

# STUDES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

THE PREACHED WEEKEND RETREAT  
A RELIC OR A FUTURE?

JOSEPH A. TETLOW, S.J.

48/1 SPRING 2016

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS is a publication of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

The Seminar is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The Seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially U.S. and Canadian Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

The subjects treated in STUDIES may be of interest also to Jesuits of other regions and to other religious, clergy, and laity. All who find this journal helpful are welcome to access previous issues at: [ejournals@bc.edu/jesuits](mailto:ejournals@bc.edu/jesuits)

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## *a word from the editor . . .*

The preceding issue by Fr. Francis X. Hezel, S.J. (Winter 2015) marked the departure of Fr. Richard Blake, S.J., as editor of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. The Society of Jesus is deeply indebted to Father for his eighteen years of generous service, including his initial stint as a Seminar member. I like to tell Jesuits that writing a piece for *STUDIES* is a wonderful way to give something back to our companions, this body of men to whom we literally owe our lives and every joy that we will ever experience in this ministry. Father Blake's own love for the Society, his deep respect for a writer's work, and his extensive knowledge of the humanities were consistently evident in his thoughtful introductions to each essay. On behalf of the Society, thank you, Dick.

Readers who hope for the same level of erudition from me will be disappointed. But rest assured that if I can make any connections to *Star Trek* or *The Simpsons*, I will not fail to do so.

Thanks also to Fr. Gaspar LoBiondo, S.J., who steps down from the Seminar after three years of solid counsel. He now has a bit more time to dedicate to faculty and students at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C. We will announce Fr. LoBiondo's replacement this fall.

*STUDIES* celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in September 2019. In forthcoming issues, I will write a bit about its future and the role I believe it can play in our ongoing formation and edification as friends in the Lord. I will clarify parameters on the kinds of essays desired by the Seminar, and, for the consideration of our prospective writers, I will propose a few subjects in need of particular treatment (or re-treatment). I also welcome suggestions from readers about topics for 2019 that will suitably commemorate the anniversary.

Now to the work at hand. Fr. Joseph Tetlow, S.J., an established retreat director and spiritual writer, offers us a thought-provoking reflection on the legitimacy and efficacy of preached weekend retreats. (One Seminar member called it "brilliant.") In light of the long-standing debate about the Ignatian character of preached retreats, as well as their theoretical potential—some would say proven potential—for revitalizing some of our retreat houses, the Seminar deemed it apropos to make Father Tetlow's essay the first of a two-part series. Fr. Casey Beaumier, S.J., director of the Institute of Advanced Jesuit

Studies and himself a director of preached retreats, will provide a follow-up piece in the near future.

For some readers a bit of historical context might be helpful. After the Restoration of the Society in 1814, it was rare to give laypeople the full retreat of thirty days with individual direction. As recently as the 1950s, preached retreats of three or eight days were the norm. Directors gave twenty- to thirty-minute presentations several times each day, and during the intervals priests were available for individual confessions.

Even Jesuit novices made the full Spiritual Exercises in preached form. Each man visited the retreat director (usually the novice master) every three or four days for about ten minutes. Given the large number of novices and the brevity of the visits, it is probably fair to say that this did not constitute spiritual direction in any substantial sense.

The content of preached retreats often revolved around catechesis, virtues and vices, and the underlying theology of individual exercises. Moral exhortations were aimed to get people into the confessional. There would have been relatively little emphasis on guiding retreatants in the more advanced practices of discernment of spirits and discernment of God's will, or in the cultivation of "contemplatives in action" who perceive the presence of God at every moment of their daily lives. Naturally, all this was determined largely by the kind of retreatants in question: working-class Catholics with a deep desire to grow in faith, but with little inclination for subtle and extended reflection and precious little free time to devote to retreats in any case.

The 1960s witnessed the revival of individually directed retreats. Prompted by the Second Vatican Council's invitation to religious orders to recapture the spirit of their original charisms, and inspired not a little by the emphases on personal experience and "the individual" that were characteristic of the existentialist and personalist philosophies of the time, Jesuits began to focus on Ignatius's vision of the Spiritual Exercises as the means of an intense, extended, personalized encounter with God. A collection of essays from the 1970s, edited by the late Fr. David Fleming, S.J., conveniently captures in one book many of the dynamics and questions raised by this transition. See his *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola: The Best of the Review* (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 1983).

Now a sense of ambivalence, even opposition, arose among many Jesuits, regarding the very idea of preached retreats, to say nothing of those that last only a weekend. At best, they were "not really Ignatian." At worst, they were antithetical to Ignatius's most cherished principles. After all, in Annotation 15 Ignatius controversially affirmed that we must allow God to deal directly with the creature. He wanted "spiritual conversations," such as we find in directed retreats, to be a hallmark of Jesuit ministry. And if it is true that the

Exercises re-create in some sense the pilgrim journey of Ignatius, it stands to reason that retreatants need extended time to make a pilgrimage of their own.

This is the tension to which Father Tetlow is responding. Do we rightfully consign preached retreats to the reliquary? Or is this a case of the baby being thrown out with the bath water, as so often happens in long-overdue spiritual revolutions?

Jesuits might be surprised to learn that Ignatius addressed this tension explicitly in the Constitutions. There, he identified the greater glory of God, or “the more universal good,” as the Society’s formal criterion for choosing apostolates. That is, when choosing between two or more legitimate works, all else being equal, one should try to choose that which makes a wider or “more universal” impact on God’s people. To illustrate, Ignatius provided a list of examples of how this might play out in practice. Among those examples is the following:

All things mentioned above being equal, when there are occupations which are of more universal good and extend to the aid of greater numbers of our neighbors, such as preaching or lecturing, and others aimed more at individuals, such as hearing confessions or giving the Exercises, and it is impossible to accomplish both at once, then preference should be given to the first, unless there should be circumstances through which it would be judged that it would be more expedient to take up the second.<sup>1</sup>

So for all the weight that Ignatius gave to individualized attention, here he gives explicit priority to preached ministries. Jesuits will interpret this passage variously. At a minimum, however, one is on shaky ground to call preached retreats contrary to the Pilgrim’s intentions.

Nor is it theologically insignificant that Ignatius describes “The Call of the King,” the oldest piece in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as a shared communal experience, that is to say, as a single message that is directed to everyone simultaneously:

I will observe how this king speaks to all his people, saying, “My will is to conquer the whole land of the infidels. Hence, whoever wishes to come with me . . . So too each one must labor with me during the day . . .

Consequently, if someone did not answer his call . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Cons. §623, in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, edited by John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 288.

How much more worthy of our consideration it is to gaze upon Christ our Lord, the eternal king, and *all the world* assembled before him. He calls to *them all*, and to *each person in particular* he says . . . *whoever* wishes to come with me . . .

*All those who have judgment and reason* will offer themselves for this task . . .<sup>2</sup>

That Ignatius chose this communal language is all the more striking when we recall that in *The Imitation of Christ*, the book so dear to him that he continued to read throughout his life, the author frequently used the second person singular, the intimate Latin *tu*, to depict God's converse with the individual:

My Son, says our Saviour Jesus Christ, I must be the end of all your works, if you desire to be happy and blessed. If you refer all goodness to Me, from whom all goodness comes, then all your inward affections will be purified and made clean, which otherwise would be evil and centered on yourself and other creatures. If you seek yourself as the goal of your work in anything, you soon fall short in your activities, and become dry and barren of all the refreshment of grace. And so, you must refer all things to Me, for I give all.<sup>3</sup>

One might say that the "Call of the King" is a prototypical preached retreat. It seems not to have occurred to Ignatius that a retreatant should have reason to regard the divine communication as any less personal because it was directed to everyone else as well.

The purpose of STUDIES is to stimulate reflection, prayer, and conversation among Jesuits. To further that end, I encourage our readers to send letters to the editor in response to Father Tetlow's essay and to all future essays. Send them to [studieseditor@regis.edu](mailto:studieseditor@regis.edu). Again, please consider it a service to our companions.

