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# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

**Ignatian Service**

*Gratitude and Love in Action*

**WILKIE AU**

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# IGNATIAN SERVICE

*Gratitude and Love in Action*

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Wilkie Au

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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## *the first word . . .*

**T**he night of the Baldwin Awards functions as a rite of spring here at Boston College. It's a five-year-old tradition that provides recognition for the best films made by students over the past year. Each winner receives a "Baldwin," a metal replica of the Boston College eagle, which some custodians of B.C. lore claim was once nicknamed "Baldwin," perhaps as a bit of wordplay on "bald eagle," or "bald one." (It would be interesting to find out if the same name was applied to some of the less abundantly feathered fathers on the faculty.) It's an open competition. Some entries originate in projects for film making and video classes, but others fly in over the transom from My Space veterans who have shot and edited films with their own begged, borrowed, or stolen equipment. The field is narrowed to twenty-five finalists, most of which are entered in several categories, just like the Academy Awards competition.

The ceremony is a bit different from the usual presentation of academic honors. "Pomp and Circumstances" and academic regalia have no place in the proceedings. Baldwin night involves a delicious parody of the Oscar ceremonies, which precede us by a few weeks. If weather permits—and this is New England, not southern California—we provide searchlights and roll out a red carpet in front of the building. Several of the students and faculty appear in tuxedos. (Not willing to spend forty dollars for a black bow tie to wear once a year, I squeezed into my starchiest pontiff four clerical collar, and explained the odd outfit as a hip variation of the classical tux that Jon Stewart would envy.) Some of the women take their prom gowns out of tissue paper for the occasion. Since they have to climb several steps to the stage, many of the jeans and sneaker set seem to find the floor-length dresses and heels bit of a challenge, but we got through the night with no major mishaps. Student comedy clubs write goofy banter and presentation speeches with the clear intention of embarrassing the faculty, fellow students, and administrators who serve as presenters. Accompanied by drum roll, cymbal, and a chorus of groans, these remarks match the inanity of the real thing, dumb joke for dumb joke.

At some time in the evening, the froth and ballyhoo of the Hollywood version is interrupted by some somber message about the achievements and promise of "the industry," as they call it. Some teetering titan, with black rimmed glasses and gray mustache, is led out by starlets one-third his age to enunciate the requisite pomposities. Not to be outdone, the Baldwin committee gave me five whole minutes maximum (but no starlets) to summarize my experience of thirty-five years of film reviewing and offer a few reflections on

the future for the next generation of film makers. They demanded a few self-deprecating jokes, too. All that in five minutes.

It was a bad-news, good-news presentation, as one might expect. First the bad news. Reviewing can be a discouraging business, as week after week passes with few new releases worth the ink to review. The dry spells have grown longer over the past few years, since the industry has succumbed to the international blockbuster syndrome. It relies more and more on multimillion-dollar action-adventure films with a minimum of dialogue and character complexity. These are designed to appeal as much to audiences speaking Urdu, Farsi, or Hindi as they are to thirteen-year-old American computer-game addicts wanting to get away from the house and their parents for a few hours. The technology has exploded, but it has exacted a terrible cost from quality. Why waste time and money with the script when the techies can sit at their monitors and generate explosions, monsters, and bodily mutilation at a fraction of the cost? Why create genuine spectacle, when so many people prefer to watch their movies on a television screen or their own private laptop. Soon we'll be streaming full length films into cell phones. Somehow the idea of seeing *Lawrence of Arabia* on a two-inch screen strikes me as desecration, but I too am a creature of my age. For another generation, it will be perfectly normal, alas and weylaway.

Of course a bit of grandfatherly exhortation to young filmmakers was lurking under the surface of my comments. The torpedoes were benign, however, and of course there was no way to see if any had struck target. This was after all a celebration, not an admonition. Here is the parallel. The commercial industry is not alone in risking the loss of its soul. All this new equipment has made it too easy for students to make films. After all, third graders are now able to make "films" in their bedrooms and post them on the web. With this experience as background, many young film students become impatient with pre-production. They want to get at the cameras, shoot, and feed their footage into the computer for editing. The requirement of scripting, site-scouting, shot-lists and the like come as an unwelcome shock, mere annoyances that they want to get through as quickly as possible in order to get to the hardware and "real" film making. In such a hurried atmosphere having, like, something to say becomes, like, far less important than, like, saying it.

In keeping with imperatives of Hollywood movies, however, this story has to have a happy ending. Here's the annual scenario. After a long arid spell of moronic teenpix, my letter of resignation as reviewer sits on the desk waiting for a stamp. Inspirational music on the sound track. A ray of light bursts through a window and falls on the keyboard of my computer. As the leaves begin to fall, along with snowflakes in New England, rumors of an abundant harvest changes one's perspective. During this season of mists and mellow fruitfulness the studios release their prestige product in the hope of getting good reviews and Oscar nominations. This is the season of Edenic bliss for film critics. Just look at the nominees that hit the multiplexes last fall. In *No Country for Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood* we had two thoughtful

meditations on the nature of evil. In both instances, destructive greed leads to self-annihilation. Both films were set in the American West. By tapping into the tradition of the Western film, they presented chilling reflections on American expansionism, past and present. *Michael Clayton* brought the question of greed into the corporate boardroom, with much the same disturbing, honest reflection.

*Atonement*, an adaptation of Ian MacEwan's majestic novel, brought not only an examination of love and betrayal, but it subtly probed the two-edged sword of imagination in a world enthralled by the delusion of scientific truth in human relationships. Once again proving that comedy is serious business, *Juno* offered a whimsical but insightful story of family relationships that shift after the discovery of an unplanned teenage pregnancy. At the other end of the life cycle, *Away from Her* gave an honest portrait of a family facing the loss of a loved one through Alzheimer's syndrome. This was not a "Best Picture" nominee like the others, but Julie Christie's nomination for best actress took me back to her Lara in *Dr. Zhivago* and Diana in *Darling*, both from 1965. It was doubly poignant, like meeting an old friend remembered as an embodiment of youthful loveliness and now devastated by adumbrations of our common mortality.

The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is that serious artists still make films that count and still challenge their audiences to think and feel. Even with that serious intent they are still able to make films that people want to see and celebrate. Let's give Hollywood its night to preen. On other nights during the year it can pander to the worst in its least-common-denominator audiences and sell tickets in multiplexes and shopping malls. On Oscar night, it lifts its head a bit above the accountants' bottom line, if only for a few hours, and for that we should all be grateful.

I felt that way about Baldwin night, too. Most student films are dreadful beer-and-blood recreations of *Animal House*. Yet several of the twenty-five student films that made it through the elimination process provoked that same sense of satisfaction and ultimately gratitude that one might experience in looking over the Oscar finalists. It was really a splendid body of work. One student put together some grant money, took a film crew to India and did a documentary on health care in rural villages. Another stayed closer to home and through a series of interviews with dining-service employees, work-study students and full-time staff alike, provided a snapshot of those subtle economic and social class distinctions that influence behavior patterns. This effort took the "Best Film" award. Another, written and directed by an undergraduate, was social satire filmed in post-Soviet and very materialistic Russia with the help of a professional television crew. One student took a nostalgic look at the big-budget MGM musicals of an earlier era. He got a composition student from a music conservatory in the area to do an original score, another to do choreography, and coaxed creditable performances out of local singers and dancers. A campus comedy troupe filmed its own incisive parody of *The Da Vinci Code*, and a more serious-minded team did a film noir, with an

abundance of murders staged in parking lots and barren beaches. It was quite a change from the "fun in the dorms" types of home movies that one often associates with college film making.

This exercise of grandfatherly pride is not boasting, since I have absolutely nothing to do with the production part of the film program. Still, those of us who handle the more academic side of the department found ourselves energized by the evening. It's something we need from time to time. Especially as the semester draws to a close, we can feel the inevitable frustration of reading student papers and discovering to our horror that we hadn't made points of history and criticism as clearly as we had believed. Fatigue leads to frustration and then to negativity. Why do they keep making the same mistakes? What to do? Blame yourself? Try harder? Put more quizzes and papers into the syllabus? Make more hysterical comments in the margins? Any of those would simply repeat the cycle of greater effort and greater recognition of inadequacy, on our part as much as our students'.

It seems so much healthier to draw renewed enthusiasm from a sense of gratitude for demonstrated achievements, even though the results arise from the talents of others. I can be reinvigorated simply by the awareness that the system works, in its own way, whether I make a contribution or not. Put concretely, many of our production majors bristle under the history and criticism courses they are required to take, but perhaps, in some mysterious way, the result of taking them is better film makers. It's vicarious satisfaction, but satisfaction nonetheless. Satisfaction brings gratitude and gratitude renews one's energies.

To come to think about it, the experience of Baldwin night might be taken as a kind of paradigm for Jesuit life. In the optimism/pessimism scale Jesuits run the gamut. Some see the glass as half empty some of the time or most of the time. That is, when they don't see the glass as totally empty all the time. If one believes that personal effort can make up for past failures, to say nothing of the deficiencies of superiors and administrators, then the result is overwork, frustration with failure, a sense of hopelessness and finally a surrender to mediocrity. One need not be a charter member of the Pollyanna sodality to realize that an occasional full glass of optimism can lead to satisfaction, gratitude for being part of the enterprise, and renewed enthusiasm for the challenges to come.

