

For example, as early as February 11, 1544, Ignatius thought that he was close to finishing the discernment. The process unfolded with great clarity, and he came to believe that the choice for no income was God's will. With this clarity about his election, he made the following resolution: "I considered the matter finished—except for giving thanks and for devotion to the Father and to the mass of the Trinity."¹⁶ However, he experienced some doubts about his choice and continued his discernment. Later in his prayer, he arrived at another moment in which he thought that he was finished and again considered his plan for offering his election: "I departed with the intention of concluding the election at the latest before dinner the next day; I also intended to give thanks, ask for strength, and to reiterate the past offering for devotion to the Holy Trinity."¹⁷ However, on this occasion he did not receive the confirmation that he had wanted to receive, and so he continued his prayer. Finally, in a moment in which he was experiencing special visitations from the Trinity, he wrote that "if it were not for devotion for the masses that I have yet to say, I would find myself satisfied."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Diary*, Feb. 11, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 297.

¹⁷ *Diary*, Feb. 17, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 305.

¹⁸ *Diary*, Mar. 3, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 323. These references indicate how difficult Ignatius found the process, which on several occasions he thought he had concluded only to encounter doubts or prayer experiences that did not confirm his decision. As Brian O'Leary has remarked, such elements as these underscore the importance of the "Spiritual Diary" in that they reveal the messiness of his

These reflections on his process are beautiful moments in the text that allow us to peer into the inner life of Ignatius. More than simply reporting experiences that he had, these brief passages reveal him thinking about his prayer. We might say that they are exactly what Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1520–1575) wanted to see when he asked Ignatius to show him the papers in which he was reflecting on points of the *Constitutions*.¹⁹ Practically speaking, the motivating factor for him to continue his process is to show his devotion to God. His election process, indeed all his prayer, thus appears as a way for him to exercise devotion.

Though Ignatius seemed to see devotion as primarily a grace that he received from God, he also used the term to describe what he wanted to do and to give to God.

Though Ignatius never provides in the text a synonym for this spiritual experience, it is possible to situate his understanding of devotion in the broader tradition of Western Spirituality. The roots of that tradition can be traced back to the understanding of devotion in Roman antiquity as a solemn oath that took the form of a sacrifice, an offering, or an expiation.²⁰ This way of understanding the interaction between the person and the pagan gods received spiritual and theological elaboration in the Christian tradition, most notably from St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Thomas Aquinas. Regarding the latter, in the second part of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas suggests that devotion is a vow or promise and as such constitutes that internal disposition by which one desires to serve God. Simply stated, devotion “is nothing other than the will to give oneself promptly to those things that pertain to the service of God.”²¹ Something of this desire to do God’s will seems to be operative

discernment. See Brian O’Leary, “The Mysticism of St. Ignatius of Loyola,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 38, no. 3 (2007): 77–97 at 90.

¹⁹ *Auto.* 101; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 64.

²⁰ Jean Chatillon, “Devotio,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, Ascétique et mystique, Doctrine et histoire*, ed. Marcel Viller, Ferdinand Cavallera, Joseph de Guibert, vol. 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), col. 702–16 at 703–4.

²¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Kevin D. O’Rourke, OP, vol. 39 (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1964), II-II.82.1, co.

in Ignatius's use of devotion, since he wants to carry out in his prayer his promise to serve and love God.

In addition, the predominance of devotion in his prayer and in his celebration of the Eucharist suggests the influence of Augustinian canon Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, a book that Ignatius cherished.²² For example, Kempis suggests that in the reception of the Eucharist, one is to receive "the great grace of devotion and the love of doing what is right."²³ Perhaps too this

Ignatius refers his devotion to the Father and to the Holy Trinity, which suggests devotion as the gift of himself that he offered in a personal way to God.

idea informed Ignatius's understanding of devotion, since he expressed his love of God in the desire to do God's will.

Another noteworthy aspect of his devotion is the generosity and gratuity of it. The passages from the "Spiritual Diary" cited above show him willing to spend "two more days" celebrating Mass, and that the discernment process was finished "except for giving thanks and offering devotion." Not only is he in no hurry, but also he wants to give more time to God. This represents an exceptionally important insight into his spiritual life: in his devotion to God, Ignatius is generous, as apparent in his willingness to give time to the Lord even when the process had finished and he apparently had received what he wanted to receive. This attitude suggests the oft-forgotten verb *praise* central to the Christian vocation. From this perspective, while service and action certainly played crucial roles in his life, that service emerged for Ignatius from both praise and time spent gratuitously with God.

Another aspect of his devotion has to do with its personal nature. Ignatius refers his devotion to the Father and to the Holy Trinity, which suggests that for Ignatius, devotion is the gift of himself that he offered in a personal way to God. As such, it was not a vague feeling or simply an

²² See, for example, *Gonçalves Mem.* 97–98; trans. Eaglestone and Munitiz, 58.

