Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits

Ministering to the Young

James J. DiGiacomo, S.J.

23/2 March 1991

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material which it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence the Studies, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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For your information . . .

Among the many gifts that Father Pedro Arrupe gave to the Society of Jesus during his term as superior general was his constant encouragement of every effort to make better known the spiritual doctrine and practice of the Society. As in everything else, in this too he faithfully carried out the desires of Vatican Council II that religious orders come to a renewed knowledge and appreciation of their original and distinctive charisms and a renewed vigor in adapting those charisms to contemporary circumstances. The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality and *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* are concrete results of that encouragement. I am sure that I express not only for myself but also for all our readers the gratitude that we feel to him for this as for so many other fruitful initiatives on behalf of the Church he served and the Lord he loved. That Church, religious life, and the Society of Jesus lost at his death a great man. But at the same time we all gained as well an advocate before the Lord as we try with the help of the Lord to answer in our lives and in our work that oft-repeated Arrupe question, "How to do? How to do?"

That same question has to be asked in every period of history of the religious life. For the Society of Jesus, the response took its first complete form when the First General Congregation in 1558 officially adopted the Constitutions of the Society. In this issue our "Sources" from the past is the letter first presenting those now official Constitutions to the whole Society.

The next issue of *Studies*, May 1991, will be a special offering for this Ignatian anniversary year. It will be a new and updated version of the bibliography on St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises originally published in *Studies* in 1981. At that time it was subtitled "A Working Tool for American Students." It will be even more so for students of many lands in this new and fuller edition.

John W. Padberg, S.J.

Editor

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Ministering to the Young

INTRODUCTION

Open the high-school classroom door a crack and listen to the following exchange between a teacher and a student. They are considering a hypothetical moral dilemma.

TEACHER: . . . So those are the choices open to her. What should she do?

STUDENT: It's up to her.

TEACHER: Yes, I know it's up to her. So what should she do?

STUDENT: It's her choice.

TEACHER: [*Taking a deep breath to avoid losing his temper*] Yes, we know it's her choice. But how should she choose? And on what grounds?

STUDENT: It's her choice.

As a high-school religion teacher, I have engaged in this kind of non-conversation many times in recent years. This is not, however, a plea for sympathy. It is my contention that this little bit of theater of the absurd carries an important message for all Jesuits whatever their ministry, whether they work with the young or not.

Rev. James J. Di Giacomo, S.J., a member of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus, has for many years taught theology at Regis High School in New York. A well-known lecturer on high-school theology courses, on adolescents' and young adults' religious aspirations, and on religious education for them, he has written textbooks for secondary-school theology courses, as well as numerous books and articles on those subjects.

I have been teaching in Jesuit high schools for thirty-five years, specializing in religious education. For the last twenty-five I have been in contact with adolescents in school settings, retreats, and parish youth groups. In the following pages you will hear many of these young people speaking and writing in their own words about religious and moral concerns. They are boys and girls, urban and suburban, ranging from freshmen to seniors, coming from various parts of the country. Some are from Jesuit schools, some from other Catholic and public institutions.

Their attitudes toward God, Church, faith, and justice vary widely, as does their receptivity to religious experience. Listening to them, see if you hear in the background the voices of their elders, and maybe a bit of yourself. You may conclude, as I have, that most of them are rich in promise and hungry for enrichment, but that they daily encounter formidable obstacles. I shall not limit myself to diagnosis, but shall offer some broad strategies of response, without descending to those details and tactics which would expand this study beyond manageable proportions.

From the very beginnings of the Society of Jesus, ministry to the young has been an important feature of Jesuit apostolic service. Ignatius and his companions placed great importance on the humble task of teaching catechism to children, hoping thus to combat the religious illiteracy that had helped provoke the Reformation. Most Jesuits at their final profession take a simple vow to be available for the religious education of the young. The religious and moral formation of the students in our schools and universities has always enjoyed a high priority. At one time or another, nearly all Jesuits have taken a turn at religious instruction, and many have made a career of it. Campus ministers, teachers of theology at college and secondary levels, retreat directors, and service-project coordinators—all try to make our institutions of learning more than mere vehicles of secular academic advancement and upward mobility.

Jesuits and their lay colleagues who have dedicated themselves to youth ministry in and out of our schools and retreat hous-

es have chosen work which is always difficult, sometimes frustrating, usually thankless, and occasionally exhilarating. They persist in their calling out of love for their young people, convinced that they are sowing seeds for the future Church. Twenty years from now their students and retreatants and the members of their parish youth groups will help determine the shape of the American Church. Will it be predominantly a Church of disciples or of religious consumers? Disciples are Church members whose basic beliefs, values, priorities, commitments, and conduct are shaped by the Gospel message. Religious consumers use religion as a product, to be purchased only when the need arises to provide such items as christenings, weddings, funerals, and safe schools for their children. It has at most a marginal impact on the direction and conduct of their lives.

Traditionally, youth is a source of rejuvenation for any society. Members of the younger generation bring energy, enthusiasm, idealism, and openness to new ideas, perspectives, and challenges. To tap into these resources of Catholic youth, religious leaders will have to address certain issues and overcome certain obstacles in American life today. Failure to do so will result in a Church of religious consumers, lacking vitality, commitment, and the faith that does justice.

ISSUES AND OBSTACLES

A brief treatment of these issues and obstacles, the main thrust of this paper, will reveal even to the casual reader that they are by no means the private preserve of youth. At last report, apples were still not falling far from trees. The behavior of young people, in religion as in other areas of life, has a way of reflecting the prejudices and preoccupations of their elders. Because they are usually more blunt and up-front in their words and actions and less skilled than adults in masking their attitudes and motivations, they tend to reveal certain social trends in stark and arresting ways. So this essay invites even those Jesuits who are not engaged in the youth apostolate to consider this diagnosis of prevailing

religious and moral attitudes, to see what it may tell us about the adults whom we serve and perhaps even about ourselves. If we are serious about the service of faith and the promotion of justice, then we had all better listen to what our young people understand by faith and what they are saying about justice.

If we ignore them and treat them as undeserving of our attention, we miss a chance to understand what is really going on in the minds and hearts not only of the young but also of the not-so-young. We run the risk of turning our backs on the future. If our only reaction to this study is to be glad that we don't have to work with kids, we miss the whole point. We will have preserved our complacency, but at the price of being irrelevant to a whole emerging generation. On the other hand, if we listen to young people and take them seriously, we may enhance our ability to understand, communicate with, and influence them for good both now and in their adult years.

What are these issues and obstacles that affect the religious and moral formation of the young? Without pretending that our list is exhaustive, let us consider these five:

1. An unfriendly dominant culture
2. Individualism
3. Inadequate images of God and Jesus
4. Notions of morality
5. Understandings of religion

An Unfriendly Dominant Culture

It requires no great insight to see that, as a way of life, Christianity is becoming increasingly counter-cultural in today's society. The dominant culture of consumerism defines the human person in terms of the acquisition and consumption of material goods. It promotes the values of getting, owning, enjoying, produc-

ing, competing, and winning, all of which emphasize aggressiveness, self-satisfaction, status, and security. As George Aschenbrenner has pointed out, possessions, power, pleasure, and prestige are morally neutral until one perceives them no longer as adornments of the self but as constituting one's very identity. As the Cadillac ad said a few years ago, "You are what you drive."

