



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Pilgrimage Re-envisioned

*Mission and Culture in the Last Five
General Congregations*

CARL F. STARKLOFF, S.J.

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE SEMINAR

William A. Barry, S.J., directs the tertianship program and is a writer at *Campion Renewal Center*, Weston, MA (1999).

Richard A. Blake, S.J., teaches film studies at *Boston College*, Chestnut Hill, MA (1998).

Philip J. Chmielewski, S.J., teaches religious social ethics at *Loyola University*, Chicago, IL (1998).

Richard J. Hauser, S.J., teaches theology and directs the graduate programs in theology, ministry, and spirituality at *Creighton University*, Omaha, NE (1998).

James F. Keenan, S.J., teaches moral theology at *Weston Jesuit School of Theology*, Cambridge, MA (2000).

Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., chairs the Department of Fine and Performing Arts and teaches therein at the *University of San Francisco*, CA (1998).

Douglas W. Marcouiller, S.J., teaches economics at *Boston College*, Chestnut Hill, MA (2000).

Thomas P. O'Malley, S.J., is associate dean of arts and sciences and teaches in the honors program at *Boston College*, Chestnut Hill, MA (2000).

John W. Padberg, S.J., is chairman of the Seminar, editor of *STUDIES*, and director and editor at the *Institute of Jesuit Sources* (1986).

William R. Rehg, S.J., teaches philosophy at *St. Louis University*, St. Louis, MO (2000).

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32/5 · NOVEMBER 2000

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Of all things . . .

Every once in a while the question comes up, When and where and by whom did what today we usually call “preached retreats” begin? By that I mean retreats given by way of “points for prayer or meditation” presented simultaneously to a (relatively) large group of men or women at a place specifically set aside for such a retreat. One could call this a good question for a game of trivia, except, of course, that this practice was not at all trivial as an adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises, nor was it trivial in the number of such retreat houses and retreatants over the years, nor, indeed, trivial in the good that such retreats have accomplished and are accomplishing. The answer: Vincent Huby, S.J. (1608–93), created the first establishment of this kind set up explicitly for such retreats (known then in French as *retraites collectives*) at the college of Vannes in Brittany in 1660. Louis Kerlivio, a diocesan priest of Vannes, generously assisted him in its foundation. In 1663 the Jesuit general Giovanni Paolo Oliva gave formal approval to this apostolate. Nothing like it had existed before.

Huby founded two other institutions that became widespread in the Church. The first was the custom of “extraordinary confessors” for men and women religious, a practice that later became obligatory for religious orders. The second was the “Perpetual Adoration” of the Blessed Sacrament, which spread rapidly from Brittany throughout France and then “even to the Indies.”

The Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University sponsors a series called the “Santa Clara Lectures.” In February of this year, a lecture entitled “Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?” was given by Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M., professor of theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. It is well worth reading this lecture, which can be obtained in its published form from the Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara. Toward the end of the presentation, the author recounts that she has “tried to present the religion-spirituality problematic as it presents itself in the cultural context of twenty-first-century America, analyze spirituality and religion separately, and suggest that they should be related, not as strangers or rivals, but as partners,” and suggests how this might be done.

Such a relationship, analogous perhaps to the relationship of spirit to body in the one person, is based on a recognition that religion that is uninformed by lived spirituality is dead and often deadly, while spirituality that lacks the structural and functional resources of institutionalized religious tradition is rootless and often fruitless for both the individual and society.

Charles Shelton, S.J., is associate professor of psychology at Regis University, a psychologist in private practice, and the author of the May 2000 issue of *STUDIES*, “When a Jesuit Counsels Others.” He has recently published a new book, *Achieving Moral Health: An Exercise Plan for Your Conscience* (New York: Crossroad Publishing

Co., 2000], pp. 239, \$18.95, paperback). As he says early in the book, beyond “health’s meaning [in] its physical and mental domains, . . . there is another area that is especially worthy of consideration: the moral realm.” Here “humanity’s most cherished attribute—our capacity to evaluate and make moral decisions—deserves the title ‘moral health.’” As one reviewer correctly remarks, this book blends “practicality and intellectual rigor.” It will be of great help in understanding and successfully developing the role that conscience can play in our daily lives.

Lest readers of these remarks think that the author thereof confines himself to history, theology, and psychology, he here offers in addition Jean Leurechon, S.J. (1591–1670), mathematician—and magician. When he was seventeen years old, he ran away from home to join the Jesuits at Nancy in Lorraine. Thereupon his mother grabbed a dagger and rushed to the Jesuit college to assassinate the student counselor. His father, who was the family physician for the duke of Lorraine, appealed both to the Parlement of Paris and to the duke to get his son back from the Jesuits. The duke had the young man transferred to a monastery of the Minims for a month. Unable to break his resolution, the parents let him go off to join the Jesuits but remained embittered until, many years later, he became the rector of a Jesuit college in Lorraine. That reconciled his parents so thoroughly that his father left his rather large estate to the Society of Jesus itself. Leurechon taught mathematics for sixteen years, published several books, and then in 1624 produced an international best-seller, which rapidly went through several editions in the original French and several in English. It bore the accurately translated title, *Mathematical Recreations, or Collection of sundrie Problems and Experiments in Arithmeticke, Geometry, Cosmographie, Horologiographie, Astronomie, Navigation, Musicke, Opticks, Architecture, Statick, Mechanicks, Chimistrie, Waterworks, Fireworks, &c., . . . now delivered in the English tongue*. As Leurechon noted, the book was “fit for scholars, students, and gentlemen that desire the philosophical cause of many admirable conclusions.”

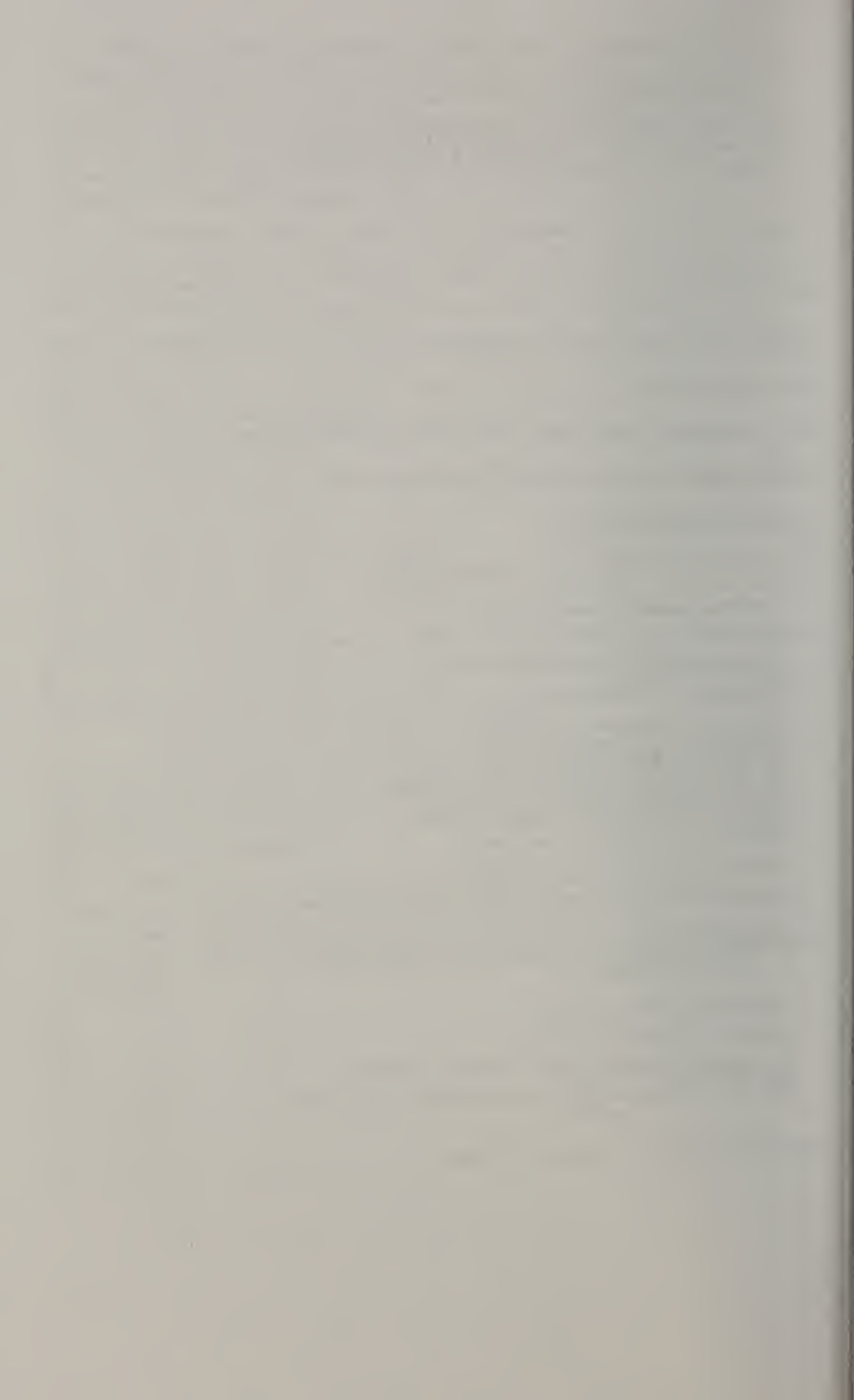
In problem 67 of the book, the author had a proposal for transcontinental communication by means of what he calls a “magnetic needle.” He thinks that an alphabetical code could be worked out “for London to Prague telegraphy,” but then adds that “the invention is subtle . . . neither is it expedient, for Treasons would be then too frequent and open.”

