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IES

Locating the Grace of the Fourth Week

A Theological Inquiry

WILLIAM REISER, S.J.

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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.

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 journal, while meant especially for American Jesuits, is not exclusively for them. Others who may find it helpful are cordially welcome to make use of it.

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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The first word . . .

Like most grave and learned fathers, I'd like to give the impression that I spend most evenings poring over my Schopenhauer and speed-reading *Theological Investigations* one more time. Well, perhaps as a practitioner of a peculiar discipline, I might even create the fantasy that I dedicate my leisure hours to wading through the periodicals to help me apply Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory and Christian Metz's semiotics to my own revisionist reading of Bulgarian cartoons from the Soviet era. But no, this self-portrait leaves reality on the cutting-room floor. By day's end, I'm ready to exchange scholarship for junk television, and as difficult as it is to admit it, after a long day at the shop, I'm rarely capable of much else. And if the day included a writing project, the last thing to put on the agenda is more print. Karl Rahner or Mickey Spillane, it makes no difference.

To salvage the shards of my reputation, however, let me insist I do have some self-respect. My tolerance for TV junk has limits. Is it merely the grumpiness of years, or have sitcoms become simply moronic since the days of *Cheers*, *Mary Tyler Moore*, and *Newhart*? After a day of faculty meetings and pouting teenagers, who needs to watch more dysfunctional families insulting one another over irrelevancies? Permit an exception for several of the "Britcoms" that seem to have an endless shelf life through reruns. Somehow, the British seem to do these things with a lot more wit and infinitely less nastiness than we do. Nor do I find it amusing to watch "ordinary" people face public humiliation in all these stupefying and patently exhibitionistic "reality" shows. Quiz shows once built up audiences by orchestrating success for their anointed hero. Now television competition programs feature failure: who's eliminated, who's rejected by the team, who's fired.

The remote has provided a strange new relationship to sports. It allows me to check in on scores during commercials without having to sit through a whole game with its mindless chatter and endless timeouts for beer ads. Somebody has to pay for those multimillion-dollar salaries for star athletes, and better Bud Light than me with my paltry community budget. We old Dodger fans—the real Dodgers, not that band of poseurs prancing around Chavez Ravine in Dodger blue—can never quite come to terms with our history. We still watch the standings and wonder when our adopted children, the Mets, will self-destruct. Like the Red Sox in that other league, they find new, creative ways to break our hearts every year.

This leaves cop shows, and here I must admit to reaching the brink of satiation every few weeks and then, like a compulsive gambler, coming

back for another go. The networks have been ingenious in working variations on the basic cops-and-robbers theme. *Law and Order* simply extended the story line from the traditional arrest ending to conviction and thus added the courtroom genre to the whodunit. It's been such a successful format that it spawned two spinoffs, with subtitles *Criminal Intent* and *Special Victims Unit*. At any hour of the day or night, some old episode of some version of *Law and Order* is showing on cable.

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation has been just as successful. In *CSI* the cop show mixes with science fiction and contemporary fascination with computers. Impossibly handsome forensic scientists cut the end off a Q-tip and drop it into a machine. While an insistent jazz beat creates the illusion of tension, they stare intently at a computer screen until the perpetrator's driver's license miraculously pops up on the monitor. The original was set in Las Vegas, but belying the tourist board's assurance that "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," the show now boasts offspring of dubious legitimacy in Miami and New York. The formula is rigid: the head investigator has all the fun-loving personality of wallpaper paste and never moves his lips when he talks; his chief assistant is a gorgeous woman; the white male assistant is a loose cannon, while the African-American is a super-competent but unsmiling scientist.

Other variations prove the flexibility within the formula. *Crossing Jordan* gives the impression that *all* forensic scientists are loose cannons, or at least they all have troubled personal lives that stir soap opera into the formula. The hero of *Without a Trace* lives through his own private soap opera, but he runs a no-nonsense team: again the beautiful assistant, the competent, super-serious African-American and a male assistant who has become addicted to painkillers. *Criminal Minds* and *Numbers* add a "boy genius" to the team to show their critics that they contain a constructive social message for the potential high-school dropouts in the audience: Nerds can be cool. *Criminal Minds* lightens the action by featuring a comic computer whiz, a fluttery woman who stays at the home office and provides key information to her buddies in the field. She's positively prim in comparison to the vampire wannabe who runs the computer lab for NCIS (Navy Criminal Investigation Service). This immensely popular crime show tips the balance toward comedy with the relentless adolescent banter between members of the team. Finally, *Monk* and *The Closer* place a comic character at the center of the action. These thoroughly neurotic, but brilliant detectives go through their antics solving a crime that seems almost incidental to the show.

What makes this predictable but adaptable genre so irresistible to audiences? I think it's because these shows engage us in the puzzle solving. They don't give us any more information than the authorities have. We have to work through the case with them. A good script includes several false leads and dead ends that throw us off the trail. Some of the informa-

tion apparently makes no sense. One of the initial suspects shows detestable arrogance during the initial interrogation. He sneers, "You can't prove a thing." Like the detectives, we know he's lying. His oily, obnoxious lawyer abruptly ends the interview. We're frustrated and angry at the loopholes in the law that may let him walk. Yet after the last commercial break, the plot takes a sudden twist. His alibi holds up, he's exonerated and a mousy secondary figure emerges as the real murderer. At the "a-ha" moment, all the loose ends of the story fit together, and we see justice served. We turn off the TV and take to our beds confident that the world is a rational place where the good receive rewards and the evil an orange jumpsuit.

Reruns are another matter. The challenge of solving a crime does not explain their popularity, since we already know how it turns out. Ten minutes into the program, when we realize it's an episode we've seen before, more often than not, we stick with it. Why? Often enough I find knowing the ending provides different kinds of pleasure. I notice clever setups for the ending that I missed the first time around. I can pay attention to the interaction of the characters, the settings, and the occasional clever bit of dialogue. I understand motivations more clearly. It's a different experience, but for connoisseurs of pop culture, reruns bring enjoyment of their own. I wouldn't push it to a third time, however. We're not dealing with multiple readings of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." But still I would maintain that knowing the narrative ending shifts our relationship to the text and adds to our appreciation of the elements that led up to it. We look at the material in an altogether different way.

If any of this matches your own experience, or even if you can see the reasonableness of mine, then you're ready to move on to Bill Reiser's fascinating treatment of the Fourth Week. Every time we work our way through the Exercises, we are covering familiar territory. The retreat is built on a rigid formula that admits of infinite variations, just like a television series. Even before our first encounter with the sequence of the Weeks, once we start on the events of the Gospels, we know how the story ends. It's not much of an exaggeration to say that we might have been encouraged to pretend that we didn't know the ending on the theory that the meditations on the Resurrection would be more powerful if they came almost as a delightful surprise after the exhaustion of the Passion.

Bill makes the point that Ignatius, as well of the evangelists, are leading their readers through a story that was shaped by Easter faith from the beginning. They knew how the story ended. The sacred authors and the Church as a whole believed in the risen Christ long before they put ink to parchment. This belief guided the compilation of stories that they assembled. In other words, not only the account of the Passion, but even the infancy narratives and events of the public life were fashioned in the

light of the Resurrection. With this context in mind, we can approach the preceding pericopes and contemplations with a fresh perspective.

During our discussion of this essay, the Seminar wondered if perhaps it would make more sense to begin a retreat with the Fourth Week. We never resolved the issue, but perhaps after reading Bill's reflections you might reach your own conclusions.

A few second words . . .

This issue marks the annual transition of the membership of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality. On behalf of all our readers, let me offer a word of thanks to Kevin Burke and Dennis Smolarski. Not only have both completed their three-year terms with the Seminar but both are undergoing other changes as well. Kevin is leaving Weston to become dean at Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, and Dennis is moving his array of computers from Nobili House at Santa Clara to the new residence across from the Mission Church.

Dennis McNamara is leaving us after one year, alas. Shortly after coming on board, Dennis assumed new responsibilities for Georgetown University that took him to Beijing for most of the year. Participating in the discussions would have involved an extraordinary commute.

Four new members have generously accepted our invitation to join us for the next three years.

Jim Bretzke (Wisconsin Province) is chair of the Theology Department at the University of San Francisco. A moral theologian, he had previously taught at the Gregorian University in Rome, and in Korea and Manila. His most recent book is *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Liturgical Press, 2004)

Pat Howell (Oregon Province) is finishing up a term as dean of the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, where he taught sacramental and pastoral theology. His last book was *Reducing the Storm to a Whisper: The Story of a Breakdown* (Ulysses Press, 2000).

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Tom Massaro (New England Province) teaches moral theology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. His most recent publications are *Catholic Perspectives on Peace and War* (Sheed & Ward, 2003) and *American Catholic Social Teaching* (Liturgical Press, 2002).

Again thanks to our recent alumni and welcome to our freshmen.

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Fra Angelico (Beato Angelico) *Christ Resurrected: The Three Marys at the Tomb*
1438. Mural, 181 x 151 cm.

Photo credit: Erich Lessing, Art Resources, New York

William F. Reiser, S.J., has been teaching theology in the Religious Studies Department of the College of the Holy Cross since 1978. Fr. Reiser is a prolific author, his most recent book being *Seeking God in All Things: Theology and Spiritual Direction*, published by Liturgical Press. He has also been active in Hispanic ministries in the Worcester area.

LOCATING THE GRACE OF THE FOURTH WEEK

A Theological Inquiry

The meditations on the Resurrection events, as well as the corresponding passages from the Gospels, invite theological as well as historical interpretations that reflect back and enrich our understanding of the Public Life and Passion. Its recollection of the Easter experience shaped the identity of the early Church and informs its ministry to the poor even today.

I. Introduction

I had just concluded the last class of the semester—an introductory course on the person and mission of Jesus in Mark's Gospel—with a lecture on Fra Angelico's fresco "The Three Marys." Carefully, I had pointed out that, according to the evangelist, only two Marys arrived at the empty tomb. Those two, in addition to Salome, made up the three women. For the artist, however, bringing the mother of Jesus to the tomb hardly needed any explanation. The mother of Jesus had as much right to be at the tomb on the first day of that week as, according to Ignatius, she had to be graced with the first of the resurrection appearances—"aunque no se diga en la Escritura" ("even though Scripture doesn't say so" [*SpEx* 299]).¹ I also noted that Fra Angelico had turned the evangelist's white-robed

¹Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, ed. and comm. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), §299, or any other translation of this work. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to *SpEx*, followed by the boldface marginal number.

young man into an angel and piously inserted Saint Dominic into the lower-left-hand corner. Finally, I explained that the messenger in the gospel text was more likely to be imagined as speaking to the reader or listener than to the women. After all, the women ran away, terrified, and said nothing to anyone (Mark 16:8). The viewer is left at the empty tomb, alone, with the mysterious messenger.