Over against this worldview stand certain basic Christian convictions. The worth of a person cannot be measured by the money or the things that he or she owns. Frugality is to be preferred to conspicuous consumption. We are responsible for one another. Justice and honesty are not to be compromised in the struggle for status and security. This is different from a kind of economic puritanism which sees wealth and affluence as somehow obscene in themselves. But Christianity relativizes every good except God and insists with St. Augustine that our hearts will be restless as long as they rest in anything less.

The youth of America are restless, all right, but not that way. Yearly national surveys of incoming college freshmen show that from 1966 to 1988 the number of students who thought that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was an essential or very important goal dropped from eighty-three percent to thirty-nine percent. The survey director's comment:

> Despite *Newsweek*'s announcement that greed is dead, our data show that it is alive and well. . . . Students tend to see their life being dependent on affluence and are not inclined to be reflective. Our data confirm the decline in interest in existential questions. Obviously we are seeing something very profound in the society.[1]

To which one of our high-school students replied: "The way the world is now, being well off should be an important thing. A meaningful philosophy of life cannot help you in the real world." Another boy reflected,

> Everyone is concerned with monetary gains, their main motivation throughout life. We all (that is, most of us) have one basic goal in

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[1] Deidre Carmody, "To Freshmen, a Big Goal Is Health," *New York Times* (Jan. 14, 1988): A 14.

life: "to look good, eat good, and smell good." For instance, take the students in this school. Don't believe the bull they tell you, that they chose to come to this school because "I'll be better able to execute my role as a Christian," or some other pious statement. They chose to come here because it will be a gold star on their record, which in turn will get them into a good college, which in turn will get them into a high-paying job.

But if existential questions are uninteresting, and reflectiveness is discouraged, and a meaningful philosophy of life cannot help you in the "real world," what happens to religion? It cannot make you look good or smell good either. To **feel** good, maybe? We shall see.

Religion is not the only casualty of this mentality. A character in a Billy Joel song, "Angry Young Man," says that he has outgrown idealism and social awareness. He no longer believes in causes, and he has renounced all activism on behalf of justice. Convinced that taking moral stands has no effect on real life, he has decided to look out only for his own survival.

Some eleventh graders had these reactions:

- Although I can see what those who protest against injustice are saying and I sympathize and identify with them as well, as far as practical and **sensible** considerations go, I think Joel has the upper hand. Results make more concrete sense than abstract feelings.

- In a serious situation, I would hope that I would act in a principled manner. However, as I get older and have more to lose, I think I will "harden" and start looking to survive as best I can.

- I think Billy Joel is a lot like me. There are a few people of conscience who care about others, but most people are just out for Number One, and I presume that I will become like them. For I must get all I can.

Not everyone in the group agreed. Two expressed themselves quite differently:

- I can't see how someone could keep repressing his feelings and not fighting for what he believes is right. That kind of person might as well not even bother to exist.

■ If I think something is wrong, I'm going to say something about it even if I know it is not going to change things. I will go to my grave at least knowing I tried to act according to my principles.

Where do young people learn these lessons and find out how to behave in the real world? Mostly, it would seem, from the mass media. A college professor who spent a day with some public-high-school freshmen in Brooklyn was told by a girl, "Alexis [of 'Dynasty'] is bad. Like she's evil. She's vicious and bold and glamorous. And she's everything that any woman would want to be. She gets whatever she wants." A classmate, speaking of J. R. Ewing of "Dallas," added, "I sort of admire the way he can just corrupt everybody and not even let it affect him."[2]

One of the most powerful educational tools, however, is advertising. As Jean Kilbourne has observed, advertisements influence our attitudes, and attitudes shape and determine our behavior. Advertising is the propaganda of a consumer culture. It tells us that we should be consumers, that happiness can be bought, and that products can fulfill us and meet our deepest human needs.[3] Commenting on the underlying theme of television commercials, Erich Fromm said, "It is the general fear of not being loved, and then to be able, by some product, to be loved."[4]

Underlying these images and messages is what James Fowler calls the dominant myth of consumer culture: You should experience whatever you desire, own whatever you want, and relate intimately with whomever you wish.[5] It takes no imagination to see that, to the extent that people young or old uncritically interiorize such a myth, they severely compromise their capacity for religious or moral integrity. Several examples will follow later in this paper.

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[2] Herbert London, "What TV Drama Is Teaching Our Children," *New York Times* (Aug. 23, 1987): H 23.

[3] "Still Killing Us Softly," Cambridge Documentary Films.

[4] Cited in Film Guide, "The 30-Second Dream," Mass Media Ministries.

[5] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 20.

What can the youth minister do in the face of a pervasive culture that is hostile to moral and religious values? One overall strategy is to help young people to engage in a sophisticated critical analysis of the dominant culture, its media and messages, and then explicitly to present Christianity as an alternative vision of life. Time and again, in ways explicit and implicit, I remind my students that they are free—that no one, neither God nor Church nor school, can make them be or do anything they don't want to do or be. In a few years even their parents will lose any control over them. They have the power to choose their lives. They can be generous or selfish; they can choose careers that serve or that just use other people; they can aspire to a fully human life, or they can settle for conspicuous consumption; they can be sexually responsible or irresponsible. It's a free country, and they can choose any of these paths that they desire.

I tell them I don't want to hear any complaints like "The Church won't let us do such and such." Short of breaking the civil law, you can do anything you please, and the Church can't do a thing about it. So grow up. Stop grumbling and passing the buck. Take responsibility for your choices. Choose your life.

What's that? You're not sure what you want to be? Okay, let's talk. No, I'm not going to tell you what to do with your life. If I did, you wouldn't listen anyway. But let's look at the different ways people live. How they make their money and what they spend it on. How they relate to other people. What they consider important. How they think about the purpose of life, about God, about right and wrong. Where and how they look for happiness, and whether or not they find it, and how you can tell.

This exploration takes us down some familiar paths, which we may now see in a wholly new way. My students and I look at the life-styles, not only of the rich and famous, but of all the people who are trying to get that way, including most of us. We examine the taken-for-granted assumptions with which people start but which they rarely reflect upon. These are found mostly in the messages of popular culture as expressed in stories, songs, entertain-

ment—most of all in advertising. They are usually implicit and have to be brought to consciousness by critical analysis.

We also look at other, competing philosophies of life, including Christianity. Beneath the Church practices and customs and rules and popular stereotypes, what is the value system which Jesus and his followers take as their starting point? Does Christ's way of looking at the world make sense? Would living by his principles be likely to bring us satisfaction and fulfillment? What is the price tag on his way of life? What is the cost of discipleship? How does it compare with the program of the dominant culture? What happens when people accept his worldview, embrace his ideals, and try to live by them? Would I want to try?

There are some good precedents for this approach. St. Ignatius takes it in his meditation on the Two Standards. In ancient Rome, catechumens were informed quite clearly that they had to choose between two irreconcilable ways of life. Jesus himself tells us that we cannot serve two masters, and that, before we set out to build a tower, we should estimate the expenses and our ability to meet the payments. This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer would call spelling out the cost of discipleship.

Individualism

A second aspect of American life that poses problems for the formation of religious identity is individualism. This is not to be confused with individuality, an unconditionally desirable trait which enables us to think for ourselves, resist pressures to conform, and take responsibility for our beliefs and commitments. Individualism, on the other hand, is a doctrine or attitude which assumes that only the individual, and not society, is what counts. Individual initiative, action, and interests should be independent of social control. According to this mentality, all values, rights, and duties originate only in individuals, and not in the social whole.