And please say a prayer for JESUIT STUDIES, that for another fifty years it may continue to serve the purpose for which it was created.

**Barton T. Geger, S.J.**

Editor

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<sup>2</sup>*SpEx*. §§93-96, in *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, translated and edited by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 53-54.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas À Kempis, *Imitatio Christi*, bk. 3:9.1, in *The Imitation of Christ*, translated by Richard Whitford ca. 1530 and edited by Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. (New York: Image Books, 1983), 85.



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*Joseph Tetlow served as Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's Assistant for Ignatian Spirituality from 1995-2004. He entered the (then) New Orleans Province in 1947 and was ordained in 1960. He finished a doctorate in American Social and Intellectual History at Brown University in 1969. His subsequent assignments included dean of Arts and Sciences at Loyola University in New Orleans and tertian director in Austin, Texas. He was the first executive secretary of the Jesuit Conference. He has been president of the Jesuit School of theology in Berkeley, an associate editor for America, and theology professor at Saint Louis University. He is currently a retreat director at Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat Center in Grand Coteau, Louisiana.*

# The Preached Weekend Retreat

## *A Relic or a Future?*

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*In the last four decades, many U.S. Jesuit retreat houses reduced or eliminated preached weekend retreats in favor of individually directed retreats. Yet the former are no less Ignatian, they serve far greater numbers of the faithful, and they can revitalize flagging retreat houses. Jesuits must explicitly recommit to these retreats and to retreat work in general, and take steps to explicate and protect their Ignatian character, just as Jesuits have done already with their educational institutions and parishes.*

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### **I. A Prefatory Confession**

I began giving preached weekend retreats in 1962. I didn't know what I was doing. When I gave the first one at the Cenacle Retreat House in New Orleans, the Cenacle director asked me what I wanted to do. I told her I didn't know what to do. She knew what to do.

I have been giving preached weekend retreats ever since. I took the experience with me when I spent almost a decade in Rome as Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's assistant for Ignatian Spirituality, visiting many of the Company's 250 retreat houses. So I write with a bit of history in mind, naming the patterns as I have seen them develop. But this is not a scholarly effort such as someone looking for a thesis topic might write. I mean to report on what I've seen as I lived through the changes and listened to Jesuits and our lay colleagues. Later, Casey Beaumier will pick up the story. Presently he is one of the main engines pulling

what's left of the boxcars. In collaboration with the director of Manresa House in Convent, Louisiana, he mentors scholastics in giving weekend retreats.

I ask myself a good many questions about this ministry. The broadest is whether the Central Southern Province will go the way of U.S. provinces in the Northeast and West. Will we put less stress on the Ignatian preached weekend retreat, or even pull back from our houses altogether? And if we do not, will we have the leadership necessary to keep a dozen or so houses thriving? Leadership is key. It was the answer that Joyceann Hagen, pastoral assistant in the Oregon Province for more than fifteen years, gave me when I asked why houses fail. Her immediate, emphatic response: "Leadership."<sup>1</sup>

I ask myself whether we will have enough Jesuits to animate the houses. We are well past the point at which Jesuits can do it all. Four of our houses in the UCS Province are led by laypeople, and all offer retreats by lay directors.<sup>2</sup> What must we do to save our houses that still draw so many people to pray, people who freely spend their own time and money to do so?

Other questions concern the ministry itself. What do people need and want? What do we want for them? Do we believe that a yearly weekend experience really makes a difference in their lives?

I believe, however, that the ministry of the preached weekend retreat thrives. The strength of our houses in the middle of this nation is astonishing and suggests that we can be confident of their future. Where else on earth do ordinary Catholic men spend approximately fifteen thousand days every year in silent prayer and religious practices, as they do at Manresa in Louisiana? What institution comes near what White House in St. Louis does every year, gathering five thousand men and women from Thursday evenings to Sunday afternoons to pray, confess, and worship in silence? These houses, both directed by laymen for some years, are thriving.

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<sup>1</sup>Pastoral assistant to the Oregon Province for fifteen years, Joyceann Hagen was named pastoral assistant to both the California and Oregon Provinces as they prepare for merger.

<sup>2</sup>White House in St. Louis; Manresa in Convent, Louisiana; Our Lady of the Oaks in Grand Coteau, Louisiana; and Ignatius House in Atlanta.

The ministry of the Exercises thrives in other forms. Jesuits in the eastern provinces have established the Jesuit Collaborative, a professional association among laity, clergy, and religious. The Collaborative “promotes networking, reflection, scholarship, and learning while managing and coordinating the diverse ministries that derive from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some houses have adapted the preached retreat to more contemplative forms and to shorter weekends.

The preached weekend retreat is a ministry to one of the invisible peripheries in the U.S. Church: that ordinary Catholic, educated, free, and hard to categorize, yet who yearns to be closer to God in Christ. These are men and women who live the “middle-class holiness” Pope Francis has talked about more than once.<sup>4</sup> In our retreat houses, we foster an interior life for the mature disciple, a spirituality for postmodernism, and a life of justice that Jesus commanded and that this pope declares so clearly.

Will the Company in the U.S. keep pulling out of retreat houses? Perhaps we are caught in developments beyond our control, and our secular, fractured culture makes retreat houses impossible to sustain. But I do not think so. I think the issue is whether the Company can elevate them among our ministries from something of an afterthought to reaching for the *magis* in our ministries, in the same way that we prioritized in turn higher education, action for justice, and, more recently, parish ministry.

## II. We “Preach the Spiritual Exercises”? Really?

All I knew when I started giving retreats was what I had observed: that Jesuits give good talks on the *Spiritual Exercises*. We taught. We lectured. In my own experience, lecturing generally bores listeners—and, after a few years of lecturing, it bored us too. So we had to keep asking what these hundreds of men and women were really look-

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<sup>3</sup>This fresh initiative is described at the Website [sjnen.org/Jesuit-Collaborative](http://sjnen.org/Jesuit-Collaborative). Very twenty-first century, it seems to me less an institution than a communications and organization start-up.

<sup>4</sup>Pope Francis, in his homily at Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls on the Third Sunday of Easter, April 14, 2013. It can be found at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013>

ing for. It took a long time for me to realize that they were looking for exactly what the *Spiritual Exercises* offer. Then I had to learn why the preached weekend retreat is a true application of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It took me a while to figure that out too.

A first step is recognizing what the director (the one who gives the conferences) does in a retreat. By the time I was dean at Loyola University in New Orleans in the early 1970s, I had learned that the primary role of directors is not to teach, lecture, or instruct. They do that some of that, but the main role is *giving witness*. Patti Clement has played this role at several of our houses and this is her witness: "I am a firm believer that our retreat talks have to authentically come from our prayer and lived experiences of practicing Ignatian Spirituality."<sup>5</sup>

Hence, a director at Our Lady of the Oaks felt real consolation on reading this evaluation: "Father was very passionate, empathetic, with very sound wisdom showing a lifelong disciple of the Lord that makes me want to be a disciple of the Lord and God." This told the director that he was *giving witness*. It prompted us to stop telling people to pray and to start leading them in prayer and showing them how it's done. Tim Murphy, currently the director at Manresa, says bluntly: "What comes out of my mouth is not theology out of textbooks. It's what I believe in my own heart and what I do because of it."<sup>6</sup>

So what are we doing in the preached weekend retreat that reflects what is in our hearts? We invite adults to grow as mature disciples of Jesus Christ. We witness by giving living evidence that an American in this secular society can accept a personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth our Savior. We let it be known that we ourselves are loved sinners. We sound like happy people because we are happy people. We believe this with all our hearts: *There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit, which gives us*

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<sup>5</sup>Patti Clement is from Baton Rouge and was with the earliest group to be trained by Kenneth Buddendorff, S.J., at Our Lady of the Oaks. She has given retreats in more than one of our houses and has done some publishing.