As he says to the reader in the foreword, it is far better to employ the mind in useful knowledge “than to be buried in vain pamphlets, play-books, fruitless legends, and prodigious histories, that are invented out of fancie which abuse many Noble Spirits, dull their Wits, and alienate their Thoughts from laudable and honorable Studies.”

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor

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PILGRIMAGE RE-ENVISIONED

Mission and Culture in the Last Five General Congregations

Coming to a large town before Montserrat, he decided to buy there the attire he had resolved to wear—and use when going to Jerusalem. He bought cloth from which sacks are usually made, loosely woven and very prickly. Then he ordered a long garment to be made from it, reaching to his feet. He bought a pilgrim's staff and a small gourd, and put everything in front by the mule's saddle.¹

What Is the Mission?

Within a space of a century, the chief governing body of the Society of Jesus, its general congregation, has traversed an almost dizzying road of learning. Beginning with a relatively simplistic theology of mission entailing conversion of the heathen or reclamation of lapsed Catholics, set within an exclusivist Christology and ecclesiology, theology has developed into the sophisticated complexity that has grown out of Vatican II, its *periti*, and its interpreters. What was originally a rather elitist concept of “high culture” has expanded to a realization that all human communities articulate themselves through their particular cultures, which are themselves avenues of the Spirit. What unfinished “projects” do these developments now suggest as we seek to live our “mission” and perform our “missions”? In this essay I shall seek to respond to this question by employing four categories or “types” of mission. But before proceeding further, let

¹ Parmananda R. Divarkar, trans., *A Pilgrim's Testament: The Memoirs of Ignatius of Loyola, as Transcribed by Luis Gonçalves da Câmara* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), no. 16 (p. 23).

us first go back to our introductory image, the pilgrimage of Ignatius of Loyola, the pattern of our own pilgrimage as his companions, re-envisioned through the concepts of mission and culture.

As both a metaphor and a historical fact, the theme of “pilgrimage” dominates the autobiography of St. Ignatius as well as the very early history of the Society of Jesus.² But that vision was subjected to dramatic re-visioning on the part of the companions and even of Ignatius himself, who devoted almost all of his final two decades in Rome to organizing a highly structured mission. As John O’Malley recounts, the earliest companions saw themselves primarily as pilgrims “mov[ing] from place to place under the urgency of spreading the Gospel.”³ However, As Fr. O’Malley remarks, even within the lifetimes of all these companions, the idea of Jesuit “mission” grew rapidly in complexity: “This ideal remained central in the Jesuit heritage, but it now had to be reconciled with the maintenance of permanent institutions and, just as important, with the necessity of continuity of their personnel” (15).

The dramatic emergence of explicitly missio-cultural thought occurred only in the twentieth-century general congregations.

O’Malley credits Jerónimo Nadal with maintaining the strong pilgrimage character of the Society through his commentaries on the fourth vow of obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff in the matter of “missions”:

Nadal provided the clearest and most eloquent explanation of what the vow symbolized. As we have seen, for him as for his confreres, “missions” and “journeying for ministry,” and sometimes even “pilgrimage,” were synonymous. In his exhortations to Jesuit communities he described such missions and journeyings as “the principal and most characteristic ‘dwelling’ for the Jesuit, as their “most glorious and longed-for ‘house.’” He loved this paradox that he saw entailed in the vow. (300)

The maintenance of this “missionary” model of Jesuit ministry, accompanied by the need for stable foundations, is in “the basic vision of the Church” for the early Jesuits. The Church was “‘the Lord’s vineyard,’ in which they were called to imitate the apostles and disciples of Jesus in the

² For a creative development of ways in which this concept influences Ignatian spirituality, see Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *The Road from La Storta: Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., on Ignatian Spirituality* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 203–24.

³ John W. O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.

exercise of their *consueta ministeria*" (301). This complex understanding of mission as both pilgrimage and "customary ministries" has inspired this essay to focus on the companion themes of mission and culture. That is, outreach into diverse cultural contexts is what gives our ordinary ministries their missionary orientation as well as a new sense of pilgrimage.

The dramatic emergence of explicitly missio-cultural thought occurred only in the twentieth-century general congregations. To be sure, from the very beginnings of Jesuit missions abroad, numerous reports have come down to us, most of them containing not just information but also reflection on how mission is to be carried out among foreign peoples. Detailed attention turns to cultural analysis too, beginning as early as the great missionary to South America, José Acosta,⁴ although the concept of culture is modern and would not have affected the early Jesuits. However, there was no "science of missiology" before the late-nineteenth century, and thus it is not surprising that none of the general congregations prior to GC 30 in 1957 have produced consciously missiological decrees.

If we speak of "the missionary spirit" of the Society of Jesus, to what does this spirit inspire us? It has been said that if everything is mission, then nothing is mission, meaning that authentic mission is something akin to foreign-mission activity. But this understanding is a partitioning of mission theory ill suited to the critical study of the Church's role as disciple of Christ on this "planet Earth." Complicating the issue further, today the word "mission" has become a catch-all, serving even to describe the goals of a corporation or an institution, which can speak of its "mission statements." How then are we to interpret the various usages of this word in the decrees of the general congregations? I suggest that we regard the problem of refining our sense of mission as a new phase in our Ignatian pilgrimage. But I also believe that there is no question that mission itself is facing a crisis. How can we describe this crisis?

Dealing with the "Crisis" in Mission

In the introductory section of his monumental ecumenical study, the late David Bosch inserts his readers immediately into the problem of mission as evangelization.⁵ That introduction can set the scene for the present

⁴ See Claudio M. Burgaleta, S.J., *José de Acosta (1540-1600): His Life and Thought* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999).

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991).

article as well, since none of the issues that agitate Bosch have been missing from the work of the general congregations, especially since GC 30. I present here a summation of that discussion, as described by Bosch, one that will readily illustrate the point.

How is one to describe and interpret “the present crisis” in mission (2-4), a crisis with a unique contemporary character? Mission is under attack not only from without the Church but from within its ranks as well. Why so? First, we have the problem of modernity, which states that science and technology have all the answers that can be found to cure the ills of the world. So what purpose does religion of any kind serve? Second, we contend with the de-Christianization of “the West,” of Western Europe in particular—of the very nations that used to send missionaries out to proclaim the Gospel. This problem leads to a third one; namely, the need for a reevangelization in the West now erases the old distinction between Christian and non-Christian territories.

In the fourth place, the entire Church, or, more accurately, its Western representatives, is suffering a massive guilt complex because of its relation to and collusion with the forces of imperialism and exploitation. This sense of guilt points to a fifth reason for the crisis in mission: the world is now divided into rich and poor nations, with the churches of the West enjoying most of the benefits of the riches. Finally comes the sixth reason: the “young churches” in mission lands of the Third World are sick and tired of being dictated to, and no longer want to be simply “mission fields.”

Bosch is a believer in the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18-20), in which the risen Christ sends his disciples out “to the nations.” That text is the point from which Christian mission derives. But Bosch then details a series of “impure motives” for going on mission (4-5). To start with, he cites the imperialist motive, which basically stands for subjugation of “natives,” at least a spiritual if not a military subjugation. Join to that the second motive: the West from which mission comes simply boasts a “higher culture.” Paradoxically, the third motive is grounded in a romanticist fascination with journeys to exotic cultures. The fourth motive involves a spiritual subjugation, or an “ecclesiastical colonialism” that fails to appreciate the uniqueness of “younger churches.”

Less impure but nonetheless unauthentic are views such as these: (1) there is no salvation without conversion to the true faith; (2) only by the mass conversion of unbelievers can the eschatological vocation of the gospel proclamation be realized; (3) for this purpose, the Church must be “planted,” in the narrower sense that the Church and the Kingdom of God are completely identified. All the above-named motives, given some divergences between Catholic and Protestant points of view, have been issues that the

general congregations have had to wrestle with in their discussions of mission and missions.