Taking this approach to religion is typically American; but, as Robert Bellah points out, it is at odds with the Jewish and Christian view of how we come to faith:

> The traditional pattern assumes a certain priority of the religious community over the individual. The community exists before the individual is born and will continue after his or her death. The relationship of the individual to God is ultimately personal, but is mediated by a whole pattern of community life. There is a givenness about the community and tradition. They are not normally a matter of individual choice.[6]

Most of the young people with whom we deal find it hard to open themselves to the notion of religious faith as a response to God's gratuitous revelation and a willingness to shape our beliefs and behavior in obedience to that revelation. Many of them find a kindred spirit in Sheila, a young woman who has named her religion after herself. She says: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice."[7] Like her,

> [t]he students enrolled in our schools . . . nearly all believe in God. They avoid religious fanaticism like the plague. They hardly ever go to church. And their "faith" is little more than listening to their own little voice, or rather to the voices who tell them what they want to hear.[8]

They are not very different from most of their elders either. William McCready of the National Opinion Research Center has described what he calls a major change in the nation's religious character. For growing numbers of people, he says, an individual search for meaning has become the central religious experience. And the impact on their moral attitudes is profound. "Americans

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[6] Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 227.

[7] Ibid., 221.

[8] James J. DiGiacomo, S.J., *Teaching Religion in a Catholic Secondary School* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1989), 1.

don't respond to moral imperatives. They increasingly behave any way they want to. They've been told to trust their consciences, and that's what they're doing."[9] The influence of this kind of individualism on religious practice and moral judgment is illustrated by these two statements by eleventh graders:

- I don't think we need to go to church every Sunday as long as we have faith. . . . I believe in God and Jesus with all my heart but . . . I don't need the Church to tell me what I believe. Nor do I need the Church to enhance my faith. I am very independent and I don't think that I don't need God but I do believe that the Church is unnecessary or at least their rituals are. I think that my faith is more important to me because it comes from my heart; it is not dictated to me from a lectern every Sunday.

- I am a devout Christian who never misses Sunday Mass, [but] I believe that the Church is getting itself into someplace it doesn't belong when the priest uses the time for the homily to speak out on abortion. They are not politicians and have never had to worry about getting an abortion. They shouldn't be passing judgment on their neighbor. (I believe the Bible mentions that somewhere.)

Dealing with this individualistic strain in American youth challenges the adult to be responsive and adaptive to this mentality and yet to be faithful to the Christian message. That is more easily said than done. Fidelity requires a gentle insistence on the legitimate demands of community, even while encouraging the thrust toward individuality that accompanies emotional maturation. Fear of rejection can tempt us to soft-pedal unpopular truths, but we should try to be as kind and firm as Jesus was in passing on hard sayings. The minister's duty is to try to be heard and accepted, but, even more, to be honest. God does not oblige us to be successful, only to be faithful.

McCready estimates that about a third of the Roman Catholics in this country rarely or never go to church, yet they think of themselves as Catholics. The younger generation does not seem

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[9] Kenneth A. Briggs, "Religious Feeling Seen Strong in U.S.," *New York Times* (Dec. 9, 1984): L 30.

likely to reverse that trend. There is no easy solution to the problem of neglect of the Church's sacramental life, but pretending that the problem doesn't exist is no answer either. We must do our best to inculcate respect for tradition and to present faith as a response to a call, not a choice made in a vacuum.

Images of God and Jesus

Religious attitudes and practices are intimately bound up with and influenced by subjective perceptions of God. For Christians the same can be said of the way Jesus is pictured and thought of. The influence is probably in both directions; images produce attitudes, that is, and attitudes modify images. By listening closely to the ways they describe God and Jesus, youth ministers can learn much about the faith of young people and about their religious needs and capacities.

Listen to what these four high-school girls say about God, both directly and by implication. The focus of their remarks is not God but two moral issues. The first two are explaining why they reject the Church's teaching against premarital sex, and the next two argue against the Church's condemnation of abortion:

▲ God gave us life and told us he would not stand in the way, and would let us make our own decisions. Individuals should be the ones to dictate to themselves what their opinion on premarital sex is.

▲ The Church can guide us, not tell us to say no, because the ultimate decision is ours alone.

▲ I do believe in abortion. Everything goes back to the word "choice." As an individual you have the choice of how you want to do things in life. I think that God made everyone different, meaning everyone has a mind of their own to make decisions for themselves.

▲ I see that God forgives you for your sins, so why is there such a big argument over abortion being wrong?

Obviously, much more than God-talk is going on here. The way these young people think about moral judgments and decision making is very revealing, and we shall return to that aspect a bit

later. For now, though, consider what they say and imply about God. They are very clear—and quite correct—in thinking of God as one who brings us into existence, makes us all individuals, and scrupulously respects the freedom of will with which he endowed us. So far, so good. But then the implication is clear: This God not only makes us free but is also totally unconcerned about the way we use that freedom. Whatever we do is all right with God as long as we do it freely.

What we have here is a kind of moral deism, where God's only function is to set the world going and remain completely uninvolved. The God of judgment has disappeared; what remains is a kind of cosmic Cheshire cat who, no matter what happens on earth, no matter what horrors we inflict upon one another, can only summon up a vapid, disembodied smile.

Where did this care-nothing God come from? Certainly not from Scripture, though some careless people still try to perpetuate the false dichotomy of an Old Testament God of judgment and a New Testament God of love. The only cure for this kind of myopia is to read the Bible itself, and not selected passages only. The Jewish Scriptures are replete with tender imagery of God as lover, most notably in Hosea, Ezekiel, and the Song of Songs. And in the New Testament Jesus repeatedly describes a God who is not only loving and forgiving but who also reminds us of the destructive consequences of sin. But, of course, those putting together the youth-group or class liturgy seldom choose passages such as these for their readings. Many young Catholics have probably never even heard or read them.

The current strange version of God may be the product of a new paganism, one that is intolerant of any restraint but loath to abandon the trappings and afterimages of the Judeo–Christian tradition. Remember McCready's observation, "Americans do not respond to moral imperatives." It has been said that the human mind is an idol factory in constant operation. Surely this carefree creator is made to order for a culture whose dominant myth assures

us that we should experience whatever we desire. One is reminded of H. Richard Niebuhr's devastating summary of a certain kind of relaxed Christianity: "A God without wrath brought people without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.[10]

Others see the origin of this doddering deity in certain trends of youth ministry in the past quarter of a century. In the warm afterglow of the Second Vatican Council, there was an overreaction against some preconciliar practices. The sterile legalism and minimalism, the neo–Puritanical preoccupation with sex, and the pervasiveness of a sometimes-irrational guilt provoked a rebellion of sorts against fear and guilt in any form. Religion teachers and retreat directors, determined not to subject their charges to the old, discredited guilt trips, exiled the God who was Creator, Lord, and Judge and enthroned in his place the Friend, Lover, and Companion. This was a God who, instead of frightening kids, would inspire them. Instead of reminding them of their failings, he would assure the young of their inherent goodness. God does not make junk.

Best of all, he would offer them unconditional love. Could he somehow provide more effectively what every adolescent needs, a positive self-image? But unconditional love on God's part, though a consoling reality, is easily misunderstood. Those who spoke of it to the young meant, quite rightly, that no matter what we do, God never stops loving us. But some heard instead that God loves us so much that he does not care what we do. A small mistake, with large consequences! And so we have the spectacle of Catholic adolescents arguing for premarital sex and abortion, and appealing to a God who has given them freedom with no strings attached.