These are rather mundane, common-sense observations, but that have implications that extend far beyond Baldwin awards and job satisfaction. Wilkie Au, the author of this issue of *STUDIES*, directs our attention to gratitude within the context of the Spiritual Exercises, and consequently at the heart of Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit ministry. We are fortunate indeed to be able to draw from his vast experience as a spiritual director to gain a refreshing insight into this core idea of Ignatius.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor

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# Ignatian Service

## *Gratitude and Love in Action*

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*Faced with the self-generated demands of the ministry, Jesuits and their companions face the constant risk of placing unrealistic expectations on themselves. Generosity can flow into frustration, guilt, and a sense of inadequacy. Contemplating God's gifts in an Ignatian spirit of gratitude provides a healthy counterbalance. So motivated, one embraces apostolic works as an instrument of God's own activity in the world rather than as a laborer from whom too much is expected.*

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**I**n June 2006 I had the privilege of participating in a conference on "The Vocation of the Teacher in the Ignatian Tradition" that was held at the Centre Sevres, Paris. Sponsored by John Carroll University, the meeting brought together delegations from twenty-one Jesuit universities, the two U.S. Jesuit schools of theology, and the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU). One of the highlights of the conference was hearing lay colleagues give voice to their strong support and solidarity with Jesuits in pursuing the Ignatian mission of forming men and women for others. As they cited Ignatian documents in their call for renewed action, it was clear to me that the Ignatian vision continues to inspire dedication and service. However, a consistent concern surfaced when lay people questioned how they might embrace a passionate commitment to service without becoming overworked and fragmented. Inspired to greater service in their work at the university, they wondered what more they could realistically do when they so often feel buffeted by the demands of teaching, research, and publishing. Their bottom-line concern was aptly summarized by one participant who said, "I'd like to do more to contribute to the university's commitment to the service of

faith and the promotion of justice, but how do I keep from getting over-extended and being burned out, when there's so much to do?" Already feeling stretched by the pressures of work and family life, they wanted to know how they could live out the Ignatian vision in a viable and integrated way.

The dialogue among conference participants eventually made clear that Jesuits and their lay colleagues face the same challenge—how to strike a vibrant balance between work and leisure, time for others and time for self. This essay reflects my desire to continue the conversation that took place in Paris by articulating an understanding of Ignatian service that simultaneously inspires commitment and fosters balance in ministry. It is my hope that this essay can serve as a useful resource in the ongoing dialogue regarding Jesuit-lay collaboration.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, then superior general of the Society of Jesus, notes that Ignatius possesses "a certain preference for comparative adverbs: the whole corpus of Ignatian spirituality seems to be summed up in the 'greater,' the *más/magis*."<sup>1</sup> Ignatius's emphasis on the comparative, however, was not intended to inspire ministers to strain beyond their human limitations, but to open them to a greater availability to

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*At first glance, to speak of gratitude as a defining element of Ignatian spirituality may seem like belaboring the obvious. Yet, the centrality of gratitude has received scant attention in published form.*

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collaborate with Christ. As Father Kolvenbach puts it, "By means of these adverbial constructions, the text is emphatically open to a synergy with this God who never rests, but labors and works in all created things on the face of the earth [236]" (116).<sup>2</sup> When not understood in the context of Ignatius's theology of ministry, these comparative adverbs are easily mis-

understood to mean that we should never be satisfied with what we have accomplished, that we should always be striving for more. Such a distorted view taints Ignatian spirituality with a perfectionistic drivenness that is both unhealthy and unattractive. When used uncritically to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "Linguistic Interpretation of the Exercises," in *The Road from La Storta: Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., on Ignatian Spirituality* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 116.

<sup>2</sup>Page references to the last-cited source are included in the text, enclosed in parentheses. This is equivalent to writing "ibid.," followed by the page reference.



exhort people to a commitment to Ignatian service, it is no wonder that such terms as “*magis*” and “*ad majorem Dei gloriam*” can come across as unreasonably demanding. The last section of this essay addresses concrete problems such as perfectionism, overwork, and codependency—struggles that Jesuits and their lay colleagues often face when relentless demands are placed on them from an incorrect understanding of Ignatius’s view of ministry.

Given the U.S. Assistancy’s priority on forming lay partners as part of its Strategic Discernment Process, it seems important and timely that Jesuits are able to articulate the Ignatian vision to their non-Jesuit partners in an attractive and realistic way. On the one hand, Ignatian service continues to be a reliable path to spiritual transformation, as it has been for centuries, because it emanates from an attitude towards life that is shaped by gratitude and love. On the other hand, contemporary followers of the Ignatian path need to be wary of counterfeit forms of Ignatian service that result in joyless work, driven by an excessive sense of responsibility and inability to set healthy limits—modern examples of Ignatius’s notion of a temptation of an apparent good, or evil under the guise of good. Clarifying the contours of an Ignatian spirituality of ministry can help lay partners share more deeply in the wisdom of Ignatius, as well as help Jesuits to prudently focus their energy at a time of shrinking manpower.

In Ignatian spirituality, service takes on great significance because it is seen as a way of collaborating with God. In this joint effort, ministers are most united to Christ when their actions issue forth from “a pure intention of the divine service.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, Ignatius encourages an ongoing purification of our motives for serving others. Allowing for developmental growth, he states at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises* that, while a healthy fear can be useful in keeping a person from deadly sin, “the zealous service of God our Lord out of pure love should be esteemed above all.”<sup>4</sup> While human action generally arises from many levels of motivation—conscious and unconscious—the ideal is that our works of

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<sup>3</sup> *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis, Mo.: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), no. 813. Subsequent references to the *Constitutions* will be placed in the text itself, enclosed in parentheses and preceded by *Cons.*, followed by the boldface marginal number of the passage

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, translated by Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), no. 370. Subsequent references to the *Spiritual Exercises* will be placed

service and justice originate more and more from feelings of gratitude and love, rather than from deficient motives such as fear of punishment, desire for reward, self-aggrandizement, guilt, and compulsion. Therefore, our commitment to service and the promotion of justice must, as Jesuit John J. English states, “take place in the context of God’s goodness . . . forgiving love . . . concern for [humankind] and the support [God] gives to persons who . . . desire social justice and peace.”<sup>5</sup> My thesis is that gratitude constitutes a leitmotif of the *Spiritual Exercises* and that the basic dynamic by which Ignatius leads people to a commitment to service originates with gratitude.

### Gratitude: The Echo of Grace

More than a transient and ephemeral feeling, gratitude for Ignatius is an abiding vision of thankfulness that recognizes the gift-nature of everything. The late moral theologian William C. Spohn captures this Ignatian understanding of gratitude when he speaks of gratitude as “the echo of grace.” Gratitude reverberates in our hearts when the gratuity of everything dawns on us. In a poignant account of his experience of imminent death, Spohn writes, “The last six months have been nothing like I feared the encounter with death would be. We are not called to summon up a great act of hope, but to turn our attention to the One who is faithful. As a professional student, I guess I imagined that this would be the ultimate final exam, and I’d better get it right.” Instead, with marvel and gratitude, he discovered “that there is more gift than accomplishment in all of this. If gratitude is the echo of grace, then hope is the echo of God’s paying attention to us.”<sup>6</sup>

At first glance, to speak of gratitude as a defining element of Ignatian spirituality may seem like belaboring the obvious. Yet, the centrality of gratitude has received scant attention in published form. “Because it is based in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatian spirituality is grounded in intense gratitude and reverence,” states theologian Monika Hellwig. “It begins with and continually reverts to the awareness of the presence

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in the text itself, enclosed in parentheses and preceded by *SpEx*, followed by the bold-face marginal number of the passage

<sup>5</sup> “The Ignatian Method and Social Theology,” in *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, edited by David L. Fleming, S.J. (St. Louis, Mo.: Review for Religious, 1983), 265.

<sup>6</sup> As cited in “The School of Hope” by Martha Ellen Stortz in *Santa Clara Magazine*, Winter 2006, 15.

and power and care of God everywhere, for everyone, and at all times."<sup>7</sup> That gratitude is thematic of the Spiritual Exercises rests on an understanding of the Contemplation to Attain Love as a recapitulation of the entire experience (*SpEx* 230–37). Viewing the *Contemplatio* as a summarizing meditation allows us to see how gratitude permeates the whole process of the Spiritual Exercises.

I contend that the basic Ignatian dynamic that culminates in service and works of justice is embedded in the *Contemplatio* and reveals a strategy that is interwoven throughout the Exercises. This dynamic entails a tripartite movement: (a) from a contemplative gaze that appreciates the gift-nature of all reality, (b) to affective dispositions or attitudes of gratitude and love, (c) attitudes that then lead to service, since, for Ignatius, grateful love is better manifested in altruistic action than in words alone (*SpEx* 230). In short, Ignatius fosters gratitude as a threshold to love. Love, in turn, becomes a springboard to service.

This essay is divided into four parts. Part I delineates how the *Contemplatio* can be seen as a recapitulation of the Exercises that underscores the centrality of gratitude as a motive for service; the basic pedagogy by which Ignatius attempted to lead people to a commitment to service was based on gratitude and love. Part II discusses how a literary *inclusio*, a writing technique for weaving seemingly disparate passages into a thematic whole, highlights gratitude as a leitmotif of the Spiritual Exercises. Part III discusses essential elements of an Ignatian spirituality for ministry, while Part IV examines some obstacles to the Ignatian ideal of contemplative action.