<sup>6</sup>Timothy Murphy graduated from Loyola University in New Orleans. He taught at the Jesuit high school there and was a grade-school principal. After some years as associate to Fr. Anthony Ostini, S.J., at Manresa House, the board appointed him house director.

*life in union with Christ Jesus, has set us free from the law of sin-and-death* (Rom. 8:1).<sup>7</sup>

We are constantly astonished that *God chose to reveal His son in me* (Gal. 3:13), but He did and does. So we live joyfully because we not only believe in, but look forward to, the resurrection of the body. In that joy, we tend to make a lot of quips and to tell droll stories (especially if the humor is at our expense). Then we ask retreatants to take to their prayer some “Points for Consideration,” as I title them, that will focus each heart on its own convictions and commitments.

As we have matured as directors, we let it be clearly known that we have learned in our own experience that God’s love is a suffering love. God is the Love who has patiently waited, one psalm after another, prophet after prophet, for His chosen ones—The People—to turn to Him with open hearts. Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God’s Love, whose naked image hangs above our altars, waiting for us to pay attention to Him. All of this witnessing was named by Pope John Paul II “the New Evangelization.”<sup>8</sup>

Now I begin retreats intoning hymns people are likely to know, such as “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.” Then I pray a paraphrase of the Breastplate of St. Patrick:

Christ be near at either hand,  
Christ behind, before me stand.  
Christ with me where’re I go,  
Christ around, above, below.  
Christ be in my heart and mind,  
Christ within my soul enshrined.  
Christ control my wayward heart;  
Christ abide, and ne’er depart.  
Christ my life and only way,

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<sup>7</sup> Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Anglicized Catholic Edition, unless marked NJB, New Jerusalem Bible. Where it helps, I use alternate readings allowed in footnotes.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, §2.

Christ my lantern night and day.  
Christ my one unchanging friend,  
Guide and Shepherd to the end.<sup>9</sup>

To begin a conference, I frame the topic of the talk, often mentioning something in the *Spiritual Exercises*, and always weaving in a lot of Scripture. I ask each group to consider, “How do we know when we’re praying?” and I instruct them briefly on God’s presence and on listening to and addressing the Lord. The main part of each conference is a text—the so-called “handout”—that I give them and read to them. I lead them in prayer again at the end, using a formula or creating a prayer based on the talk, or at times guiding them in a contemplation of an event in Jesus’ life that came up in the talk.

This is the pattern I follow in giving each of the seven, ten, or eleven talks. Others do it differently, playing songs on CDs or giving them icons to ponder. All of us do what we know will help people embrace *silence*, which is experienced among the retreatants and which Jesuit houses characteristically insist on for the whole of the weekend. We also help retreatants reach *quiet*, which is in the secret of their hearts. Catherine of Siena said that in each person’s heart there is a little room where only that person and God can go. We invite retreatants to go there by helping them to pray.

After the third or fourth conference, I give them the texts of the prayer “Christ Be Near” and the Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester.

Thanks be to thee, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits thou hast given me,  
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.  
O most merciful Redeemer, friend, and brother,  
may I know Thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
and follow thee more nearly,  
day by day.

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<sup>9</sup>Canon J. Fennelly, *Divine Office I: Advent and Christmas* (London, Collins, 1974), 372.



As the conferences go along, we all start reciting these two prayers together. My hope is that retreatants will own them when they leave.

Put plainly: we directors are manifesting how a mature disciple of Jesus Christ thinks and feels, talks and acts. But we are not “performing,” any more than we are merely lecturing or teaching. We are just doing “the new evangelization.” Pope Francis sees faithful disciples like us as living “middle-class holiness.” Then he pushes it a bit further and, in *The Joy of the Gospel*, makes this claim about every disciple of Jesus Christ: “I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing.”<sup>10</sup> We do not *have* a mission; we *are* a mission. It’s a critical point about Christian identity. I find that when I say this, most retreatants brighten with surprise, and find the thought hugely consoling.

The question here is whether we can keep believing that our retreat houses do all of that. Pope Francis wrote, “Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people.”<sup>11</sup> The Company has worked passionately for the visibly poor and the socially marginalized for a full generation now. In the 1970s we turned to the one-to-one directed retreat, giving it to those with the luxury of being able to make it: religious, educated laity, and people with enough income and leisure. We have found that this is an expensive enterprise and it’s hard to support a house doing just the one-to-one retreats. But we learned that some who make the weekend retreat want to move on. So as the past century ended, even the most active retreat houses began scheduling special times during the year to offer the one-to-one guided retreat to those who can afford it and want it. These are relatively few compared to the whole number of retreatants who come, for instance, to Montserrat in Dallas, Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, and Ignatius House in Atlanta.

Now we have to ask whether we have the passion to keep bringing to “ordinary Catholics”—the laboring class, secretaries, farmers, local lawyers and professionals—what they keenly yearn for: spirituality. I am not confident of the answer. I *am* confident that we have to

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<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* (hereafter *TJG*), §273.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, §268.

do what the JSEA and AJCU did for themselves: dialogue long and hard, plan, and create structures.

In this essay, I simply wish to show what we're doing in the preached weekend retreat, and to suggest why continuing to do it really belongs to the *magis* of a group of men entrusted with the *Spiritual Exercises* and called by the Church again and again to guard and promote them.

### III. What Happens in Our Retreat Houses

December 3, 2015, a Thursday evening: Mary Alice rolled her bag into the courtyard of Our Lady of the Oaks Jesuit Retreat House in Grand Coteau, Louisiana.<sup>12</sup> She was one of fifty who had come to be in silence until Sunday afternoon, listening to four half-hour presentations each day. She would attend Mass and recite the rosary with others who so desired. Then she would spend the rest of her time quietly reflecting and praying.

Asked after the silence ended whether she knew God better or differently, she answered as though astonished at what she was saying: "Yes. He craves my love as much as I crave his." Ignatian directors try to remember what Paul told his son Timothy: *The aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith* (1 Tim. 1:5).

This good Catholic had heard the faith proclaimed in her parish for years. She had come wanting "to learn to pray better," though what that might entail was clearly a mystery to her, as it is to most people who say that. She had tried the typical Catholic groups—reading and prayer groups, some Exercises in Daily Life—but they never suited her. That's how it is for Catholic parishioners in the second decade of the new millennium: a steady and sometimes enthusiastic practice of religion but with little help in their spirituality. Mary appreciated it, but found it somehow anemic and lacking.

Mary found it different this first time in the Jesuit retreat house. She thought it a holy place, or "the space to feel God's love," as Christopher Manahan, S.J., likes to put it, the director of our house in Oshkosh. Holy places have always figured large in humankind's relations

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<sup>12</sup> All the people mentioned or cited here are real; the names are fictitious.

with the holy. Pope Francis had this in mind when he asked that every diocesan cathedral install and celebrate a “holy door.”

The parish church feels like a holy place to most of us. So do retreat houses; but they are appreciated a little differently. Perhaps it’s because we feel obliged to go to the parish church and we freely choose to go to a retreat house. The different senses of obligation might mark one difference between religion and spirituality.<sup>13</sup> Retreatants commonly remark, as one woman wrote on her evaluation: “This is my 15th year and as always I truly feel like I am coming ‘home’ when I turn down the driveway.”

### *Experiencing a Spiritual Life as Mature Disciples*

Here’s why. Men and women should be treated explicitly as mature disciples and invited to experience the spiritual life. They do not simply hear the Good News, they experience the grace-filled spirituality that Jesus Christ opens for us. An immigrant man wrote a gracious note after one of his retreats at Manresa: “Every day I am always looking for answers. What will I do? What do I live for? How can I be like Jesus? Thanks, you gave me the answer.”