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[10] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, Harper Torchbook (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 193. I have changed Niebuhr's "man" to "people."

How should the youth minister speak of God? The way Jesus does. As a loving, caring, forgiving parent who comforts us, his children. Also as a responsible parent who challenges us, has high hopes for us, is sometimes disappointed with us—a parent who must put limits on us for our own and our neighbors' (God's other children's) good. Good parents are not pushovers, and God is an infinitely good parent.

The images that young people have of Jesus are also vitally important. The most appealing one is that of Friend. At an age when friendship and acceptance are so important, the young find this a rich and authentic approach to intimacy with God's Son. But, as in the case of God, we must take care not to allow one aspect of a many-sided Person, no matter how attractive, to overshadow other qualities to the point of distortion. William O'Malley reminds us of this when he warns against making Jesus a kind of Warm Fuzzy, a doting sentimentalist whose only preoccupation is patting our little heads and assuring us that all is well even when it isn't. Real friends sometimes tell us things we don't like to hear, and Jesus is the best friend we'll ever have.

During the years when God and Jesus were having their images refurbished by well-meaning but myopic catechists and preachers, the late Gustave Weigel playfully remarked that hell seemed to be getting cooler every year. Whatever happened to hell anyway? Today, in many youth-ministry circles, it is treated the way we used to deal with dirty words: if we hear people mention it, we wash out their mouths with soap. And yet Monika Hellwig observes quite rightly that every page of the New Testament reminds us that everything is at stake in the way human beings use their freedom. The imagery and the details of hell are negotiable, of course; but not the note of urgency that comes through in Jesus' impassioned summons to renounce evil and embrace goodness.

It is this sense of urgency that often fails to come through in much of today's best-intentioned service of the young. The reasons are not hard to find. Sin and guilt and repentance are not very

popular themes today. Talking about them in church or classroom or on retreat can earn low marks from young hearers who file all such topics under "fire and brimstone"—the ultimate put-down. But when we avoid such matters, salvation (from what?) becomes a game that no one can lose. And what could be more boring than that? Jesus was accused of many things in his time, but never of being boring. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the Jesus we meet in the Gospels

> is neither neutral nor nondirective. He doesn't tell his hearers that their main job is to find out what's important **for them,** or that their value judgements and choices are self-justifying so long as they feel good about them.
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> He is a man who calls to decision. He reveals people to themselves, helps them to see who they are and where they're going. He cuts through rationalization and self-deception. He breaks down the defenses that people throw up against self-discovery and the demands of reality. . . . He is unwavering in his determination to tell it like it is, no matter what the cost. If this uncompromising honesty leaves him with few or even no disciples, then so be it. He is organizing a trip through a narrow gate, and crowds need not apply. If the rich young man cannot stand the idea of not being rich, let him stay home and count his money. If the young fishermen aren't ready to leave their nets, they're not ready to follow him. If Peter doesn't want to hear about the Cross, he can stay in Caesarea Philippi where it's safe, but the first team is going to Jerusalem.[11]

This Jesus is a well-kept secret. It's about time we blew his cover.

There are certain elements of Jesuit spirituality that can help us to avoid the pitfalls just described and to present God and Jesus in more balanced and authentic ways. The First Week of the Spiritual Exercises helps us to approach God with a sense of our own need for healing. The Second Week, with its meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards and the public life, presents a Jesus who not only attracts and consoles but also challenges us. And the treatment of the Passion in the Third Week reminds us of

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[11] James J. DiGiacomo, S.J., "Telling the Jesus Story," *Today's Catholic Teacher* (Nov.–Dec. 1981): 22f.

the consequences of sin and of the Cross that must precede the Resurrection. It is the very opposite of the offer of cheap grace. Even in those youth retreats not based on the Exercises, where young people offer the presentations in peer-ministry style, we can be alert to what is happening and what is not happening, what is said and not said; we can gently and tactfully encourage them to present and to meet the kind of God that Jesus describes.

Notions of Morality

The fourth issue with which effective youth ministry must come to grips is the difficulty of communicating the moral dimension of the Gospel. There is a paradox here. Most young people are intensely curious about moral questions—the more controversial, the better. But several factors operative in the adult world as well as among the young can make it extremely difficult to carry on the most rudimentary dialogue. There is the unwillingness already alluded to, to respond to moral imperatives, an unwillingness so characteristic of this country. Moral relativism, long entrenched in secular academia, has its devotees among both the washed and the unwashed, for whom all moral strictures are arbitrary impositions. Telling others that, on the basis of moral grounds, they should or should not be doing something constitutes "imposing morality"—the biggest no-no of them all; for "right" and "wrong" exist only in the eye of the beholder.

Although teens and young adults often talk like moral relativists, appearances can be deceiving. They may well be reacting in an incoherent way to what they perceive as the high-handed, unfair, insensitive uses of authority by adults in power.

> "Who's to say" and "That's just your opinion" are clumsy ways of rejecting the idea that moral judgements derive their validity just from being said by authorities. "It's wrong to condemn others" is a reaction against the bullying tactics of judgmentalism, incautiously directed at judgement in general. "If it's right for him, it's right" is

a recognition of the plurality of the good (although misleadingly framed in terms of the right).[12]

Whether or not they are really relativists, however, they can be very hard to teach. And make no mistake about it: they very much need to learn. One does not have to be a prophet of gloom to see that our children are coming of age in an increasingly dangerous environment. Drugs, casual sex, pregnancy, abortion, and AIDS are only the most spectacular of the traps that await the unwary and inexperienced. "Youth at risk" has become a cliché. So the ability to make sound moral judgments and decisions holds a high priority, but it is becoming harder and harder to attain.

Recall the classroom conversation with which this paper began. For as long as we can remember, creative teachers have resorted to some version of the moral dilemma in order to teach in an inductive way. The adult lays out the hypothetical case, indicates the options, and then asks, What should the person do? For years, the student would select one of the courses of action open to the subject, the teacher would ask why, and the group would go on its Socratic way to learn outcomes that were more or less enlightening. But over the course of the last few years, the conversation is likely to go more or less like the one described earlier:

TEACHER: . . . So those are the choices open to her. What should she do?

STUDENT: It's up to her.

TEACHER: Yes, I know it's up to her. So what should she do?

STUDENT: It's her choice.

TEACHER: [*Taking a deep breath to avoid losing his temper*] Yes, we know it's her choice. But **how** should she choose? And on what grounds?

STUDENT: It's her choice.

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[12] Robert Fullinwider, "The Menace of Moral Relativism," reprint (Center for Philosophy and Public Policy, 1987).

What brought on this development? Among other factors, the abortion controversy has certainly contributed to it. Although there are arguments for abortion in certain circumstances and these deserve serious consideration, many pro-abortion adults short-circuited the national debate about the rights of the unborn by calling themselves "pro-choice." And so we and our children are being treated to something new under the sun, a dispute about a moral issue in which one side makes no arguments for the justice of its position, appealing instead simply to the right to choose. Thus we have on a national scale the same kind of frustrating non-conversation as the classroom dialogue described above. All pretense at rationality has been abandoned; the individual conscience has been pronounced infallible. In the face of an enormous and growing social evil, all that good citizens can do, we are told, is to leave one another alone. Is it any wonder that our children find it difficult to engage in meaningful moral discourse?