When I came across the fresco at the convent of San Marco in Florence several years before, I stared at the painting for the longest time, partly musing about what it must have been like to wake each morning and see that scene gracing the wall (it's painted in one of the monastic cells), and partly marveling at the happy liberty of Fra Angelico's imagination. He had, after all, modified the gospel text in at least three ways, right there in a monastery named after Saint Mark!

The morning lecture had gone well. The evangelist, I assured myself, would have been pleased with my exposition of the Gospel's last eight verses. That night, after rehearsing the day's moments, I

The emptiness of the tomb, I reasoned, belongs to history; but the moving of the stone belongs to theology.

was falling asleep with the San Marco fresco still in my mind's eye when, all of a sudden, a little detail jumped out of place. "The stone! Who really rolled it away—and why was it necessary to move it?" The empty tomb, though not conclusive proof of Jesus' resurrection, is something I take to be part of a

tradition whose historical truth we can trust. The tomb was evidence of a sort. It would have been pretty challenging to preach that Jesus had been raised bodily from the dead if someone could simply point to the place where they laid him and noted the presence of his remains!

But what about the "very large" stone? Jesus certainly didn't have to move it in order to exit the tomb, and it doesn't make much sense to suggest that God—or an angel—moved it precisely to allow the women to enter and make their alarming discovery. Jesus could have simply appeared to the disciples; from a narrative standpoint, the tomb would not first need to be reported as empty, except by hindsight. If God had been really concerned about leaving proof of Jesus' being raised from the dead, then instead of having the stone moved, why not arrange for several of the disciples to witness so extraordinary an event? Thus instead of the testimony of an eyewit-

ness or two, we are left with the puzzle of a stone rolled away and an empty burial chamber. Something a little more conclusive, given the enormous importance of the Easter event, would have been helpful.² The emptiness of the tomb, I reasoned, belongs to history; but the moving of the stone belongs to theology. I needed to explore what that very large stone was saying. The one thing that is certain is that there are no appearances in the Gospels to people who had not been following Jesus or who were not earnestly looking for him.³ For an evangelist who records Jesus saying, "Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation" (Mark 8:12), neither the empty tomb nor the stone was probably ever intended to be taken as a "sign" for nonbelievers.

As Ignatius introduces the Fourth Week, we notice that the apparition to Mary, Jesus' mother, *precedes* the discovery of the empty tomb. For Ignatius, apparently, one does not need to know about the empty tomb in order to meet the risen Jesus. Ultimately, evidence for the resurrection does not depend upon the empty tomb, the stone rolled away, the folded burial cloth, heavenly messengers, or miraculous sightings. In the end, the most telling evidence turns on the religious experience of men and women already disposed to believe that, in Jesus, God had begun something new.⁴

²The angel of Matthew 28:2 and the two angels of John 20:12 serve as artistic contrivances to help explain what has happened. For Matthew, the presence of the angel accounts for how the stone came to be moved. For John, it is Mary Magdalene who sees the two angels, which were apparently not there when Simon Peter and the beloved disciple had stepped into the tomb. Their question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" implies that there was no longer any reason for weeping. In short, the human mind—even now—cannot comprehend "resurrection" without divine assistance.

³David Stanley notes: "St. Thomas Aquinas expressed his profound insight into this mystery by saying, 'After his resurrection the disciples saw the living Christ, whom they knew to have died, with the eyes of faith'" (*The Call to Discipleship: The Spiritual Exercises with the Gospel of St Mark, The Way Supplement nos. 43 and 44 [January 1982], 178*). The way to an encounter with the risen Jesus was first and foremost paved by faith.

⁴In his book *Beyond the Passion*, Stephen J. Patterson goes a little too far, I think, when he writes that "resurrection proves nothing," because this underestimates the significance of the Easter experience and "the rolling away of the stone." But he is on the right track when he underscores the continuity between the disciples' pre-paschal faith and what comes later. His intuition is sound when he says: "The followers of Jesus did not believe in him because of the resurrection. They believed in the resurrection because they first believed in the spiritual life he

In the case of Jesuits, for example, the primary “evidence” of the raising of Jesus from the dead might well be the story of the founding of the Society of Jesus itself as a historical demonstration of the life-giving power of the Creator and Lord, a historical moment the religious measure of which can only be grasped by a person who prays. The secondary, though no less major, confirmation of the resurrection would be the record of our own experience of being converted, called, redeemed, empowered, and missioned precisely as a function of our relationship with Jesus.

Framing the Question

The more I thought about the stone, the more I realized that if the Ignatius who gave us the *Exercises* was a Fourth Week Christian, then all the more so was the evangelist himself. That’s putting things a bit anachronistically, I know. But what we refer to as “the grace of the Fourth Week” was in the Gospel long before Ignatius named it. What then, exactly, is this grace—how might we describe it? Does it consist of one experience or several? Indeed, might there even be more to the Fourth Week grace than Ignatius envisioned?

The purpose of the Second and Third Weeks, with their sustained contemplations on the ministry of Jesus and his suffering and death, seems fairly straightforward. One is directed to ask for “an experiential knowledge of the Lord” (“conocimiento interno del

In other words, the grace of the Fourth Week does not appear to reach its climax in the Contemplatio. We need to think further.

Señor” [*SpEx* 104]) in order to love and follow him all the more. The First Week cannot be summed up quite so neatly. For those in possession of only the most elementary form of spiritual literacy, the First Week provides the opportunity for basic catechesis, as annotation 18 makes clear. For those with a more developed interior life,

however, the grace of knowing and experiencing oneself as a loved sinner might not arrive in the space of eight days, or even thirty days; while experiences of the Spirit can be mapped, they cannot be

timed. Indeed, no one appropriates the full range of the Christian religious experience even after thirty days; the dynamics of discipleship cannot be telescoped.⁵ But at least we know what the grace of the First Week ideally is. In his important commentary on the *Exercises*, the British Jesuit Michael Ivens puts it this way: "The cause of 'shame and confusion' is not sin-awareness in itself, but the experience of a God who is merciful and faithful (see *SpEx* 74). One asks that through prayer this experience be deepened and intensified so as to change the heart profoundly."⁶

I recall our master of novices telling us as we started the long retreat that, since we had already made a decision to enter the Society, the retreat would not be a retreat of election but of deepening our commitment to following Christ, in keeping with *SpEx* 189, about correcting and reforming one's life. Thus the material in the *Exercises* about election and decision making was not immediately relevant to us. Of course, no one went on to draw the conclusion that perhaps the first disciples had found themselves in an analogous situation. If they were already married and raising families, then perhaps their calling did not alter their lives so dramatically as we have imagined. In fact, we know that their wives subsequently accompanied them on apostolic mission—and very likely shared in it—as Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 9:5.⁷ Along this line the Uruguayan Jesuit theologian Juan Luis Segundo made an interesting observation:

Nothing in the *Exercises* points to following Jesus precisely or necessarily in the religious order that Ignatius will found. If the *Exercises*

⁵ Ignatius appears to take this into account when he notes that the Second Week can be lengthened or shortened, depending upon the needs of the retreatant, and that the contemplations of this Week serve only to *introduce* him or her to the life of Jesus; better and fuller contemplation would follow afterwards, over the course of one's life: "Porque esto es dar una introducción y modo para después mejor y más complidamente contemplar" (*SpEx* 162). One look at the mysteries of Christ's life that are included later (*SpEx* 261–312) confirms that the Exercises were not intended to be an exhaustive insertion into the gospel narratives. If that were the case, then the Second Week would have to be a great deal longer.

⁶ Michael Ivens, S.J., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary; A Handbook for Spiritual Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 49.

⁷ Paul writes, "Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" Throughout this essay I have used the New Revised Standard Version.

could be isolated from other psychological variables—who gives them, where they take place, how exercitants are recruited—they would produce vocations indiscriminately for any and every religious order. In fact, however, Ignatius probably made the *Exercises* as we do today and did not decide to enter any existing religious order. It is impossible for us to say exactly why. All we can see is that he was looking for something else, in the light of the *Exercises* and the “choice” he made in them, without clearly perceiving what.⁸

Now, if this important dimension of the *Exercises*—the election—could be bracketed, what about the Contemplation for Attaining Divine Love at the end (*SpEx* 230)? Does this contemplation really belong to the Fourth Week, or is it an appendage much like

That his soul “descended” into hell and then returned to the tomb, borders on the spatializing of mythical thinking. That he then appeared “body and soul” to his mother and others is a matter of faith.

the three ways of praying (*SpEx* 238)? The *Contemplatio* was presented to us as an important element of the Fourth Week, but I was unable to figure out precisely why it belonged there. How we find God in all things is qualitatively different before and after the paschal experience. This point ought to be stated upfront, for the resurrection completely transfigures our understanding of the divine mystery. Nevertheless, by acknowledging this point we are

also implying that one does not have to believe in Jesus risen in order to find God in all things or to love God above all things. In other words, the grace of the Fourth Week does not appear to reach its climax in the *Contemplatio*. We need to think further.⁹

⁸ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 120.

⁹ On the debate about whether the Contemplation to Attain Love belongs inside or outside the Fourth Week, see Gilles Cusson, *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988), 312–16. Marian Cowan sees in the *Contemplatio* a recapitulation of the four Weeks. See Marian Cowan and John Carroll Futrell, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola: A Handbook for Directors* (Denver: Ministry Training Services, 1981), 133–35. Michael Buckley views the purpose of the *Contemplatio* as “developmental”: “The *contemplación* brings the major strands of the Exercises into their synthesis in love by recapitulating their graces in heightened form” (“The Contemplation to Attain Love,” *The Way Supplement*, no. 24

II. The Fourth Week

The Easter Mysteries in the *Exercises*

The grace of the Fourth Week is intrinsically connected to the Easter faith that pervades the Gospels; that much is clear. The *Exercises* are not inviting us to share in some grace that goes beyond the Gospels or that reaches beyond the distinctively Christian experience of God. The grace of the Fourth Week, I would suggest, hinges upon how we understand the meaning and purpose of the resurrection appearances within the broader gospel narratives.

To begin, there is a certain discontinuity between the Second and Third Weeks and the Fourth Week, one which reflects a perceptible discontinuity within the Gospels themselves. As David Stanley observed,

Now no one who has thoughtfully contemplated the gospel scenes depicting the return of the risen Christ to his own after the first Easter morning can have missed a certain indefinable aura of unfamiliarity, even—let us admit it—of unreality surrounding the figure of our Lord. As we read the evangelists' accounts of these meetings, we inevitably discover to our great discomfiture that everything appears much the same, except the risen Christ himself. . . .

Certain special features of Christ's post-resurrection appearances indicate unequivocally that we cannot approach the contemplation of these occurrences as we did those of Jesus' earthly life. Nor should we look to obtain the same fruit from them as in the earlier weeks of the retreat. We see, for example, that the disciples never again return to the same delightfully human intimacy with the Lord which they had "in the days of his flesh."¹⁰

Imagination, we might even say, would not be satisfied if it could detect *no* perceptible difference in Jesus before and after Easter. In contemplating the Easter scenes, imagination seems to appreciate that it needs theological guidance.