²³ Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 4.1; trans. William A. Creasy (South Bend, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2017), 192.

emotional-spiritual climate of warmth toward God, but rather a deeply personal offering of his will to one of the Divine Persons. This accords with the text, where every moment bespeaks a deeply personal communion with God, as in passages where he indicated that he did not know how to begin the Mass. For example, on February 16, he wrote that he knelt down, “looking for where to begin,” at which point he found the Father and, attracted by God’s mercy, he began Mass.²⁴ Also on March 4, when he signaled that he “did not know to whom to begin,” he looked first for Jesus and then for the Trinity. Finding that the Trinity “allowed itself be felt,” he began Mass.²⁵ These fascinating examples of the deeply personal quality of his prayer indicate that the Mass did not begin for him with the sign of the cross but when he felt one of the Divine Persons present to him. At that point, he could begin the Mass in, with, and to that person. This personal nature of his prayer characterizes devotion, as he always offered it to one of the divine persons of the Trinity.

B. Finding God’s Will through Devotion

In his discernment on the question of income, Ignatius received many spiritual movements, including tears, warmth, consolation, spiritual motions, understandings, internal satisfaction, and devotion. On occasion, he also indicated the way his body felt in prayer, as for example, on February 18, when he felt as if his “veins or parts of his body were sensibly felt.”²⁶ With precision and care, he registered the beginning, the middle, and the end of these movements over his four periods of prayer on this question. Similarly, he always described the quality of the spiritual motion. Though devotion may have felt like warmth, consolation, and internal satisfaction—experiences that he reports with much less frequency—he seemed to perceive it as different from them. For students of the Ignatian charism, the way he describes devotion may be the clearest indication we have of his great sensitivity to the action of the Spirit in his life and his remarkable capacity to describe his interior life.

²⁴ *Diary*, Feb. 16, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 301.

²⁵ *Diary*, Mar. 4, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 324.

²⁶ *Diary*, Feb. 18, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 307.

Considering this care as well as his descriptions of spiritual movements in the *Exercises*, we can imagine the possibility of his receiving a false devotion, although his notebook gives no indication of such an experience. Rather, the grace seems to be something of a spiritual touchstone for him, and as such he seems to have invested it with a high degree of reliability for the sake of confirming his discernment. And in the structure of this specific discernment, which involves making an election, devotion was the feeling that was moving him to know God's will. In that sense, I suggest that, in the first part of the "Spiritual Diary," devotion is the gift upon which his discernment rests.

On this point, in the beginning of his process, devotion accompanied every moment of his prayer, and its presence seemed to assure him that he was finding God's will regarding the reception of income. For example, on February 9, he indicated that he "was reviewing the points of the election with much tranquility and devotion, and it seemed to [him] in everything that not having a part nor any, and not even to be a thing worthy to look into further."²⁷ He mentioned the same spiritual experience in reviewing his election points the following day: "at night, reviewing the points of the election, of receiving the whole income, only part, or none at all, and making the oblation to receive none at all, with much devotion."²⁸ Then, as he moved through the steps of the election, devotion appeared as the internal feeling that guided him: "although I spoke as if the thing [viz., the election] were completed, feeling considerable devotion . . . and I began to lose the desire to continue to see the reasons."²⁹ These observations convey the idea that the feeling of devotion signaled to him the rightness of his path, such that he moved forward confidently.

This dynamic of being guided by devotion continued the first day that he offered his election. On that morning, he made a moving and expansive colloquy that began with the angels and then moved to the Church Fathers, Mary, the Son, and finally to the most Holy Trinity. In this prayer, he found himself with "much devotion ... and

²⁷ *Diary*, Feb. 9, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 294.

²⁸ *Diary*, Feb. 10, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 294.

²⁹ *Diary*, Feb. 11, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 295.

[he] was covered in tears.”³⁰ Nevertheless, in the beginning of his prayer he found “no or very little enjoyment” and he felt “a lack of confidence to find Grace in the Trinity.”³¹ In short, the spiritual climate of this day differed significantly from all the others. In this vein, he reported that during Mass thoughts came to him such that he was not experiencing an effusion or abundance of tears, and these thoughts “were pricking [him] and taking away devotion.”³² As he watched his devotion leave him, he decided that this mass was not a confirmation of his election. For this reason, although he would continue in prayer to look for a clearer sign of God’s confirmation, the diminishment of devotion seemed clear enough that he knew to wait for another moment for confirmation.

In addition to the principal discernment on poverty, the “Spiritual Diary” also reveals Ignatius making many smaller decisions, and thus allows us to notice a structure in his discernment whereby he seems to notice first his thoughts and then to watch for the interior movements that they produce in him. Simplifying the pattern seems to begin with thoughts and then move to feelings, and his notebook shows him just as attentive to his thoughts as to his feelings. This is worth noting: where the reflection on Ignatian discernment tends to emphasize feelings, the “Spiritual Diary” suggests that Ignatius’s discernment focused on the relationship or interaction between thoughts and feelings.³³ In fact, he seems especially vigilant and even suspicious of his thoughts, for which reason he always waited to judge them until he saw the

³⁰ *Diary*, Feb. 18, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 307.

³¹ *Diary*, Feb. 18, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 306.

³² *Diary*, Feb. 18, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 308–9.

³³ On this point, Carlos García Hirschfield notes that “thoughts are not fundamentally logical formulations with a philosophic or ideological content, but first and foremost interior movements, ‘motions’” [Carlos García Hirschfield, “Todo modo de examinar la conciencia,” *Manresa* 62 (1990): 251–71 at 256]. José García de Castro Valdés sharpens the observation: “we have to keep in mind that a thought in Ignatius is a term with a broader semantic spectrum than the strictly rational one that consists in the elaboration of ideas: it includes the imagination, the fantasy, or those updated contents from one’s memory” [José García de Castro Valdés, “Moción,” *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, vol. 2 (Bilbao, Santander: Mensajero, Sal Terrae, 2007), 1265–69 at 1265].

interior movements that accompanied them, and he paid special attention to the presence or absence of devotion.