More succinctly, one woman announced at the end of a retreat preached by Carol Ackels at White House, “No one ever told me that I can be a mature disciple.”<sup>14</sup> Yet this good Christian had attended weekly Mass and observed Holy Days for years. To be sure, “not being told” does not mean that the parish was failing in its tasks. It does mean that the U.S. Church has not structured our parish life to include help for adults to develop an active spiritual life. Parishes rarely offer programs

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<sup>13</sup> In the broadest terms, religion involves creed, code, cult, and sometimes culture. The Mexican peasant recites the Credo, keeps the Commandments, goes to Mass on Sunday, and is wrapped in the mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Spirituality involves a deep interior life, freely chosen and persevered in, and lived according to long-established ways of believing and praying and practices of piety. Nonetheless, religion and spirituality overlap in good works and also in worship and some forms of prayer.

<sup>14</sup> Carol Ackels is a lawyer and the mother of five grown children. She made the Spiritual Exercises in Annotation 19 and trained in Ignatian spirituality. She is now executive director (and main engine) of the Ignatian Spirituality Institute connected with Montserrat Retreat House in Dallas. She speaks from the wide experience of giving retreats at several of our retreat houses and of conducting workshops on Ignatian spirituality and on the preached retreat.

to guide adults to interiorize their faith, to put order into their affective lives, and to mature in their relationships with God and others and even with themselves. In all probability, at some point a homilist did tell Carol that she is a mature disciple. But no one showed her what that looks like and how to do it.

Every year six thousand men come from New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and a dozen states, to Manresa at Convent on the banks of the Mississippi. They arrive on Thursday evening and leave on Sunday at noon or on comparable days during the week. The men vary

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*Since Ignatius had unwisely suggested pondering the mysteries of the Holy Trinity to women in Manresa, he learned to match the exercises he gave to "the dispositions of the one who is making them."*

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widely in education, employment, social position, and to some extent race and ethnicity. Much the same is true of the five thousand who visit White House, further north on the river. As indicated earlier, these are two of our steadiest U.S. houses offering preached retreats. They are well matched by the house in

Demontreville, Minnesota, where four thousand men come over a period of every weekend, with the exception of five. They offer only the preached weekend retreat. The house in Oshkosh offers the same retreat on twenty-two weekends a year, and has a few one-on-one directed retreats and AA retreats.

Many other houses conduct, sponsor, or host a range of other weekend spiritual activities. Bellarmine in Barrington, Illinois, is an outstanding example. It holds thirty-one silent retreats for Catholics and other adults (over thirteen hundred attend). It also holds thirty-four high-school retreats totalling 1,700 students. It lists five recovery weekends (275 persons); nineteen conferences and retreats of faith-based organizations (900 persons); six spirituality programs (300 people); four veterans retreats with spiritual direction (100 people); and two directed retreats and private retreats also totalling about 100 people. It is impressive that some 5,000 individuals a year come to Barrington for many different programs.

There is a Point for Consideration here: Bellarmine is wonderfully busy but it is busy about a lot of things other than the Spiritual Ex-

ercises. If we wonder why Jesuits are involved in all that, the answer probably begins with the fact that it needs doing, no one else is doing it in that place, and it supports the ministry of Exercises. Are Bellarmine's activities furthering the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises? The question is worth attending to, and it may well be that the men there have answers. We should listen to them, because the way Bellarmine has developed might be the way many other Jesuit retreat houses will go.

That raises a concern about where the development might end. We have closed a number of retreat houses, and turning away from insisting on the Spiritual Exercises seems to be part of the pattern. One example is Mt. Manresa on Staten Island. It opened in 1922 as the first Jesuit retreat house in the United States. In 2003, the house listed "traditional preached retreats" as just one of several activities. This was not the only development, as costs went up and Jesuit availability went down. The house was sold in 2014.

The Jesuit Retreat House in Inisfada, the eighty-three-room Brady mansion on Long Island, is another instance. Well before it closed, the staff (Jesuits and others) had been presenting some Exercises and a panoply of other programs on culture, spirituality, and the arts. They gave spiritual direction and supervision and brought in famous speakers like Janet Ruffing, R.S.M., and Richard Rohr, O.F.M. But the province could not maintain it because the mansion demanded too much maintenance and wasn't getting enough use, so it was sold in 2013.

These changes continue in other houses. Manresa Retreat House outside of Detroit, for instance, has moved even further away from the preached weekend retreat. In February 2016 its Website listed one retreat for men and one for women, Friday through Sunday. That same month, the house also offered yoga, journaling groups, reading groups, and other activities.<sup>15</sup> This seems to be a pattern: a move away from preached weekend retreats to other activities. Evidently U.S. Jesuits are reassessing retreat ministry, but in a piecemeal manner, with much ad hocery and little indication of having wondered about long-range consequences.

That raises another Point for Consideration: the Jesuit Conference and various provinces have done serious work during the last fif-

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<sup>15</sup>This information is from the Website: < manresa-sj.org >.

ty years to keep a sharp focus on our mission in the high schools and universities. What does it mean that the ministry which is directly and exclusively concerned with the spiritual development of adults has not been the subject of similar serious planning at the national level? Perhaps nothing, or perhaps we can't tell. But the Oregon Province has closed all but one of its retreat houses and the remaining one in Portland seems to limp along without much activity. In 2003, when I printed the worldwide directory of Jesuit retreat houses in the *CIS Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, there were thirty. In 2016 many of them are no longer listed.

So we have to ask: Are Montserrat on Lake Dallas, El Retiro San Inigo at Los Altos, and even Ignatius House in Atlanta, going the way of Bellarmine in Barrington? Will this way lead to the same fate as Mt. Manresa and Inisfada? These developments beg for reflection, but it is hard to know what questions to ask. One help might be the "captain's system" by which men recruit other men. (This practice doesn't seem to be so strong with women.) It keeps Manresa in Convent, White House, and Our Lady of the Oaks going strong. We can reasonably think of this as an expression of the "new evangelization," in that the "captains" are bringing others to know Jesus Christ better.

But the questions might be larger than that. Has Catholic religious culture taken a new direction, making the weekend retreat obsolete? Have costs outrun us? Can we actually bring ourselves to wonder whether the Spiritual Exercises have outlasted their usefulness to any but an elite? Whatever questions we ask, we have to respond to the fact that the Company of Jesus in the U.S. is downsizing our direct, focused, zealous application of the *Spiritual Exercises* to those who live what Pope Francis called "middle-class holiness." As Maria Cressler, house director in Atlanta, asks, Can we do anything to take the one-to-one Spiritual Exercises (maybe the "19th Annotation") to the ordinary people who come to our retreat houses?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Maria G. Cressler has been executive director of Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center in Atlanta since 2009. She holds a Master of Theological Studies degree and a Certification in Spiritual Direction from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama. Her thirty years of pastoral experience include prison ministry in Danbury Federal Prison, parish youth ministry, and directing adult faith formation. She has been married for thirty-years years and has three grown children and four grandchildren.

Perhaps we are beginning to think that preaching does not have anything to do with the experience offered by the Spiritual Exercises. If that is the case—as it seems to be in the eastern and western provinces—then we need to revisit our history and the “Annotations to the *Spiritual Exercises*.”

#### **IV. Why Is “Annotation 18” in the *Spiritual Exercises*?**

Some Jesuits have come to feel that the only authentic way to give the Exercises is the one-to-one retreats described by “Annotations 19 and 20.” They do need to ask what “Annotation 18” is doing there.

The Spiritual Exercises should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them, that is, to their age, education, and ability. In this way someone who is uneducated or has a weak constitution will not be given things he or she cannot well bear or profit from without fatigue. Similarly, exercitants should be given, each one, as much as they are willing to dispose themselves to receive, for their greater help and progress.

Consequently, a person who wants help to get some instruction and reach a certain level of peace of soul can be given the Particular Examen [and other individual pieces]. Such a person can also be encouraged to weekly confession of sins and, if possible, to reception of the Eucharist every two weeks or, if better disposed, weekly. This procedure is more appropriate for persons who are rather simple or illiterate. They should be given an explanation of each of the commandments, the seven capital sins, the precepts of the Church, the five senses, and the works of mercy.