## I: The *Contemplatio* as a Recapitulation

Viewing the Contemplation to Attain Love as a recapitulation of the entire Spiritual Exercises was proposed by Michael J. Buckley, S.J., in 1975.<sup>8</sup> Since then other writers have reiterated this theme: Peter Schineller, S.J. in 1989,<sup>9</sup> and Robert Sears, S.J. and Joseph

<sup>7</sup> Monica K. Hellwig, "Finding God in All Things: A Spirituality for Today," in *Review of Ignatian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997), no. 85, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup>Michael J. Buckley, S. J., "The Contemplation to Attain Love," in *Supplement to the Way* 24 (Spring 1975), 92–104.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Schineller, S.J., "St. Ignatius and Creation-Centered Spirituality in *The Way* 29, no. 1 (January 1989): 50–51.

Bracken, S.J. in 2006.<sup>10</sup> For Buckley, the Contemplation is “a summary in consciousness and affectivity of major consideration of the previous four weeks.”<sup>11</sup> In support of his thesis, he cites Ignatian scholar Ignatius Iparraguirre’s belief that the *Contemplatio* provides “in a highly condensed form the very kernel of the Exercises” and must be seen as a “kind of concrete synthesis.”<sup>12</sup> The *Contemplatio* concludes the Exercises and proceeds through four considerations, which closely correspond to the four Weeks of the Exercises. The first consideration recalls the First Principle and Foundation at the beginning of the Exercises when it invites us to contemplate the gifts of creation and redemption, and the

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*Recognition of the graces of each week of the Exercises is meant to evoke an ever deepening gratitude for all that we have received.*

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special blessings and favors we have received. The second reflection reminds us that God not only is the creator of life and the giver of gifts, but also dwells in all created things, especially in the human person, the *imago Dei*. This indwelling

of the divine in all of creation corresponds with the Second Week of the Exercises and the Incarnation, the mystery that celebrates the enfleshment of divine compassion in the person of Jesus. The third consideration of the Contemplation to Attain Love asserts that God’s presence in the world is not inert but dynamic: God labors and works for us in all of creation. This emphasis on the labor of God on our behalf calls to mind the Third Week of the Exercises when we pray over the passion and death of Jesus, whose love for us enabled him to endure painful labor and suffering, even unto death on the cross. Finally, the fourth point of the Contemplation portrays all of God’s blessings as descending from above. This vision of God as source and giver of all gifts is possible because the Risen Christ is “the efficacious witness to the creating and redeeming love of God” (93). In these ways, the four considerations of the Contemplation to Attain Love summarize and recapitulate the major themes of the entire Exercises.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert T. Sears, S.J., and Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., *Self-Emptying Love in a Global Context: The Spiritual Exercises and the Environment* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2006), 74–75.

<sup>11</sup> Buckley, “Contemplation to Attain Love,” 100.

<sup>12</sup> Ignatius Iparraguirre, *A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises*, trans. J. Chianese (Bombay, 1959), 102 and 107, as cited by Buckley, *ibid.*, 93.

## Gratitude for the Graces Received

“The *Contemplación* brings the major strands of the Exercises into their synthesis in love,” notes Buckley, “by recapitulating their graces in a heightened form” (100). Each Week of the Exercises invites us to call to mind the abundant graces of God and to be grateful. A schematic summary of these graces highlights how gratitude is central to the Exercises.

- The First Principle and Foundation fosters gratitude for the gifts of creation and one’s personal life. Each of us has been created in “lone nativities,”<sup>13</sup> not in twos or thousands. The existence we enjoy results from God’s conscious love, choosing us to be. Because we are “desired into being,”<sup>14</sup> our basic attitude towards God should be one of gratitude and praise (Rom 1:21). This initial consideration also evokes gratitude for the gift of a love relationship with God meant to be enjoyed in the “here-and-now” and in the “hereafter.”
- The First Week’s reflection on sin fosters gratitude for God’s saving and merciful love. With the help of grace, we realize with felt-knowledge that we are sinful, yet loved.
- The Call of the King meditation, a transition between the First and Second Weeks, fosters gratitude for the gift of covenant partnership with Christ. We become grateful for a share in the ministry of Jesus and for the fact that we are sinful, yet called.
- The Second Week evokes gratitude for the gift of Jesus, the Compassion of God made flesh, and for the Good News of God’s unconditional love proclaimed by Jesus.
- The Third Week elicits gratitude for Jesus’ sacrificial love, a love manifested in a trusting surrender to God’s will, even to the point of a painful death.
- The Fourth Week fosters gratitude for the ongoing presence of the risen Christ as an abiding source of consolation.

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<sup>13</sup> Jessica Powers, “The Masses,” as cited in *Ashes to Easter: Lenten Meditations* by Robert F. Morneau (New York: Crossroads, 1997), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Woman* (Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 2001), 100.

- The Contemplation to Attain Love fosters gratitude by inviting us to recall all of God's gifts of creation and redemption and to rejoice in God's loving presence and action in all of reality for us.

## Gateways to Gratitude

The graces received throughout the Spiritual Exercises call for a grateful response. Peter Schneller observes, "In the presence of God's abounding love, the basic response according to Ignatius is gratitude."<sup>15</sup> Ingratitude, Ignatius once wrote, "is the most abominable of all sins, and it is to be detested in the sight of the Creator and Lord by all of God's creatures for it is the forgetting of the graces, benefits and blessings received."<sup>16</sup> To counteract this kind of forgetting, Ignatius asks us in the first point of the *Contemplatio* to recall the many blessings of creation and redemption that we have enjoyed. Recognition of the graces of each Week of the Exercises is meant to evoke an ever-deepening gratitude for all that we have received. For Ignatius, asking for what we want in prayer is an effective way of shaping our perceptions; when we voice our desires in prayer, God hears us and we hear ourselves. The graces of the Exercises correspond to the desires (*id quod volo*) that Ignatius encourages us to pray for throughout the experience.<sup>17</sup> When we sense on the level of "*sentir*" or felt-knowledge that we have received what we have asked for, we feel favored by God and grateful. Thus, for

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<sup>15</sup> Schneller, "Ignatius and Creation-Centered Spirituality," 50.

<sup>16</sup> *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. and ed. William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 55, as cited in Schneller, *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>17</sup> *SpEx* no. 48, regarding the Second Prelude. Jesuit Edward Kinerk makes a perceptive observation about how Ignatius's instructing retreatants to pray for particular graces involved a kind of "schooling of desires." He states, "In this age of personalism, one of the more startling aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the final prelude to each meditation. Here Ignatius tells the retreatant the particular grace which should be asked for, 'that which I want and desire.' How, one might well ask, can I ask for something that I may not really want? Should my desires not be more spontaneous and above all personal? Should I not be asking for what *I* want and desire instead of for what *Ignatius* tells me to want and desire?" In response to this criticism, Kinerk suggests that "Ignatius is not mandating desires but eliciting them, and he does this by interesting the retreatant's imagination. Imagine yourself before Christ on the cross and ask yourself what you want to do for Christ. Imagine yourself before Christ the King and see if you do not desire to respond to his call. Imagine yourself with Christ in the Garden and see if you don't desire to experience sorrow with Christ. In effect, Ignatius is telling the retreatant, 'Try this on for size. See if it fits you and make it your own.'" (E. Edward Kinerk, S.J. "Eliciting Great Desires: Their Place in the Spirituality of the Society of Jesus," in *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 16, no. 5 [November, 1984]: 9-11).

Ignatius, graces are gateways to gratitude when they are deeply felt and acknowledged. There is a vital difference between knowing something in a conceptual or notional way and knowing it in a heart-felt and affective way. Anthony de Mello tells a story that illustrates the difference.

Uwais the Sufi was once asked,  
 "What has grace brought you?"  
 He replied, "When I wake in the morning I feel  
 like a man who is not sure he will  
 live till evening."  
 Said the questioner,  
 "But doesn't everyone know this?"  
 Said Uwais,  
 "They certainly do.  
 But not all of them  
 feel it."

De Mello concludes, "No one ever became drunk on the word *wine*."<sup>18</sup> Emotional realization is what makes a difference in spiritual transformation. Ignatius sought to cultivate the kind of affective awareness that evokes gratitude and love for God.

## The Pedagogy of Ignatius

The Spiritual Exercises represent Ignatius's attempt to objectivize his own experience in order to share the graces that he himself received.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the four weeks of the Exercises, Ignatius traces out for us how the love of God has unfolded in salvation history, and, in so doing, moves us to a deeper and deeper insight into the love of God. Step by step, Ignatius illustrates the progressive manifestation of divine love, starting with creation and ending with God's restoration of abundant life in the resurrection of Jesus. At a time when creation-centered spiritualities are responding to our environmental crisis by placing a much needed focus on God's love shown in creating and sustaining the cosmos, the Ignatian vision provides balance. Peter Schineller reminds us that "while the loving presence of God in creation remains a constant,

<sup>18</sup> Anthony de Mello, S.J., *Song of the Bird* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 2.

<sup>19</sup> John C. Olin, "Introduction and Notes," in *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius with Related Documents*, translated by Joseph F. O'Callaghan (N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1974), 12.