For example, once when he was deliberating a way to finish his discernment regarding the income, he decided no longer to review his election points but rather to offer masses over two days to “give thanks and to redo the same oblation.”³⁴ He reports that immediately after formulating this idea, the thought produced in him “excessive tears, warmth, and devotion,” and he seems to trust the thought because such clear signs accompanied it.³⁵ Another example occurs later that same day when he considered the idea of spending a few more days reviewing his election. However, this thought to give his process more time “took me from the so intense devotion and I thought to reject it.”³⁶

These passages, along with those directly connected to the election, suggest that his attention to the quantity and the degree of devotion connected directly to how he discerned his thinking in the election process. In this way, quantitative judgments of his devotion as “much,” “abundant,” “great,” “considerable,” and “some” helped him to confirm the origin of his thoughts, which in turn brought him closer to knowing God’s will. This connection between his thoughts and his quantitative perception of devotion also appeared on the two days when he offered his election to God for confirmation: on February 8, he experienced “the most intense devotion”; then, several days later, he found himself again with “intense devotion.”³⁷

C. Being with God in Devotion

The above description of devotion highlights Ignatius’s fundamental belief in God as the one who was, as he wrote in the “Spiritual

³⁴ *Diary*, Feb. 16, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 303.

³⁵ *Diary*, Feb. 16, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 303.

³⁶ *Diary*, Feb. 16, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 303.

³⁷ *Diary* Feb. 8, 1544; Feb. 11, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 293, 296.

Diary," "the giver of all graces."³⁸ He repeats this idea in one of his more famous letters, which he wrote to the scholastics at Coimbra, reminding them that God always gives his gifts.³⁹ This basic theological principle undergirds all of his thinking on the relationship between the human person and God. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, perhaps the most fundamental expression of this appears in the Fifteenth Annotation, where he instructs those giving the Exercises that "it is more appropriate and far better that the Creator and Lord himself should communicate himself to the devout soul."⁴⁰ This idea suggests not only that God constantly communicates his gifts to his beloved sons and daughters, but also that the communication of God is the communication of God's very self. In other words, for Ignatius, when God pours out his grace, he gives more than experiences on which to reflect or to decipher and use as a basis for action. Rather, God is giving God's self to Ignatius, which reminds us that the grace of devotion for Ignatius entails more than a spiritual sense of well-being or a guide to his finding the answer to his election question.

On this point, three weeks into his discernment process, Ignatius noted a development in how he experienced God's self-gift, describing it on the morning of February 20 as "warm or bright and soft."⁴¹ With these three qualifiers, which he at times varies, often using the adjective *dulce* or sweet, he introduces a dimension of his experience that is qualitative. Furthermore, this aspect recurs with notable frequency, on fifteen of the twenty-two days from February 20 to March 12, the day on which he concluded his election. As such, his descriptions become fuller, richer, and more palpable, such that more than simply measuring the quantity or feeling the intensity of this gift, his notes convey how he experienced it occurring in him as he felt its warmth and tasted its sweetness. From this perspective, if before he registered devotion

³⁸ *Diary*, Mar. 12, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 337.

³⁹ Letter 169, *Epp. et instruct.* I:495–510 at 497: "Y no dudo de aquella suma Bondad suya, *sumamente comunicativa de sus bienes* y de aquel eterno amor con que quiere darnos nuestra perfección, mucho más que nosotros recibirla, que lo hará"; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 165–74 at 166, my italics.

⁴⁰ *SpEx* 15; ed. Ganss, 25.

⁴¹ *Diary*, Feb. 20, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 311.

only as a kind of brute quantity, now he describes it as if it has its own life, which he characterizes by color, light, and warmth.

Regarding this felt experience of devotion, both the time that it occurs in his prayer and its connection to his election also seem significant. First, his perception of devotion seemed to occur almost al-

More than a feeling, devotion as warmth, sweetness, and light points to God who is more the subject than object of his life.

ways during prayer periods that happened earlier in the day. Specifically, of the fifteen experiences in which he indicated some kind of warmth, clarity, or brightness, fourteen of them took place in his first period of prayer, when he was

likely still in bed. Day after day, as he made this discernment marked by an experience of Jesus and the Trinity, his first moments of prayer as he lay prostrate in bed had this rich internal sensory character that pointed to an intimate, deep, and felt sense of God's presence. And while these kinds of descriptions do not begin until later in the "Spiritual Diary," Ignatius does not seem surprised at these qualities of his devotion as if they were new, nor does he puzzle over their appearance, which suggests that he was familiar with them. In fact, though his descriptions point to a delicate sensitivity with regards to his interior experience, there is at the same time a kind of simplicity to his observations and a kind of ease in his reporting. On this point, note that none of these descriptions suffered any deletions—a fact in itself remarkable since this part of his journal is replete with modifications.