Likewise, if the one giving the Exercises sees that the one making them is a person poorly qualified or of little natural ability from whom much fruit is not to be expected, it is preferable to give to such a one some of these light exercises until he or she has confessed, and then to give ways of examining one’s conscience and a program for confession more frequently than before, that the person may preserve what has been acquired. But this should be done without going on to matters pertaining to the Elec-

tion or to other Exercises beyond the First Week. This is especially the case when there are others with whom greater results can be achieved. There is not sufficient time to do everything.<sup>17</sup>

The second half of the long paragraph clearly belongs here. It makes an important point about the full Exercises done according to “Annotations 19 or 20.” Master Ignatius instructs us how to handle persons who begin a long retreat but prove unable (physically, psychologically) or unwilling (ungenerous, self-centered). He must have faced this development himself, which can be consoling for us today.

The first half of the paragraph, however, has nothing to say regarding the long retreat. It pertains to the spiritual exercises that Iñigo used to share with women in the plazas, and with crowds of clerics, religious, and laypeople who visited him in the prison cells of Alcalá and Salamanca. Since he had unwisely suggested pondering the mysteries of the Holy Trinity to women in Manresa, he learned to match the exercises he gave to “the dispositions of the one who is making them.”<sup>18</sup> Iñigo always gave what person(s) could manage and what would lend to spiritual progress. He reports that he spoke about the Commandments and virtues and vices to people at Alcalá, where “he was engaged in giving spiritual exercises and teaching Christian doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> And in Salamanca, he spoke about “the things of God,” and talked so long on the first commandment—the love of God—that the inquisitors did not ask about the other nine.

We should keep in mind that Iñigo had the *Spiritual Exercises* well in hand when he left Manresa for Barcelona, Alcalá, and Salamanca. This is what he preached, witnessed to, and the matter he used in instructing groups of men and women. He promoted the “Examen” to most people. But he went beyond the “Examen” into the doctrines in the Weeks when he got to Alcalá. There, what he did “gave rise to talk among the people, especially because of the great crowd that gath-

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<sup>17</sup>§18, in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, edited and translated by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis; Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 26-27.

<sup>18</sup>*Spiritual Exercises*, “Annotation 18.”

<sup>19</sup>Ignatius of Loyola, *Autobiography*, para. 57.



ered wherever he was explaining doctrine.”<sup>20</sup> This “doctrine” that he was explaining was not polemical and academic. Iñigo said plainly to the inquisitors at Salamanca that what he spoke about “was with little foundation”—that is, he had no university studies.<sup>21</sup>

In “explaining doctrine”—as opposed to lecturing or instructing—he gave “a deep understanding and relish of spiritual things,” as he put it in the “Autobiography.”<sup>22</sup> Consider what “theology” Iñigo knew from his appropriation of the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony: original and personal sin, mercy, grace, the Holy Spirit’s active work in each soul, the power of the sacraments, life in Christ, the human qualities of Jesus, the Church as His kingdom, the Real Presence, the Communion of Saints, the redeeming death of the Savior, His Resurrection, and the promise of ours.

This is what Iñigo knew when he frequented the plaza to talk to people. Notice that the “spiritual things” he talked about led to “deep understanding” as well as to “relishing.” He had taken the core of revelation in Christ Jesus the Lord and systematized it in his own way before ever he cracked a book in Latin to read philosophy and theology.

John O’Malley calls *Spiritual Exercises* not “a book of dogma, but a dogmatic book.” It presents the full Christian message, the Good News that Jesus brought, not for arguing or proving, O’Malley points out, but for “personal appropriation, a clinging to the message with all one’s heart and then a translation of it with all one’s heart into one’s life.”<sup>23</sup> This is where the first half of “Annotation 18” fits.

### *Spiritual Exercises for Ordinary Catholics: Favre and Laínez in Parma*

This doctrine is what Laínez and Favre passed on when in 1539 they went to Parma, north of Rome. They were on the first important mission given by Paul III to the new Company. They exchanged letters weekly, and Master Ignatius wanted to know what they were doing

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., para. 62.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., para. 57.

<sup>23</sup>John O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 42.

with the *Spiritual Exercises*. In March of 1540 Favre wrote to Ignatius that he could not guess how many people were making Exercises because there were so many giving them. In June Laínez wrote:

The Exercises continue to grow day by day, since many who have made them give them to others, to groups of ten or fourteen. As each “brood” is completed, they begin another, so that we see the children of the children, to the third and fourth generations; and universally, they all change their lives and practices so much that we must praise the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

Note that people “changed their lives and practices” because of “the Exercises.” We can imagine that these two apostles were inventing the “weekend retreat,” since the people to whom they preached labored during the week. Their religion came on the weekends. These Jesuits were caring for the souls no one else was caring for, which Jerónimo Nadal pointed to as a Jesuit charism. People came of their own free will to listen to them and to do the exercises that were urged on them.

Two things are clear about this early mission and what it implies. First, the Jesuits did not concentrate only on the powerful and the elite and people who could take a month off to pray. They spent a great deal of time with ordinary people, housewives and farmers and tradesmen, especially people who were eager to know God better and people who had been living sinful, careless lives. And second, relatively few Jesuits were fighting heresy, and even fewer of them were converting pagans. The large majority of early Jesuits spent time helping confused, ignorant Christians make “progress in Christian life and doctrine” by returning to Communion and the sacraments and by learning how to pray.<sup>25</sup> The ideal of helping Christians “make progress” is enshrined in the first paragraph of the “Formula Instituti.” It is what the retreat houses do.

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<sup>24</sup>*Lainii monumenta*, vol. 1, no. 4. I have taken this translation from a MS by Fr. John F. Montag, S.J., submitted to the The Institute of Jesuit Sources for publication.

<sup>25</sup>“The Formula of the Institute of Society of Jesus,” July 21, 1550, in the first paragraph.

### *Making Progress: The First Half of "Annotation 18"*

All of this makes plain that the first half of "Annotation 18" is very pertinent today. The people to whom we go may not be utterly confused and ignorant, but they need help. People who come to the preached retreat of their own free will do not feel called to the one-to-one retreat. Few of them could set aside the time and money even if they did. But they are serious people, well educated in secular terms, and ready for serious interior experiences of God in Christ.

What they seek is correctly called "spirituality" (which was not even a word until a couple of centuries ago). At that time French Catholics were guided by Blessed William Joseph Chaminade (d. 1850) to name what laity were yearning for and still do yearn for: to live as mature disciples. Today they want to know Jesus Christ as their own Savior and the Church as faithful to His Reign. They want to feel that their own belief and trust in Jesus Christ has meaning and significance. What should be given them "according to their wish to dispose themselves"? In other words, what are people open to?

Tim Murphy points out that people under fifty generally feel that they did not learn the Catechism well. I can add that people in my generation wonder what is happening to the Catholic Church. A man who would never miss Sunday Mass told me, "I don't know what the Church teaches anymore." So we "catechize" them, not in the sense of instructing them like children, but in the sense that St. Paul catechized when he spoke on the Agora or in many synagogues. These retreatants are open to our witness that Jesus Christ lives and His Spirit is at work in the Church. They need reassurance that they do know what the Church teaches, even about sex, but they need help inculturating faith and belief. This requires stories of real life, starting with the personal witness of the retreat giver. Fr. James Goeke, for instance, prepares talks by "remembering the graces I have in the particular Exercises and talking out of them."<sup>26</sup>

A considerable percentage of our retreatants come every year. Some continue for decades. What are they doing? What Father Goeke does: remembering what they found to help them keep "making prog-

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<sup>26</sup>Fr. James Goeke, S.J., has long experience in pastoral ministries and is now assistant novice director at Grand Coteau.

ress in Christian life and doctrine.” Some Jesuits have said that the annual retreat does little but give people a rest. Is that all our annual retreats give us Jesuits? What those who listen to these men and women discover is that the annual retreat contributes to making real progress in the interior life. Carol Ackels, an experienced director at the Dallas Ignatian Spirituality Institute, wrote thus to me:

Often enough during an annual retreat (preached or otherwise), the person will recognize the same root sin and sinfulness. One might feel tempted to discouragement. But the annual retreat actually gives hope. Because I may have the same root sin, but with God’s grace my own response to it has changed. During the annual retreat when I pause and reflect, I notice that what once troubled me I can now hold with faith and love and balance and hope. I can look and see the real healing the Lord has worked in my life, which however small, has also worked real change in my life and relationships.