Despite these disheartening developments, however, there is much that youth ministers can do to help the young escape from the morass of confusion and self-deception. One of the most rewarding features of teaching adolescents is the opportunity to work with hearts that have not had time to harden and minds that are too young to be closed. Of course, they can be prickly and defensive too, and quite trying in many other ways. But for the patient, caring, and resourceful teacher or youth leader, there are great opportunities to win over hearts and minds. Grace builds on nature; and, while the young are limited in maturity and wisdom, they nearly always possess a bedrock openness and idealism waiting to be built upon.

The adult who wins the respect and confidence of the young and gains a hearing can contribute to moral development in ways too numerous to detail. But here are a few suggestions, which many of our readers will be able to expand upon from their own experience.

a. Expose the fallacy of the pro-choice argument. Point out that every choice is for something which can be helpful or destructive. When we catch muggers, drug dealers, and rapists, we impose our morality on them and put them in jail. We penalize them for exercising their freedom of choice by preying on their neighbors.

When confronted with arguments like these, of course, most kids don't just roll over.

STUDENT: That's different!

TEACHER: How? How are mugging and drug dealing and rape different?

STUDENT: They're illegal.

TEACHER: Good point! You're right. So what do you think? Is everything that is legal also right, and everything illegal thereby wrong?

The teacher and students can then explore together familiar examples from history. Did slavery become wrong only after the Emancipation Proclamation? Was denying women the vote wrong only after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment? Helping black slaves escape via the underground railroad was illegal; so was hiding Anne Frank from the Nazis. Was it wrong? Interning Japanese–American citizens living near the Pacific coast in 1942 was legal; was it right? As of this writing, apartheid is the law of the land in South Africa; is it right?

Conversations like these can help youngsters who are thinking about such matters for the first time, who may never have heard of these events or were never encouraged to think about them in these ways. Even when, like those who would not listen to Stephen, they stop their ears and figuratively stone the teacher, the experience of such dialogue with its spur to critical thinking can be salutary in the long run.

b. Another way we can serve young people is to help them think out and imagine the consequences of their actions before they

happen. Here are two boys and a girl thinking out loud about premarital sex:

▼ Most teenagers agree that haphazard premarital sex is wrong, but in cases where there is an intimate relationship, sex is a beautiful thing and can be engaged in, even though there may be consequences.

▼ Premarital sex is wrong if you do not love the person, but if you are willing to take responsibility for your actions and are committed in some way to the person, it is all right.

▼ Commitment does not have to mean marriage. Just because two people aren't married does not mean that they are not committed to each other forever.

The inexperience and naiveté of these otherwise-bright young people jump off the page and cry out for some reality therapy. They do not need to be preached to; rather, they need to explore with the help of a caring older person just what "consequences" and "commitment" and "responsibility" entail in real life. Someone must explain the basis of Christian sexual morality, not as an arsenal of arbitrary taboos, but as a respect for the demands of reality, for persons, and for new life. Someone has to answer the girl who wrote:

I don't think it is up to the Church to put the label "wrong" on something as personal as sex. . . . The Church believes in suffering for one's God (because we love him so much)—and **how** they make young men and women suffer! The guilt they place on those who even **consider** premarital sex is enough to inhibit them for the rest of their lives! The Catholic Church is not to **impose** their views as they do, on anyone. God can be the only judge—and he forgives everyone—doesn't he? Or is the Church and its views a jumbled-up mess???

c. One inescapable conclusion from all this is that youngsters need help in learning how to form their consciences. Awareness of cultural and peer pressures, ideas of God, distinctions between temptation and sin, the limits of freedom, and the nature of responsibility are a big order for inexperienced young people growing up in a confused society, where amorality is normative and many consider uninhibited self-expression an absolute right.

I believe that Jesuits as a group are well equipped to assist in this endeavor. It is not triumphalistic to point out what many outside the order have noticed, that a highly developed critical faculty is characteristic of most of our men. This ability to think logically, analyze reasoning processes, and expose fallacies is much needed today in the present climate of moral confusion. Although the roots of this confusion are not all intellectual, clear thinking is in fairly short supply when issues of right and wrong are addressed by both young and old.

d. More than clear thinking, however, is needed. As Craig Dykstra reminds us, moral agents are more than thinking persons; they are feeling, hoping, fearing persons.[13] There is an affective component in all moral decision making; the heart is engaged as well the head. In the case of young people, with their felt need for acceptance and belonging, peers play an important role in making value judgments. The negative influence of peer pressure is well recognized, but what is not always appreciated is the positive impact that peer pressure can have. Sometimes students will put in writing sentiments that challenge the prevailing pseudo wisdom of their contemporaries. They often have a salutary effect on their young hearers simply because they are not perceived as speaking for the adult establishment. Here, for example, are some eleventh graders speaking up for sexual responsibility:

> BOY: Teenage love is an infatuation. Teenagers experience deep emotional, social, and psychological stress during these years. When viewed with hindsight, what is love to them one day can be the result of a massive hormone influx. Teenagers still have a long way to go before they are ready for real love.
>
> GIRL: If two people love each other that much, why don't they get married? If they are too young, they are too young to handle such a big respon-

[13] Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 7–11.

these questions: Does he love me? Is this a one-night stand? Is he forcing me? If two people love each other, they won't mind waiting until they are married. I know I will not engage in premarital sex. When I get married that is going to be one thing that I give my husband, something that no one else has and can take away.

BOY: I have lived with the pain. I have been through what everyone else brags about. It is not that good. In fact, it stinks. Don't get me wrong. I am not turned off by sex. I just feel that there is a time for everything, and it is up to the individual to control his desires. Young people don't realize that sex can make their lives permanently changed.

GIRL: [*Commenting on this last statement*]

Experience is the best teacher. This guy sounds like he knows what he is talking about. Many other teenagers should follow his advice.

Exercises like these are helpful to adolescents because they show how divided they and their peers are on these matters. This may seen like a small accomplishment, but it is important. Otherwise, they might assume that it's an "us against them" situation, where adults defend traditional values and young people are all naysayers. Exposing the divisions among the young helps them to see that, in order to take a stand, they must do more than choose up sides in a phony intergenerational war.

And it is worth the effort. Sometimes persistence pays off, as in the case of the boy who wrote this at the end of the year:

> When we began the sexuality part of this course, I thought it would be a grand waste of time. For what could there be that I, a teenager, did not know about? My mind seemed to be a closed door, shut tight by the security that all teens seem to possess. Over this past weekend, I have looked over some of my homeworks, which often had comments [by the teacher] which I did not want to accept. Most of these things I just laughed at and put in my folder. But after reading them all together I felt strange. I felt as if I was the one who almost wasted his time by keeping my mind closed. I

was scared. Scared to be a teenager in an age of AIDS, VD, and abortion, in a society which often does not provide support or help to those who most need it. Most teens have kept their minds closed to the ideas and precautions of adults who, whether we like it or not, know more about life than we do.

My only problem bigger than my closed mind during this course was my closed heart. My view on abortion was that it didn't matter. Let women and girls do what they want as long as I don't have to feel any pain, any remorse, or any regret. I had a Superman-like aura around me. I didn't think about what I was saying when I said that things were not going to affect me. Maybe it takes the fear of being a teen in today's society to open up minds and, more importantly, hearts.