To develop our understanding of this experience of devotion, let us now briefly consider how it connects to his election or decision about receiving income for the churches. Note that here devotion does not appear related at all to his search for God's will on the question, perhaps because this warm, soft, and luminous devotion never went beyond the first period of his prayer. And because its manifestation did not seem to carry over into subsequent periods of prayer, it appears an exceptionally circumscribed spiritual moment. This is surprising for a couple of reasons. First, he always followed the movement of what he experienced over into subsequent periods of prayer. Second, he never seemed to inquire as to why the devotion did not seem to continue into

other moments of prayer. Instead, he simply described the nature of it as manifest in the first prayer period and then proceeded to indicate what happened in the second prayer period. For example, on both March 11 and 12, he simply recorded devotion as clear, lucid/bright, and warm, and then commented on his next period of prayer.⁴² Such a description would seem to suggest that this manifestation of devotion is a feeling, richly perceived, but one less connected to his election. In other words, he saw it as a different kind of a sign, not revelatory for his election.

Given these descriptions of devotion and its circumscribed place in his prayer, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the experience. However, perhaps the meaning lies in the descriptors, which suggest a kind of presence, a being-inhabited-by, and a profound sense of God's life in him. From this perspective, these early-morning experiences do not seem to point to the reception of devotion as a kind of object, but rather as a presence that inhabits him. Ignatius seems to be communicating an experience of the Giver and not primarily of the gift.

For this reason, these descriptions of devotion take us deeper into the nature of Ignatius's spiritual experience. More than a feeling, devotion as warmth, sweetness, and light points to a God who is more the subject than object of his life. Perhaps in this characterization of devotion, we can see a personal experience of God who gives to him his very "existence" and who makes of him a "temple."⁴³

D. Devotion as a Grace in an Apostolic Discernment

The previous sections make the case that the grace of devotion guided Ignatius to know God's will in making an apostolic discernment. And though this expression may be anachronistic, I would suggest that the "Spiritual Diary" is best understood as a concrete, apostolic discernment that he undertook for the order. A risk for readers of this personal text is to forget that it is a document connected to a historical moment involving Ignatius and his companions. Indeed, much of it can seem so personal and removed from his actual life, and so it is important to

⁴² *Diary*, Mar. 11, 1544; Mar. 12, 1544; ed. Iparraguirre and Ruiz Jurado, 334.

⁴³ *SpEx* 235; ed. Ganss, 95.

remember that it emerges from his concern for how to carry out the growing apostolic commitments made of him and his men.

The apostolic nature of the “Spiritual Diary” thus comes into view when one considers another document that accompanied it and, I would argue, should accompany all readings of it.⁴⁴ This autograph, most likely composed along with his prayer notes, contains a list of advantages and disadvantages for receiving all, some, or none of the income. As for its interest here, first, it suggests that Ignatius was following the first mode of the third time for making an election as specified in the *Exercises*. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, it reveals how he was thinking during his process about the mission and spiritual life of the men. And third, it reveals how he imagined Jesuits as living devotion.

One of the main areas involving his points of advantages and disadvantages has to do with the Society’s service to the church. For example, one reason to refuse the income is that it would allow the Society to unite itself more closely to the church.⁴⁵ Similarly, such a choice would allow the Society to be “more diligent” in service to God.⁴⁶ Still, he does consider that receiving money would enable the men to spend more time “preaching, hearing confessions, and other pious works.”⁴⁷

Nevertheless, he seems to think that complete poverty would allow them to be more effective apostolically. In language that will not surprise readers, he concludes that “Members of the Society will probably be more diligent in helping others.”⁴⁸ As John W. O’Malley has demonstrated, the phrase “helping souls” may provide the best summary of the Society’s way of proceeding, as “no other expression was more characteristic of Jesuit writing, thinking,

⁴⁴ Critical edition of text “Deliberatio S.P.N. Ignatii de Paupertate” in *Constitutiones*, I:78–81; “Pros and Cons: Advantages and Disadvantages in Having a Fixed Income for Churches of the Society of Jesus” (hereafter “Pros and Cons”), in *St. Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 70–72.

⁴⁵ “Pros and Cons,” reason 2(b) for not accepting; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 71.

⁴⁶ “Pros and Cons,” reason 5 for not accepting; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 71.

⁴⁷ “Pros and Cons,” reason 5 for accepting; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 70.

⁴⁸ “Pros and Cons,” reason 10 for not accepting; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 71.

and action.”⁴⁹ It is not surprising then that the expression appears as one of the reasons that Ignatius considers for not accepting any income. Perhaps, however, it is surprising to see the connection between the spiritual grace of devotion and the apostolic mission of helping souls. In short, finding the grace of God’s devotion helped Ignatius to know how best to help souls.

To conclude this section, note that one more reason for not receiving any income, which Ignatius offers as the first “advantage,” appears to signal his hopes and desires for his brother Jesuits. In this, he believed that with such a way of proceeding, “the Society gains greater spiritual strength, *and increased devotion*, the more it contemplates and imitates the Son of the Blessed Virgin, our Creator and Lord, so poor and so afflicted.”⁵⁰ The wording here offers a theological and spiritual richness. Specifically, it suggests that the vow of poverty, fully lived and embraced, would help the men to grow in their identification with Jesus, the Son of Mary, who lived his life in poverty.⁵¹ What is fascinating about this identification with Jesus is that Ignatius frames it as an experience of “greater devotion,” signaling that he imagined devotion as a Christological grace, configuring the person into the life of Christ, such that to live, experience, and offer devotion is to live like Christ. From this perspective, it is to be human as Christ was human, the poor son of the Virgin, obedient to the Father.