Defining Mission

Bosch's effort to sketch out an "interim definition" of mission (8-11) bears a striking resemblance to the various deliberations that the last five general congregations have devoted to that subject, and to discussions held in the broader Society of Jesus over the last quarter century. Sharing the position of Vatican Council II in its *Ad gentes* decree (which treats the Church's missionary activity), Bosch begins by emphasizing the "intrinsically missionary" nature of the Church. But such an uncompromising assertion then calls for the development of a critical missiology that strives to approximate the ideal of mission.

In order to move toward a definition, Bosch sketches out a possible missiological approach that integrates theology and the social sciences as well as a broader range of human disciplines. Thus, contemporary mission theory should attend to the dynamic relation between God and the world. That is, God is continually encountering

the world in new and creative ways, based on a relationship grounded in the Incarnation, or "God's self-communication in Jesus Christ." Bosch then confesses, in something of a reversal of the frequent claim to an almost "scientific" certitude behind mission, that the Church's

"Mission" must be distinguished from "missions": the missio Dei (God's work in the world) sends forth the missiones ecclesiae, or the outreach of the Church.

commission to proclaim the Gospel is based on "an act of faith which has no earthly guarantees" (9). We must learn how to expand the definition of mission beyond the concept of merely "foreign" missions, since the whole Church is missionary by reason of the Gospel's universality. Thus, theologically speaking, "foreign missions" do not constitute a separate entity, but rather share the same foundation as all other Christian outreach—"the universality of salvation and the indivisibility of the reign of Christ" (10). The difference between foreign and domestic missions is one of scope rather than of principle. But the principle is that "mission" must be distinguished from "missions": the *missio Dei* (God's work in the world) sends forth the *missiones ecclesiae*, or the outreach of the Church. The various particular

enterprises of the Church can never forget that they are part of the overall or general missionary task, which is “as coherent, broad and deep as the need and exigencies of human life” (14).

Mission is thus both God’s yes and God’s no to the world. It is God’s yes to the world in its welcome to all alike to be members of God’s earthly community, but it is a no to any idea that is totally identified with any particular social or cultural movement (11). In other words, the theology of mission demands discernment regarding its fundamental *theological* nature. In Bosch’s terminology, the Church’s mission is both *sacrament* and *sign*: as sacrament it is mediation, representation, and anticipation of salvation, and as sign it is the pointer, symbol, and model of the work of salvation.⁶ Thus far the ideas of David Bosch.

Now, to situate the missionary deliberations of the general congregations more deeply within the Roman Catholic context, we can turn to the 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI. It is again striking how closely this document resonates with the mission spirit of the general congregations. The Pope dwells more on evangelization than on mission in general, but evangelization is the very reason for mission and its specific character.⁷ The Pontiff begins his exhortation with Christ the evangelizer, whose message the evangelizing Church continues to proclaim. The same holistic message is heard: the Kingdom of God represents a salvation that liberates from all that oppresses humankind, but especially from “the Evil One.” The Church’s vocation is tirelessly to proclaim *metanoia* in the same way that Jesus did, both by its work of healing and its witness to eternal life (8).

Paul VI described the “essential elements” of mission: renewal of humanity through the Good News, the transformation of humanity in all its strata, its values, its criteria of judgment, and its models of life. This means the evangelization of cultures because, while it is only persons who are actually evangelized, the locus of this process must always be their cultural contexts. The Christian witness of an inspired life leads people to ask the right questions about their society and their culture, and calls people basi-

⁶ Not to engage in theological distinctions here, Catholics might understand Bosch’s language as analogous to that of Vatican II when it describes the Church as “the universal sacrament of salvation” (Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” [“Ad gentes”], in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents* [Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc.], 813). The point is the essentially theological nature of mission.

⁷ Pope Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World: Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975), 5.

cally to the mystery of Jesus and to membership in a Church blessed with a truly global vision (12).

Evangelii nuntiandi, again much like the decrees of the general congregations, strives to unite disparate elements: it seeks to balance the tension between testifying to a destiny fulfilled by grace only in the here-after and the necessary striving of a world undergoing liberation from social evils and promoting healthy human advancement (15). The Pope emphasizes developing suitable means for evangelization, by which the witness of a Christian life is offered. This takes place not only through the traditional means like preaching and catechetics but, more specifically, through the use of mass media, constant personal contact, and popular piety (23ff.).

Here one also encounters the tension between dialogue and proclamation. Pope Paul employs the ancient metaphor of “seeds of the Word” as St. Justin used it in his image of the *logos spermatikos*, which symbolizes divine wisdom at work in ancient pagan philosophers. Thus the Pontiff recognizes the various other religions as “preparation for the Gospel.” In the midst of dialogue, the Church must proclaim to the other religions, which are grouped here together with “unbelievers” and non-practicing Christians (31). This message seems to be reiterated twenty-five years later in the Vatican document *Dominus Jesus*, and the same tension is dramatically evident, as we shall see, in the documents especially of GC 34. While *Evangelii nuntiandi* does not employ the as yet unclearly defined term “inculturation,” it does emphasize “adaptation” to cultures, balanced by fidelity to tradition (41). Again there is a striking similarity in the ideas as well as in the tensions that pervade the papal documents and in those issued by the last three general congregations in particular.

At this point we can enter upon a discussion of the meaning of mission in the recent general congregations. As a means of interpreting the various usages of “mission,” even in the earlier congregations, I shall suggest four types through which to understand this term as the Society of Jesus has understood it and understands it today.

How to Understand “Mission” in the Congregations

The types I propose may serve as guidelines by which to interpret “mission” in the decrees of all the general congregations, especially those of the late twentieth century. They are the following: (1) the basic theological meaning, (2) “foreign” missions, (3) mission to indigenous cultures within “Western” societies, (4) outreach from already established

ministries. Under all these headings I also suggest overriding concerns that touch all of them.

The theological meaning of mission

This type governs all mission, in that it is grounded in the divine Trinitarian missions, that of the Son from the Father and that of the Holy Spirit sent into the world by the Risen Lord (John 16:7-14). Obviously, there is no Christian ministry that is not mission in this sense: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit."⁸

"Foreign" missions

Fundamentally, we may understand those missions to be foreign wherever there is no "local church." In Catholic terminology this means that there is no established local hierarchy, while Protestants take it to mean that the local community is not "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating."⁹ The problem of foreign missions in this sense is exacerbated here because the ecclesiastical structures and attitudes are still so European, even where the mission is within non-European cultural groups.

Mission to indigenous cultures within dominantly "Western" areas

I include this type because of the persistent problem of developing a strong local church among peoples of non-European cultures located within mainstream geographical boundaries. This problem is exemplified in the many complaints coming from communities of indigenous peoples living within First World countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States. Even though there are established hierarchies in the regions where these cultures are found, these areas are still "missions" because they have not developed their own local leadership. The problem figures dramatically in discussions about inculturation.

Outreach from established ministries

This type of mission refers to ventures that serve new needs and remedy deficiencies preventing the development of an authentic local church. Thus it indicates new creative social and cultural ministries among the poor

⁸ Flannery, *Missionary Activity*, 814.

⁹ This is the famous "three self" formula of Protestant mission theory as propounded first by Henry Venn. For a brief account of this theory, see J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 52 f.

and disadvantaged, the youth, and marginalized groups. Such outreach is a form of foreign mission both because these groups are usually subcultures to whom the Church is a stranger and because the Gospel has not yet been truly proclaimed in them.

In relation to all these types, the congregations, especially of the twentieth century, have asked themselves how the mission spirit is to be implemented. How is the Gospel to be proclaimed and then inculturated within groups where adverse social and cultural conditions hinder it? It seems that the three overarching concerns in these contexts are inculturation, the faith-justice tensions, and interreligious dialogue. While these issues are highlighted only in the last five congregations, there are presages of them from the very beginning.

The Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries

As noted earlier, reports of Jesuit missionary activity throughout this period make for dramatic reading: the massive collection of the *Jesuit Relations* for Canada or New France, Lafitau's writing on the same area, the reports of Valignano from the Far East, the treatises of de Nobili in India and Ricci in China, the writings of Acosta from Latin America. There is likewise much information available regarding the terrible tensions in the Paraguay reductions as they struggled to stave off the deprivations of the Spanish empire and the *bandeirantes* from the Portuguese colonies. And yet, there is virtually no evidence of concern about these men or their activities in the general-congregational decrees. No doubt we can explain much of this silence by noting that congregations until recent times dealt preponderantly with governance and internal affairs, leaving mission discussion to other occasions.