When Ignatius writes in the first prelude about "the history" of the mystery of Jesus' appearance to his mother (*SpEx* 219), he is

[Spring 1975], 95, 100).

¹⁰David Stanley, *A Modern Scriptural Approach to the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1967), 279, 281. The "aura of unfamiliarity" also runs through the otherwise warm scenes of John 20 and 21.

combining history and faith in the same way the Creed does. That Jesus died on a cross is a historical event. That his soul “descended” into hell and then returned to the tomb, borders on the spatializing of mythical thinking. That he then appeared “body and soul” to his mother and others is a matter of faith.¹¹ The problem is that one cannot pray about the resurrection just by imaginatively inserting oneself into the various Easter episodes. Why? Because these scenes are not like photographs; they are more like paintings. They engage us differently for the elementary reason that Jesus was not resuscitated—an event we could get our imaginations around. There are, after all, the stories of Lazarus (John 11), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22–43), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–17). These scenes our imaginations can reconstruct. Jesus, however, was “raised from the dead.” Imagination, unaided, would miss a central aspect of Christian experience; it would be unable to cross from history to faith if it were to fail to attend to the important difference between resurrection and resuscitation.¹²

The meditations of the Fourth Week become more complex than one might suppose. I think we all realize that a person cannot innocently look at the scenes as straightforward historical confirmations that Jesus was truly raised from the dead. For one thing, the risen Jesus pervades the whole of the *Exercises* in the same way that he pervades the whole of the Gospels. The evangelists wrote from the perspective of Easter faith. Consequently, no matter how “historical” particular episodes might feel, the fact is that, for anyone praying from the Gospels, the Jesus to whom one speaks or in whose presence one is imaginatively standing is the risen Lord. Jesus touches a leper, for

But the “ascension” was a theological moment in the Church’s paschal experience, not a physical event. It should not be contemplated naively.

¹¹ Gerald O’Collins remarked on these various genres in the Creed in his *What Are They Saying about Jesus?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 8 f.

¹² On the Fourth Week meditations see Paul Edwards, “The Resurrection Narratives Today,” in *The Way* Supplement no. 58 (Spring 1987), 47–55; and the various articles in *Resurrection and Beyond: The Fourth Week* (*The Way* Supplement no. 99 [2000]), especially Philip Sheldrake’s “Rooms and Places” (pp. 78–86).

example; but for the one praying it can only be the risen Jesus who does so. The gospel scene is more than historical remembrance; it has been crafted from faith. So also in the *Exercises*. The First Week colloquy with Jesus on the cross (*SpEx* 53) is with Christ our Lord—the one whom God has raised from the dead, the Jesus who lives in the Church—not with the historical or pre-Easter Jesus. Likewise, the king who is imagined as calling each and every member of the human race at the beginning of the Second Week is clearly Jesus risen (*SpEx* 95).

Fourteen Easter Scenes

The mysteries that Ignatius directs us to contemplate in the Fourth Week are (1) the appearance to his mother,¹³ (2) Jesus' appearing to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:1–11), (3) his appearance to the two Marys on their way to announce the startling news of the resurrection (Matt 28:8–10), (4) an implied appearance to Peter after he had seen the linen cloths in the tomb (Luke 24:9–12, 34), (5) the Emmaus appearance (Luke 24:13–35), (6) the first appearance to the disciples behind locked doors (John 20:19–23), (7) the second appearance behind locked doors, when Thomas is present (John 20:24–29), (8) an appearance by the shore and the great catch of fish (John 21:1–17), (9) an appearance on the mount of the ascension with its great commissioning (Matt. 28:16–20), (10) Jesus' appearing to more than five hundred (1 Cor. 15:6), (11) an appearance to James (1 Cor. 15:7), (12) an appearing to Joseph of Arimathea, based on pious legend, (13) the appearance to Paul (1 Cor. 15:8), and finally (14) the

¹³ Cusson writes as follows: "We should note that Ignatius was not at all the first to suggest the possibility of Jesus' having appeared first to Mary. Ludolph the Carthusian, who speaks of it in ch. 70 of his *Life of Christ*, records the more or less explicit testimony of Sts. Ambrose, Anselm, and Ignatius of Antioch." Cusson then mentions other writers who shared the same opinion. See his *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, 304. Cusson notes that the pious belief that the mother of Jesus was the first to "see" the risen Christ does not "furnish a 'proof' in favor of this opinion which Ignatius accepted." The fact that this appearance is not recorded in the New Testament does not mean one cannot devoutly contemplate such a scene. One must bear in mind, however, that the Fourth Week is not about Mary or any of the other figures who "see" the risen Jesus; it is about what God has done (and revealed) in raising him from the dead. Thus, to suggest that "the Resurrection of Christ and the apparition to our Lady constitute only one single Resurrection event" (306) may be pressing the biblical text too far in the direction of figurative exegesis. Also, see Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Our Lady in the Spiritual Exercises," in *The Road to La Storta* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 33–45.

ascension appearance (Acts 1:1–12).¹⁴ Each of these fourteen mysteries has its own distinctive theological and spiritual character, including the first and twelfth ones—the two nonbiblical mysteries. In all these mysteries we find the themes of apostleship and mission, ministry and ecclesial life, reconciliation and Eucharist, real presence and real absence, human history and divine providence, paschal faith and paschal love.

To contemplate any of these scenes requires the use of imagination in order both to set the stage and recall the history. The supposed encounter with Peter, for instance, would lack texture and pathos unless we recalled the “history” of Peter from the moment when he first met Jesus to his triple denial. Likewise, the piously imagined appearance to Joseph of Arimathea necessitates our remembering that it was he who had asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, took it down from the cross, wrapped it, laid it in the tomb, and “rolled” the stone against it (Mark 16:42–46).¹⁵

¹⁴ While it is curious that Ignatius includes nothing about the Pentecost scene, the Spirit's *activity* is by no means foreign to his thinking and experience in the Exercises. The Holy Spirit is mentioned six times in the mysteries of Jesus' life: Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit (*SpEx* 263), the Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism (273), Jesus breathed the Spirit on his disciples in the sixth appearance (304, twice), Spirit is part of the baptismal formula (307), and the apostles are told to await the promised Holy Spirit (312). Finally, the Spirit is mentioned in the rules for “right feeling” (“sentido verdadero”) with respect to the Church (365). Ignatius overwhelmingly prefers to identify the divine mystery as “God our Lord,” perhaps with the implicit understanding that when one of the divine Persons is acting, all are acting. Interestingly, in his book *Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), Karl Rahner adds a chapter on Pentecost and the experience of the Spirit (pp. 251–61) and, in his *Ignatius the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), Hugo Rahner discerns a dialectic of Spirit and Church in the *Exercises* (pp. 214–38). See also John R. Sachs, “The Spirit of the Risen Lord,” *The Way Supplement* no. 99 (2000), 22–34. Nevertheless, for some reason the Spirit appears to be a less operative category in Ignatius's way of describing divine action in the *Exercises* than in the *Constitutions*. All but one of the mentions of Espíritu Santo in the Exercises occur in the mysteries of the life of Christ and are connected to scriptural texts; but there are eight mentions in the *Constitutions*—none of which is directly connected to a biblical text. Given Ignatius's singular devotion to the Trinity (see “The Trinity in the Ignatian Charism: A Tribute to Father Arrupe,” *CIS* 13, no. 1 [1982]), it doesn't seem that the absence of frequent references or appeals to the Holy Spirit in the Exercises stemmed from any nervousness on Ignatius's part about being associated with the *alumbrados*.

¹⁵ It is interesting that, just as Fra Angelico took artistic liberties with the scene of the empty tomb, so too did Michelangelo with the Pietà to be found in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence. The face of Nicodemus (it should be

But imagination also needs to be careful not to blur the difference between historical reconstruction and faith. We approach the story of Jesus' meeting Mary Magdalene, for instance, not as a snapshot in the ancient Christian family album, further confirmation of Jesus' being alive, but as a work of art. We do not leave the scene wishing we could have been standing with Mary outside the tomb. In light of the Johannine beatitude "Blessed are those who have not seen" (John 20:29), I don't think we should be leaving any of the Easter scenes praying, "If only I could have been there!" These scenes represent faith speaking to faith, the faith of the evangelist and of the early Church speaking to our faith, in order to stir our imaginations and shape our way of looking at the world, to intensify our desire to be where Jesus is and train our hearts to notice his presence in the various Galilees where we live. I appreciate the devotion that led Ignatius to return to the mount of the ascension, for he believed that Jesus had literally lifted off from the earth at that spot and his love for Jesus drew him to want to touch every place in the Holy Land where Jesus had been. But the "ascension" was a theological moment in the Church's paschal experience, not a physical event. It should not be contemplated naively.

The joy Jesus feels is inseparable from his taking up a new life among his sisters and brothers, and becoming an integral part of their lives—healing, teaching, forgiving, encouraging, calling, leading, and blessing.

Each of the narrative details that make up the appearance stories prompts us to imagine, to think, and to pray. But what distinguishes them from, say, the story of the leper or the healing of the epileptic boy other than the somewhat artificial timeline that separates what happened before Jesus' death and burial from what happened afterwards? The earlier part of the gospel narratives contain as much theological embellishing as the resurrection appearances. The Jesus who calms the wind and the waves or who walks

Joseph of Arimathea) who is placing the body of Jesus into his mother's arms, appears to be that of the sculptor himself. In *SpEx* 297 Ignatius mentions both Joseph and Nicodemus at the cross, but in *SpEx* 310 he mentions only Joseph. All four Gospels state that Joseph removed the body. Nicodemus, mentioned only in John, assisted Joseph with the anointing and burial.

across the water doesn't feel all that different from the Jesus who joins his frightened disciples behind locked doors.¹⁶ The discovery of the risen Jesus among those who are marginalized by poverty or sickness is made possible because the imagination has been schooled in stories about a leper, a paralytic, or a woman with a hemorrhage. The discovery of Jesus among prisoners or refugees is made possible because we have been schooled by the voice of the king in the last judgment scene of Matthew 25—a passage that appears before Jesus' resurrection.

The point, therefore, is not that some stories are more historical while others are more theological; it is not even that some are preburial and others are postburial. What changes as one moves through the weeks of the *Exercises* is neither history nor theology, but specific, distinctively Christian religious experiences. It is one's experience of Jesus that keeps changing and developing in the course of making the Exercises—whether we are talking about the long retreat itself or the gradual, steady immersion of the believer into the mystery of Christ that continues over a lifetime. The Exercises in daily life, after all, never really come to a close. And so I come back to the question: What is the grace of the Fourth Week? What does Ignatius expect to happen there, and can that happen unless the Jesus of the Easter apparitions draws us to remember the rest of his history?