One of my problems has been that I was afraid of what seems to be a majority around me. Most of my friends engage in sex and I'm afraid to seem out of line or conservative. But over this weekend I have come to a strong conviction within myself. . . . I feel better about myself and about others. I feel that I can help to change things and that I can make a difference (however small) in our world. I look forward to the chance of helping a friend to decide not to have sex or not to have an abortion. These are terrible problems but my weaknesses have been replaced with strengths. My mind, body, and heart are one and ready to face society and hopefully make a change.

Notions of Religion

The last issue to be considered in our survey of the problems and possibilities of youth ministry is the nature of young people's religious aspirations and strivings. When we take an explicitly religious approach to young people, how do they perceive us? What are their expectations and felt needs? How do these compare with our own self-understanding and priorities?

As usual, there is good news and bad news. The good news is that the vast majority of the young people we meet in our various ministries are basically religious, at least in the sense of being open to a religious message. This should not surprise us, since the American people are surely more religious than the popular organs

of mass entertainment would have us believe. According to an experienced deprogrammer of young people who have become involved with cults, what they are all looking for is idealism, community, and a sense of belonging. After successfully deprogramming one very bright young man, he inquired how a person of his intelligence could have believed such patently nonsensical teachings. The other replied: "Maybe what I was believing in the cult was nonsense, but at least I was believing in something. My parents believe in nothing."[14] Most of his peers want to believe in something too. Whether they can articulate it or not—and most cannot—they seem to sense the emptiness of consumerism and materialism and are open to some deeper meaning.

As one would expect, however, this religious receptivity is often accompanied by a good deal of ambivalence. A high-school junior, asked why the number of Catholic priests is declining, wrote:

> When boys grow up, they see that the people who are enjoying (or seem to enjoy) life are the well-off people. The work they do to go to a good college, they don't want to waste on a life of little means as a priest. They want to be worth something. People are too greedy and possessive.

It is not clear where this student stands. What does he mean by "being worth something"? He seems to suspect that materialism may be bankrupt, but doesn't know what to put in its place. He senses that something has gone wrong, but sees no other way to go.[15] Jesuits and others who are involved in campus ministry are perhaps the ones who most often see this phenomenon up close.

Of course, there is bad news too. Like their elders, many young Americans are inclined to reduce the religious quest to the search for a congenial cult, a comfortable code, and a compatible community. The temptation to invent their own brand of Sheilaism, the

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[14] *Minneapolis Dispatch* (Nov. 17, 1979).

[15] James J. DiGiacomo, S.J., "Socialization for Secularism," *New Catholic World* (March–Apr. 1980): 63.

do-it-yourself religion of the young woman quoted earlier (p. 10), will always be there as long as religious individualism and consumerism are around. Will Herberg said something thirty-five years ago about American religiosity that still sounds strikingly contemporary:

> The religiousness characteristic of America today is very often a religiousness without religion, a religiousness with almost any kind of content or none, a way of sociability or "belonging" rather than a way of reorienting life to God. It is thus frequently a religiousness without serious commitment, without real inner conviction, without genuine existential decision . . . yet succeeds in generating the sincere feeling of being religious. Religion thus becomes a kind of protection the self throws up against the radical demands of faith.[16]

Herberg is talking about adults, of course; but anyone who is religiously involved with young people today must recognize that many of them might easily settle for what he describes. Teenagers especially, with their need to be accepted and to blend in, are liable to find prophetic religion frightening. It appears that many of those who minister to them have decided not to frighten them. Hence the God who wants whatever they want, and Jesus the pal who makes no demands. But there is a side of youth that welcomes risk and challenge too, and this should not be ignored.

Adolescents are different from adults in so many ways that it is not surprising that their ways of "doing" religion should be different too. Some of the differences are insignificant, due simply to passing phases in their growing up, and involve only superficial matters of style. For example, several years ago it had to be explained to skeptical adults that, when teens sat on the floor at Mass, it was their way of expressing, not casualness, but reverence. Time takes care of such minor misunderstandings, but a few merit closer attention, if only to help the generations communicate better. Among these are their attitudes toward obligation, spontaneity, routine, and celebration.

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[16] Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 260.

Among large numbers of the young, the idea of performing some religious activity out of a sense of obligation meets with an intensely negative response. Something in the adolescent psyche, which this writer does not pretend to understand completely, judges very harshly anyone who would participate in the liturgy out of a sense of duty. This strikes them as unauthentic and phony. As one boy wrote,

> Why aren't Masses optional anyway? We've discussed why man sins and we decided that, without the freedom to sin, being good means nothing. If Mass is mandatory, then it defeats its own purpose. Most people will go because they have to, and they come out feeling the same way without ever gaining knowledge or ever enhancing their faith.

Some may ascribe this phenomenon simply to the well-known resistance of adolescents to rules. But this does not explain why earlier generations of teenagers accepted the Sunday obligation in theory if not in practice. Whatever the explanation may be, the youth minister is well advised to tread carefully in this area. For reasons that may be more cultural than psychological, today's young people equate integrity with spontaneity. This goes beyond the obligation to celebrate the Eucharist. The idea of setting aside certain times of the day for prayer is also considered unauthentic. If you pray or worship for any other reason than that you feel like doing it right here and now, you are just going through the motions, and your prayer is worthless. Is such thinking shallow and immature? Of course it is. But that's what you have to contend with if you throw in your religious lot with the young.

Their attitudes toward prayer and worship have one more twist which creates a good deal of anxiety among adults who try to share faith with them. This is the problem, already alluded to from several different angles, of young people's neglect of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. This argument has been going on for so long now that both sides are growing weary of it and are making overtures toward what looks more and more like an uneasy truce. "They made a desert and called it peace." But before giving

up, it may be worth considering some elements that have received insufficient attention.

Everyone has heard over and over again why kids (and some adults) don't go to Mass. "It was boring." "I didn't get anything out of it." First of all, what do they want to get out of it? An immediate, palpable, emotional return on their investment of time and attention. When liturgy goes well and every person and thing comes together, we have a conscious feeling of self-improvement, a sense that our active faith has been enhanced. Everyone, not just teenagers and young adults, wants this to happen in church. It ought to happen more often, and we should all work a little harder to make it happen. No quarrel here. What is troubling is the corollary: If these things **don't** happen, then **nothing** happens. The whole exercise is worthless. "I got **nothing** out of it."

These are hard sayings for those of us who grew up believing that, even when prayer and worship, including the Eucharist, were less than inspiring, Christ was truly present, God's grace was operative, and the reception of Holy Communion was of immense value. This is not to be misinterpreted as a hankering after the return of *ex opere operato* rationalizations of humdrum or sloppy liturgy. I am simply pointing out that religion teachers have their work cut out for them when they try to inculcate an appreciation of and a reverence for the sacraments of the Church. Religious illiteracy takes many forms; one of them is an impoverished understanding of the sacraments.

Where did this almost intractable mentality come from? According to James Heft, the new religious receptivity of adolescents suffers from an absorption in the self. They demand that all spirituality must be rooted in human experience and must somehow be related to self-development. These demands are not unreasonable, but they do run the risk of getting lost in self-absorption and of being separated from religion's communal dimension, from metaphysical considerations, and from history. He cites the theory,

developed by Philip Rieff in *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*,[17] of long-range characterological changes in the West. According to Rieff, the old ideals were the political person, the religious person, and the economic person. What has been emerging for the last few decades is a new ideal, the psychological person, who rejects all forms of commitment except the pursuit of one's own well-being. For this type the highest good is entertainment, and the greatest evil is boredom.