It may be, on the other hand, that discussion did occur in these gatherings, but never led to public pronouncements. In his introduction to the full collection and translation of the decrees of the first thirty congregations, John W. Padberg offers these remarks:

A full scholarly history of the general congregations does not yet exist. To produce one would involve research not only on the decrees of the congregations but also on their *acta*, the secretarial report of their day-to-day proceedings, and on whatever *postulata* still exist among those submitted to and accepted or rejected by the congregations. Such *acta* and *postula-*

ta, lodged in the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome, have never been fully investigated; they await their historians.¹⁰

The decrees themselves of these congregations are jejune in their mission statements. In GC 1 (1558), decree 130 promises to assist missionaries in the Indies with manpower, but no details are given in the decree itself (100). GC 2 (1563) manifests a certain kind of mission fervor when, according to the historical introduction to the collection, it offers six Jesuits to the Pope for service in the crusade being preached by Philip II of Spain and Pope Pius IV (6). The fathers of GC 7 (1615–16) ruled that missionaries in various provinces were not to have superiors belonging to their own nationalities—a decree that produced considerable tension, given the prickly feelings existing between Jesuits of English and Spanish origins in those days (15). The same congregation discussed whether or not to seek permission from the Chinese ruler to preach the Gospel there, and very wisely decided to leave this decision up to the prudence of the fathers on the mission (276–77).

During GC 17 (1751), Fr. General Ignazio Visconti forbade Jesuits in the Paraguay missions to resist any transfers of land and people by the Spanish and Portuguese powers. But again, as the historical introduction notes, nothing is said about all this in the congregation's decrees themselves (25). GC 20 (1820), the first one following the restoration of the Society, requested the general to send men to the missions of Ireland, England, and the United States as soon as possible (35). GC 24 (1892) seems to be the first to commend work among the poor and laborers, but inserts this into a decree on religious discipline (42). One might foresee in this context the problem that would plague the “worker priest” movement in the mid-twentieth century, when Rome suppressed the movement after the “apostasy” of a number of these priests.

The Twentieth Century

The nineteenth century, at least in the language of Protestant thought, was seen as “the Great Century” of missions, as the planning of the churches caught up to the dramatic expansionist spirit of

¹⁰ John W. Padberg, S.J., Martin D. O’Keefe, S.J., and John L. McCarthy, S.J., *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty General Congregations: A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), xii. All references to these earlier congregations, indicated by numbers in parentheses in the text, are to pages in *Greater Moment*.

the major European powers.¹¹ Protestant theology, following Luther and Calvin, had not emphasized foreign missions prior to the late eighteenth century, following the idea that the “whole world” had already heard the Gospel. Moreover, Protestant leaders were preoccupied with maintaining a grip on recently Protestantized areas. Arriving on the scene as late as they did, the Protestants had the advantage of a mission theory that made its appearance only in the mid-nineteenth century. The Catholic Church had emphasized missions for centuries, indeed from its beginnings, but had come to take this work rather for granted, in spite of the efforts exerted by de Nobili, Ricci, Las Casas, Acosta, and Lafitau, to name the most important, who attempted to evolve a sophisticated mission theory. One might conjecture, then, that the emergence of mission theory among Catholics in the early twentieth century was an indirect response to the new Protestant missiology. GC 25 (1906) has nothing more than a practical decree of implementation (no. 6) to respond to the postulate from the Holy Father, Pope Pius X, to establish an institute of higher education in Japan.¹² GC 26 likewise issued several decrees of a practical nature, granting province or assistancy status to areas previously considered to be “mission territory” (506–10). GC 27 (1923) focused almost entirely on matters of internal constitution and discipline and in a general way on our ministries.

In GC 28 (1938) we find an increasingly universalist tone. Decree 29 recognizes the problem of the estrangement of modern society from God and the Catholic Church (606). Thus, within this decree there are four titles under which to implement mission to modern society. First, the social apostolate is strongly commended, with a call for the training that will enable Jesuits to work among the poor, especially laborers. Second, there is a call for Jesuits to “gird themselves” for war against atheistic Communism and to learn how to refute its errors. Third, there is a statement condemning racism and statism and calling for “prudent zeal” in refuting errors of this sort. A separate decree (d. 31), recommends special attention to youth as a foremost ministry of the Society. Finally, decree 33 recommends that each province inaugurate a special periodical dealing with “missions to the infidels,” and take great care in selecting the men to be sent on foreign missions (609). GC 29 (delayed to 1946 because of World War II) reaffirmed many of the points made by its predecessor, but did not develop them further.

¹¹ For the best overall study of this period, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century*, vols. 4 (1941), 5 (1943), and 6 (1944) of *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers).

¹² Padberg, *Matters of Greater Moment*, 494. The result was the present Jesuit Sophia University in Tokyo.

The Five Latest General Congregations

General Congregation 30 (1937)

Although often enough little attention is paid to GC 30 (1937), overshadowed as it was by those congregations that followed it, this congregation did pass some significant decrees on mission. For the first time in congregational documents, in decree 54, "On Adaptation in Missionary Life," we find the following:

So that the Society might be able to labor more successfully for the glory of God and the worldwide good of the Church, in accord with its goal and aim, and to do so first of all in any quarter of the world and in work of any kind, and particularly on foreign missions, it is imperative that Ours, becoming all things to all men, adapt themselves to the varying conditions and customs of different places. (675)

As practical means for implementing this adaptation, the congregation urges missionaries to learn local languages as well as to study the culture, history, and religious teachings of each missionary area. Along the same line, these men should understand "the feelings, mentality, and customs of the nations to which they are sent," and regard them with esteem as long as they are not opposed to Christian faith and understanding. This is to be carried to the point of adopting the customs and manners of living of the local people. Such adaptation likewise means, for the men involved, setting aside any intemperate love of their own country (675). The congregation went on to pass decrees facilitating greater service to the Indian, East Asian, Latin American, and African Assistancies. For missiological concerns, however, the significance of this congregation was that it entered into the discussion of "adaptation," which was, in later congregations, to lead further into refined terminology such as inculturation, contextualization, and indigenization.

General Congregation 31 (1965–1966)

Introductory decree 1, "The Mission of the Society of Jesus Today," is instructive in how it employs the word "mission" in several different senses. In the opening statement, "mission" is clearly understood in the very general sense of readiness to undertake any ministry whatsoever.¹³ The word

¹³ *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), no. 1. Unless otherwise noted, numbers in parentheses referring to the more recent congregations indicate the boldface marginal numbers in this source.

“mission,” when used to describe the offering of themselves that Jesuits make to the Sovereign Pontiff, is placed within quotation marks, no doubt in order simply to recall the First Companions’ readiness to undertake whatever task the Pope might assign them (5). But it is then explained that the First Fathers joined this readiness for mission to a determination to become a more formal religious body, to ensure that any individual missions they might receive would not vitiate the close companionship they had formed. “Thus it came about that the promise made to God of obeying the Roman Pontiff with regard to all missions turned out to be ‘our beginning and first foundation’” (7). This sentence explains what the congregation calls “the ‘missionary’ constitution of the Society of Jesus.” That is, it refers to “those things which its vocation and its mission to promote the divine glory and the greater service of souls demanded” (9). However, the ensuing paragraph interprets this mission in a way that will apply to the more specific missionary efforts of the Society. It notes that, given the profound changes taking place in society and culture in our times, the Society’s mission will have to be carried out while conscious of both the challenges of atheism and the criticism of modern philosophy, as well as of the painful social conditions endured by great multitudes of people. Consequently, this decree calls for a revitalization of the Society’s general mission by a renewed commitment to Christ through service of the pope and the Church (14). It does not go into details.

Although it too comes under the heading of “mission” in the more general sense, introductory decree 3, “The Task of the Society regarding Atheism,” demands comment (24–40). In the first place, it is a direct “mission” from Pope Paul VI; in the second place, it obviously touches on more specific missions in many parts of the world. There is no need for a detailed commentary here, given the clarity and simplicity of language of the decree itself, but some missiological remarks are appropriate.

“The denial of God is no longer, as in former centuries, an isolated phenomenon; it has become widespread, affecting entire social groups and nations.”