What Are We Supposed to Be Asking For?

Ignatius directs us in *SpEx* 221 “to ask for what I want; and here it will be to beg the grace to feel intense happiness and joy over so much glory and joy on the part of Christ our Savior” (“y será aquí pedir gracia para me alegrar y gozar intensamente de tanta gloria y gozo de Cristo nuestro Señor”). But why, exactly, is Christ so

¹⁶ Ignatius situates the two water stories (*SpEx* 279 and 280) between the Sermon on the Mount and the sending of the disciples out to preach. Today, should we propose the water stories for prayer as part of the Fourth Week, or should we leave them in their place and let them stand as moments within the public life of Jesus, counting on the likelihood that a person's prayer life will eventually catch up with exegesis? I would be inclined to view them as Fourth Week contemplations and would try to organize the meditations of the Second and Third Weeks around the events that in one way or another lead up to and account for Jesus' rejection, arrest, and execution.

full of joy? Is he happy because, after enduring such a harrowing experience, he has made it to the other side and is now enjoying a richly deserved reward? Such a reason would not help us all that much, however. I could imagine someone praying, "I'm happy for you; but look at us—we still have a long way to go!" Besides, does the ultimate reason for leading a God-centered life simply boil down to the hope of being rewarded? The well-known prayer in the Contemplation for Attaining Divine Love concludes, "just give me your love and your grace, that's all that I need" ("dadme vuestro amor y gracia, que ésta me basta").

Placed alongside the Second Week prayer in *SpEx* 98 we get a clear sense of what this love and grace mean: "I want, I desire, it is my firmest resolution—provided only that it is for your greater service and praise—to imitate you in undergoing all insults and every disgrace and total poverty, both inner and outer—should your most holy majesty want to choose me and receive me into such a life and state" ("yo quiero y deseo y es mi determinación deliberada, sólo que sea vuestro mayor servicio y alabanza, de imitaros en pasar todas injurias y todo vituperio y toda pobreza, así actual como espiritual, queriéndome vuestra santísima majestad elegir y recibir en tal vida y estado"). The only reward worthy of a companion of Jesus would be to find oneself placed alongside him as he preaches and labors for the kingdom of God. And so, what is the joy of the risen Jesus all about?

Jesus' joy is so connected with the peace, happiness, and communion of his disciples, however, that it is hard to imagine his joy being complete if they are in distress, or worse, divided.

To answer this question we would do well to retrace our way through the Gospels. Joy seems to be correlative to desire. To understand the reason for Christ's joy we are led to think about what he himself was looking for, what he desired, what his heart was centered on. To reply that Jesus wanted God above everything else would be correct, but it also might be saying too little. For God does not preside over human history from outside; he resides within it. That is why it is impossible to love God without loving our neighbor and why loving our neighbor (however unconscious we may be of it) is implicitly a prayer of adoration. So what does Jesus want, if not

the salvation—the freedom and wholeness—of his people? What does Jesus want, if not the new community and new humanity that are integral to the coming of the kingdom of God? It would seem to me, therefore, that to understand the paschal joy experienced by the risen Jesus we have to think of how, by virtue of the resurrection, he became more deeply one with his people. As the Irish Jesuit Brian O’Leary writes,

We have to ask: Who is this Christ whose broken spirit and subsequent joy we desire to share? Is it the Jesus of history, the carpenter’s son from Nazareth, who died by crucifixion inflicted by Roman soldiers and whom God then raised and exalted? The answer is *yes*, and much more.

This Jesus Christ, we believe, is not separate from his people. He is the head of a body, to use Paul’s words, and believers are members of that body. When the head suffers or rejoices, the body suffers or rejoices. When the body, or any part of it, suffers or rejoices, the head suffers or rejoices.

There is no way we can separate Jesus from his people so as to be in union with him but not with them; or in union with them but not with him.¹⁷

Of all the things we can desire, certainly communion has to be at the top of the list: communion with one another as an indispensable sign of our union with God, and perhaps as the closest approximation we can imagine this side of death to what being forever with God will one day mean. The joy Jesus feels is inseparable from his taking up a new life among his sisters and brothers, and becoming an integral part of their lives—healing, teaching, forgiving, encouraging, calling, leading, and blessing. I take this to be the point of Mark’s insistence that the risen Jesus goes ahead of his disciples into Galilee. Jesus does not leave the world; he remains. The scenes which form the basis of the Easter contemplations listed above would have no staying power unless the same Jesus who is imaged there were working, very much alive, in the experience of believers today. The scenes are not simple remembrances of what once was but paintings—works of art—that invite the believer to participate in the mystery underneath.

¹⁷ Brian O’Leary, “From Isolation to Consolation: The Mystery and Message of the Third and Fourth Weeks,” *CIS* 27, no. 2 (1996): 39. I have developed the connection between Jesus and his people at greater length in my *Jesus in Solidarity with His People: A Theologian Looks at Mark* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000).

Jesus' life-giving oneness with his followers as a consequence of God's raising him from the dead satisfied his heart's desire: that's my suggestion. Rather than removing him from this world, death brought Jesus closer to us. With the resurrection Jesus' prophetic engagement with the world intensified; he could no more forget his people than God could, for they were inscribed indelibly on the palms of his hands (Isa. 49:16). I do not wish to exclude other possible reasons for Jesus' joy, however. There could certainly have been a thrill of vindication, not because of a personal victory over the forces of death and sin on his part, like a runner winning a marathon, but because he had experienced the triumph of divine justice. In this respect, the risen Jesus tasted the glory of God. The joy and delight did not come from what he, Jesus, had done but from what God had done in and through him. The words of the Magnificat would sound equally appropriate coming from the lips of Jesus: "The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:49). Perhaps the humble sentiment of Mary's words picks up more effectively what Easter might have meant for Jesus than the sureness in the pronouncement "I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33).

And while there no doubt would have been great joy as a result of Jesus' being everlastingly joined to the Father, we do the Gospel no disservice by suggesting that even for the risen Jesus oneness with the Father would have been incomplete to the degree that his disciples—indeed, the human race—were still so far from home. Three times in the Last Supper discourse Jesus mentions joy being complete—not his but that of the disciples: "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11); "ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete" (John 16:24); "but now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves" (John 17:13). Jesus' joy is so connected with the peace, happiness, and communion of his disciples, however, that it is hard to imagine his joy being complete if they are in distress, or worse, divided. Hence Ignatius's fifth point

The possibility that God might be calling the retreatant to actual poverty only makes sense in light of the poverty of Jesus himself.

about Christ as “the bearer of consolation” (“mirar el oficio de consolar que Cristo nuestro Señor trae” (*SpEx* 224).¹⁸

Commenting on the grace of the Fourth Week, Michael Ivens writes as follows: “Paschal joy, however, can be experienced at different levels; and the joy petitioned in the Fourth Week of the *Exercises* consists in the transforming experience of a joy which is a union in that of the risen Christ himself, just as suffering in the Third Week was such a sharing in the suffering of Christ.”¹⁹ He continues: “Fourth Week joy will constitute an élan towards apostolic mission, a source of strength, energy and courage to participate in the work of the Kingdom” (162f.). Then he explains in a footnote: “Sharing in the joy of Christ means sharing altruistically in Christ’s joy for himself (i.e., in his return to the Father and his elevation to glory), but we must remember that Christ’s joy is not only for himself but for us—joy in all he has achieved for us” (162). By “different levels” I take Ivens to mean that paschal joy, as a dimension of the Christian religious experience, can also assert itself during the meditations of the First, Second, and Third Weeks. There is an experience of the risen Jesus particular or appropriate to each of the Weeks, a consolation that at its root is paschal. The “élan towards apostolic mission” of the Fourth Week would, therefore, be linked to the joyful impulse that prompts someone to heed the call of the earthly king in the Second Week.

Yet while I readily understand the idea of “sharing altruistically in Christ’s joy for himself,” I would urge that the joy Christ has for us derives, not from what he knows he has accomplished on our behalf, not from a sense of satisfaction, but from his sharing, from

¹⁸ In his article “The Graces of the Third and Fourth Weeks,” Dominic Maruca points to the Emmaus story as an instance of the risen Jesus consoling his disciples. See David L. Fleming, ed., *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola* (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 1981), 141. But was Ignatius connecting the risen Jesus with the “Paraclete”—the one who encourages, cheers up and comforts—of John 14:26? Since Ignatius was not so attentive to scriptural texts as we are today, he understandably could have amalgamated the role of the Spirit and the activity of the risen Jesus. As Michael Palmer argues, “There are personages in Church history for whom a central part of their religious mentality was a love for the Bible as the Word of God. Do we find such a love of the Bible, of the written word of God, to be a significant factor in St. Ignatius’s spiritual profile? I do not think so” (“The Spiritual Exercises and the Bible,” *CIS* 26, no. 2 [1995], 29).

¹⁹ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 162.

now until the end of time, in our history and our experience. His is the joy of the Incarnation, the enduring presence of the divine Word made flesh among God's daughters and sons. It is a joy that resonates richly with the theological aesthetic of Proverbs 8: "And I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the human race."

III. Scripture and the Church

The Gospels as the *Exercises*' Wider Horizon

Permit me for a moment, drawing on computer language, to open up a "window" onto the general relationship between the *Exercises* and the Gospel. The *Exercises* represent Ignatius's discovery of the Jesus of the Gospels and the way of discipleship. If this were not so, then the meditations of the *Exercises* would make no sense because they are based almost exclusively on gospel texts, even when Scripture is not explicitly mentioned. Nearly all the mysteries of the life of Christ are drawn from the Gospels. Indeed, apart from the mention of the first parents in the meditations on sin during the First Week (*SpEx* 51) and Ignatius's frequent use of the word "Creator," there is virtually no direct appeal to the narrative lines of the Old Testament.²⁰

²⁰In *SpEx* 365 Ignatius refers to the Ten Commandments (also in *SpEx* 42, during the examination of conscience, and *SpEx* 238–48, regarding the First Way of Praying), while in *SpEx* 275, in the third of his points on the calling of the disciples, he notes how the disciples—*de ruda y baja condición* ("unschooled and from a low social class")—were lifted up beyond all the fathers of the New and Old Testament. Such mentions are incidental. What is more important, the creation story seems to furnish the meta-narrative for Ignatius. The third of his points in the Contemplation for Attaining Love (*SpEx* 236) invites us to think about how God "works and labors" ("*trabaja y labora*") in every single created thing on the face of the earth, "behaving just like someone at work" ("*habet se ad modum laborantis*")—the text suddenly shifts from Spanish to Latin. Nevertheless, I do not think Ignatius views the mystery of Creation—the mystery of God as Creator—the same way before and after the resurrection. The indwelling of God, for example, in *SpEx* 235 is being offered for our consideration in the Fourth Week; there is a note of warm intimacy here. Contrast this Fourth Week contemplation with "the human being is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord." Michael Palmer, in the article cited, points out that Ignatius "blends into the biblical data other traditional elements" (30) and that he was in possession of a "global Christian vision of reality" incorporating many non-biblical elements (37). I would urge, instead, that whatever "global vision" Ignatius

To be sure, some of Ignatius's discoveries about the dynamics of the interior life have universal relevance because they derive from humanity's common moral and religious experience. On the basis of such common experience, one could put together a sort of world grammar of the interior life.²¹ Christians cannot copyright the dynamics of discernment. Life offers the human spirit countless practical lessons, and a good number of these have entered into the

world's repository of popular wisdom. The book of Proverbs would be one example of such wisdom. So too the hard-learned truth one finds in the very first Psalm: "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread."