One retreatant came to confer with me on “a problem that has hit me this year.” It was anger at his spouse, his children, even at the people who worked for him. Our conversation uncovered a good deal of work for him to do during the retreat and the coming year: disappointment with his life’s trajectory, disillusion with family life, disgust with the nation’s president. Twenty years ago I might have wondered whether he needed psychological therapy. I know now that he needed to look into being grateful for his nation and family and for the considerable gifts the Lord had given him. He’ll have a different report in his next annual retreat.

One way we at Our Lady of the Oaks help others make progress is giving them handouts for each conference. We put Points for Consideration in some form or another (I usually put three, as did Master Ignatius). Retreatants regularly find these solid and rather extended handouts useful. They write evaluations at the end of the retreat like “the handouts—excellent—will be able to review handouts at home at future dates.” Often enough one will add, “with my spouse.” Some of us add a bit of a bibliography: books on Scripture, perhaps *The Catholic Catechism for Adults* with its exercises and group work, or books like *An Ignatian Adventure* by Fr. Kevin O’Brien, S.J.

These all help, but we are still searching for a “program,” and perhaps we can collaborate in finding it. We know that the adult Catho-

lic and mature disciple needs to go deeper into divine revelation, from the Principle and Foundation to the resurrection of the body. And the “*Contemplatio*” creates an occasion for handling evolution and Genesis.<sup>27</sup> Retreatants are willing to learn a way to pray mentally in their busy life-world. And they feel enlightened to hear about the current practice of discernment shown by the pope.

## V. Beginning with the “Principle and Foundation”

Any program of authentic Ignatian spirituality that we might devise, any mental prayer or discernment, will be rooted in Jesus Christ. The experience of the “Principle and Foundation” guarantees this. We Jesuits were not so clear about this during the past century. Hervé Coathalem, for instance, the Belgian commentator on the *Spiritual Exercises*, considered the “Principle and Foundation” the philosophical foundation on which the whole edifice of the retreat was based.<sup>28</sup> But Ignatius (as he was called by then) almost certainly put this brief text together at the university in Paris. The exercises in the Weeks had been long established, crafted in Manresa, when Iñigo knew little theology and even less philosophy.

Interestingly, too, in 1548, when the Latin translation of Master Ignatius’s dictated notes on giving the Exercises came back to him, he read that we are to praise, reverence, and serve “*Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.*” The Spanish he had dictated did not mention “Jesus Christ”; the Latin translation he vetted to send to the Pope specified: *Jesum Christum*. He had not written that; he did not correct it.<sup>29</sup> As Iñigo grasped in praying through Ludolph, *the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal. 2:20).

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<sup>27</sup>Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si’*, para. 15, speaks out of the “*Contemplatio*” when he writes, “I will offer some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience.”

<sup>28</sup>His book appeared in French in 1966 and was translated by Fr. Charles J. McCarthy, S.J. In my limited experience, it was the standard for some decades, perhaps as the *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises* by Fr. Gilles Cusson, S.J., is a standard today.

<sup>29</sup>See Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., “The Fundamentum: Creation in the *Principle and Foundation*,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 21, no. 4 (September 1989).

The experience of Spiritual Exercises is entirely and thoroughly Christ-centered, from the very first colloquy under the Cross ([53]). They do not just present doctrine. They show how the human life goes on in Christ. This is easy enough to explain; but to grasp its full implications in giver and receiver, it might be more helpful to show how that happens. So here is the way I presented the “Principle and Foundation” to a group of fifty men gathered at Our Lady of the Oaks. Fr. Richard Buhler does it differently, as does Robert Fitzgerald, the layman who begged and managed to keep Ignatius House in Atlanta going and thriving into this millennium. Both of them *witness* to the way they understand the faith and how they are committed to believe in Christ and Church, and what they do to put these into action.

### *Witnessing to the “Principle and Foundation”*

The following quotations are from handouts of that retreat. If you wonder how this is “witnessing,” do what I do: read it out loud with feeling. You won’t need further explanation.

The *Spiritual Exercises* challenge us to ask: Who are we? What are we for? Most people who think about it answer with a “philosophy of life.” We answer both questions with the principle and the foundation of our life: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the foundation we are built up on: *For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ. On this foundation, different men may build in gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw but each one’s handiwork will be shown for what it is* (1 Cor. 3:11).

I might pause in the reading at this point, depending on the group and their responses. On this occasion I stopped to tell the men that we could consider how each one of us is “building.” Most of us are working somewhere between gold and straw—family life, business career, bank account, what success we hope for—and it’s good to think how long that which we build will last after our deaths. I personally think about that a lot (at age eighty-five, of course) but we need to know all along where our lives are going. I read again:

What about the “principle” that we live by? The Latin root meaning of “principle” is *boss, head, beginning*. God has revealed to us that the Son of God is the beginning: *All things came to be through him* (John 1:3). “Principle” also means the model or norm: Christ,

as St. Paul wrote, *is the image of the unseen God, the first born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth . . . and in him all things hold together* (Col. 1:15).

This is the core truth that Vatican II rediscovered among all our dogmas and practices. As Carlo Martini explained, the Council did a great deal of work on ecclesiology, Scripture, and Christian anthropology (the separation of church and state in 1539, for instance). But “always at the center was God’s plan in Christ Jesus.” So I go on:

Christ is the beginning of creation? So how does this square with the Big Bang, and what about evolution? The Book of Genesis described God’s creating this way: God created humankind *in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves* (Gen. 1:26). The authors of Genesis didn’t know about evolution, of course. That doesn’t eviscerate their belief, because they knew perfectly well that God our Creator and Lord is creating all things at every instant. If God chose to be creating things by evolving each of them, He is still at every instant their Creator. What agnostic scientists see as random selection—mere chance—we see as the plan God is enacting to bring the cosmos and every single flea into existence. This, by the way, is where *putting on the mind of Christ Jesus* begins.

At times—and this paragraph might seem like one of them—what I and other directors hand out seems pretty rarified and dense. This is not Catechism 101, and as far as I know, it took all of us a long while to be bold enough to talk like this to a roomful of ordinary Catholics (and other Christians—there are always some in our retreat houses).<sup>30</sup> We’re encouraged because the evaluations done at the end of these retreats are just about uniformly positive. One man felt after hearing and praying with all the material: “Talks were carefully planned and the retreatants were given meditations to contemplate without being overwhelmed.” Evaluations like these encourage us to keep making handouts (although a little fewer evaluations than one in ten come back blank).

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<sup>30</sup>Demontreville has such a regular flow of other Christians that the Website gives a welcome and some instruction about Communion. The rest of the houses just wing it. Ecumenism for us is not a movement or an idea; it’s just what we do.

### *Ongoing Creation in God's "Image and Likeness"*

The Principle and Foundation deals not only with what we are to do but with who we are. It prompts people to face the challenge of negative self-image, but from the perspective of the mind of Christ.

*Our Creator*—we are in His image. That *image* is absolute: between each of us and God, it will forever be something like a wrinkled, scratched mirror aimed at the sun. The mirror is full of light, its own light. Yet, the light is the sun's light. So the mirror's unique light—wrinkles and scratches and all—is its own, but the light is still the sun's light. That's how being with God is.

We are intelligent and that is a share in the divine intelligence. When a scientist sees the design of cell membrane transfer, he is seeing God's seeing. When we marvel at the exquisite curls of a camellia, we are marveling with God's marveling. Then, too, we are free to do as we choose and that is a share in the freedom of God. When I choose to love another person, I am doing what God is eternally doing, and the instinctual linking of the earthly animal is raised to the personal, into the divine activity of living in and with and for the other.