“The denial of God is no longer, as in former centuries, an isolated phenomenon; it has become widespread, affecting entire social groups and nations” (24). This fact deeply influences our approaches to inculturation: if the Gospel is being proclaimed and lived within a culture where the various forms of atheism are prevalent, then no cultural analysis can afford to neglect atheism. One might even say that atheism belongs within the

category of “cultural system” developed by Clifford Geertz.¹⁴ Such an atheistic system is a whole collection of related symbols that support the denial of God on either the theoretical or the practical level. The congregation calls for painstaking study of and sympathetic dialogue with atheism, based on an understanding of the reasons for this phenomenon. The decree might well have asked for a study of those symbols themselves. In any case, although the congregation does not mention it here, this context is ideally suited to the presupposition that Ignatius placed at the beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises*, calling for both open-mindedness and readiness to question and to challenge in a “civilized discourse.”¹⁵

Part 5 of the documents of the congregation, “The Apostolate,” presents varying understandings of mission. Decree 21, “The Better Choice and Promotion of Ministries,” while not employing “mission” terminology, lays down certain ideals or principles for guiding ministry in general. These would later apply to work that is specifically missionary—namely, mission as described in the second, third, and fourth types described above. The “Norms for Renewal” reassert the Constitutions and the *Spiritual Exercises* as our fundamental sources of spirituality and the virtues requisite for the necessary indifference and openness to renewal (365). Again, without direct use of the word “mission,” the congregation specifies certain apostolic fields that come under the fourth type of mission given above—outreach from established ministries. That is, our conventional ministries must reach out to the more secular works of higher education, especially the positive sciences. They must reach out to labor and professional groups, to youth groups, and to international organizations. We must look to rapidly changing areas of the world in which special problems are foreseen, and to regions in which “neopaganism” has arisen (375).

Decree 24, “Mission Service,” focuses directly on mission as people generally understand it—service abroad, away from one’s homeland. It invokes Vatican II’s decree *Ad gentes* (on the Church’s missionary activity) as its authority when it states that “[t]he specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root.”¹⁶ Mission service thus

¹⁴ See Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87–125.

¹⁵ I have developed this idea, although not in relation to atheism, in “‘As Different as Night and Day’: Ignatius’s Presupposition and Our Way of Conversing across Cultures,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 28, no. 4 (September 1996).

¹⁶ No. 417. A recent book on mission has emphasized the current difficulty in defining exactly what mission is, even as explained in Vatican II. See Donal Dorr, *Mission*

understood is not the preserve merely of those who may have received a “second vocation” to foreign-mission work; rather, it is directed to all Jesuits, that they might at least be open to a missionary call, along with its demands for a spirit of “poverty, obedience, service and self-sacrifice to the death” (424).

This document exhibits a heightened awareness of the need for attention to and esteem for local cultures, customs, and traditions, as well as for works of charity and mercy (427). Among works for and within the missions, education of local clergy, religious, and laypersons figures strongly. Within the foreign-mission type, the decree places interreligious dialogue, as well as training in the theology of missions (432–23). Although decree 26 (on ecumenism) deals with relationships among Christian bodies, there is a strong admonition to work to eliminate the scandal given to non-Christians by the divisions among Christians themselves (462).

Decree 32 (on the social apostolate) deserves mention in this context, since it demonstrates an increased awareness of how this ministry is an outreach from more conventional ministries. It is also an example of how “structural” social thought had come to influence Jesuit communal reflection. “For social structures, above all today, exert an influence on the life of man, even on his moral and religious life. The ‘humanization’ of social life is, moreover, particularly effective as a way of bearing evangelical witness in our times” (570).

A strong sense of “globalization” likewise makes an early appearance in this document, advancing social thought beyond concern for tensions among local groups to concern for worldwide problems of inequality and unjust social conditions. In turn, the decree goes on to teach that our thinking on these problems should be theological as well as ideological. That is, political ideology must be subordinated to the intention “to infuse Christian principles into public life” in accordance with the means of our Institute (573). This is an early description of the “praxis” of inculturation that will appear in GC 32 and later congregations. GC 31 thus became a hallmark in the style of general congregations, in that its language began to feature the conscious “social construction” of reflection among Jesuits.¹⁷ It

in *Today's World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 7–13. John Padberg alludes to the same ambiguity in his *Together as a Companionship: A History of the Thirty-First, Thirty-Second, and Thirty-Third General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 18.

¹⁷ One excellent explanation of such structural thinking can be found in Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1966).

may be argued that the subsequent three general congregations found their inspiration in this one, as they came to manifest increasingly sophisticated thought not only in theology but in anthropology, sociology, economics, and the other social sciences as well. The Society's long history of critical missionary thought, which grew out of praxis in the field, now began to be explicitly reflected in the language of the Society's highest governing body.

General Congregation 32 (1974–1975)

In the matter of missiological language, GC 32 illustrates the remark made by John Padberg about this congregation: "Although any general congregation of the Society of Jesus is extraordinary, some are more extraordinary than others."¹⁸ One can argue that this body produced or reiterated more significant mission terminology than any that had preceded it; certainly the proliferation of "buzz words" about mission is quite dramatic. The formalizing of the use of the word "inculturation" started a theological, and at times polemical, conversation that continues into the present.

Decree 2, "Jesuits Today," made this now famous (and controverted) pronouncement:

Moreover, the service of faith and the promotion of justice cannot be for us simply one ministry among others. It must be the integrating factor of all our ministries; and not only of our ministries but of our inner life as individuals, as communities, and as a world-wide brotherhood. (19)

I include it among mission statements not only because it stimulated lively and sometimes heated debate about the focus of our mission but because it pinpointed the fundamental ideal of missionary outreach to be expressed in the next congregation, GC 34.¹⁹

Decree 4, "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," is notable for the controversy it aroused. Even though this is not the specifically missionary decree, still it calls for some comment. At the outset, the decree states that "[t]he mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another" (48). This decree reinforces the call for Jesuits to continue their work in specifically foreign-mission lands—the second sense of mission cited above. It makes justice a major concern for Jesuits working all around the world, but it also emphasizes a broader

¹⁸ Padberg, *Companionship*, 29.

¹⁹ For an instance of this debate, see Martin R. Tripoli, S.J., *Faith beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994).

understanding of justice. “Finally, if the promotion of justice is to attain its ultimate end, it should be carried out in such a way as to bring men and women to desire and to welcome the eschatological freedom and salvation offered to us by God in Christ” (82). In this same vein, statements about social involvement and solidarity with the poor are followed by others on the service of faith and “the incarnation of the Gospel in the life of the Church” (103).

The word “inculturation,” according to Padberg, replaced the word “indigenization,” which had first been employed in the deliberations.²⁰ Some brief discussion of the long process toward this term is in order here.²¹ The word “inculturation” first appeared, rather modestly and without any attempt to define it, in a 1962 article by Joseph Masson, who employed it, more rhetorically than technically, to call the Church and the Fathers preparing to attend Vatican II to greater sensitivity to cultures.²² However, following that article came a whole series of essays discussing the term in its relationship to the technical anthropological words “acculturation” and “enculturation,” meaning cultural adjustment and socialization, respectively.

Thus, when the term “inculturation” made its appearance during GC 32, considerable exchange had been taking place beforehand, but no clear definition had yet been agreed upon. The events subsequent to the beginning of GC 32 will now receive our attention.

GC 31 thus became a hallmark in the style of general congregations, in that its language began to feature the conscious “social construction” of reflection among Jesuits. It may be argued that the subsequent three general congregations found their inspiration in this one, as they came to manifest increasingly sophisticated thought not only in theology but in anthropology, sociology, economics, and the other social sciences as well.

²⁰ Padberg, *Companionship*, 86.

²¹ Perhaps the best single essay on the origin and progress of the term “inculturation” is that of François Guillemette, “L’Apparition du concept d’inculturation: Une réception de Vatican II,” *Mission: Journal of Mission Studies* 2, no. 1 (1995): 53–78. The best description in English is in Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989), chap. 1. The best ongoing discussion of the topic is in the Gregorian University series *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures*.

²² See J. Masson, S.J., “L’Église ouverte sur le monde,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 84 (1962): 1032–43.

The Decree on Inculturation

Decree 5, in itself a deceptively brief one—hardly a page and a half long—is entitled “The Work of Inculturation of the Faith and Promotion of Christian Life” (p. 439). It provides a striking example of how the initial work of one congregation results in the more developed work of a later congregation—in this instance, GC 34’s decree “Our Mission and Culture.” GC 32’s document clearly directs our attention to mission in the more strict sense of foreign missions or missions in other non-European cultures. It places special emphasis on Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with work to be pursued there “according to the mind and authentic teaching of the Church” (131), so as to facilitate interaction between local churches and the universal Church. The congregation then “entrusts to Father General the further development and promotion of this work throughout the Society” (132). Following this contact with the wider Society, he was then to write an instruction for the entire Society.