In summary, the “Spiritual Diary” and the points of his deliberation suggest the centrality of the grace of devotion in his spirituality. As I have suggested, devotion signaled the offering of his will and desire to serve God. In accord with the language from the *Exercises* on consolation, it also constituted a spiritual movement that he understood as “a gift and grace from God our Lord.”⁵² Finally, through

⁴⁹ John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 372.

⁵⁰ “Pros and Cons,” reason 1 for not accepting; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 71, my italics.

⁵¹ Given the penurious situation of some of the houses, it seems that the men of the early Society had little choice but to embrace poverty. For indications of this, see Letter 3107, *Epp. et instruct.* IV:564–565; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 405.

⁵² *SpEx* 322; ed. Ganss, 124.

devotion he intuited God's presence to him as light, warmth, and sweetness. As such, the formerly peripatetic Ignatius, now confined to Rome, indeed continued to journey, but in a pilgrimage made in devotion. In regard to this point, Gonçalves summarized well Ignatius's spirituality as it is reflected in the "Spiritual Diary": "he was always growing in devotion."⁵³ And, as we will see in part 3, Ignatius desired that Jesuits always would be growing in devotion.

III. Devotion in the Life of a Jesuit

Though a vastly different genre than that of a personal diary and as a text composed in close collaboration with his secretary, Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576), the *Constitutions* reveal an important place for devotion in the apostolic life of the Jesuit. The term *devotion* appears forty-eight times in the document, and the bulk of those uses occurs in those parts of the text that elaborate on the Jesuit's spiritual formation.⁵⁴ Without addressing each instance, I will highlight two semantic fields in which the term appears, the first suggesting that Jesuits are encouraged to grow in devotion and the second concerning a Jesuit's personal discernment. Taken together and considered along with a selection of his letters, these uses of *devotion* suggest a spirituality that implies a promptness to do God's will and an ongoing discernment of God's will in one's life.

⁵³ *Auto.* 99; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 63.

⁵⁴ Specifically, *devotion* appears in the General Examen (five times), part 1 (three times), part 3 (ten times), part 4 (thirteen times), part 5 (six times), part 6 (six times), part 7 (three times), and part 10 (two times). See Ignacio Echarte, ed., *Concordancia Ignaciana* (Bilbao, Santander, St. Louis, MO: Mensajero, Sal Terrae, IJS, 1996), 365–66. Note that the noun *consolation* appears once in part 8 while verb *console* appears twice in the General Examen (see *Concordancia Ignaciana*, ed. Echarte, 229–30).

A. "Keeping in View the Genuine Devotion"⁵⁵

Those who examine candidates for the Society are to ask them about their experience of devotion, and formators of accepted candidates are to challenge them, through probationary experiments, to grow in that quality. The *General Examen* questions candidates specifically regarding their prayer: "how often has he been accustomed to pray during the day and the night, at what hour, with what bodily posture, what prayers, and with what devotion or spiritual experience?"⁵⁶ This question alerts the candidate to the kind of spirituality that awaits him should he be accepted. Similarly, devotion functions as a criterion for the admission of temporal coadjutors: "they ought to be men of good conscience, peaceful, docile, lovers of virtue and perfection, and inclined to devotion."⁵⁷ Then, in part 3 of the *Constitutions*, Ignatius indicates that all men in formation should be "devoting time to spiritual things and striving to acquire devotion to the extent that divine grace imparts it to them."⁵⁸ Such an explicit spiritual directive highlights the importance of the grace of devotion—not tears, warmth, or consolation—for the Jesuit. Seen from the perspective of the "Spiritual Diary," "striving to acquire devotion" then has less to do with accumulating feelings in prayer than with finding God's will and desiring to carry it out.

As such, Ignatius did not see devotion only as a grace to be found or experienced in prayer but as a characteristic of the Jesuit way of proceeding, so that Jesuits are to carry out "with all possible devotion the tasks in which humility and charity are practiced more."⁵⁹ This idea receives a more extensive elaboration in a letter of Ignatius's secretary, Polanco, who refers to the spirit that Ignatius desires to see in the Society. Writing to Urbano Fernandes (d. 1555) in 1551, Polanco,

⁵⁵ *Constitutions* 343, hereafter *Const.*; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1996), 144.

⁵⁶ *Const.* 46; ed. Padberg, 32.

⁵⁷ *Const.* 148; ed. Padberg, 74.

⁵⁸ *Const.* 277; ed. Padberg, 121.

⁵⁹ *Const.* 282; ed. Padberg, 123.

describing the spiritual life that ought to characterize men in the Society, indicates that the men “should find no less devotion in any work

At the same time, however, Ignatius suggests that studies carried out with a right intention are in and of themselves devotion offered to God.

of charity or obedience than in prayer or meditation . . . for they should not be doing anything at all except for the love and service of God our Lord.”⁶⁰ He then goes on to suggest that every man should be content to carry out that which has been entrusted to him,

knowing that in fulfilling his mission, he is fulfilling the will of God. Finally, Jesuits are to find the grace of devotion in all things, meaning in whatever work or activity they undertake.