For as we are always relating to one another and seeking for love, we are sharing that with the divine Persons. They are eternally relating, Three and yet united in One Love. We are made for love—and we all know that, whether we get around to saying it or not. With that keen energy of love, we are creative and bring forth new things, most notably infants made in the image and likeness of ourselves—marvelous way of being like God, who creates others *in our image and our likeness*. We will never not be all of that—intelligent, free, relating, and creative. We also thoroughly expect to live on forever.

I might mention at this point how wise it is to consider the conditions of my living forever. People have trouble believing in hell. But Jesus believed in it. Rather than cite authorities and discuss doubts about the existence of hell, I generally say something to the effect that all I know for certain is that I do not want to go there, and I hope none of you will either. This is *witnessing*, not lecturing or disputing.

To go back to the likeness: How in the world can a creature be *like* God, who is infinite and invisible? We find our way in our Principle and Foundation: Jesus Christ. . . .



Jesus said: *Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will be like the teacher* (Luke 6:40). That's Jesus and us. The likeness goes deep, for Jesus of Nazareth was conceived by the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb and so were we. Our parents were involved, of course; but understand: God the Spirit of Life created my soul and the tiny beginnings of my flesh as much as God is creating all the universes and galaxies. The same Holy Spirit created Jesus of Nazareth, day by day, and on the pattern of human life that is the pattern the Spirit uses in creating us, day by day. This is why we say the prayer "Christ be near at either hand" and give thanks in the prayer of St. Richard of Chichester.

Most retreatants have heard about the Christ more than about the human Jesus of Nazareth. We forget that *person* is a mysterious thing, both His and ours. But we acknowledge that, though He is equal to the Father, Jesus has a human mind and a human heart. His hands were hard, a workman's hands. Everything He did was as human as everything we do. What He went through are the things that people go through, even His torture and death, which we find being duplicated today. Then I read again:

We can hope we are not going to die as He did—we won't be like Him in that. Still, each of us has to wonder: "I'm going to be like Jesus of Nazareth? I don't think so." That happened even when Jesus was alive, as Luke tells us. When Peter began to appreciate his new friend Jesus, he groveled in front of Him, saying, *Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!* (Luke 5:4). One of the truths that Peter had to learn—he did it the hard way, as most of us do, too—was that Peter was not going to make Peter a holy man. God does that for those whom He chooses. And God has done that for each of us, because Jesus asked: *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth* (John 17:17).

The Father has answered Jesus' prayer. We are trying to open our own hearts and others' hearts to accept this great gift: our human life goes on in union with Christ Jesus. We look like ordinary people. But look at what Jesus said about all of us: *I tell you, of all the children born to women, there is no one greater than John [the Baptist]; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he* (Luke 7:28).

This presents a really challenging Point for Consideration: What does it feel like to be considered by the Savior of the world a man greater than John the Baptist? And another one: How would you act, day in and day out, if you really believed that?

## VI. The Four Weeks Are Really about Jesus

The handout just read touches on some of the doctrines that come up in all four Weeks. This is what has made us stay in our retreat houses for as long as I've been there: "We give the Spiritual Exercises." This is a strongly held conviction: Preaching the weekend retreat, we give the Ignatian Exercises. Don Mayeau of Our Lady of the Oaks uses slides in each talk.<sup>31</sup> Jan Tate uses images and music. I have listened to both of them follow the Weeks meticulously. Jan began preaching at Our Lady of the Oaks in 1999, where she had been mentored by Duval Hilbert, S.J., director of the Oaks until his death. His instruction: "Never go to outside stuff. Keep the *Exercises*."<sup>32</sup>

Ask Fr. Rich Buhler what we offer on our retreats and he will say the same. He feels—and after travels and visits around the world, I thoroughly agree—that the Spiritual Exercises are the brand of our houses.

This is very much my opinion but I think a contributing reason for the closure of some retreat houses is that they moved away from having the Spiritual Exercises as the foundation of what they offered. My opinion is that it is the main reason. Some very good retreat houses offer other prayer experiences, but I do not know any of the successful Jesuit retreat houses in the USA that do not have the Exercises as their foundation. (Of the USA Jesuit houses, Morristown is the only one that I have never visited.) Some have evolved into Conference Centers, but again I think a main reason for that is their moving away from the Exercises as their key offering.

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<sup>31</sup>Don Mayeau is a successful lawyer in southern Louisiana, married with five children and some grandchildren. He is about to retire. He went through a training given by Kenneth Buddendorff, S.J., over some years in Grand Coteau and has given numerous retreats during about ten years.

<sup>32</sup>Jan Tate of New Orleans has done studies in Ignatian spirituality at the Loyola Institute of Ministry. She is very active in giving retreats and conducts a program in spiritual development at a high school in Arkansas.

As former director at Sacred Heart Retreat House in Sedalia, Colorado, and also at White House, Father Buhler was careful to listen to new directors. He wanted to see “how well they were bringing the Exercises into their preaching.” He noticed that some were explicit and others were not, though the latter gave “a solid Ignatian framework for prayer.”<sup>33</sup>

Keep in mind that the *Spiritual Exercises* is not the vehicle of some new doctrine, as Ignatius’s contemporaries on the Spanish Inquisitions feared. The *Exercises* present the doctrine of the faith through an experience that allows and invites mature Christians who already believe to commit themselves to do better than their unbelieving neighbors. They commit themselves to live out the faith in Christ. And the retreat experience helps them want to try to act as if they believe it.

This is why we still say that we preach Spiritual Exercises. We do it, however, in ways that will be “more helpful and profitable” to the real people in front of us. Iñigo’s retreatants had no Bibles; ours have three or four and often have heard the results of solid scholarship. These are mature disciples who feel called to a sort of new *devotio postmoderna*. But we still witness to what we have interiorized from our own prayer: Jesus Christ, from the “Principle and Foundation to the Resurrection.” While we march through the life of Jesus of Nazareth, we still proclaim and witness to the foundational graces of Christ’s revelation: mercy, the passionate love of God seeking our love through suffering and triumph, and the vibrant hope of living with the saints forever. We are witnessing to the core of the Christian revelation, inviting retreatants to accept and embrace and to change their lives with them.

Occasionally someone will claim that we at Our Lady of the Oaks follow “the dynamic of the Exercises,” which begins with a deep interior conversion and accepting Christ’s invitation to follow The Way more generously, and which then leads to the enactment of some service to God that is somehow *magis*. But the preached weekend retreat does not follow that dynamic, and it does not lead to the *magis*. We are wiser to claim that it leads to the *satis*, to contentment with the graces of middle-

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<sup>33</sup>These are paragraph that Father Buhler e-mailed to me. He would have been the one to write this issue of STUDIES except that he keeps giving retreats to clergy and laity and is currently rector of more Jesuits than some provincials have, at Jesuit Hall in St. Louis.

class holiness. For the dynamic we are following is that of Christian life in the Sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Communion, reconciliation, and matrimony. The mature disciple has grown in and through each to a personal relationship with God in Christ—no longer just a loyal member, but now a devoted follower and disciple. This dynamic leads from acceptance of God’s ongoing creative activity to a contentment with where God has led me at this juncture, which is humility. One retreatant in Georgia said it led her to “Deeper Interior Peace,” her capitals suggesting sound consolation.

It important to note that contentment differs from the restless joy of selflessly seeking the *magis*. Rather, it is the “peace of soul” of “Annotation 18.” We know that God loves us as we are, since He is making us as we are, but that God loves us too much to leave us as we are. So we sin, we admit it and repent, get up and go to the next good thing. We learn contentment that the grace I have is enough; the person I have become is enough; and when my life is enough, God will call. And all of this is gift.

### *Grasping the “New Evangelization”*

A look at each Week might illustrate what we are doing as we use the Weeks to give “some instruction and the attainment of a certain degree of peace of soul,” as “Annotation 18” says, along with a method of prayer appropriate for today’s mature disciple. I have already indicated one way this can be done for the Principle and Foundation, who is Christ: *All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being*, not even now (John 1:3).