Between 1975 and 1978, following a procedure he had employed earlier in dealing with Marxism, Fr. Arrupe, through the mediation of Fr. Parmananda Divarkar of India, who was at that time one of his general assistants in Rome, wrote a brief letter to numerous Jesuits throughout the world who were ministering within diverse cultures. He requested from them a letter detailing their own understanding of the meaning of inculturation, collated this information, and in 1978 produced a memorable document. His letter is a landmark, since it contains the definition that has generally been followed in all subsequent discussions.²³ In fact, wherever it has not been used, whether one agreed or disagreed with it, the whole concept has been distorted. Fr. Arrupe wrote that inculturation is

[t]he incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular local cultural context, in such a way that the experience not only finds expression through the elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies a culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about “a new creation.” (p. 2)

The General’s letter is followed in that issue of *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* by further contributions on the subject. I have cited the definition in full here because it would become very important in the work of GC 34 some sixteen years later.

²³ Pedro Arrupe, S.J., “Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation,” in *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* (June 1978): 1–9. See *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu* 17, no. 1: 256–81.

General Congregation 33 (1983)

This congregation, dealing with so many issues and events, especially the crisis following Fr. Arrupe's illness and the eventual election of a new general, did not directly address the question of inculturation. Padberg does observe, however, that

a concern about the [desirability of] representation of different cultures and experiences [in the congregation itself], which had been manifested back in the Thirty-second General Congregation, surfaced again in this congregation. For the most part, however, it seemed that the proposed solutions answered this concern to a sufficient degree.²⁴

Although the decrees of GC 33 do not enter into the inculturation discussion in any detail, they continue the spirit of Fr. Arrupe's letter. In decree 1, its major document, "Companions of Jesus Sent into Today's World," part 2 reiterates the commitment to the service of faith and the promotion of justice that avoids both "disincarnate spiritualism" and "merely secular activism."²⁵

The document makes special note of the call from Pope John Paul II to implement the Second Vatican Council through proper adaptation of our apostolates to the necessities of today, to ecumenism both among fellow Christians and the other religions of the world, and to "the task of authentic inculturation." The congregation then confirmed its commitment to respond to the papal calls for a discerning implementation of the means for serving the faith and promoting justice, again recognized as the overarching ideal in all of our ministries (41). But we must turn to GC 34 to find detailed development of the thought of GC 32.

General Congregation 34 (1995)

The general theme of "mission" holds a preeminent position in the decrees of this congregation; the understanding of the term here includes the constantly unfinished and open nature of the mission given to the Church by Christ. Fr. Kolvenbach, the superior general, in an early address to the delegates had emphasized the theme of "pilgrimage," and noted how Diego Laínez, the second general of the Society, had seen the Constitutions themselves as "[a] summons to a creative fidelity, the Society's responsibility, when gathered in general congregation, to renew, enrich, and clarify with

²⁴ Padberg, *Companionship*, 117.

²⁵ *Documents of the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984), no. 36 (p. 55).

new apostolic experiences, demands, and urgencies, the way pointed out to us by the pilgrim Ignatius.”²⁶

The idea of mission as pilgrimage is hardly a new one. Pilgrimage was the “root metaphor” for the mission of the Irish monks who, with SS. Columba and Columban, first crossed the channel to the European continent in the seventh century.²⁷ The ideals of those pioneers (very different from the stability principle of Benedictine monasticism) bear a striking resemblance to those of Ignatius and the First Companions. They are descriptive of the mission sense of the Society of Jesus as a whole. The style of life of those monks called for them to be wanderers upon the earth, proclaiming to all that life is indeed a pilgrimage to be made in companionship with Jesus, the itinerant rabbi. In fact, the Society of Jesus must now in many ways live a much more “stable” life than those monks ever did. Its resemblance to them, however, lies in our considering our mission, along with the principles that support it, a matter of constantly unfinished development. That is the spirit that typifies the decrees of GC 34.

Decree 1: United with Christ on Mission

This introductory decree asks Jesuits to see themselves as “servants of Christ’s mission, especially in “the service of faith and the struggle for justice which it includes” (3). The pilgrimage metaphor again makes its appearance: to update our law and orientation for mission, we must have before our eyes “the Ignatian images of pilgrimage and labor” (4). Pilgrimage here, besides its clear allusion to the early conversion years of Ignatius, means, in particular, constantly learning, like schoolchildren, about the poverty and the passion of Christ, and entering into his resurrection. By this means we carry on the pilgrimage portrayed in the Spiritual Exercises and in the Constitutions; this whole process of pilgrimage is “our way of proceeding.” Qualities of this pilgrimage “procession” are labor, compassion, and reconciliation; this means care for the poor, the marginalized, and the abandoned (5). It is not at all coincidental that to be a pilgrim means to embrace voluntarily a condition of marginalization that serves as a challenge to the “structure” of mainstream society.²⁸

²⁶ Quoted in the historical preface of *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), 14.

²⁷ For a brief historical description of this view of mission, see Michael Collins Reilly, S.J., *Spirituality for Mission: Historical, Theological, and Cultural Factors for a Present-Day Missionary Spirituality* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), 56–65.

²⁸ For a fascinating study of the pilgrimage phenomenon, see Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York:

Decree 2: Servants of Christ's Mission

This decree proceeds in the light of the more general theological conception of mission—that of Christ's mission into the world, which is the paradigm for all Christian ministry and here that of the Society. The decree emphasizes the image of "friends in the Lord" engaged in ministry "at the crossroads of cultural conflict, social and economic struggles, religious revivalism, and new opportunities for bringing the Good News to peoples all over the world" (16). Mission as outreach from the center to the margins finds expression here in the idea that being "friends in the Lord" means being "friends with the poor, and thus engaging more concretely in the ideal of faith with justice." The framers of the decree were careful to place equal stress on both faith and justice: "Ours is a service of faith and of the radical implications of faith in a world where it is becoming easier to settle for something less than faith and less than justice" (36).

The decree summarizes its message by emphasizing that transformation of cultures is an urgent imperative, since cultural and economic structures can and often do support the roots of injustice. As an epitome of this message, we find the poetically framed formula:

- No service of faith without
 - promotion of justice
 - entry into cultures
 - openness to other religious experiences
- No promotion of justice without
 - communicating faith
 - transforming cultures
 - collaboration with other traditions
- No inculturation without
 - communicating faith with others
 - dialogue with other traditions
 - commitment to justice
- No dialogue without
 - sharing faith with others
 - evaluating cultures
 - concern for justice (47)

Decree 3: Our Mission and Justice

The inseparability of justice from culture finds expression in this decree, which likewise emphasizes that justice here transcends particular ideologies, philosophies and political movements (53). The decree again represents outreach from the center, expressing with great sophistication the socioeconomic, political, and cultural implications of this outreach. This is summed up well in the statement, referring to the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* and *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, “Since persons and communities are intertwined, there are important analogies between the rights of persons and what are sometimes called the ‘rights of peoples,’ such as cultural integrity and preservation, and control of their own destiny and resources” (55).

There is, then, an outreach to “new dimensions of justice,” such as globalization of the world economy, technological developments, communication, and business. Major issues in this outreach are economic-adjustment programs, the unfettered freedom given to market forces, the “homogeneous ‘modernization’ of cultures in ways that destroy traditional cultures and values,” and the growing inequality among nations (56).

Issues involving human life belong in this context: the “culture of death” in abortion, suicide, and euthanasia; war, terrorism, violence and capital punishment; drugs, massive-scale hunger, AIDS. All of these call for an assertion supporting the “culture of life.” Related to this is the congregation’s concern for the integrity of creation, for the environment, and for a sustained ecological equilibrium. It helps us to place concern within the context of inculturation if we again attend to Geertz’s “cultural systems” methodology, which in turn calls us to study the symbol systems that express these issues as well as to deal with them.

In the light of all these concerns, one can appreciate the decree’s emphasis on the marginalization and exploitation of Africa in the “new world order” (61). Ironically, the world recognizes the vital position of Africa and its resources even as it excludes that continent from effective participation in creating that new order. Related to this is the recognition of the marginal and exploited condition of all indigenous peoples around the world. The decree also calls attention to the connection between the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and the massive refugee crisis everywhere. The practical implementation of these realizations must take three criteria into account:

When understood in the light of the faith which seeks justice, the criterion of “greater need” points towards places or situations of serious injustice; the criterion of “more fruitful,” towards ministry which can be more effective

in creating communities of solidarity; the criterion of “more universal,” towards action which contributes to structural change to create a society more based on shared responsibility. (71)

Decree 4: Our Mission and Culture

This decree, more than any other general-congregational decree, enters into detail about the meaning of mission and its relationship to culture and cultures. Its framers comment that the great cultural diversity evident in the congregation’s representatives has heightened their awareness of the diversity of cultures in the world as well as in the Society of Jesus. The decree then notes the lament of Pope Paul VI that “the split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt *the tragedy of our time*” (76).