This point appears more clearly when Ignatius writes in the *Constitutions* about studies. For example, he proposes that the kind of study in which men of the order should engage is that which “will help them toward what has been said on the abnegation of themselves and toward further growth in virtue and devotion.”⁶¹ However, this devotion, like all aspects of the spiritual life, needs to be governed by discretion and moderation. In this spirit, Ignatius warns about “the impediments which distract from study should also be removed, both those arising from excessive or improperly ordered devotions and mortifications and those springing from external cares and occupations.”⁶²

At the same time, however, Ignatius suggests that studies carried out with a right intention are in and of themselves devotion offered to God. In a letter to Bartolomé Hernández (d. 1579) in 1554, Ignatius reminds him how to combine studies with prayer. He first recognizes that it is normal that the scholastics do not experience the “relish of devotion that one might desire,” given that often “the divine Wisdom sometimes suspends sensible visitations of this sort.” With great

⁶⁰ Letter 1848, *Epp. et instruct.* III:499–503 at 502; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 335–39 at 337.

⁶¹ *Const.* 289; ed. Padberg, 124.

⁶² *Const.* 362; ed. Padberg, 152–54.

realism, Ignatius goes on to admit that “the occupation of the mind with academic pursuits naturally tends to produce a certain dryness in the interior affections,” yet this is no impediment to growing in devotion, since “when the study is directed purely to God’s service, it is excessively good devotion [*harto buena devoción*].”⁶³ Thus, Ignatius declares that when prayer does not provide much spiritual enjoyment and work or studies produce aridity, experiences undertaken for the service of God are themselves living “excessively good devotion.”

Finally, in one of the more eloquent paragraphs in the *Constitutions*, regarding the spirituality of the order, we find again the preeminent place that Ignatius accords to devotion:

In all things they should try and desire to give the advantage to the others, esteeming them all in their hearts as if they were their superiors [Phil 2:3] and showing outwardly, in an unassuming and simple religious manner, the respect and reverence appropriate to each one’s state, so that by consideration of one another they may thus *grow in devotion* and praise God our Lord, whom each one should strive to recognize in the other as in his image.⁶⁴

This declaration provides a basic formulation of Jesuit spirituality. To summarize, all are to be growing in devotion as a way of seeing God in the other person and the other person in God. In this sense, devotion does not simply comprise the vertical relationship of the man with God nor, as suggested above, is it only an affective movement. Rather, devotion is a way of living in which a reverence for God’s presence permeates all of one’s relationships. And lest the reader think that Ignatius intended the declarations from part 3 of the *Constitutions* only for novices, it seems clear that he meant the spirituality lived in the early stage of formation to accompany the Jesuit throughout his life.⁶⁵

⁶³ Letter 4619, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:268–70 at 270; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 494–95, at 494. I translate “*harto buena devoción*” as “excessively good devotion” because I believe that it captures better than “excellent form of devotion” the strength of the Spanish.

⁶⁴ *Const.* 250; ed. Padberg, 112, my italics.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Simon Decloux, who argues that parts 3 and 4 of the *Constitutions* include recommendations that Jesuits should live throughout their entire lives.

In summary, we ought not understand the qualifier “always growing in devotion” solely as a felicitous summary of Ignatius’s own spiritual life but as an ideal for Jesuit life in general.

B. According to One’s Own Devotion

The second semantic field that unites several uses of “devotion” in the *Constitutions* has to do with decision making. On many practical issues, Ignatius refers to a Jesuit’s devotion in searching for a decision. For example, he left each man to decide himself what to do with his possessions and inheritances upon entering the Society. His instructions on this topic provide a clear guide regarding the poverty of the order and how each person has the obligation to resolve practically the distribution of his own goods within the framework of the vow. On this point, in the fourth chapter of the General Examen, Ignatius indicates that “the first men who joined themselves together in this Society” were already detached from the world, and the same detachment goes for all who follow the first companions. For that reason, he invites the men who enter to distribute all their goods to the poor, “making the distribution according to their own devotion.”⁶⁶

This same idea returns in part 3. After reminding the novice of the vow of poverty, Ignatius enjoins him to consider that, while nothing is his own, should he have goods or possessions, “it is left to the devotion of each one to apply his property, or a part of it, to one pious work rather than to another according to what God our Lord will give him to perceive as being more conducive to his divine service.”⁶⁷ And should one wish to leave his goods or inheritance to the Society, that too depends upon the man, “should [he] find it to his devotion.”⁶⁸ This connection between personal discernment and devotion

See Decloux, “Las Constituciones, Manual de Formación,” *Manresa* 66 (1994): 19–34 at 23. On his point, see also José María Rambla, “Introducción de tercera parte principal,” in *Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús*, ed. Santiago Arzubialde, Jesús Corella, and José María García Lomas (Bilbao, Santander: Mensajero, Sal Terrae, 1993), 133–41 at 134.

⁶⁶ *Const.* 53; ed. Padberg, 34.

⁶⁷ *Const.* 254; ed. Padberg, 114.