The risen Jesus dwells in the Church, but the Spirit of the risen Jesus makes Church possible in the first place. Thus to encounter the Jesus of the Gospels is to meet a Jesus who is inseparable from the community of disciples.

Ignatius's particular take on discernment, however, is so intertwined with the Gospels and with what happens when one decides to follow Jesus that the measure or

standard by which we distinguish between the way of life and the way of death becomes nothing less than the teaching and example of Jesus. Or, to take another example, the meditation on the three degrees of freedom—the three classes of men—though making no mention of any scriptural text, unfolds against a gospel background.²² The possibility that God might be calling the retreatant to

shared was profoundly conditioned, whether directly or indirectly, by the biblical narratives and the spiritual traditions that attempted to exegete those narratives. Readers of *Studies* might want to revisit Richard Clifford's essay, which appeared in January 1999 (vol. 31, no. 1), "Scripture and the Exercises: Moving from the Gospels and Psalms to Exodus and Proverbs."

²¹ Such a grammar would include, for instance, the rule that one cannot cultivate the life of the spirit without asceticism, the indispensable role of meditation and the examination of consciousness, a lexicon of virtues, the unity of life, ecological mindfulness, and so on. Neither Ignatius nor Christian faith has a corner on humanity's interior life. I have attempted to sort out what is distinctive about the Christian religious experience in my *Seeking God in All Things: Theology and Spiritual Direction* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 69–116.

²² *SpEx* 149–55. The footnote in the Spanish edition I have been using here explains Ignatius's "tres binarios de hombres" as "[t]ipos de hombres en diversos niveles de libertad" (*Ejercicios Espirituales*, with Introduction and notes by Ignacio

actual poverty (*SpEx* 157) only makes sense in light of the poverty of Jesus himself. The second point that Ignatius singles out from the forty-eight verses of the sermon on the mount (*SpEx* 278) is about making good use of one's talents, the first point being to live the Beatitudes themselves—which is exactly what the deepest degree of freedom consists of.

The conversion experience embedded within the *Exercises* is founded upon the conversion presupposed by the Gospels. The *Exercises* represent Ignatius's inspired grasp of the revelation of God in Christ as set forth by the evangelists; they are his way of mapping the development and deepening of Christian religious experience. As catechesis, the four Weeks guide a person through the gospel narrative of Jesus' life, moving from his conception and birth to his death, burial, and resurrection. The fact that the Gospel opens with a call to repentance and conversion in John's preaching as well as Jesus' is no spiritual accident. One cannot participate in the kingdom of God or join Jesus on mission until one has faced the reality of sin in his or her own life. Without a penetrating awareness of human sinfulness—the personal record of one's own waywardness as well as the tragic alienation of humanity from its Creator—one is not in a position to appreciate why Jesus was ever sent.

Of course, Jesus' message, so abbreviated in the phrase "repent, and believe in the good news," presupposes the entire Old Testament narrative about Israel's centuries of wandering and a people's desire to come home.²³ The First Week distills Ignatius's own experience of homecoming, his own awakening to the words of Jesus addressed directly to him: "The time is fulfilled, and the king-

Iglesias [Madrid: San Pablo, 1996], 101).

²³ The idea of an unspoken meta-narrative figures prominently in the writing of N. T. Wright. See, for instance, his *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 7–13. But it also figures in Jesuit discourse as well. In the back of our minds, the stories of Ignatius's life and conversion, the assembling of the First Companions, and the founding of the Society, are constantly playing. Grafted on to this narrative might be the history of the Paraguayan Reductions, the early mission to China, and more recently, the assassination of the Jesuit educators in El Salvador—not to mention the regional stories of provinces and assistancies. This meta-narrative does not have to be explicitly mentioned or invoked, yet it is ever operating at the level of where self and corporate identity have been constituted. We draw on it constantly. In the same way, Paul and Jesus drew on the story of Israel, and Paul was drawing on the story of Jesus.

dom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The grace of the First Week might be aptly summed up in Peter's words "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" and Jesus' reply "Do not be afraid" (Luke 5:8, 10). Without this heartfelt realization of sinfulness, and without the acceptance and assurance of Jesus' words, Peter would not have been spiritually equipped to follow him. Though the evangelist does not explicitly say so, this is a class-action story: what Peter goes through by way of conversion, every disciple must go through. In other words, the First Week experience was in the Gospels long before it appeared in the text of the *Exercises*. And lest we think that conversion and calling are solely First and Second Week experiences, the Easter narratives make it clear that a second repentance and second calling can be part of the paschal experience itself.

To make the Exercises is essentially to "make" the Gospel. The first time one "makes" the Gospel, the believer most likely follows Jesus chronologically from his birth to his ascension. But chronological meditation—viewing Jesus' life in linear fashion—gradually yields

In other words, any "seeing" of the risen Jesus could not be divorced from the faith that made such seeing possible in the first place.

to an integrating of the mysteries of Jesus' life into the fabric of one's thinking, imagining, choosing, and acting. We pray the texts selectively, moving back and forth within the Gospels, always from the platform of our deepening appropriation of the paschal mystery. The grace of the Fourth Week is not what comes at the

end of prayerfully following Jesus through the story, as if we "graduate" through the four Weeks by achieving successively higher viewpoints. The grace, rather, is one of sharing the interior life of the Son of God—a sharing which is God's gift. It does not come automatically; one must ask for it.

Now we can close the "window."

Praying in the Fourth Week, as I have noted, entails more than reconstructing the resurrection scenes in our imaginations. What complicates matters further is that many of the scenes within the Gospels that take place before Easter are already laced with Easter faith; all have been composed by writers whose only experience of Jesus was an experience of Jesus risen. Differentiating the grace of

the Fourth Week from what precedes it in the *Exercises*, therefore, does not mean bracketing the Easter stories from the rest of the gospel narrative, even though the Easter narratives introduce new material for contemplation. Joy is certainly central to this new material. Another prominent feature of the Easter contemplations is that the raising of Jesus from the dead is not just a divine word about victory over sin and death. It is also about return—a return that brings this victory further into history in order to bring about the creation of a new humanity and the formation of a new people of God. The Fourth Week, in other words, is also about living in and for the Church.

The Fourth Week and the Grace of Belonging to the Church

I do not mean to imply that “Church” has not been present in the Gospels prior to the resurrection. The Jesus whom the evangelists know is not only the risen Jesus; he is also the ecclesial Christ. The risen Jesus dwells in the Church, but the Spirit of the risen Jesus makes Church possible in the first place. Thus to encounter the Jesus of the Gospels is to meet a Jesus who is inseparable from the community of disciples. This may not be immediately evident as one moves through the *Exercises*, because in the meditations we are constantly relating to the figure of Jesus in prayer, conversing, as one person to another. And the Jesus of our imagination has determinate historical, human features. He is Jewish, he is male, he grew up in a small village in the Galilean countryside, he was a carpenter. Socially and politically Jesus’ religious and moral sensitivities were affected by the political and social structure of the Roman imperial world. His imagination was shaped by the meta-narrative of Israel’s history, and so on. At the same time, however, we can only encounter this Jesus—not the historical figure, but the one that is fully alive now in the Spirit, the same Spirit that was seen descending upon him in the Jordan—in and through the Church. The Spirit comes upon Jesus and remains with him for the

The paschal mystery cements together creating and raising the dead as two sides of a single spiritual coin, two sides of a single religious experience.

rest of the story and into his risen life, which becomes inseparable from the life of the people of God.

The Gospels are products of believing communities, confirmations of the existence and vitality of the ancient Church. Together with the liturgical performances of baptism and Eucharist, they are the privileged expressions of that Church's faith. To discover Jesus in the Gospels, therefore, is—however indirectly or unknowingly—to touch the believing community that proclaims and shares its remembrance of him. The Fourth Week, consequently, is not a progression of reflections on a resuscitated Jesus but a set of meditations on the ecclesial Jesus, that is, Jesus in relationship to the Church. These contemplations suppose sufficient maturity of spirit and interior freedom—perhaps the right Ignatian word would be “mortification”—to enable a person to live in and for others. The dying to self that rises in community would be another expression of Fourth Week grace, which once again sets these contemplations apart from those of the Second and Third Weeks.²⁴

The First Week experience of forgiveness likewise grows and develops as one shifts from the experience of being the individual sinner before God to the experience of belonging to the community of disciples—a community that is itself sinful and needful of God's healing love, yet which, through the very act of sharing its life, becomes the instrument of forgiveness and the place where the believer feels whole and accepted. When the *Exercises* direct us to ask for an experience of the glory and joy of the risen Christ, it is implicitly inviting us to recognize the Church as the chief expression of that glory and the principal motive for Jesus' joy.

In this sense the resurrection is not just about Jesus. It ought not to be thought of as the greatest personal moment of his life, the sort of vindication that the Maccabean martyrs longed for or the everlasting happiness that awaits the righteous. The resurrection is above all about the God of Israel, the world's Creator. And from the perspective within which we are considering it here, the resurrection

²⁴The memorable words of Oscar Romero come to mind: “I have often been threatened with death. I must tell you, as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed, I shall rise in the Salvadoran people. I say so without boasting, with the greatest humility.” The archbishop's words are a moving expression of Fourth Week grace. See James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), 248.

is about this God's formation of a people so closely tied to Jesus that they can even be called the "body" of Christ. To find Jesus is, especially in the Fourth Week, to find the Church.²⁵

The sequence of the fourteen mysteries or contemplations from Easter to the Ascension (*SpEx* 299–312) does not seem to hold any particular historical or theological significance, except in the case of the appearance to Paul, which I shall come to shortly. And it could very well be that Ignatius never intended a person in the Fourth Week to approach the Easter appearances as primitive remembrances of the events that took place after the crucifixion.²⁶ Taken together, these appearances re-form Christian religious sensibility so that it becomes increasingly ecclesial; and the more ecclesial our sensibility becomes, the sharper fix we have on what "service of God our Lord" meant for Ignatius. In fact, there is no reason why we could not append to these Fourth Week contemplations the two sea stories—an awakened Jesus calming the wind and the waves, a ghostlike Jesus walking over the water. The Jesus of these stories so closely resembles the paschal Jesus and the disciples on the boat are such an apt figure of the Church that they had to have been composed in light of the Easter experience.²⁷ All of these contemplations

²⁵ The same Spirit that pervades the history of Israel ("that gave the ten commandments") and, we could add, the ministry of Jesus also guides the Church (*SpEx* 365). For a variety of reasons, the first part of rule 13 ("what I see to be white I will believe to be black") is less palatable today and needs nuance; its underlying ecclesiology sounds rigid. But from what Ignatius says it seems that ecclesiology presupposes a theology of the Holy Spirit, not the other way around. Thus, while the *Exercises* can certainly never be enlisted to support a "shadow community," a Christian path somehow independent of the larger Church—an access to the life of Christ that bypasses the wider communion—it does appear that for Ignatius experience of the Spirit is logically prior to the existence of the Church. If this is so, then every effort to renew or reform the Church has to proceed from an experience of the same Spirit that guided and empowered Jesus.