The decree then moves on to discuss the need for inculturation, employing a behavioral description of culture: “‘Culture’ means the way in which people live, think, feel, organize themselves, celebrate and share life. In every culture, there are underlying systems of values, meanings, and views of the world, which are expressed, visibly, in language, gestures, symbols, rituals, and styles” (75 n.). Inculturation is the way in which the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures while introducing people into her own community, “taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within” (76). The decree manifests an increased sophistication about this point by detailing the different examples of cultures in which the process of mission still consists of proclaiming the “something new” of the Gospel and receiving “something new” from each culture (76).

Just as the early Church had to deal with its first non-Hebraic context in Greek civilization, today it must relate to contemporary indigenous cultures, the great religious traditions, and to “critical modernity.”

Thus, just as the early Church had to deal with its first non-Hebraic context in Greek civilization, today it must relate to contemporary indigenous cultures, the great religious traditions, and to “critical modernity.” More specifically, contemporary secular culture does not even accept religious faith as among its values, and has even developed in opposition to the Church. Asian cultures, even after centuries of missionary activity, deeply distrust Christianity because of its link with Western culture. The same problem applies to present-day indigenous peoples who have been subjected to colonialism, among whom African communities are the primary example (78–84).

The decree here returns to the congregation's fundamental understanding of Jesuit mission, recognizing "the inseparability of *justice, dialogue, and the evangelization of culture*" (85). The basic humanistic inspiration of the Society emerges here in the desire to respect the humanity of all peoples with whom it works, in all their diversity: "Our service of the Christian faith must never disrupt the best impulses of the culture in which we work, nor can it be an alien imposition from outside. It is directed towards working in such a way that the line of development springing from the heart of a culture leads it to the Kingdom."²⁹ This statement introduces a discussion focused more on "foreign" mission, or mission to cultures outside the pale of the mainstream European heritage.

A reexamination of the Christian mystical tradition may be of help to us, insofar as we might recognize the incomprehensibility of God there.

The members of GC 34 express the desire to work closely with indigenous cultures, especially since they are so threatened by powerful pressures, and to support the Jesuits at work with so many tribal and ethnic groups around the world. They acknowledge that the Society has often failed to identify with the more marginalized cultural groups, but has remained "a foreign presence" among them. There is an admission of the tendency to side with the "high cultures" of the elite and to disregard

the cultures of the poor (95).

Dialogue makes its entry into the discussion here, based on the mystery of unity that has existed within all cultures since the beginning of creation. The decree sees this mystery as a call to share in the Paschal mystery as it is manifested throughout human history. To benefit fully from this gift, there must be a dialogue by which we let God be present in our midst, through the way in which we open ourselves to others (101). The dialogue is based on a kind of optimism: "We do not plant the seed of his presence, for he has already done that in the culture; he is already bringing it to fruitfulness, embracing all the diversity of creation, and our role is to cooperate with this divine activity" (101).

The decree recognizes that the Society's mission to critical postmodern culture is a mission to an alien culture, in the sense that persons of this

²⁹ No. 87. This quotation is a close paraphrase of Bernard Lonergan's prophetic argument on the importance of communications as a "functional specialty" of theology. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 362.

worldview consider themselves to have passed beyond Christianity, or even beyond any religious commitment. How can we “incarnate the Gospel” in such a culture? Only by recognizing the seeds of disbelief in ourselves can we appreciate how impossible it will be to use conventional theological language with such persons. A reexamination of the Christian mystical tradition may be of help to us, insofar as we might recognize the incomprehensibility of God there. “‘Post-Christian culture’ witnesses, strangely and implicitly, to a reverence for the God who cannot be imagined by human beings without destroying the divine mystery” (105). “‘Post-Christian culture’ witnesses, strangely and implicitly, to a reverence for the God who cannot be imagined by human beings without destroying the divine mystery” (105). Thus, “[a] genuine attempt to work from within the shared experience of Christians and unbelievers in a secular and critical culture, built upon respect and friendship, is the only successful starting point” (107).

Did this congregation fall into a naive romanticism in expressing such a positive outlook? I do not believe so, since decree 4 says, “The aim of an inculturated evangelization in post-Christian contexts is not to secularize or dilute the Gospel by accommodating it to the horizon of modernity, but to introduce the possibility and reality of God through practical witness and dialogue” (106). Even less is there any naiveté about modern technological culture:

The “city” can be for us the symbol of our current efforts to bring fulfillment to human culture. That the project, in its present form, is seriously flawed no one doubts; that we are more skeptical now than we were even thirty years ago is true; that there have been massive dislocations and inequalities is clear to all; that the totalitarian experiments of this century have been brutal and almost demonic in intensity none will dispute; that it seems sometimes to resemble the Babel and Babylon of the Bible is all too evident. (110)

These words must, at least in their warning against romanticism, be applied to the encounter with the marginalized cultures as well, as a great deal of popular literature about these cultures makes clear. The principle about not watering down the Gospel remains a constant.

All told, it seems to me that this decree sees inculturation as a “utopian” concept. That is, whether one understands “utopia” to mean “no place” or “good place,” it is a metaphor for the ideal striving that inculturation represents. We know that this process will not be completed this side of the Parousia, but we struggle to realize it as an eschatological reality in hope of the Kingdom. Another way to understand inculturation and indeed all the mission concepts in GC 34 is that they are “asymptotic”—that mathematical symbol employed by Karl Rahner and others to stand for a movement

toward a point, even knowing that we will at best touch that point only tangentially.

Decree 5: Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue

Under the rubric of interfaith or interreligious dialogue, the concept of “mission” encounters its most daunting challenge, especially in light of recent declarations from Rome. There is no question that the Church, and thus the Society of Jesus, have a “mission” to people of non-Christian faiths. The question is, What kind of mission? The question is a neuralgic one, to

say the least, since mission as proselytism is today considered an imperialistic and arrogant kind of spiritual colonialism. And yet, the critics of such an understanding of mission, if they are Christian themselves, must grant that Christianity is essentially missionary. If it had not been, there would be no Christianity at all today, save perhaps for a small sect in Palestine, and modern Christians would still be practicing some form of their parent culture’s tribal

So dialogue and proclamation are not contrary ministries, but rather aspects of the one evangelizing mission of the Church.

religion. The paradoxes of history are no more dramatic than at this juncture. We cannot respond to all of them here, but we can at least examine what decree 5 has to say about “mission” in the context of interreligious dialogue.

The introduction to this decree is both Trinitarian and incarnational in the spirit of the Contemplation on the Incarnation. We are to imagine ourselves looking down with the Trinity on the diverse peoples of the globe, not “going down to hell,” but depicted as within a “rich ethnic, cultural, and religious pluralism” (128)—a statement that Ignatius in his time was not likely to make. Seeing this diversity as a “richness,” then, we are asked how we can respond to the racism, cultural prejudice, religious fundamentalism, and intolerance so common in today’s world. Thus, mission here takes on a profoundly socioethical cast, calling for a dialogical attitude that seeks common ground in combating all elements of exploitation and division. Moreover, dialogue “should never be made a strategy to elicit conversions.”³⁰ The decree goes on thus: “To be religious today is to be interreligious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of pluralism” (130). It then supports the “fourfold dialogue”

³⁰ No. 130. The congregation is citing the Asian Bishops’ Conference here.

recommended by the Church: the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of religious experience, and the dialogue of theological exchange.³¹

The decree recognizes how extensively our contemporary apostolates have brought us into contact with believers in other religions, which it describes as “the human response to God’s salvific work in peoples and cultures.” Thus, “[w]e realize that God, who wants all people to be saved, leads believers of all religions to the harmony of the Reign of God in ways known only to him.”³² Dialogue with these religions is “an integral element of the Church’s evangelizing mission.”³³ So dialogue and proclamation are not contrary ministries, but rather aspects of the one evangelizing mission of the Church. The former “reaches out to the mystery of God active in others,” and the latter “witnesses to and makes known God’s mystery as it has been manifested to us in Christ” (135). The theological humanism of the Society of Jesus manifested here sees religion as containing a liberating potential to create a more humane world: “Hence commitment to integral human liberation, especially of the poor, becomes the meeting point of all religions” (136).

This decree concludes with a summary of the ideals of both liberation and inculturation, joined to a set of concrete responses to the different major religions of the world, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The one negative note here is a rather gentle caution regarding fundamentalism, although the decree challenges Jesuits to study this phenomenon and to attempt to dialogue even with fundamentalists, so as to discover their basic motivations and thus be of help to them.

Conclusion: Mission and Culture: Where Are We in the Pilgrimage?

To conclude, let me return very briefly to the beginning of this essay, and then attempt to respond to the question of “unfinished projects.” We have seen how the latest general congregations have reflected a tendency to render the theology and practice of mission more complex. Likewise, the understanding of culture has expanded out of a

³¹ No. 131. This formula comes from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples—an interesting pairing of commissions!