⁶⁸ *Const.* 258; ed. Padberg, 114.

echoes Ignatius's own discernment as recorded in the "Spiritual Diary." Here it seems that he appreciated the grace because he found in it a connection between feeling God's presence and doing God's will, and perhaps he wanted to inculcate this approach in members of the Society. Thus, the experience of devotion that each man felt would help that man to grow in his capacity to discern the concrete matters of their respective lives and to act upon them.

Note too that Ignatius counsels his men to consider devotion regarding personal matters apart from those that touch on religious poverty. For example, the novice, upon completing his pilgrimage experience, should bring back with him reports from people that attest to his character. Specifically, he should provide "testimony from one or several dependable persons that he arrived there while pursuing his devotion and without a complaint from anyone."⁶⁹ Though the text emphasizes the importance of bringing back positive testimony, the reference to devotion directs the novice's attention to his own inner movements as he makes his pilgrimage. Likewise regarding clothes, the candidate may enter the novitiate as he was dressed "or in the manner in which each one finds more devotion."⁷⁰

Ignatius also provides counsel about how to proceed when a Jesuit dies. Here, he instructs each member of a man's community to celebrate a mass for his departed housemate's soul and leaves the superior to determine what more might be done; he adds that each one should follow his devotion.⁷¹ Finally, in terms of the prayer of the temporal coadjutors, Ignatius signals that they can follow the prayer prescribed for the scholastics, attend Mass, and pray for an hour, during which "they will recite the rosary or crown of our Lady and they will likewise examine their consciences twice a day." But he adds that they can do something different, as "engage in some other prayers according to their devotion, as was said about the scholastics."⁷²

⁶⁹ *Const.* 75; ed. Padberg, 39.

⁷⁰ *Const.* 197; ed. Padberg, 88.

⁷¹ *Const.* 598; ed. Padberg, 268.

⁷² *Const.* 344; ed. Padberg, 144.

In each of these contexts, Ignatius's refers to devotion as a deeply personal spiritual movement that guides the men. He seems to want each man to find his devotion—that grace of coming to know God's will—so that they can discern for themselves how best to proceed. In this sense, the place he accords to devotion in the *Constitutions* indicates his desire that each man take responsibility for his life in the Spirit and for his own discernment. Note, however, that this does not stand in opposition to the hierarchical structure of the Society and the vow of obedience; rather, devotion fits within that structure as the place in which the man functions as a discerning agent in the apostolic body. From this perspective, within the structure of the Society that seeks the complete availability of its fully incorporated members, devotion represents the place in the spiritual governance of the order in which the man continues to cultivate his personal, intimate, and prayerful dialogue with the Spirit. As such, the spiritual governance of the order depends upon the Jesuit's cultivation and attention to his own devotion.

Of course, not everything can happen in conformity with a man's devotion, and Ignatius makes this fact clear in his famous letter on obedience to the Portuguese province in 1553. In that missive, he encourages the men to incline not only their will but also their understanding to the superior. In such a way of living obedience, they will give their entire selves to the mission, making of themselves "a living sacrifice pleasing [*una hostia viva y agradable*] to his Divine Majesty."⁷³ But by the same token, neither can the governance of the Society ignore how a man's devotion is moving him. For example, in his discernment to remain in Spain or to undertake a new mission in the Society in Rome, Antonio Gou (d. 1556) submitted to Ignatius his reasons for and against each possibility, and Polanco's reply to him was simple: "follow your devotion."⁷⁴

Another important example of this attention to a man's devotion appears in a letter to the scholastic Andrea Boninsegna (d. 1557).

⁷³ Letter 3304, *Epp. et instruct.* IV:669–81 at 677; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 412–21 at 418.

⁷⁴ Letter 4893, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:693; no published English-language translation available.

After reminding him that time given to studies is not lost time, Polanco reverentially acknowledged a key part of Andrea's discernment as it concerned his ordination: "in the priesthood, without your devotion certainly you will not be promoted."⁷⁵ Similarly, Ignatius even counsels a superior to accept a man's decision to no longer exercise the priesthood "as long as devotion is not lacking" in the decision.⁷⁶ Such indications signal the central place that Ignatius accorded to devotion in the spiritual life of the men; although he wanted them to obey their superiors, he also wanted the superiors to heed their devotion in making decisions on their behalf.

Furthermore, Ignatius also looked for devotion to guide the men in their apostolic missions. This appears in a letter to King John III of Portugal in which Ignatius responds to the King's request that he send Jesuit missionaries to Ethiopia. In response, Ignatius promises to send men whose "example and doctrine" will give much service to the Divine Majesty and be in conformity "of those holy desires of your highness that we all follow." He then indicates how they will carry out their mission: "may God give them special devotion to employ their works and their lives with great desire in this work."⁷⁷ Note here that, while Ignatius likely asked the men to commit to such a mission out of obedience, he seems to have thought that they would live this new apostolic venture out of their God-given sense of devotion.

One further example will help complete this brief sketch of devotion in the life of the Society. In his *Memoriale*, a collection of notes taken while he lived in Rome, Gonçalves recounted a story in which Ignatius wanted to place a holy image on a small hill in a vineyard so that all who pass it might have an opportunity for prayer. Hearing this

⁷⁵ Letter 4481, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:40–41 at 41; no published English-language translation available. Polanco raises the same issue in a letter to Hannibal Coudret in which Polanco inquires as to the devotion of two men—Pietro Mercado and Angelo Prodocimo—in preparation for their ordination to the priesthood [Letter 4729, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:438–41 at 439; no published English-language translation available].