²⁶ Following Luke and the liturgical calendar, Ignatius views the ascension "temporally," that is, as something that took place forty days after the resurrection and not (following John) as occurring on Easter day itself. Luke's reason for spacing the two moments appears to have been ecclesiological, namely, to terminate the Easter appearances and demarcate the paschal experience from the age of the Spirit. But this spacing left Paul out of the interval, and Ignatius clearly wants him inside, not just on account of what Paul will write (1 Cor. 15:8) but also because of his—Ignatius's—own experience of being called.

²⁷ Why, I ask myself, did Jesus intend to pass them by (Mark 6:48)? I think the answer is that Jesus never intends to "get into the boat"; it should be enough for

nurture a religious awareness that anticipates future encounters with the risen Jesus within history. The resurrection appearances, we might say, are proleptic to the core; they reach forward into history.

Ignatius's own visionary experiences would seem to confirm the point. After Manresa, could he have been surprised at the various ways in which he would later "see" the risen Jesus? In no. 29 of his so-called autobiography, for example, Ignatius has this to tell us:

Often, and for a long time, as he was in prayer, he used to see with his interior eyes the humanity of Christ. As for the form that used to appear to him, it was like a white body, not very big nor very small, but he did not see any distinction of limbs.²⁸

On the way to Venice, he tells us, "while he was there [in a big field somewhere between Padua and Venice] Christ appeared to him in the way he normally appeared"

(no. 41). Later, on the voyage to Jerusalem, we find this: "Throughout this time Our Lord often appeared to him, which gave him great consolation and energy. Moreover, it seemed to him he repeatedly saw a large round object, apparently of gold" (44). Ignatius mentions at the end of the autobiography that he had visions often, "when he saw Christ like a

Likewise, along a related line of thinking, the nativity episodes could be linked to the passion narrative, for that is where the first sounds of rejection and suffering are to be heard.

sun" (99). Curiously, the description of the famous vision at La Storta sounds more like an intense conviction than a vision or "seeing" of the risen Jesus. As we are told,

And being one day in a church some miles before arrival in Rome, and making prayer, he sensed such a change in his soul, and he saw

us to know that the risen Jesus always "sees" the Church when it strains "against an adverse wind." It should be no more necessary for him to step into the boat than for Thomas to stick his finger into Jesus' hand. Faith ought not to be insisting upon such proofs of Jesus' real presence.

²⁸ *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 26. Quotations are taken from this translation. The editors explain why "reminiscences" more aptly describes Ignatius's memoir than "autobiography." To avoid confusion, however, I will simply refer to this work as "autobiography."

so clearly that God the Father was putting him with Christ, his Son, that he would not have the wilfulness to have any doubt about this: it could only be that God the Father was putting him with his Son. (96)

Jesuit imaginations may have been inadvertently spoiled by the Rubens painting of this moment. We tend to visualize this event the same way one is tempted sometimes to interpret a biblical text literally when it should be read figuratively. The word “saw” in this passage, just as in the case of “see” in the accounts of the resurrection appearances, has to be understood carefully. It might be worth reminding ourselves that Ignatius was dictating his story to da Câmara. Yet even so, examining the Spanish (or in this case Italian) text probably will not yield any fresh insight. Sometimes we say “I see” when we mean “I understand”; “to see” then means “to get the point.” It sounds as if Ignatius is saying that at La Storta he understood that the Father wanted him to be with Jesus (he doesn’t say that he “saw” Jesus at this moment). The experience bordered on absolute certitude (“sino que Dios Padre le ponía con su Hijo”) but at the same time “he would not have the wilfulness to have any doubt” (“no tendría ánimo para dudar de esto”).

The issue here is more than semantic. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul lists what had become by his time some well-known Easter appearances: “He *appeared* to Cephas, then to the twelve”; “then he *appeared* to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time”; “then he *appeared* to James, then to all the apostles”; “last of all . . . he *appeared* also to me.” The word “appeared” in this text is the aorist passive of the word “to see”— Jesus “was seen [by]”; so too in Luke 24:34 (“and he has appeared to Simon”). Much has been written on the meaning of this verb by New Testament scholars that I will not rehearse here.²⁹ The

And with which human beings does the risen Jesus identify most closely? All of us know the answer.

²⁹ On the use of the verb form, see James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 104ff. In *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), Dunn notes: “The passive *opthe*, (‘was seen by, appeared to’) also indicates an understanding of the givenness of the vision and of something/someone there to be seen” (239). See also N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 323; Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 59 f.; Gerald O’Collins, *Christology* (New

use of the passive voice seems to indicate a nuancing of the verb “to see”—the visionary experience is not so straightforward as to eliminate every trace of a doubt. As the New Testament scholar Raymond Collins explains, “The traditional Jewish understanding of divine transcendence, particularly strong at the time of Paul, suggests that the use of this traditional language with regard to a manifestation of the divine did not imply physical sight.”³⁰ In other words, any “seeing” of the risen Jesus could not be divorced from the faith that made such seeing possible in the first place.

At La Storta, Ignatius’s faith was the condition for the possibility of the visionary experience. Hence, the vision by itself should not be understood as empirical proof of a real encounter with the divine mystery. Similarly, the listing of appearances in 1 Corinthians 15 should not be taken as straightforward proofs independent of the faith that made such experiences possible to begin with. They are confirmatory and reflect apostolic testimonies, but they are also (even in the case of Paul) rooted in a prior openness to the very real possibility that the Creator God can “raise the dead.” Yet is not this stress on the priority of faith—this a-priori openness to the divine mystery—fully consistent with the gospel tradition that records Jesus saying, long before Easter, “Your faith has made you well” (Mark 5:34)?³¹

It may be worth adding that Paul’s listing of the appearances in 1 Corinthians 15 has much to do with claims to apostleship and thus to the ground of his authority. The British scripture scholar James D. G. Dunn writes as follows:

The resurrection appearances took place over a limited period and after a time ceased, and only those who experienced one could

York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92f.; and id., *Interpreting Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 108–30.

³⁰ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina series, no. 7 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 535. Collins continues: “In the biblical accounts of a manifestation of the divine, auditory elements predominate.” Even in the case of the resurrection appearances, such an auditory element becomes essential. One does not “see” the call to mission; it has to be “heard.”

³¹ There are numerous instances where, for Jesus, faith is the condition for the possibility of miracles. I think particularly of Mark 9:23 (“If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes”) or, by contrast, of Mark 6:56f. (“And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief”).

justify their claim to apostleship. . . . *His Damascus road experience was not simply the first of several or many experiences of the same kind; for Paul it was the last of a number of experiences of a unique kind.*"³²

Dunn goes on to explain that these resurrection appearances always included a call to mission: "It was not the seeing itself nor the commissioning itself which was distinctive for Paul but the appearance as call, the encounter as commission."³³

Now, I doubt that Ignatius picked up on the theological connection between Easter appearances and claims to apostleship, although he undoubtedly grasped the idea of being called and sent by the risen Jesus as fundamental to the Easter stories.³⁴ After all,

In the end, solidarity is inconceivable without hope and unachievable without love. Its realization is a manifestation of Easter joy.

what *does* one do after Easter? What conceivable response could there be to an encounter with the risen Jesus apart from full engagement with the kingdom of God? Certainly, the response God expects would not consist of standing for the rest of one's life at the

mount of the ascension, staring at the sky! For Mark, as we have seen, one must return to the story's beginning, travel back to Galilee where the good news began, and hear Jesus' call to discipleship and mission from the perspective of the cross and empty tomb.

To be sure, Ignatius directs the exercitant in the Fourth Week to think about things that are likely to induce a feeling of happiness, such as the prospect of eternal glory. But the reason for urging such thoughts is that the paschal experience, as if by definition, makes it possible to feel about humanity the way Christ does—deeply wounded and yet infinitely, incomprehensibly loved. The cross could not reveal God's love for the world apart from Easter, because it is Easter that announces that God will not permit death to have the final word about us and our history even if death is what we

³² *Jesus and the Spirit*, pp. 102 and 103. Italics in the original.

³³ *Ibid.*, 114. I omitted the italics this time.

³⁴ Calling and sending are linked in Mark 3:13f. and 6:7, long before Easter. But the urgency and meaning of the mission are clearly deeper in light of the cross and resurrection. In addition to driving out demons and unclean spirits (3:15 and 6:7), the Twelve will now become witnesses to Jesus risen.

choose, even if death is what we inflict. The Fourth Week binds our deepest religious sensibilities with everything in human experience that is on the side of life. Ignatius believed that we are less likely to achieve such a vision if we don't give our bodies a chance to feel a certain release: coolness in summer, warmth in winter, moderation with respect to fasting and the frequency and duration of prayer, light and color, the thought of rejoining our companions—or scores of other things that would promote gladness, because gladness is the appropriate affective climate for contemplating the Easter stories. Thus he modifies the additions (*SpEx* 229).

Just as we cannot think cross without resurrection or humanity without divinity (*SpEx* 219), so too we cannot think God as creator apart from God as the one who raises the dead. The paschal mystery cements together creating and raising the dead as two sides of a single spiritual coin, two sides of a single religious experience. The presence of this second side might not have been apparent to us at the outset of our conversion, when we first became aware of the God who is creating us. As time goes on, however, one realizes that

Anyone who thinks that ministry to God's word can be carried on without insertion into the daily life of God's people has probably not moved beyond the Second Week.

humanity's destiny was never intended to be Sheol. I am talking, of course, about Christian religious sensibility, not Christian apologetic. The resurrection of Jesus cannot be advanced as historical confirmation for belief in life after death, and it certainly cannot be enlisted as indirect evidence of the existence of God. With all its beauty and spiritual energy, the paschal mystery does no more than

tell what kind of God we believe in. The resurrection of Jesus is unlikely to bring about a surge of hope in someone who is unsure of the very existence of God or who has never shared the experience of being known by God that we find, say, in Psalm 139. Yet even if the resurrection cannot be proved, the paschal mystery can be lived; and once lived, it can be powerfully persuasive. The most convincing apologetic for Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus has always been the community's full-bodied living out of Jesus' mission.