³² No. 133. Again, the congregation cites here a statement from the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences.

³³ No. 133. This is a quotation from Pope John Paul II in 1987.

rather “elitist” concept of “high culture” to an appreciation that all human communities articulate themselves through particular cultures, which are themselves avenues of the Spirit. What unfinished projects does this situation now propose as we seek to live our “mission” and perform our “missions”? I shall respond to this question by using the types or categories of mission suggested at the outset of this article.

The Trinitarian Paradigm

Aside from the potentially abstract nature of this paradigm, it reminds us that the Church, far from simply “having” a mission, *is itself mission*. That is, coming forth from the Father, the Word Incarnate began his mission by choosing followers to share that mission, and in sharing it to become the primitive ecclesial community. They could not fail to see themselves as mission by the very nature of their calling. I believe that we can derive a practical corollary from this Christian identity principle, as expressed in the ecclesial vocation of the Society; namely, that each our ministries is an “outreach.” In that sense, then, everything *is* mission after all, in that Christians are always “sent” by Christ. Does that mean, then, that effectively *nothing* is mission, since we have so watered down the concept, and that we have forgotten the call to go out “to the nations”? This returns us to the second mission type.

Mission as “Foreign Mission”

The best answer to this riddle today lies in the mind-boggling intermingling of “foreign” cultures to be found in all large cities almost everywhere, and generally on the campuses of all large universities. That is, every student (to be less vague, let us speak here of our Catholic people) and every faculty member, administrator, and campus minister is called to be Christ’s mission “to the nations” simply by reaching out to every “foreigner” he or she encounters. The same might be said of many of our parishes and perhaps of our high schools.

We need not search far to discover concretions of this cosmopolitan situation. For example, several years ago a group of immigrant Muslims approached the parish staff of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Toronto, Canada. They requested the staff to provide space for their worship services. The parish responded by making available the parish hall one day a week. In addition, the parish boundary encloses large communities of Hindus and some Buddhists, and many of the Hindus come frequently to the Marian shrine in the church to pray. To thicken this broth, I recall at least one vociferous protest against sheltering the Muslims; it came from an immigrant

Christian from the Middle East, who perceived the event as an Islamic conversion ploy! A very down-home challenge to our mission theology, this.

As I sit writing this essay, I am about two hundred yards from the Islamic Center of St. Louis, located on the west end of the St. Louis University campus. The university likewise has a Muslim Students Association, with very visible signs manifested in the attire of many Islamic students. Also, within many departments, with the possible exception of Theological Studies and perhaps Philosophy, there is a mixture of strong Christian and Catholic faith testimony and of a modernity to which faith means very little. These viewpoints may be even said to constitute divergent “cultural systems.” Whatever our mission theology may be, whether dialogical or proclamational or both, the “foreign missions” with all the theological and pastoral questions are right here in “River City.”

Indigenous Cultures within “Western” Societies

This issue is being slowly recognized within the boundaries of Roman Catholicism—too slowly for many. GC 34 recognized the issue with great clarity in acknowledging the marginalization of indigenous peoples even within the Church and attempting to do something about it. But while the recent synods for America and Asia have recognized the problem of the “foreignness” of certain cultures within the Church, the final documents of these synods are short on positive and practical statements of inculturation. Under the above heading, then, a theology of mission must appreciate how the Church itself, granted its divine origin and inspiration, has had the character of a subsystem of Judaic, Hellenistic, and Germanic cultures. Yet it must learn how to carry on dialogue in matters of worship, spirituality, law, and lifestyle with all the non-Western cultures sharing the Christian faith. The alternative is that the Church, and consequently the ministry of the Society of Jesus in these areas, will remain “foreign mission.”

Mission as “Outreach” from Established Ministries

The various connections of our institutions and parishes with outside social and cultural groups constitute “mission,” not simply in the more general Trinitarian sense, but in a sense analogous to “foreign” mission. That is, these forms of outreach extend into places where the Good News is not known or proclaimed, or where it has not called forth faith and justice. Hence the intimate connection between inculturation and liberation theology. Ironically, as so many of us have witnessed during even brief visits to barrios in Central America, townships in South Africa, or urban ghettos and areas of rural poverty even in North America, the Gospel is being lived

there. Many who go there to minister have found themselves being ministered to. But I use the word “ironically” because, while injustice has not necessarily muted the voice of the Gospel, the very situation testifies to its foreignness in the dominant society that allows these conditions to prevail.

Therefore, as GC 34 also recognizes, the “sending Church” itself can be enriched by those to whom it sends missionaries. On the other hand, that the poor do enrich us is no excuse for failing to recognize the absence of gospel values wherever prosperity and destitution are allowed to exist side by side. This fact leaves the Church and the Society with a massive project of developing an authentic mission theology for which “praxis” is a prime criterion. This “conscientization” is the reason why the questions of mission and culture loom so large in the general congregations of the twentieth century, and will no doubt continue to do so into the twenty-first century.



SOURCES

Points for a Spiritual Director

*Jean Rigoleuc (1595–1658) was one of a group of renowned Jesuit spiritual writers and accomplished guides to the interior life in seventeenth-century France, in company with others who were better known, such as Jean Joseph Surin (1600–1665) and Louis Lallemant (1587–1635). Rigoleuc entered the Society of Jesus in 1617, and after ordination spent his life as a teacher and spiritual director at the Jesuit college at Vannes in Brittany, as a mission preacher, and as a spiritual director for priests. He had had Lallemant for tertian director, and it is due to Rigoleuc that we have Lallemant's Spiritual Doctrine. He had made a collection of Lallemant's conferences, which were later published some sixty years after the death of Lallemant. Rigoleuc himself wrote two highly regarded works for confessors and catechists and *La Vie et la doctrine spirituelle du P. Lallemant*. Only a few of his writings have been put into English in an undated *Walking with God, or Dwellers in the Recreation House of the Lord*.*

*The selection given here comes from the *Vie du Père Rigoleuc*, published in 1686 by another French Jesuit, Pierre Champion, and revised, reedited, and republished many times later. Rigoleuc composed these points either for his own use or for other confessors. The text of some of them would lead one to suppose that they were used most often when directing priests and religious, but they were equally applicable to the laity. It is to be noted that they start with the past (see no. 1), look to the future (no. 2), return to the present, and again open out to the future (no. 18). Adapting for their seventeenth-century context, we can find these points quite useful today too. I made this translation from the French version in *Christus*, no. 188 (October 2000): 488–89.*

JWP SJ

Points to ask about when one takes on the responsibility of serving as a spiritual director for people.

1. For how long and in what manner were they attracted to the service of God?
2. What idea of perfection do they propose for themselves?
3. Have they practiced mental prayer and for how long? In what way do they pray? How do they prepare for it? How easy do they find it? How do they regard vocal prayer?
4. What attraction do they have for solitude and recollection, and do they experience the presence of God familiarly during the day?
5. By what spirit are they more touched? Is it of fear or of love?
6. What care do they bring to keeping a watch over their hearts? Do they experience various movements therein? Do they distinguish those that come from nature, from the evil spirit, and from the spirit of God?
7. How do they carry out the responsibilities of their state of life? How do



- they attend to their rule of life, their vows, and their rules?
8. What care do they take to overcome themselves? In what do they experience more difficulties, and what force do those difficulties have?
 9. Do they know their faults? What bad habits do they have? To what passions are they most subject, and do they voluntarily entertain them? Do they have some attachment, some imperfection, that they do not want to give up? Do they commit faults deliberately, or do they ordinarily not sin except by surprise or by weakness?
 10. Do they recognize their faults right from the time when they have committed them, and do they check them and make amends to God?
 11. What temptations and trials do they experience? Do they still experience them, and how do they deal with them?
 12. Do they have many or few spiritual consolations and feelings of devotion? Do they experience ups and downs in their spirit, darkness, dryness, disgust, and other interior afflictions?
 13. What desire do they have to suffer, and what part in his cross has our Lord given to them?
 14. What mortifications do they practice, and what love do they have for penance?
 15. What use do they make of and what profit do they get from confession and Communion? How do they prepare themselves for these sacraments and, especially, what do they do after Communion?
 16. How much time do they give to spiritual reading, and what books do they most enjoy?
 17. What devotion do they have for our Lord and for his mysteries, for the Blessed Virgin, and for the saints, and what graces have they received from them?
 18. What do they believe puts the biggest obstacle to the plans of God for them, and what especially holds back their spiritual progress?



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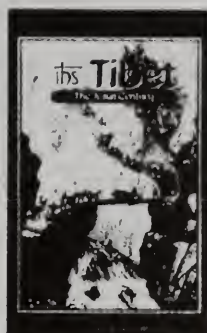


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