[creation] . . . is not God's full or final word of love."<sup>20</sup> Those making the Exercises contemplate the love of God expressed in multiple ways: not only in creation, but also in the incarnation of the divine Word and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Transformation, for Ignatius, entails internalizing the fullness of God's love in all its manifestations. Ignatius envisions the Spiritual Exercises as an experience to enter, not something to be watched. To distance oneself from the process and to study it only speculatively is to subvert its purpose. Ignatius intends it to be a transformative encounter in which God deals directly and uniquely with each person (*SpEx*, Annotation no. 15). The kind of profound interior change sought by Ignatius requires the internalization of the truths of faith through personal exploration and discovery. Thus, he warns the director of the Exercises to refrain from explaining the material at too great a length that could engender passivity. More fruit is gained when retreatants themselves come to a deep, interior grasp of the matter through self-activity and personal experience, "for it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth" (*SpEx*, Annotation no. 2) Based on his experience of God's forming him, as a school master treats a child, Ignatius creates the Spiritual Exercises as a way by which people could be similarly formed by God.

In the *Contemplatio*, we find a threefold dynamic by which we are led to a loving service of God. This Ignatian pedagogy for forming "people for others" is embedded in the Second Prelude of the *Contemplatio*: "This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty" (*SpEx* 233). This three-fold dynamic entails knowledge, gratitude, and loving service. The dynamic begins with considering how we have been gifted by God, not only in a global fashion, but in concrete and particular ways (*SpEx* 233, 234, 237). When done in a manner that leads to a felt-knowledge (*sentir*) of the wonderful blessings of God, this leads to a movement of affective arousal; our perception of God's gifts to us evokes an attitude of gratitude. As we become progressively aware of God's generosity, we are brought to a stance of humble thanksgiving. It was Ignatius's hope that this deepening gratitude would bring us to

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<sup>20</sup> Schineller, "Ignatius and Creation-Centered Spirituality," 50.



the last movement—one of free and loving service.<sup>21</sup> As one writer has noted, “Knowledge, as an object of Ignatian petition, is never an end in itself, but is always a means of moving to deepening freedom. One asks to know and understand precisely in order to choose more freely.”<sup>22</sup> In short, the full goal sought in contemplating God’s goodness consists in a unity of three moments—interior knowledge, love, and action. These three moments constitute “a single line of interpersonal surrender. Just as knowledge which did not issue in love would not be interior, so also a love that did not embody itself in service would be deceptive” (157).

This threefold pattern of perception evoking affectivity that issues forth in action is traceable throughout the Exercises. In the First Week, for example, we seek a felt-knowledge both of our sinfulness and

how it has caused things to happen in the world that are stunning reversals of God’s intent for creation. We also ask for a desire, motivated by gratitude for God’s merciful and forgiving love, to work with Christ to restore order and harmony to the created universe. As Monica Hellwig

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*At the sight of people of all colors,  
creeds, ages, and backgrounds —  
struggling and lost, like sheep  
without a shepherd — the Persons  
of the Trinity are moved  
with compassion.*

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summarizes: Realizing that “the world as we have it is not the best we can hope for, nor the world God intends, but a badly broken and distorted one which can be restored and can be immeasurably better and happier than it is now,” we are moved to collaborate with Christ out of

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<sup>21</sup> This threefold Ignatian dynamic is reflected in Gospel accounts describing the ministerial outreach of Jesus. “Perceiving,” “seeing” was the beginning of the compassionate actions of Jesus. For example, once a leper approached Jesus, begging to be cured (Mk 1:40–45). Jesus takes in the reality of this afflicted suppliant, paying close attention to his words and actions. Then, moved with compassion, he reaches out to touch the diseased person. Jesus’ therapeutic touch issued forth from a compassionate heart. This episode exemplifies a threefold dynamic that characterizes many of Jesus’ healing encounters (e.g. Lk 7: 13–14; Lk 13: 10–13; Mk 6:34–35): (1) Jesus is keenly aware of his interpersonal environment, sensitive to the needs of the people around him (*contemplative perception*); (2) he lets what he perceives stir him to compassion (*affective arousal*); (3) moved by compassion, he reaches out to help (*altruistic action*).

<sup>22</sup> Donald St. Louis, “The Ignatian Examen,” in *The Way of Ignatius of Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to the Spiritual Exercises*, edited by Phillip Sheldrake (London, SPCK, 1991), 157.

gratitude for his merciful and saving love.<sup>23</sup> Highlighting the Christocentric nature of Ignatian service, the colloquy before the crucifix at the end of the first day of Week 1 invites a return of love for love, not service for Christ out of guilt (*SpEx* no. 53).

The dynamic connection between knowledge, gratitude, and loving action is further illustrated in the Second Prelude of the contemplation on the Incarnation, which states, "This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has just become man for me, that I may love him more closely" (*SpEx* no. 104). Ignatius's portrayal of the Incarnation captures the essence of Ignatian service as a means of embodying God's compassion for people. In guiding our contemplation of the Incarnation, he paints a vivid picture of the mission of Jesus (*SpEx* 102–103, 106–108). He asks us to imagine how the Trinity hovers over the globe, perceiving the wounds of the world with sensitivity and care. At the sight of people of all colors, creeds, ages, and backgrounds—struggling and lost, like sheep without a shepherd—the Persons of the Trinity are moved with compassion. They then decide that one of them should become human to enable people to experience concretely God's empathic love. So the Word became flesh or, as John's Gospel puts it, "pitched his tent among us" (1:14). This Ignatian contemplation helps us to realize how the struggles and sufferings of people everywhere flood God's heart with compassion.

Throughout the following Second Week contemplations of Jesus' public ministry, the retreatant witnesses Christ's extending God's compassion to all he encountered. The Kingdom meditation is an invitation to continue Christ's mission. It is Ignatius's hope that knowledge of Christ's compassionate love would stir up our gratitude and draw us to loving action in union with Christ. He "believed that the human desire to serve echoes the divine compassion, that concern for healing the world . . . [and] stems from God's desire to heal the world."<sup>24</sup> Thus, the Second Week petitions continually reecho the desire for "knowledge, love, and its commensurate expression in discipleship."<sup>25</sup> Finally, because love of God is the "pure intention of the divine service" sought by Ignatius, his emphasis in the Third Week contemplations of Christ's passion and death is on the love of God manifested in pain. Unlike the-

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<sup>23</sup> Hellwig, "Finding God in All Things," 30.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Spohn, "The Chosen Path," in *America*, July 21–28, 2003, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Buckley, "Contemplation to Attain Love," 97.

ories of atonement and satisfaction, the Ignatian approach focuses on love and gratitude, not on repayment and redemption.

In sum, affective awareness of God's gracious love generates gratitude, which, for Ignatius, serves as a springboard to loving service. Even though all that we possess has been given to us by God, nothing is required of us in return. Genuine love never demands reciprocity. We do not owe God anything. Nevertheless, love urges us on to an intimate mutuality with a God who loves us so abundantly (*SpEx* no. 230). As Jesuit William Meissner rightly observes of Ignatius, "Motifs of love and service are thus fused into a common and mutually sustaining theme pervading all of his spirituality."<sup>26</sup> In short, through the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius hopes to form people who are open to being touched by God in a way that illumines their perception of God's presence and action, stirs their heart with gratitude and love, and motivates them to assist others.

## II: A Literary Inclusion Highlights Gratitude and Service

**A**n *inclusio* is a literary device that creates a frame by placing similar matter at the beginning and end of a text. The two sides of an *inclusio* serve as brackets or bookends, providing an interpretative framework for the material between them. If we employ this device to the *Spiritual Exercises*, we can see how the whole work ends as it begins, with a recapitulation of pertinent motifs. The thematic similarity between the first exercise, The First Principle and Foundation (*SpEx* no. 23) and the final exercise, The Contemplation to Attain Love (*SpEx* nos. 230–237) allows us to view the entire work of the Exercises as a textual unit with gratitude as a central theme. In discussing the *Contemplatio*, Meissner states, "It is the final contemplation toward which the whole of the Exercises have been aiming—the final point in which, together with the Principle and Foundation, the Exercises are framed and defined" (237, with emphasis added).

The biblical scholar Marcus Borg describes a form of faith as "*visio*," "as a way of seeing *the whole*, a way of seeing 'what is.'"<sup>27</sup> Our *visio*

<sup>26</sup> W. W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., *To the Greater Glory of God: A Psychological Study of Ignatian Spirituality* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1999), 336.

<sup>27</sup> Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 34.

is very significant because how we view the whole will affect how we respond to life. Ignatius articulates his *visio* or perception of reality in consistent and complementary ways in the first and final exercises of the Spiritual Exercises. Featuring a loving God as the creative source and generous giver of everything that exists, both exercises invite us

to stand in grateful awe before “the mystery that there is anything, anything at all, let alone cosmos, joy, memory, everything, rather than void.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, both considerations contextualize service to God within a relationship of love

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*A central truth of the First Principle and Foundation is that we have been “desired into being” by a loving and generous God.*

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and as a grateful response to being gifted by God. Clearly, gratitude permeates Ignatius’s *visio*. “Gratitude can be best defined and understood as the only possible response to a gift, to something recognized as utterly, freely given,” scholars note. “Gratitude is the vision—the way of seeing—that recognizes ‘gift.’”<sup>29</sup>

## Desired into Being, Sustained by God’s Love

During the ten months in the seclusion of Manresa, following his spiritual conversion at Loyola, Ignatius had a vision at the River Cardoner.<sup>30</sup> This mystical experience shaped his view of reality and, in turn, it determined his fundamental attitude towards life, which was one of profound reverence, gratitude, and love. In order to foster the same affective dispositions in others, Ignatius attempted through the Spiritual Exercises to share his perception of God and the world. His hope was that by internalizing the view of reality that was revealed to him, people might be filled with gratitude and love for God and moved to express that love in acts of service.