⁷⁶ Letter 4776, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:513–15 at 515; no published English-language translation available.

⁷⁷ Letter 4636, *Epp. et instruct.* VII:296–298 at 297; no published English-language translation available.

idea, Gonçalves offered that he could remind everyone to genuflect before the image. Reluctant to agree to this idea, Ignatius told his Jesuit companion that he would “leave this to the devotion of each one.” Apparently finding this anecdote noteworthy, Gonçalves glossed it many years later as he edited his notes for wider circulation. In these later modifications, he commented that “leaving this to the devotion of each one” captured an essential part of Ignatius’s spiritual vision for the Society. According to Gonçalves, Ignatius desired that, regarding God’s service, “we would all be moved or inclined by devotion and an interior movement,” for which reason “he used in such matters as few extrinsic rules as he could.”⁷⁸

Conclusion: Beyond Devotion and All Spiritual Feeling?

The theological understanding of devotion in the life of Jesuit draws from the Thomistic definition of it as the willingness and the promptness to carry out God’s will. But always attentive to God’s communication, Ignatius seems to have considered devotion as a language or spiritual sign that could help a man to discover and execute God’s will. From this perspective, he saw devotion as a felt grace, similar to what he experienced during his discernment between 1544 and 1545, and he offered it to his men as a grace that would guide them in carrying out God’s will. Growing in devotion would thus entail growth in the capacity to discern God’s will and in the freedom to carry it out.

But might “always growing in devotion” have signaled something more audacious? It is intriguing to consider that Ignatius’s thinking on the spiritual life continued to evolve in such a way that he placed less emphasis on feeling spiritual sentiments in one’s mission and in one’s prayer. Perhaps growing in devotion signaled growth in the freedom to do God’s will even if that be unaccompanied by spiritual feelings. Such an experience of the grace returns us to those three moments in the “Spiritual Diary” where he simply desired to offer masses out of love for God.

⁷⁸ Gonçalves *Mem.* 171; trans. Eaglestone and Munitiz, 104.

Moreover, his later letters suggest that Ignatius wanted his men to make a deeper offering of their lives for their mission and an offering that would depend less on spiritual feelings. They were to be, in his oft-used image, “instruments in the hand of their divine Lord.” As such, he wanted them not to hold anything as their own, giving themselves completely as an offering to God. It is safe to imagine that in such a free self-offering, emotions or feelings, while never abandoned or ignored, perhaps assume a smaller place in the spiritual life. In a sense, they are relativized, not seen as constitutive of union with God or as determinative of one’s spiritual health.

This seems to be the movement that Ignatius encouraged Spanish Jesuit Alonso Ramírez de Vergara y Arellano (d. aft. 1651) to consider. Ignatius first suggested that in “pursuing what is better and more perfect” in the service of God our Lord, “it suffices to be moved by reason.” He then invited Ramírez into a deeper relationship with God, confident that “God our Lord repays our trust in his providence, our complete self-abandonment, and our giving up of our own consolation.”⁷⁹ His spiritual advice is clear: follow the movement of your reason and give to God all your desires for spiritual contentment.

Another example of this encouragement appears in his letter to Manoel Godinho (ca. 1520–1569), in which Ignatius responds compassionately to apparent complaints by Godinho about the endless distractions that occupied him in his role as superior. Here, while Ignatius admits that mundane matters can be distracting, they also, if accepted as Godinho seemed to be doing, with a right intention to serve God, can become “not only equivalent to the union and recollection of constant contemplation, but even more acceptable to him, since they proceed from a more vehement [*más violenta*] and stronger charity.”⁸⁰ This is an astounding spiritual claim: union with the Lord does not consist in feeling great spiritual sentiments but rather the simple, faithful realization of one’s mission no matter how arid, distracting, and difficult it may

⁷⁹ Letter 6327, *Epp. et instruct.* XI:184–85; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 647–48.

⁸⁰ Letter 2383, *Epp. et instruct.* IV:126–27 at 127; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 367–68.

seem. From this perspective, even a distraction is a grace—an opportunity to give to God all his or her memory, will, and understanding.

These few observations suggest that “always growing in devotion” implies a movement toward a greater spiritual freedom in which one surrenders to God any desires that one may have for spiritual feelings. Nevertheless, as original and as audacious as his thinking may seem, it accords with the Christian tradition that informed his spirituality. Here, one need only recall the little book of the *Imitation* that he reportedly always kept on his desk. According to Kempis, with the grace of devotion, one “does not focus on his own devotion and comfort, but goes beyond all devotion and consolation and seeks the glory and honor of God.”⁸¹ This sounds like something that Ignatius would write to his men in studies or in their apostolic works: to go beyond all spiritual feeling—be they tears, consolations, warmth, and even devotion itself—to give glory to God with their whole lives.

Such is Ignatius’s experience of devotion: the search for the will of God in which he grew in his desire to give all of his life in God’s service. For us as Jesuits, that same grace can be operative. All of us are invited to “always grow in devotion”: to grow in that grace that brings us to the Giver, through which process we discover the freedom to offer to God all of who we are.

⁸¹ Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 4.15; trans. Creasy, 218–19.

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