How do I respond to such a mentality? I try to help my students see beyond short-term goals as they evaluate their sacramental encounters by reflecting with them on their experiences of learning in school. Do they feel smarter at 3 P.M. than they did at 9 A.M.? Wiser on Friday than on the previous Monday? No, they answer. Are most of their classes humdrum and forgettable? Yes, is their reply. And yet, isn't it strange that between September and May, if they hang in there and make an effort, something wonderful takes place. They learn. They grow. Talents develop. Skills are honed. Slowly, imperceptibly, but no less dramatically, maturity happens. That is the way God works too. We must not look for immediate, perceptible results from our sacramental meetings with Christ. That is like checking a plant every day to see if it has grown. Relationships need time to develop and deepen, and they are nourished by fidelity and perseverance; my relationship with Christ is no different.

Self-development, of course, is not the only norm by which to judge our sacramental life. But it is, not surprisingly, the one that seems to mean most to adolescents. And we can appeal to this dimension without distorting the reality.

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[17] New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

CONCLUSION

When those of us who minister to the young encounter the mentalities and attitudes described in these pages, we have to make pastoral decisions based not only on responsiveness to youth's felt needs and expectations but also on fidelity to the message of Christ. The same challenge faces those of us who do not work with youth but who encounter adult versions of these same problems. What is negotiable and what is nonnegotiable? When does fidelity become rigidity, and when does accommodation become betrayal?

Tevye, the protagonist in the popular musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, tries to adapt to a changing world when modernity makes its way into his remote Russian village. Love of his growing daughters moves him, a pious orthodox Jew, to make one concession after another to the new worldview which they and their young suitors represent. In each instance we hear the refrain, "On the one hand (I shouldn't) . . . but on the other hand (I'll give in this time)." At length, when one daughter violates the great taboo and asks permission to marry a Gentile, her father proclaims, "There is no other hand!!!" But it is too late. Tevye's beliefs have died the death of a thousand qualifications. As the story ends the family goes into exile to escape a pogrom. But their final status as wanderers in a strange land only mirrors the spiritual breakup of their world that had begun years before.

If we ourselves are disciples and not just religious consumers, we will have to come to terms with the fact that we are out of step with much of what goes on in American life. The youngsters who just want to "eat good, look good, and smell good" are not against religion as long as it doesn't challenge their values or interfere with their plans. But if we are going to teach as Jesus did, then part of the Gospel we announce must be a call to conversion. Never, perhaps, were both young and old less inclined to heed such a call; never was it needed more.

If all we want is to be liked by all our kids, we will have to stay away from the hard sayings. Many of our young people do not want to be told that consumerism is a shallow way of life, that religion is a community affair, that the Eucharist is a nonnegotiable element of Christian life, that you can't write off the Church and call yourself a Catholic, that God not only loves them but also makes demands, that Jesus is more than a pal, that some of their moral choices might be wrong, that premarital sex is not a right, that social justice is not optional, that religion is not a consumer item, that we are called to measure up to what God wants, not the other way around. It's much safer to keep it general, to tell them that they're beautiful, that God loves them just the way they are, and to leave them with the impression that whatever they do is all right with God just as long as they want to do it. The hard sayings will lose us followers, just as they cost Jesus many of his disciples.

From the earliest years of the Society, Jesuits have been famous for their ability to adapt to different cultures without sacrificing principle. Missionaries like Ricci and de Nobili showed us how to respond to unfamiliar patterns of thought and behavior. Today's missionaries put inculturation at the head of their list of priorities. Well, the more we listen to our growing children, the more we realize that the missions have come home. We have to develop a shared language of religious and moral concern. Our history, our spirituality, and our training put at our disposal some impressive resources for carrying out this task. At a time when religious education and other elements of youth ministry mingle positive achievements with some troubling weaknesses, we should be able to strike a needed balance.

Such skills are much needed today. Many of our fellow Americans young and old have been sold a way of life that is in many respects shallow, exploitative, and ultimately unsatisfying. Remember, it took a child to notice and say out loud that the emperor had no clothes on. The children who have spoken to us in these pages are trying to get our attention, and we must give them that attention.

SOURCES

Presenting the Constitutions

This "prefatory letter" appeared at the head of the first official printed edition of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. The Constitutions had been approved by the First General Congregation in 1558 and the first printing of them took place in 1559. The author of this letter remains unknown. Some have attributed it to Jerónimo Nadal or to Pedro de Ribadeneira.

In 1620 the Jesuit historian Francesco Sacchini added immediately before the brief concluding sentence of the second-last paragraph (at the place marked in this printing by an asterisk) the words "and by all means possible and with all zeal urge on others also, ever looking for God's greater glory." In that expanded form the paragraph was regularly reproduced and quoted over the next centuries as the "Sum and Aim of Our Institute" or the "Sum and Aim of the Society of Jesus." The text was translated from the Latin by Martin E. Palmer, S.J., of the Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, MO.

To the brethren of the Society of Jesus

Dearly beloved in Christ,

Here at last, beloved brothers in Christ Jesus, is what we have all been so eagerly longing and praying for—our Society's Constitutions promulgated in their final form. Their appearance has been delayed longer than we had wished, but the reasons for this were both compelling and weighty; namely, that they might be drawn up with maturer deliberation and with greater devotion and care and, by being subjected to more prolonged trials, receive a form that would be more solid and enduring.

In the Apostolic See's letters establishing and confirming the Society, authorization had been granted to enact Constitutions on the understanding that once enacted and approved by the Society they would automatically be considered as approved and confirmed by the authority of the Apostolic See. The Society was at that time scattered over the world and occupied with activities of great importance for faith and religion. Hence, it quite rightly entrusted its originator and founder, our Father Ignatius of holy memory, residing in Rome, with the task of writing and enacting the Constitutions.

Carefully, wisely, and religiously did he undertake and carry out this task that had been laid upon him, to the extent that he made it his chief concern for a number of years. With many tears, ardent prayers, and repeated sacrifices of the Mass, he implored from the Lord the anointing of the Holy Spirit, so that by the latter's inspira-

tion and guidance he might accomplish through divine assistance what was impossible through human prudence. In this way, with immense toil he drew up the Constitutions with all their parts and brought them to completion.

But our Father was a man of remarkable prudence and modesty. He realized that customs differed throughout the world, and that not all things were right for all places. He knew that, if the Society was to have everywhere a single hue and form, its Constitutions would have to be in the greatest possible agreement with all the practices of the provinces everywhere so as to enjoy permanent acceptance. Moreover, his estimation of himself was not so high that he was willing to rely in a matter of this magnitude exclusively upon his own way of proceeding or his own opinion and judgment.

Accordingly, during the Jubilee Year of 1550, he showed the Constitutions he had written to nearly all the surviving professed Fathers (who had come to Rome), and solicited their criticisms. Taking all these comments into account, along with various other points which had been turned up by day-to-day experience, he finally sent the Constitutions to Spain in 1553 for promulgation there. He also sent them to a limited number of other places, his intention being to test gradually how well the Constitutions meshed with the customs of all the provinces, and thus obtain the confirmation of experience for what had been originally established by reason.