Ignatius would probably have found any dividing line between Paul's Damascus experience and subsequent visionary experi-

ences of the risen Jesus to be both artificial and unwelcome. Perhaps this would help to account for his positioning the mystery of the risen Christ's apparition to Paul *before* the contemplation on the ascension, even though *SpEx* 311 notes that Jesus appeared to Paul after the ascension. The chronological inversion is intriguing. Ignatius may have identified with Paul's sentiment in the letter to the Corinthians: "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor. 15:8). How would Ignatius have replied if he had been asked, "Did the risen Jesus ever appear to you? Did you actually *see* him?" Perhaps God had indeed answered the prayer of that woman in Manresa with more "insight into spiritual things, "the woman who had asked that "Jesus Christ appear to him."³⁵ We can be reasonably confident, though, that Ignatius would never have hesitated to say that he had *heard* himself being called by the Father to join the Son on his mission. In this sense, everyone beyond the apostolic generation who experiences such a call could justifiably claim to be "untimely born."

Another element of Fourth Week grace, therefore, would be the conviction that we have been called to live in and for the people of God, with all that this implies.

IV. Worldly Consequences

A Political and Social Grace?

I have been making the case that our understanding of the grace of the Fourth Week depends upon how we understand the resurrection narratives themselves. The parameters of this grace have been determined, not by Ignatius's religious experience, but by gospel texts and the underlying religious experience of the apostolic generation. Since there is more than one spiritual fruit enclosed in the resurrection stories, perhaps we really ought to be talking in the plural about "graces." Because the Gospels were composed from the perspective of Easter faith, I have also been suggesting that a number of scenes within the gospel narrative, not just the Easter apparitions, could be used as the basis for Fourth Week meditations, provided one knows what one is doing. Likewise, along a related line of thinking, the nativity episodes could be linked to the passion

³⁵ Autobiography, no. 37. Again, it is not enough to "see"; above all one has to "hear."

narrative, for that is where the first sounds of rejection and suffering are to be heard.³⁶

As someone is introduced to the narrative of faith, the various Christian themes or doctrines might appear to be discrete, unrelated elements of belief. Eventually, however, one grasps the mystery with a certain wholeness of vision. Gospel moments gradually slide back and forth into one another. The fact that the Fourth Gospel opens with a focus on the Incarnation, for example, does not necessarily mean that the Incarnation is Christian faith's starting point, even though Ignatius links it to the Nativity. Incarnation can be its end point or conclusion, since we do not know the full significance of the Word's becoming flesh until the cross and resurrection. The Word resurrected is the actual starting point, I would think, even though that is not where the contemplations of the *Exercises* begin. Yet resurrection in turn presupposes the meta-narrative of creation, even as it brings our theology of creation to an entirely new level.

To take another example, the story of the loaves and fishes would be incomplete without Easter, just as the ecclesial resonance in Jesus' words to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5), is heard more distinctly because of John 20:21–23, since the mission given by the risen Jesus has everything to do with forgiveness, reconciliation, and lifting burdens. Forgiveness of sins is not something the Son of Man alone has the authority to grant; so do his followers. Otherwise, why hand on the story? And so on.

The gospel story has to be reclaimed continually, or else its lifegiving urgency will be lost. The tomb is empty.

In recent years writers have attended closely to the important connection between Jesus' death and his resurrection that one hears in the messenger's words, "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was *crucified*. He has been *raised*; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). The one who was raised never loses the marks of crucifixion (John 20:27)—consoling words for victims, unsettling words for everybody else. Anyone earnestly looking for this Jesus—the Jesus whose ministry we have contemplated and whose history we have followed—should not be search-

³⁶See Raymond Brown, *An Adult Christ at Christmas* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1978).

ing the skies but the world—"toda la planicia o redondez de todo el mundo llena de hombres" ("the whole world, whether flat or round, yet filled with human beings" [*SpEx* 102]). And with which human beings does the risen Jesus identify most closely? All of us know the answer; its logic requires no explanation. The divine Word pitched its tent, preferentially, among the poorest. At the heart of the story, just as at the heart of human history, one discovers the Word become victim. For victims, the story of Jesus becomes an account of God's "no" to every form of injustice and oppression, a protest against the forces, structures, and relationships that have defaced and destroyed them, a story of prophetic resistance to the reign of demons.

For the rest of us, the gospel story delivers an enduring, nonnegotiable challenge—in the unforgettable phrasing of Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría³⁷—to take the crucified ones down from their crosses, historical imaging that breathes freshness into the meditation on Joseph of Arimathea. In this regard, the grace of the Fourth Week is both social and political; it drives one's prayer and imagination deeply into the world and deeply into history. The only way to escape participating in the dynamics of oppression is to learn how to live in solidarity with those whose lives are being deformed by poverty and violence. Learning how to live in solidarity is, at least for us today, a liberating grace of the Fourth Week—a grace without which the Easter mission would be practically paralyzed.

The moving of the stone is not about Jesus getting out of "the place they laid him," but about the women—and the reader—getting in.

Our ears may have grown too accustomed to the rhetoric of liberation theology, but I believe its perspective is absolutely on target here as an expression of the grace of the Fourth Week. The proper wording for this grace is "realized solidarity," a term that has found its place alongside the formulas "faith that does justice" and

³⁷ See Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), and Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 580–603.

“the preferential option for the poor.” I would propose further that the experience of solidarity changes as one moves through the Weeks, as the Gospels keep challenging us to examine our loyalties and social location.³⁸ Are we being untrue to the *Exercises* by bringing in the notion of solidarity with its far-reaching social and political connotations? Not at all. The political and social orders have been permanently woven into the gospel fabric. We would be unable to appreciate (and therefore could not faithfully retell) the story of Jesus if we knew nothing about the cultural and economic, the social and political circumstances both of his life and that of the early communities. What history is summed up in the Creed’s brief phrase “he was crucified under Pontius Pilate”? To proclaim that Jesus is Lord was to affirm that Caesar is not; to live for God’s kingdom was to reject the way the empire wielded patronage and power.³⁹ Christian holiness today cannot afford to be apolitical; solidarity is essentially partisan—it is born from the same preferential option that governs the logic behind the third level of freedom (*SpEx* 155 and 167).

³⁸ A First Week experience of solidarity might be approximated this way (in the words of John Paul II): “By virtue of human solidarity which is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual’s sin in some way affects others” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* [Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005], 53). The number of index entries under “solidarity” furnishes some idea of how extensively the term has been used in the Church’s official statements. A form of solidarity appropriate to the Second Week might be a oneness with Jesus and the people that is properly “ideological,” together with a thoroughgoing embrace of the principles underlying the kingdom of God. In the case of the disciples, there was a oneness but it was as yet untested, and the necessity of solidarity being rooted in shared suffering was something they did not yet understand. On this score, their hearts were still hardened.

³⁹ “I therefore propose that the clash between Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries, especially the Pharisees, must be seen in terms of alternative political agendas generated by alternative eschatological beliefs and expectations” (N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999], 58). And again: “The gospel of Jesus as king of the Jews is then placed, by implication, in tension with the rule of Herod as king of the Jews, until the latter’s sudden death in chapter 12 [of Acts]; whereupon the gospel of Jesus as lord of the world is placed in tension with the rule of Caesar as lord of the world, a tension which comes to the surface in [Acts] 17.7 and smolders on through to the pregnant but powerful statement of the closing passage, with Paul in Rome speaking of the kingdom of the true god and the Lordship of Jesus himself” (Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 569).

In the Fourth Week, then, solidarity, like companionship with Jesus, assumes a specifically paschal character. If oneness with the victim—and, through the One, with all victims—is a Third Week grace in which this oneness is experienced as consolation, then in the Fourth Week this same oneness is accompanied by an unshakable rightness, the firmest conviction that in standing alongside victims we are standing with God and that the Father himself has placed us there. Such an experience empowers us profoundly. In the Fourth Week, like the seer in the book of Revelation, one envisions and dares to hope for a world remade, where no one will ever again hang upon a cross. A person living in the Fourth Week might well have to endure crucifixion, as when Paul exclaimed, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:19) and felt himself still hanging there with Jesus. But one also experiences being with Christ crucified as ultimately redemptive and healing, for there is no other way to make all things new, no other way to glory. Feeling the power of a love so strong that it elects solidarity over denial and flight is a paschal grace. In the end, solidarity is inconceivable without hope and unachievable without love. Its realization is a manifestation of Easter joy. As Jon Sobrino writes,

We can live in history with resignation or desperation, but we can also live with hope in a promise. And this happens. Those who have radical hope for the victims of this world, who are not convinced that resignation is the last word or consoled by the claim that these victims have already served a positive purpose, can include in their experience a hope analogous to that with which Jesus’ resurrection was first grasped and can direct their lives to taking the victims down from the cross. Furthermore, those who, in the midst of this history of crucifixion, celebrate what there is of fullness and have the freedom to give their own lives will, perhaps, not see history as nonsensical or as a repetition of itself but as the promise of a “more” that touches us and draws us despite ourselves. This experience can be formulated in various ways, but one of these has to be “walking with God in history,” as Micah puts it, or as an encounter—in faith, in hope, and in love—with the God who raised Jesus.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 78.

Any approach to ministry that regards the world and its concerns as either irrelevant or peripheral to life in the Spirit is, I believe, locked into the First Week. And anyone who thinks that ministry to God's word can be carried on without insertion into the daily life of God's people has probably not moved beyond the Second Week. When the Jerusalem apostles determined that "it is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables" (Acts 6:2), they may have set an unfortunate precedent. Not only can apostles lose contact with God's people if they devote themselves exclusively to prayer and "serving the word." They may forget that God's word does not hover above God's people as a timeless text; it dwells and breathes within them. In this regard, Paul's strategy of working to support himself as he went on mission may have paid an unexpected dividend. Forms of apostleship engaged with and by the world strike me as more in keeping with the paschal experience.

Consolation in the Fourth Week

When Ignatius directs us in *SpEx* 224 to consider how the risen Christ "consoles" his disciples in the way friends are accustomed to "console" one another, he does not have in mind the way we console one another over the loss of a loved one at a wake or funeral. Jesus, after all, has been raised from the dead. The word

Our sense of Jesus' absence is heightened in proportion to our awareness of all the things that are wrong with the world. Suffering remains, especially the suffering brought on by sin.