The First Principle and Foundation paints a portrait of human life as emanating from God as its creative source. Traditionally, this Ignatian meditation has been expressed in a dry and succinct manner: “Man is

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<sup>28</sup> Denise Levertov, “In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being,” and “Primary Wonder,” in *Sands of the Well* (New York: New Directions, 1996), 107, 129, as quoted in *Imaging Life after Death: Love That Moves the Sun and Stars*, by Kathleen Fischer (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 175.

<sup>30</sup> *Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, no. 28.

created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created."<sup>31</sup> When stated in such jejune terms, it is difficult to spot any similarity between the First Principle and Foundation and the *Contemplatio*, which portrays all blessings and gifts as descending from above, "as the rays of light descend from the sun and as the waters flow from their fountains" (*SpEx* no. 237). However, some contemporary reformulations of the First Principle and Foundation highlight their similarity. For example, the First Principle has been cast in the form of a prayer:

Lord my God, when Your love spilled over into creation,  
You thought of me.

I am from love, of love and for love.

Let my heart, O God, always recognize, cherish, and enjoy your  
goodness in all of creation.

Direct all that is me toward your praise.

Teach me reverence for every person, all things.

Energize me in your service.<sup>32</sup>

That the creative act of God manifests an outpouring of divine love is also nicely stated in a recent commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*. The authors express the mystery of creation, which is the focus of the First Principle and Foundation, in terms that resonate with the *Contemplatio's* focus on divine love as the impetus for creation. Seeing oneself and all of creation as continually loved and desired into being by a passionate God," they assert, "prompts an awe and still deeper reverence for God, self and the sacrament of creation. Such was the case with Ignatius at the river Cardoner. A sense of the diaphanous presence of God in everything undergirds the awareness of gift."<sup>33</sup> A central truth of the

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<sup>31</sup> *SpEx* no. 23. The language of this traditional formulation is problematic for two reasons: (1) it seems to espouse an anthropocentrism that neglects the intrinsic value of non-human creation; (2) it is androcentric and thus not inclusive. For a discussion of how the *Spiritual Exercises* can be understood in a way that encourages care and reverence for all of creation—both human and non-human—see Sears and Bracken, *Self-Emptying Love in a Global Context*. For a fine treatment of how the *Spiritual Exercises* can be adapted in a pastorally sensitive way to honor the concerns and sensitivities of women, see Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*.

<sup>32</sup> Jacqueline Bergan and S. Marie Schwan, *Love: A Guide for Prayer* (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary's Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, p. 100.

First Principle and Foundation is that we have been “desired into being” by a loving and generous God. The emphasis on creative Love as a central focus of the First Principle and Foundation captures how it is presently understood and articulated by Jesuit retreat directors. Howard Gray, S.J., for example, states that God not only initiates human life as a gift, but also accompanies the gift of life with an offer of a love relationship.<sup>34</sup> According to Ignatius, this love relationship, like all others, needs to contain three moments: praise, reverence, and service. In other words, love moves us to praise, revere, and serve those we love.

To praise is to notice and to acknowledge the goodness or giftedness of someone. When we praise the Creator, we acknowledge God’s greatness and goodness with gratitude and joy. To praise is to give God glory or credit for all of God’s wondrous gifts. Praise keeps our focus on the divine and the reality of God’s good and gracious presence in life. Praising is central to Christian prayer, as revealed in the following doxology, one of the most frequently sung hymns in the Christian church:

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*The tenets of an eco-feminist spirituality are reflected in Ignatius’s insistence that love of God entails reverence for the earth and all species of life.*

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“Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God all creatures here below; praise God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.”

Reverencing others is to honor who they are as other—as unique and unprecedented selves who evoke our appreciation, wonder, and admiration. When we revere God, we acknowledge God as the mysterious source and sustainer of life and the transcendent Wholly Other in our midst. Thus Ignatius suggests that we assume a posture of reverence when addressing God in prayer (*SpEx*, Annotation no. 3). This attention to posture may strike us as a residue of Ignatius’s medieval experience in the royal courts of Spain. Nevertheless, the emphasis on approaching God with reverence remains perennially contemporary. Honoring God extends beyond our attitude and posture in prayer, however, because God dwells in all creation. Thus, reverence in Ignatian spirituality requires that we regard all of creation, human and non-human, with appreciation, wonder, and awe. Revering God in all creation prohibits the exploitation, manipulation, and abuse of cre-

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<sup>34</sup> Howard Gray, S.J., *Spiritual Exercises Seminar* given at Columbière Retreat House in Clarkston, Michigan, June 19, 1985.

ated things, especially of human beings. The tenets of an eco-feminist spirituality are reflected in Ignatius's insistence that love of God entails reverence for the earth and all species of life. In this sense, Ignatian spirituality can be viewed as a "creation-centered" spirituality.

Finally, serving the beloved is a dimension of loving. For Ignatius, the service of God springs out of a felt-experience of God's love of us and a gratitude that seeks to return that love. Our dedication to God must spring from a free desire to return love. Like the First Principle and Foundation, the *Contemplatio* speaks of the mutuality and service that should characterize a love relationship in which one has been gifted and blessed. In prenotes to the Contemplation, Ignatius emphasizes two points: (1) "that love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words"; (2) "that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses, or something of that which he has or is able to give; and vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover" (*SpEx* 230). That the context of our human existence is a love relationship with a Creator who "desired us into being" means that the basic orientation of our lives is meant to be "other-oriented." A love that is shaped by praise, reverence, and service cannot be self-centered, but must be focused on the beloved. Grounded in a healthy love of self, friendship calls for a self-transcendence that enables one to reach out to others in life-giving ways. In this reaching out to God and all that God has created, our fulfillment as human beings is to be found. This is the core message of both the First Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation for Attaining Love.

### III: Becoming Contemplatives Even in Action

**I**n the Ignatian schema, gratitude and love are meant not only to supply the motivation for service, but also to shape the manner in which we serve. The call given to us in the Kingdom meditation is an invitation to intimate collaboration with Christ in which we labor with him by day and break bread with him by night. In other words, Ignatian discipleship entails being covenant partners in a way that combines friendship with shared labor. Ideally, Ignatian service leads to a closeness to Christ that results from working shoulder-to-shoulder with him. Ignatius hopes the Kingdom meditation would elicit a generous response of love to God's gracious invitation to be intimate co-workers (*SpEx* no. 97).

Ignatius viewed ministry primarily as God's action in the world. In the *Contemplatio* he describes God's presence in creation as dynamic, reminding us that "God works and labors for us in all creatures upon the face of the earth." God is ever in our midst laboring for us. "In the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc., God gives being, conserves them, confers life and sensation" (*SpEx* no. 236). This ongoing labor of the Creator in the world constitutes the essence of ministry. Given this understanding of ministry as God's pervasive action, it is clear why Ignatius taught: "Pray as if everything depends on you; work as if everything depends on God." It is sometimes argued that Ignatius said just the opposite; that is, "Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you." However, Jesuit theologian Francis Smith asserts, "We now know that . . . the correct version in a simplified form" is "Pray as if everything depends on you; act as if everything depends on God." In its full form, translated from the Latin, Ignatius said, "Have faith in God, as if all success depended on you, nothing on God; set to work, however, as if nothing were to come about through you, and everything through God alone." According to Smith, "One could debate what the fuller version means, but . . . [I] think the simplified version is an accurate capturing of its meaning."<sup>35</sup> The focus of ministry should be on God, not us. We are called to be, in the words of Jerome Nadal, "contemplatives even in action," people who have a facility for finding God in all things. "Properly understood, the essential place for meeting God in the Ignatian schema," writes Michael W. Cooper, S.J., "comes not just in prayer but even more in action in the outer, public, societal, cultural, and ecclesial spheres." Ignatian service should not be seen as "doing our thing for God," but as a call to a synergy with God, to join "God in the work God has already initiated to heal and transform both individuals and institutions—thus unitative action."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Francis R. Smith, S.J., "The Religious Experience of Ignatius of Loyola and the Mission of Jesuit Higher Education Today" (paper presented at the Fourth Institute on Jesuit Higher Education, University of San Francisco, San Francisco: Cal., June 6–9, 1990), 2–3.

<sup>36</sup> Michael W. Cooper, S.J., "Ignatian Spirituality: Unitative Action with Christ on Mission," in *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*, 2, no. 3 (September, 1996): 26.