All this would have been more than enough to ensure a reverent reception for the Constitutions. Nevertheless, in order to root them even more deeply in our spirits, a final hand was put to them by the general congregation last year, 1558, when the entire Society gathered in Rome to elect a superior general to succeed our departed Father Ignatius. After solemnization of the election, the Constitutions, which had been submitted for examination to the judgment of the entire general congregation, were received by it with great veneration and confirmed with unanimous enthusiasm.

The text of the Constitutions approved at that time was a copy of the autograph written by our Father Ignatius. Since this was in Spanish, the congregation commissioned the newly elected Father General, along with several others judged competent for the task, to examine the Latin version which had been prepared. They compared it carefully with the Spanish original. While not aiming at a word-for-word translation, their concern for an exact rendering of the ideas was such that they decided, especially in some passages, not to worry too much about idiomatic and elegant Latinity, but rather, following the ancient and approved practice of all the crafts, to try to express in our own special terminology the elements that are special to our order.

In addition, His Lordship Paul IV, by divine providence pope, submitted our Constitutions for examination to two most reverend cardinals, who returned them to us untouched, with not a word changed. Later, His Holiness gave his apostolic blessing not just to the congregation there present but to the entire body of the Society throughout the world, reconfirming and establishing by his apostolic authority all the favors, privileges, and indults granted us by his predecessors.

In view of all this, beloved brothers in Christ, we have no hesitation in presenting and publishing these Constitutions for your observance, backed as they are by such extensive deliberation and consensus. By authority of the most reverend vicar for Rome and of the master of the Sacred Palace, who have been placed in charge of the printing of books by the Supreme Pontiff, we present the Constitutions to you in printed form, thus obviating both the tiresome labor of making numerous copies by hand and the danger of errors creeping into such hand-copied texts. In this way we can ensure that the Constitutions reach you with greater ease and in a more correct form.

What need is there, brothers, for me to spur on and encourage men like yourselves—already running of your own accord at full speed—to the eager, perfect, and entire observance of these Constitutions? The grace of our vocation itself and our God-given decision to lead a holy life ought to be weighty motives—once we have grasped the character of our profession and embraced it with our whole hearts—for proceeding to bend every effort and exertion towards fulfilling what we have received and corresponding to the heavenly grace of our vocation.

This grace is set forth in the Formula of our Institute contained in the letters of the Apostolic See. There, however, our vocation and Institute are described in a global rather than detailed fashion. That is why it was deemed necessary to frame Constitutions that would give a fuller and more particularized treatment of various matters. 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.

Here we shall find the pattern we are to imitate, the way we are to pursue, the light we are to follow, the perfection towards which we are to aspire. Here we shall find the mirror in which to inspect our own lives. Beholding in the Constitutions the finished portrait of all virtue and perfection, each of us should do his best to present a living expression of it in his own holy manner of life.

Here each of us should eagerly seek out whatever applies to his own formation and to the fulfill-

ment of the duties of his particular state.

Here superiors ought to seek directives on how they should be an example to others; how they should govern those under them with conscientiousness and concern; how they should test the novices, educate the unlearned, strengthen the weak, and exercise the robust—in sum, how by their word and example they should lead all forward to perfection.

Here subjects should learn how to revere their superiors, loving them as fathers, respecting them as teachers, obeying them eagerly, trusting their advice, heeding their admonitions, and seeing in them Christ himself as the one who commands.

Here teachers should learn what disciplines to impart and what methods to use, and also what exercises to employ in strengthening their students' minds and forming them in virtue no less than in letters.

Here scholastics should learn to know the purpose of their studies, and how they should keep their work from overwhelming or cooling their fervor of spirit by learning how to couple prayer with study, piety with learning, heartfelt movement of the will with reflection in the mind.

What shall I say of our temporal coadjutors? Are they not also portrayed in the Constitutions—men of good conscience, peaceful, cooperative, lovers of perfection and given to devotion, happy with Martha's part?

The spiritual coadjutors, for their part, should be eager for all virtue as well as hardworking, steady, and afire with zeal for the salvation of souls.

The professed, who stand first in order and rank, should also excel by their example and heavenly manner of life. They should be like men marked out for death, ready, at the slightest bidding of the Supreme Pontiff and Vicar of Christ, to whom they have bound themselves by a special vow, to set off joyfully to preach Christ anywhere on earth, whether among pagans, Turks, or Indians, whether among believers or unbelievers. They should hold it a great privilege—as indeed it is—to pour out their blood, along with this momentary life, so that they might rejoice forever in immortality.

Finally, the Constitutions train us all for perfection, instructing us in the weapons to be used in combatting our three fierce and raging adversaries. They teach us how to counter the lust of the flesh with chastity, the lust of the eyes with poverty, and the pride of life with obedience. I shall say nothing of our observance of chastity (in which we should imitate the purity of the angels so far as our frailty allows), or of our observance of poverty (which is so strict that neither churches nor professed houses may acquire any rents, lands, or

even perpetual endowments). As for obedience, however, by which we consecrate the chief and noblest part of ourselves to God, our Constitutions require of us that it be so prompt, eager, perfect, and integral that we do not swerve even a hairsbreadth from our superiors' commands. In matters falling under obedience, not only must our action be guided by the superior's command and our will by his will, but even—something much more difficult—our understanding by his understanding.

To sum up: men crucified to the world, and to whom the world itself is crucified—such would our Constitutions have us to be; new men, I say, who have put off their affections to put on Christ; dead to themselves to live to justice; who, with St. Paul [2 Cor. 6:4–8], in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Spirit, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, show themselves ministers of God; and by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, by good success finally and ill success, press forward with great strides to their heavenly country.* This is the sum and aim of our institute.

And so I beseech you, brothers in the Lord, that we may walk in a manner worthy of our vocation, and, in order to know that vocation, may read and reread these Constitutions that have been bestowed upon us by the gift of God. Let us study them day and night. Let us 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.

Farewell in Christ.

Rome, the house of the Society of Jesus, 1559

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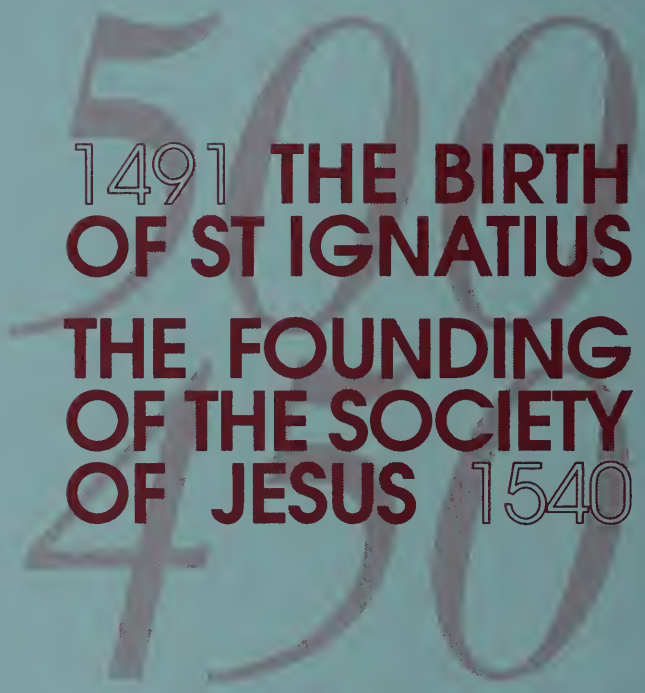

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