"console," like the noun "consolation," covers a range of interior movements. In the first, the soul is so inflamed with love for its Creator and Lord that nothing else could ever be loved for itself alone but only in God. In the second, one's love for the Lord comes to expression in tears that are prompted by, for example, the recollection of one's sins, the remembrance of Jesus' suffering, or

the awareness of something else that has to do with serving and praising him. In the third, consolation consists of every increase of faith, hope, and charity, as well as every internal delight that comes from thinking about the kingdom of God and the way God has been at work in our lives, so that as a consequence our hearts are left

“quieted and at peace” in our Creator and Lord—“quietándola y pacificándola en su Criador y Señor” (*SpEx* 316).

To consider Jesus as the one who consoles, therefore, is to realize what happens upon “seeing” the risen Lord, or perhaps more pointedly, upon “hearing” him. As a result of hearing him, in the premier instance, the two disciples returning from Emmaus exclaim, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road?” (Luke 24:32). This explosive realization conveys that sense of increased faith, hope, and love of which Ignatius speaks. It communicates the sense of a love of God so thoroughgoing that every affection is rearranged around it. And it suggests a happiness so deep and sudden that one is moved to tears. At such a moment, a person imagines nothing more desirable and gratifying than spending every waking hour for the rest of one’s life, if that were possible, thinking and talking with others about Jesus, and responding to his call.

Without a doubt, someone praying in the Fourth Week would want to experience Jesus as the one who consoles us. But when Ignatius adds “as friends are accustomed to do” (“cómo unos amigos suelen consolar a otros”), he seems to be intimating that another grace of this week is that of doing what the risen Jesus does, namely, being a source of consolation for others—and taking delight in the fact that others are drawing new life from us, or what the “Formula of the Institute” refers to as “the spiritual consolation of Christ’s faithful.” This aspect of Fourth Week grace has to do with delight and satisfaction in speaking with others about Jesus, *and* doing so in such a way that the focus is not on us but on him, *and* noticing others responding to what they are hearing with an increase in faith, hope, and love: “Were not our hearts burning?” And here we have an accurate description of the evangelists at work.

The route to blessedness and peace was never intended to lead us out of the world but more deeply into it.

Nothing guarantees that someone will remain forever a person of the Fourth Week. High spiritual achievement, however costly and however long in coming, can never be permanently secure. Experiences fade, important lessons can be forgotten, newness gives way to routine, the desperately poor outside the gate become invisible, protest and resistance give way to resignation and surrender. The master, it seems, delays his return too long. For all these reasons, the

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young man's instruction to return to Galilee, to the place where the story first began, never loses its "wild and precious" ring: "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16:7). The gospel story has to be reclaimed continually, or else its lifegiving urgency will be lost.⁴¹ The tomb is empty.

V. Conclusion

So, What about the Stone?

That writers would be drawn to interpret the stone figuratively is understandable. As Gerald O'Collins put it,

This detail in the Easter story has often made me think of the many things in the world and in our lives that look impossible. They may be sufferings that we cannot cope with, injustices that seem unforgivable, or difficulties that look quite insuperable. If we imagine ourselves to be inside the tomb, we can sharpen further the sense of our powerlessness. Many of us can feel dead and locked in a tomb by some great stone.⁴²

Ched Myers says something similar:

This stone symbolizes everything that impedes the Church from continuing the narrative of biblical radicalism. It represents our paralysis whenever we conclude that the discipleship journey is a dead-end, that Jesus' vision of love and justice is, for all practical purposes, a well-meaning delusion.⁴³

Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the little detail about the stone has hitchhiked its exegetical way merely as a spiritual figure or metaphor for anything that may be entombing us and keeping us from the freedom and joy of Christ's risen life. The rational side of my brain wants to say that, if indeed the stone was too large for

⁴¹ I am borrowing here from Mary Oliver's wonderful poem "Summer Day," where she asks, at the end, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?" (*New and Selected Poems* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1992], 94).

⁴² Gerald O'Collins, "Easter Stories," in *The Way* Supplement no. 99 (2000), 39.

⁴³ Ched Myers, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 412. The stone blocking us might be "addictions, family violence, urban decay, ecocide" (413); or it might be "the architecture of domination, which we dare not challenge yet constantly reproduce in our own lives" (414).

three women to roll it away (following Mark's account), then the stone had probably been rolled away *after* reports of someone's having seen Jesus risen; it was moved by human hands, not divine ones. Yet this is not what the gospel text says.

Of course, the use of the passive voice—"had already been rolled back"—could very well be a first instance of the divine passive in this passage, the second being "He has been raised."⁴⁴ The rolling away of the stone would thereby become another way of referring to the resurrection itself. In other words, the stone is probably not a historical detail but a theological one. The moving of the stone is not about Jesus getting out of "the place they laid him," but about the women—and the reader—getting in. And once inside, it is not Jesus that we discover, but the Easter witness. Which means that, at least in the case of Mark's Gospel, it is not the women who become the Easter witnesses (we are informed, after all, that "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid") but the evangelist himself. The evangelist is the one who has rolled the stone away; it is he who has directed us to search for the risen Jesus among the living and trained our minds to recognize the marks of crucifixion.

The answer is to stay with the people, no matter the price to be paid, to let the circle of our loyalty and affection enlarge, and never to lose sight of that spirit which God has breathed into each and every one of us.

Can There Be Fourth Week Desolation?

One more thing remains to be said about Fourth Week grace. For lack of a more felicitous term I will call it the "grace" of Fourth Week desolation. Ignatius writes in *SpEx* 320 and 322 that a person who is experiencing desolation needs to consider whether, in some cases, *God* might be doing a bit of testing and teaching—counsel appropriate to a First Week experience. Sometimes desolation can be salutary. But what about the desolation or sadness that arises from a

⁴⁴Myers describes this use of the passive voice as "the grammar of divine action" (414).

penetrating awareness of Christ's absence, the not-yet pole of Christian experience?

Although Ignatius does not consider desolation as something that might happen during the Fourth Week, the sense of "real absence" is what led the disciples to awaken Jesus as he slept through the raging storm, and perhaps later to wonder why he stayed behind and allowed them to sail off alone into restless seas. "Real absence" seems to have been the reason the early Church took up the practice of fasting: "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day" (Mark 2:20). The "little while" of which Jesus speaks in John 16:16 suggests both a short-term absence and a long-term. Jesus returns with Easter, but Jesus' definitive union with his friends, and their union with him, has to wait. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). The risen Jesus can be touched by faith but not by sight.⁴⁵

Our sense of Jesus' absence is heightened in proportion to our awareness of all the things that are wrong with the world. Suffering remains, especially the suffering brought on by sin. The raising of Jesus has awakened and intensified in creation itself the hope that it "will be set free from its bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:21). One of the Beatitudes reads, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). "Hunger" and "thirst" sound better than "desolation"; but when Ignatius speaks in *SpEx* 320 of the Lord's withdrawing fervor, love, and grace, we seem to be moving close to the experience of Jesus on the cross—a graphic embodiment of someone hungering and thirsting for justice, yet at the same time a chilling representation of divine absence. There are times when the ragged, unfinished character of our lives and our common history threaten to overwhelm our capacity for hope. At such moments all the paschal reassurance in the world is not going to bring redemption any closer. Karl Rahner once wrote that

⁴⁵Sandra Schneiders developed this point in her "Touching the Risen Jesus: Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin in John 20," *Proceedings of the Sixtieth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 60 (2005):13–35. See especially pp. 30–35.

[a]lthough I took part in the elaboration of *Gaudium et spes* at the Council, I would not deny that its undertone is too euphoric in its evaluation of humanity and the human condition. What it says may be true, but it produces the overall impression that it is enough to observe its norms, and everything will more or less turn out well.

It does not insist enough on the fact that all human endeavors, with all their sagacity and goodwill, often end up in blind alleys; that in questions of morality, when we really face the whole of reality, we get lost in obscurities which no moral formula can wholly remove. In short, as Scripture says, the world is in a bad way and it will stay that way, even if, as we are obliged to do, we fight against evil to the death.⁴⁶

The intense joy asked for in the Fourth Week remains an eschatological joy. That is, the Easter stories project God's future into our minds and hearts, a vision of creation begun all over again. But those "new heavens and new earth" are not merely a long way off; they are never going to be realized in real time and space, no matter how earnestly we pray for the coming of God's kingdom. On the other hand, to attempt living without hope gets us nowhere either. The God who creates is at the same time the God who raises the dead. It is easy to see why the idea of heaven would become so appealing: a state of blessedness beyond the grave, a spiritual existence with a radically different sort of body and a definitive escape from the suffering of the present age. The simplest way to overcome the tension between already and not yet is to reduce history to a vale of tears and the material world to a messy, dispensable middle step on the way to our becoming pure spirits. The material universe, like the human body itself, would one day be cast off and replaced by an eternal and immaterial kingdom. But this is not what "the resurrection of the body" means.

Let us suppose, by contrast, that the route to blessedness and peace was never intended to lead us out of the world but more deeply into it. Let us suppose that the cup of suffering has to be drunk, that the baptism of which Jesus spoke has to be endured, because his is the only way to become more human together and there is no other way to drive out demons. "Are you able to drink

⁴⁶ Karl Rahner, "Christian Pessimism," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 22 (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 157 f.

the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38). Rahner's words about Christian pessimism are sobering: there is an understandable desolation that comes from attending to the vast human desert before us. What then is to be done?

The answer, I think, is to stay with the people, no matter the price to be paid, to let the circle of our loyalty and affection enlarge, and never to lose sight of that spirit which God has breathed into each and every one of us. We simply have to master the lesson about how to live in and for others: the experience of doing so is a supreme example of consolation. In living for and in others, especially history's victims and throwaways, we grasp at last what the Creator and Lord is like. This great consolation, however, cannot be won without dying; to embrace the world passionately is to be crucified to it. And herein lies a paradox we have known all along.

In my imagination, as the lights fade and the curtain descends, the messenger in the tomb stands, exits, and rolls the stone back across the tomb's entrance. We have been told that Jesus is not among the dead and that there should be no reason for ever going back to the place where they laid him. Mark's narrative about naked men, howling demons, disobedient women, and witless apostles has taken us over. One goes back to the Jordan where the story began, perhaps with questions more pressing than ever, yet convinced—happily convinced—that there is no other way to pass through this world than to walk in Jesus' company.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

I want to thank you for publishing Charles Jackson's superb essay "Something Happened to Me at Manresa: The Mystical Origin of the Ignatian Charism" (Summer 2006). Charlie seems to get inside Ignatius and to grasp something of the profound upheaval caused in him by God's loving presence. I especially appreciated his preference for finding the "desire" of God than for finding the "will" of God. I have not seen this anywhere else, and believe that it hits upon something profound about God that Ignatius intuited at Manresa, and es-

pecially at the Cardoner. To speak of finding God's desire is to speak of friendship and cooperation in a family business. If you fall in love with God, you want to do what God wants you to do because you know that you can't do anything better with your life. Charlie Jackson has hit a home run with this one.

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