## A Mysticism of Service

A prominent Ignatian image of ministry is that of being placed by the Father next to Jesus carrying the cross.<sup>37</sup> Jesus carrying the cross symbolizes the redemptive presence of Christ in the world today. By being placed in intimate juxtaposition next to Jesus, we are given the gift of sharing in Christ's saving work. This image of ministry stems from Ignatius's personal religious experience at a small chapel called La Storta, about ten miles outside of Rome.<sup>38</sup> When he was making his way to the city to consult with the Pope as to how he and his newly formed group of Jesuits could best serve the universal Church, he had a vision. In this vision, he experienced his petition to serve Jesus being granted as he heard the Father say to Jesus, weighed down by his cross: "It is my will that You take this man [referring to Ignatius] for Your servant; and Jesus in turn saying to Ignatius, "It is My will that you serve Us".<sup>39</sup> Ignatius's experience of being chosen as a servant by God resembles St. Paul's understanding of himself as chosen to be a minister of God (2 Cor 6:3f) and minister of Christ (2 Cor 11:23).

Clearly, the invitation to intimate collaboration with Christ is far more than a mere formal arrangement, since it includes an offer of close friendship. This is why de Guibert describes Jesuit spirituality as a mysticism of service<sup>40</sup> or as "unitative action with Christ on mission" by Cooper.<sup>41</sup> To support his notion of Ignatian mysticism, de Guibert cites the testimony of Nadal, one of the early companions who knew Ignatius

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<sup>37</sup> See Jesuit Joseph de Guibert's magisterial treatise on Jesuit spirituality, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Studies, Loyola University Press, 1964), 176–81.

<sup>38</sup> *Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 89.

<sup>39</sup> De Guibert, *Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 38–39.

<sup>40</sup> Commenting on de Guibert's notion of a mysticism of service, Meissner comments perceptively: "If there is justice in de Guibert's (1964) distinction between mysticism of love or union and mysticism of service, the balance tilts in Ignatius from one to the other—if the motif of service dominates the Exercises and the Constitutions, the companion motif of love emerges as the dominant theme in his Spiritual Journal. Yet it may also be fairly claimed that de Guibert's classic distinction between the 'mysticism of union' and the 'mysticism of service' may not do justice to pivotal statements about union with Christ and God in the annotations [SE 15] and in the second mode of election [SE 184]. The only explicitly nuptial reference is to union of Christ and the church as his spouse [SE 353]" (*To the Glory of God*, 336).

<sup>41</sup> Cooper, "Unitative Action with Christ," 2–39. Here, Cooper distinguished between "unitative prayer" and "unitative action."

intimately. According to Nadal, Ignatius's special grace was the ability "to see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action" (*simul in actione contemplativus*).<sup>42</sup> Other companions spoke in similar ways about Ignatius's mystical experience during daily life. De Guibert quotes Ribadeneira as saying, "It is unbelievable with what ease our Father recollected himself in the midst of a tide of business, apparently having at his disposal and under his hand, so to speak, the spirit of devotion and torrents of tears" (45). And Gonçalves da Câmara noted that Ignatius enjoyed a "habitual awareness of God and his continual prayer was in the midst of goings and comings" (45). De Guibert concludes,

We are not dealing here with a mysticism of introversion turned chiefly toward the depths of the soul, that is, with a mystic union of God at the fine point of the soul and a union removed as far as possible from all that is perceptible to the senses. Instead, we are considering a divine activity which affects the entire person, in all the spiritual and bodily faculties which he can devote to the service of God. (58-59)

Similarly, in describing Ignatian mysticism, Cooper asserts that "In earlier, more contemplative-based spiritualities, the goal was unitative prayer with one's God. Jesuit spirituality has an apostolic thrust; its goal is unitative action, that is, a felt sense of bondedness with Christ in the midst of active life and ministry."<sup>43</sup> A mysticism of service requires integrating the polarities of intimacy with God and active engagement in the world. It calls simultaneously for the capacity to "be with Jesus" and to be "sent off" in mission.

Paradoxically, this Jesus who invites deep friendship remains always the "Christ on Mission," who desires to free our brothers and sisters from "the chains and snares" with which the "enemy of our human nature" is wont to bind them. In the Kingdom meditation Jesus calls us on mission with him in order to share this sacred task. *Friendship and intimacy go with and are found in apostolic mission and ministry in and to the world!* (36, with emphasis added)

This paradoxical ideal of Ignatian spirituality finds biblical roots: the call of the apostles in Mark's gospel (3:13-19a) and John's discourse on the vine and the branches (Jn 15). In both pericopes, union with Christ is paired with being sent to serve. In Mark's gospel, the twelve apostles are called for two purposes, which are grammatically joined by

<sup>42</sup> De Guibert, S.J., *Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Cooper, "Unitative Action with Christ," 26.

the coordinate conjunction, *kai* (3:13–14). Use of a coordinate conjunction here to link these two purpose clauses is significant because it indicates that both purposes are equally important. Like the apostle, we are called to simultaneously “be with him” (*met’ autou*) and to “be sent off to preach the Gospel” (*apostellen . . . kerrussein*).<sup>44</sup> John’s vine and branches also reflects this summons to a paradoxical spirituality. While the first part of chapter 15 emphasizes the theme of intimate union and the need to “remain” (*meinein*) in Christ (4–10), the second half speaks of Christ’s commissioning his disciples so that they might bear fruit in plenty (v. 16). “Once people make this connection between the Jesus of intimate friendship and the Jesus on Mission,” states Cooper, “they are more able to see that the two dimensions of that relationship. . . . need to be held together in a creative tension.”<sup>45</sup> In biblical terms, to be contemplatives in action is to integrate the Mary and the Martha dimensions of the self. A mysticism of service challenges us to be intimately present and united to God, even in the midst of the ministerial activities. In the *Constitutions*, Ignatius makes clear the importance of being united with God in ministry. In discussing what is essential for the ongoing well-being of the Society as an apostolic body, Ignatius writes,

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*What distinguishes codependence from authentic Christian service is the compulsive quality of the codependent’s relationship with others.*

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The means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded dexterously by His divine hand are more effective than those that equip it in relation to men. Such means are, for example, goodness and virtue, and especially charity, and a pure intention of the divine service, and familiarity with God our Lord in spiritual exercises of devotion, and sincere zeal for souls for the sake of glory to Him who created and redeemed them and not for any other benefit. (*Cons.*, pt. X, no. 813)

This understanding of ministry as God’s present labor on behalf of all creation and the image of ministry as being placed next to Jesus carrying the cross highlight the essential nature of an Ignatian spirituality of service. As the Kingdom meditation highlights, being given an intimate share in God’s action in the world is a gift and a vocation. As Chris-

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. my “Discipleship in Mark,” in *The Bible Today*, October 1973, 1249–51.

<sup>45</sup> Cooper, “Unitative Action with Christ,” 36.

tians, our call is to embody the consoling presence and saving action of the Risen Christ for others today.<sup>46</sup> The heart of ministry finds poetic expression in words of Gerard Manley Hopkins:

I say more: the just man justices;  
Keeps grace; that keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is  
Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.<sup>47</sup>

Strictly speaking, all ministry is collaborative because all of us are co-workers with God. Before we are collaborators with each other, we are first of all, in the words of St. Paul, "collaborators of Christ" (1 Cor 3:9).

#### IV: Obstacles to Contemplative Action

If our service does not emanate from gratitude and love, we are liable to operate out of deficient motives and fall into dysfunctional work patterns. Highly motivated ministers are easily vulnerable to being over-conscientious. This unreflective zeal is an instance of Ignatius's Second Week temptation, i.e., an apparent good. For example, it has been said that the delegates of the Thirty second General Congregation initially intended to conclude the decree "Jesuits Today" with the "Prayer for Generosity" frequently attributed to Ignatius and widely popularized by its inscription on holy cards.<sup>48</sup> However, because of doubts raised regarding the authenticity of the prayer as genuinely Ignatian, the "*Suscipe*" ("Take, O Lord, and Receive . . .") was chosen instead.<sup>49</sup> A prayer of generous self-offering, the *Suscipe* echoes the sentiments of the colloquy that ends the Kingdom meditation (*SpEx* no. 98)

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<sup>46</sup> According to John O'Malley, S.J., the first Jesuits considered all ministries of the Society, not just the hearing of confessions, as ministries of spiritual consolation (*The First Jesuits* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993], 19).

<sup>47</sup> "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," as cited in *Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits*, edited by Michael Harter, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993), 59.

<sup>48</sup> "Jesuits Today," Decree 2 of the 32nd General Congregation in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, edited by John Padberg, S.J., the American translation by the Jesuit Conference, Washington, D. C. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> This story was recounted to me by Michael J. Buckley, S.J., who was a delegate at the 32nd General Congregation and a member of the committee which drafted Decree 2.

Apart from the absence of historical evidence to verify the authorship of the "Prayer of Generosity," its content casts serious doubts about whether it actually flowed from Ignatius's pen. Phrases such as "to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest" sound antithetical to Ignatius's understanding of ministry as God's labor in all of creation for us. These words also are alien to his desire that we strive to be "contemplative even in action." Furthermore, the "Prayer for Generosity" seems to contradict what Ignatius proposes in the *Constitutions* as the norm of Jesuit action, i.e., *discreta caritas*. Ignatius realized that law can only comment on the generality of situations and that the individual on the scene must often be left to determine what exactly should be done in concrete situations. In these cases, he suggests that "discreet charity" be the norm of action. This concept reflects Ignatius's concern for the integration of thinking, feeling, and action. Various translations as "an educated or intelligent heart" or "loving intelligence," this Ignatian standard is rooted in both intellect and will. In scholastic philosophy, "discretion" is seen as the wise use of the properly chosen means to an end; prudence is the wise choice of means. As such, discretion is a function of the mind. Charity, or love, on the other hand, is a function of the heart, involving will and feelings. When told by God in a dream that he could have anything he wanted, Solomon asked for "a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil" (I Kgs 3:9). A heart able to understand how to discern is the essence of discreet charity.

It is significant that for Ignatius, an adequate norm of action must integrate both discretion and love. Although love should always be the motive for service, in and of itself love provides no clear course of action. The existential question always remains: What does love require in this particular situation? Thus reason must come into play. Since "*discreta caritas*" is mentioned seven times in the *Constitutions*, it is clear that Ignatius wanted followers whose actions were not determined by reason alone, or by feeling alone, but by an intelligent heart and a compassionate mind.<sup>50</sup> The "Prayer for Generosity" does not reflect the wisdom of Ignatius's discreet charity; indeed, it sounds like an exhortation to unreflective and unrelenting action. The whole tenor of the *Constitutions* is one of "temperate restraint in spiritual and bodily labors," a moderation that does not "lean toward an extreme of rigor or toward excessive laxity" (*Cons.* no. 822). Because Ignatius viewed ministry pri-

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<sup>50</sup> *Cons.*, nos. 209, 237, 269, 582, 727, 729, 735.

marily as God's labor in which we are given a share, God is the principal worker and we are co-workers. God's sustaining action will not cease when we exercise prudent self-care by taking time off for prayer, leisure and solitude.

## Codependency as an Apparent Good

In a real way, the Prayer for Generosity smacks of codependency. The term "codependent" originally referred to persons who were so closely involved with an alcoholic or drug addict that their lives revolved around the addict's behavior. Today the term implies problems with a variety of issues such as setting limits, intimacy skills, and compulsive activity, usually in the form of "helping" others. The literature on codependency suggests personality characteristics that bear a striking resemblance to the caricature of the "good Christian"; for example, compulsively putting the needs of others before one's own, an inability to say "no," or an excessive sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. Codependents have a way of getting into others' lives by making themselves needed, and then helping in ways that point to their own generosity and self-sacrifice. Others exist to make them feel needed. Although codependents would be the last to see this dark side of their helpfulness, they relate to others as objects that they use to give themselves a sense of purpose and value. Such persons are also inclined to help others in order that others become dependent on them. Genuine helping, by contrast, is not self-serving but arises out of genuine empathy and compassion. Because it is a response to another's real need for help, not one's own need to be needed, it quietly enables those served to become healthier, more autonomous persons.

Codependents tend to be self-sacrificing, generous, other-directed, and idealistic people. Since these are also characteristics of genuine Christian self-transcendence, codependency is often confused with apostolic zeal. What distinguishes codependence from authentic Christian service is the compulsive quality of the codependent's relationship with others. For the codependent, giving is a "must" rather than a response of genuine love and compassion. Codependents do not give freely; they give because they "should." The giving of the codependent is often more a flight from self than the dying to self that characterizes true Christian service. Suffering from low self-esteem and feeling unlovable, codependents strive to overcome these painful feelings by proving to others that they are good and therefore worthy of love. For example, being busy is a common way we unconsciously promote our sig-

nificance.<sup>51</sup> In a culture that equates doing good with being good, codependents easily become addicted to helping others, thereby justifying themselves by good works. An Ignatian spirituality of ministry challenges us to make our way gracefully between the Scylla of narcissism, resulting from excessive self-concern, and the Charybdis of grandiosity, resulting from too easily dismissing our legitimate needs as human beings. When caring for others is not balanced with caring for self, ministering as a contemplative in action proves impossible.

The Prayer for Generosity easily lends itself to being used as a rationalization for an unhealthy overdoing in ministry. Besides disregarding the norm of discreet charity, excessive work can be seen as the kind of subtle temptation that,

according to Ignatius, confronts people who are striving to grow spiritually (*SpEx*, Annotation 10). This temptation takes the form of an apparent good or evil under the guise of a good. Neither gross nor easily detectable, this subtle temptation is seductive and requires sensitive discernment. Ignatius learned this from personal experience.

During his time in Manresa, the newly converted Iñigo took on severe forms of penance and fasting as a way of making amends for the excesses of his former life as a courtier. When undergoing his regimen of strict fasting, he had a vision of a

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*For example, over-extending oneself in work appears initially to be a sensible expression of generosity and dedication; but when it ends in joyless exhaustion, leading to deterioration of prayer and personal relationships, it exposes its true nature as an obstacle to contemplative and unitative action with Christ on mission.*

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<sup>51</sup> Novelist John Grisham vividly illustrates how overwork is worn as a badge of honor and status: "'Have a seat,' Foltrigg [U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Louisiana] said, pointing at a chair. 'We're finishing up.' He stretched too, then cracked his knuckles. He loved his reputation as a workaholic, a man of importance unafraid of painful hours, a family man whose calling went beyond wife and kids. The job meant everything. His client was the United States of America. Trumann [FBI agent in New Orleans] had heard this eighteen-hour-a-day crap for seven years now. It was Foltrigg's favorite subject—talking about himself and the hours at the office and the body that needed no sleep. Lawyers wear their loss of sleep like a badge of honor. Real macho machines grinding it out around the clock" (John Grisham, *The Client* [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 8).

many-eyed serpent.<sup>52</sup> This he initially interpreted as a consolation that confirmed the rightness of his punishing penances. Later, however, he reassessed the vision in light of his powerful mystical experience at the River Cardoner and concluded that it was a form of false consolation that deluded him into fasting to the point of harming his health.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps, this experience of being subtly seduced by an apparent good led Ignatius to formulate his rule regarding how people striving to do good are tempted by evil camouflaged under the guise of good. He warns that what initially glitters like gold may end up as fool's gold. For example, over-extending oneself in work appears initially to be a sensible expression of generosity and dedication; but when it ends in joyless exhaustion, leading to deterioration of prayer and personal relationships, it exposes its true nature as an obstacle to contemplative and unitative action with Christ on mission. Addressing the topic of the mental health of Jesuits, Charles M. Shelton, S.J. states, that "work can easily become *the 'disguised good'* if it fosters workaholic tendencies or prevents the Jesuit from attending to other areas of his life" .<sup>54</sup> According to Shelton,

A subtle but destructive tendency for many well-intentioned men is, simply, "to do more." This is especially tempting as the needs of the Church become more pressing and manpower shortages more critical. At some point a Jesuit must examine his ministerial efforts in order to establish healthy boundaries. A Jesuit's apostolic life must balance play, rest, work, and prayer" (57, with emphasis added).

Excessive busyness is a temptation that ministers striving to be contemplatives in action need to be wary of because of the ill effects

<sup>52</sup> *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 33, 40.

<sup>53</sup> C.G. Jung, who wrote a commentary of the *Spiritual Exercises*, interprets Ignatius's experience in a way that supports Ignatius's ultimate reassessment of his practice of excessive penance. Jung states: "We should fix our attention on the actual content of this vision. Ignatius had seen a snake covered in shining eyes. This is no isolated case, many of my patients have seen a similar image, it is an essential symbol for the lower part of the nervous system, for the sphere of the instincts. This is the root from which the whole psychic life grows. This is why the serpent is a symbol for healing. . . . When man [sic] is ill he is severed from his instincts and part of the art of healing is to bring him back to them, so that he can grow on his own roots. Consciousness and ideas, valuable as they are in themselves, cut us away from the essential roots of our being. Ignatius had surely injured his health with penances and constant prayer, so the healing snake appears as a compensation in his vision, but he was not in a position to recognize this fact" (Summer Semester, Unpublished Notes, Lecture X, June 30, 1939, 166–167).

<sup>54</sup> Charles M. Shelton, S.J., "Reflections on the Mental Health of Jesuits," in *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 23, no. 4 (September, 1991): 12, with emphasis added.



that it can produce. The story of a woman religious who ran a halfway house for abused women illustrates the danger of overwork. Finding herself on the brink of burnout because of her codependent and workaholic tendencies, she, a recovering alcoholic, sought help from her sponsor. The words of the wise sponsor to the worn-out and discouraged woman minister can serve as sound advice for all who strive to serve others. "My dear," her sponsor said with firmness and care, "it's good to do God's work, but not God's job!" Ignatius's belief that ministry is God's labor for the welfare of the world supports this advice.

Another obstacle to contemplative action is an inability to accept human limitation and imperfection. A detriment to psychological and spiritual health, perfectionism must be distinguished from the healthy pursuit of excellence that motivates many talented people. Appreciating our potential and taking genuine pleasure in striving to meet high standards is healthy; demanding a higher level of performance than we can attain is not. Because our standards are beyond reach or reason when we are caught in the grip of perfectionism, we strain compulsively toward impossible goals and measure our worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment. Never feeling that our efforts are enough, we are unable to achieve a sense of satisfaction because we think that what we do is insufficiently good to warrant that feeling. In contrast, those who take pleasure in doing their best without needing to be perfect tend to be satisfied with their efforts, even when the results leave room for improvement. When driven by a need to be flawless, we often feel anxious, confused, and emotionally drained before a new task is ever begun. We are motivated not so much by desire for improvement as by fear of failure. On the other hand, when we strive for excellence in a healthy way, we are more likely to feel excited, energized, and clear about what needs to be done. In general, the normal quest for excellence produces growth and benefits our ministry, whereas the compulsive drive for perfection easily leads to overwork and a resulting burnout, exhaustion, and distaste for ministry.

## Perfectionism and Religious Rhetoric

The rhetoric of religious life sometimes makes Christians particularly vulnerable to perfectionism. For example, Jesuit documents exhort religious to strive always for the *magis* (the more) and to do everything *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God). Similarly, the Sisters of St. Joseph are given a hundred "maxims of perfection" to follow. Young and idealistic saints, such as St. Stanislaus Kostka, whose motto

was *Ad majora natus sum* (I was born for *greater* things) have also been held up for emulation. The underlying message of much traditional hagiography is that saints are perfect, and, hence, we should all strive for perfection. Commenting on St. John Berchmans after the saint's death, his rector wrote: "What we universally admired in him was that in all the virtues he showed himself perfect and that, with the aid of divine grace to which he responded to his utmost, he performed all his actions with all the perfection that can be imagined."<sup>55</sup> This kind of exhortatory language can instill a sense that one can never accomplish enough, and that more needs always to be done.

Jesuit economist Gerard L. Stockhausen perceptively points out the danger that arises when doing the *magis* gets uncritically translated into quantitative terms. When this occurs, "we are in danger of using the values we have taken on from the world around us to decide that more service means working more, working harder, being more efficient and more productive," he states.<sup>56</sup> "The danger here is making the *magis* substantive," asserts Stockhausen, "in the sense that we keep

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*When the focus of spiritual maturity is on the ongoing development of the capacity to love like God, the danger of self-absorption is minimized.*

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choosing to engage in more activities and take on more projects because that "more" will give glory to God. Instead, we are to choose whatever will give God greater glory, and that may well be to do less or to say no to some request rather than to assume that more is

always better" (22). He rightly observes that the quantification of such notions as *magis* and *majorem Dei gloriam* misses "the whole point of the Principle and Foundation, namely, that more work or less work, harder work or easier work, are among those pairs concerning which we are to be indifferent" (22). In discussing the topic of "Ignatian Spirituality versus Leisure," Stockhausen observes that "the Spiritual Exercises can seem to be the antithesis of leisure" (9). Acknowledging openly the

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J., *Jesuit Saints and Martyrs: Short Biographies of the Saints, Blessed, Venerables, and Servants of God of the Society of Jesus* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1984), 429.

<sup>56</sup> Gerard L. Stockhausen, S.J., "I'd Love to, but I Don't Have the Time: Jesuits and Leisure," in *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 27, no. 3 (May 1995): 22.

struggle that many Jesuits have with incorporating and validating leisure in their lives, he understands the struggle to stem from

a spirituality ordered to apostolic work . . . that makes leisure problematic for most Jesuits (and probably most religious) [who] "have given up their whole lives as a holocaust, not just a few hours. Their work is service, it is ministry. So when more is asked of them, the appropriate response is to give generously. For this point of view, taking time for themselves sounds selfish and un-Jesuit. (8)

If the praise, reverence, and service of God are understood as using the gifts God has given us for the service of God's people, rather than as three moments of love in our relationship with God, taking time off from work can be difficult to justify. As Stockhausen puts it, "If there are people in need of my gifts when I am off engaging in leisure, then am I not contradicting the end for which I was made and using those gifts poorly?" (9). Honest dialogue among Jesuits themselves and with their lay partners about the challenge of integrating leisure with their commitment to service seems to be a necessary aspect of appropriating the Ignatian vision of generous service without succumbing to a debilitating imbalance.

While perfectionism is so remarkably widespread that it constitutes a cultural phenomenon, it is reinforced among Christians by a misunderstanding of the biblical injunction to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). Through the ages, this exhortation has given the impression that holiness consists in being a flawless paragon of virtue. Taken out of context, this passage has served as the basis on which Christians were urged to strive for individualistic moral perfection, to be flawless in thoughts, words, and deeds. If to be true followers of Christ necessitates embodying the perfection of God, it is no wonder that the pursuit of perfection has often resulted in fear, hypocrisy, and legalism.<sup>57</sup> Perfection, defined as being errorless, is a human impossibility, and yet it has masqueraded for centuries as the nature of true Christian holiness.

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*The life that the New Testament portrays as the proper response to God's generous gift of love is not a matter of pursuing individual excellence through perfect obedience, but a sincere imitation of Christ whose life centered on love and service of others.*

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<sup>57</sup> Louis Mebane and Charles R. Ridley, "The Role-Sending of Perfectionism: Overcoming Counterfeit Spirituality," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 16, no. 4 (1988): 335-37.

When this exhortation of Christ is understood in its context, a very different image of "Christian perfection" emerges.

This well-known saying is taken from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. It is immediately preceded by a description of God, who "makes the sun rise on the evil and the good" (5:45) and castigates those who love only people who love them. Thus, the context indicates that Jesus exhorts his followers "to imitate God by loving without distinction, not by becoming perfect paragons of virtue."<sup>58</sup> In other words, we are called to imitate the Father's indiscriminate and inclusive love, a love that causes him to let the sun rise on the bad as well as the good and to allow the rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. Thus,

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*[Father Arrupe's] farewell message addressed to the members of the General Congregation on September 3, 1983, just after the acceptance of his resignation, reveals the exuberant spirit of gratitude and love that kept him vibrant, even in the midst of severe physical decline*

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the passage is not advocating the pursuit of perfection as a striving for individual moral perfection, but rather a life-long stretching of one's capacity to love as God does.

The Greek word used by Matthew for "perfect" is the term *teleios*. According to scripture scholar William Barclay, the term has nothing to do with what

might be called abstract, philosophical, metaphysical perfection. Rather, a thing is *teleios* if it realizes the purpose for which it was planned or created. Matthew 5:48 makes clear that Christian holiness consists in being Godlike. And "the one thing which makes us like God is the love which never ceases to care for [people], no matter what [they] do. . . . We enter upon Christian perfection, when we learn to forgive as God forgives, and to love as God loves."<sup>59</sup>

When the focus of spiritual maturity is on the ongoing development of the capacity to love like God, the danger of self-absorption is minimized. When, however, the Christian ideal is seen as the perfect attainment of virtues, a radically different focus emerges. Concentrat-

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<sup>58</sup> William A. Spohn, S.J., "The Moral Vision of the Catechism: Thirty Years That Did Not Happen," *America* 3 (March 1990): 192.

<sup>59</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 175, 177.

ing on a life of faultless obedience and spotless virtue keeps us focused on our own scorecard of good works, rather than on the quality of our relationships. The life that the New Testament portrays as the proper response to God's generous gift of love is not a matter of pursuing individual excellence through perfect obedience, but a sincere imitation of Christ whose life centered on love and service of others. "Too often the pursuit of perfection," writes William Spohn, "becomes more concerned with the servant than with those who need to be served. In the New Testament, gratitude and compassion, not the drive for perfection, channel Christian commitment into action."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in the Spiritual Exercises, gratitude and love, not codependency and perfectionism, are meant to channel our commitment into action.

## Conclusion: The Self as Instrument in God's Hand

**I**n a kind of *inclusio* of my own, I would like to end with some observations about the Paris Conference on the "Vocation of the Teacher in the Ignatian Tradition" that I referred to in the beginning of this essay. Parker Palmer, who addressed us on the first day of the gathering, stressed that the most effective teachers are those who have an intimate relationship with their discipline or field of study. They are people who have been formed and transformed by what they have studied. Unlike cartoon characters and their "balloon speech," effective teachers exhibit no disconnect between who they are and what they profess. Palmer's extensive research in higher education consistently indicates that the genuineness or congruence of the teacher as a person is what has made the biggest impact on students.

Palmer's emphasis on the effectiveness of teachers whose behavior is congruent with their words resonates with what Ignatius believes is crucial for apostolic effectiveness. For Ignatius, the best means of fostering effective service is by becoming persons whose service of others springs from heartfelt gratitude and love and is experienced as work that links them intimately with Christ as co-workers. In short, it is to be an instrument united with God, able to be wielded dexterously in God's hands. This Ignatian ideal was well exemplified in the life of the late Pedro Arrupe, S.J. After many years of ministry in Japan, Arrupe was

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<sup>60</sup> Spohn, "Moral Vision of the Catechism," 192.

called to Rome to lead the Society of Jesus during a tumultuous time of conflict and change both in the world and the Church. Despite the strenuous nature of his position, he maintained a lively spirit of service all throughout his long tenure as Superior General. His farewell message addressed to the members of the General Congregation on September 3, 1983, just after the acceptance of his resignation, reveals the exuberant spirit of gratitude and love that kept him vibrant, even in the midst of severe physical decline.

More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands.

At the end of eighteen years as General of the Society, I want to first of all, and above all, to give thanks to the Lord. His generosity towards me has been boundless. . .

In these eighteen years my one ideal was to serve the Lord and his Church—with all my heart—from beginning to end.

My call to you today is that you be available to the Lord. Let us put God at the center, ever attentive to the voice, ever asking what we can do for his more effective service, and doing it to the best of our ability, with love and perfect detachment. Let us cultivate a very personal awareness of the reality of God.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Pedro Arrupe, S.J., as cited in *Company: A Magazine of the American Jesuits*, Spring 1999, 29.

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