*The First Week.* John Monroe, based at Ignatius House in Atlanta, says that “the conference is to help people know who God is to them—in their lives—and how they are responding to God’s love.<sup>34</sup> Like others, he uses the parable of the Prodigal Father in Luke 15. He sees adults change from the immature sense of sin as “breaking a law or a rule” to the mature grasp that “it’s the way I turn my back on God—I put me or some *thing* at the center.” For many, the understanding is new that the

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<sup>34</sup> John Monroe, who is married with three adult children and works for a start-up, made the “Annotation 19 Exercises: in 1997 and studied them in a program at Spring Hill College. A spiritual director at the Ignatius House in Atlanta, he gives conference retreats there and at Our Lady of the Oaks in Grand Coteau.

prodigal is not the scalawag son but the father. A Point for Consideration might be what person or thing now stands, or threatens to stand, in front of God for you.

*The Kingdom.* After the Second Vatican Council, we have realized more deeply that the Reign of Christ in the world today is *all of us*. So the Kingdom finds its true ground in Second Corinthians: *You are a letter from Christ—that everyone can read and understand . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on stone tablets but on the tablet of human hearts* (2 Cor. 3:2). This is simply the “new evangelization.” Again, Pope Francis insists that each of us does not *have* a mission, but each of us *is* a mission because of who and what we are in our world. The Points for Consideration will ask retreatants whether they can think of themselves this way, and what they could do to bring the Reign of Christ to their families or parishes or towns.

*The Incarnation.* One truly paradigmatic application of “The Incarnation” in the preached weekend retreat was conceived by Fr. Jim Goeke. Besides bringing the Incarnation into the present, he also links to it faith doing justice. Here’s the relevant part of his handout:

“The Incarnation—Part II. It is important to see the big picture, and also to recognize that the work of incarnation happens in the lives of individuals and communities of faith and trust: Joseph’s experience: (Matt. 1:18-24; then 2:13-15; then 2:19-23.

- “not what I bargained for when I became betrothed to Mary”
- called through a dream and his integrity to take Mary into his home
- a trying experience of assisting Mary in childbirth in an inhospitable setting (with the assistance of family members?)
- another dream—a sudden departure: “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt.” Now refugees in Egypt, how did Joseph support his family? Was he welcome there as a Jewish refugee?
- Further discernment after Herod died. Not safe to return to Judea, so he settled in Galilee in Nazareth (also a strange land?)
- Joseph—his life out of control: “not my plan”; but without Joseph, would the Incarnation have been possible?

What are the ways you help bring Christ to the world and further the Church's mission?"

*The Second Week.* The daily life of Jesus of Nazareth—*Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart*—opens the possibility of considering Jesus' human character (tender with children; kind to the woman at the well; compassionate at Nain; stern with the unbelieving). Jesus had

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*In the preached retreat, we can help retreatants get into a different lectio, which I call diaria. It is actually the way many mature people have described their prayer in spiritual direction.*

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a human spirituality, that of a first-century faithful Jew. But He prayed frequently—all night preparing to choose the Twelve, for instance—and His prayer shows certain characteristics. He trusted the Father; He asked for what He wanted (sometimes with a sigh); and He says many

times, "I thank you, Father." The Points for Consideration might include: What in your life right now makes you thankful to God the Father? Or another: Jesus was truly human; so what does that tell you about how you are like Him? Or another, Can you candidly name your virtues and ask how yours might be similar to those of Jesus?

*The Third Week.* In the preached weekend retreat, one of the strongest points is that Jesus was a human failure. Very few mature disciples have ever considered that Jesus knows failure. Yet, humanly, He was a failure. A look at the crucifix should stun us with that realization, even though we cover His shame as the Romans did not. He failed: He had not been able to persuade the leaders to accept the signs the Father gave Him. One of His men betrayed Him and the rest abandoned Him. He was repudiated by the authorities, cut off from the People, and brutally murdered. One Point for Consideration is often this: Recall a serious failure in your life, and consider that you know what Jesus felt and that He knows what you felt.

Holding grudges and not forgiving injuries come up very often in people's lives, though we all say, "Forgive our sins as we forgive." So Jesus forgiving His executioners is important. A consideration is that Jesus gave the Father a reason why the Father could forgive them: *Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing* (Mark 23:34).

More than one retreatant have said that they had forgiven the ones who harmed them, but they didn't feel that they had. Finding empathy and compassion for the one who hurt them eases that uncertainty.

*The Fourth Week.* Effective belief in the resurrection of the body presents a challenge even to mature disciples in our culture. Flannery O'Connor put her finger on the problem when she said that faith is what you know is true, whether you believe it or not. Believing in bodily resurrection transforms thoughts of suffering and death, but American Catholics are strained by a culture that does not want to think about death, let alone celebrate it. There is some change, but Americans are still afflicted with what Ernest Becker named in *The Denial of Death* more than forty years ago. With unsettling frequency, good Catholics confess belief in the resurrection of "a spiritual body."

I find it almost necessary to tell true stories of people already with God who came to people who were about to go to God. A number of entirely balanced people have recounted to me an experience like this. My own youngest brother saw my long-dead father several times in the months just before his early death. A first cousin, who died slowly but painlessly when we were twenty-five, told the nurse that his mother was coming for him the next day. She did. He who was too weak to raise his hand sat bolt upright in bed, then said "Mamma," and lay back and died.

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis pointed out that "Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past," a single event in human history. Its power continues permeating humankind and the earth, "for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history."<sup>35</sup> This is our faith, but our believing it needs to be strengthened.

*Conclusion.* In giving the preached weekend retreat, we use the structure of the Weeks given by Ignatius together with the Truths of Revelation, for the same reason he used them with the first companions: to help them in their faith and believing, and to guide them as they choose for themselves what God has been hoping in eternity that they will do. We use the structure differently, and our hopes are not as elevated as they might be in giving the thirty-day retreat. A case in point is that we cannot use meditations aimed at making a decision and

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<sup>35</sup>TJG, paras. 276, 278.

making it in generosity of spirit, such as the “Two Standards” and the “Three Times for Making a Decision.” Nor can we use all of the mysteries. But our conviction is that we are applying the *Spiritual Exercises* in one of the ways Master Ignatius intended . . . or anyhow, as closely as we know how.

## VII. Ordinary Prayer in the Ignatian Manner

What do retreatants do during the silent hours between the talks and pious practices? We say that they pray. And how do they pray? We say that we guide them into what Master Ignatius called *consideration*, which is explained below. Even when they use the *lectio divina* that many of them have learned, they are *considering*. This is how Pope Francis explained it in *The Joy of the Gospel*:

152. There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call *lectio divina*. It consists of reading God’s word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us . . .

153. In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: “Lord, what does this text say to me? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this?” Or perhaps: “What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?”<sup>36</sup>

This is different from the *lectio divina* of monastic life: *lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*. Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., describes the latter excellently: *Lectio divina* is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures” that helps identify a “spiritual rhythm” underlying our daily lives. How do we handle the concerns and distractions of everyday life that “naturally intertwine with our meditations”? We take them as “simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self.” He

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., paras 153, 154.



summarizes this way: “*Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.”<sup>37</sup>

We need to note this *lectio divina* because it is taught in publications like *The Word among Us* and *Give Us This Day*, and many people use it. I want to be careful here not to seem to dismiss or disdain a holy practice different from the Ignatian practice. But in all candor, I have known few people who could sustain *contemplatio* many days in a row. The editors seem to sense this, too. The final movement, *contemplatio*, is absent in several recent issues.<sup>38</sup>

In the preached retreat, we can help retreatants get into a different *lectio*, which I call *diaria*. It is actually the way many mature people have described their prayer in spiritual direction. It is my own ordinary prayer. And I would say it is the Pope’s also, to judge by his many homilies, *The Joy of the Gospel*, and *Laudato Si’*. This prayer has four moments, too: *lectio*, *consideratio*, *oratio*, *discretio*, the last of which we have to translate as *discernment*.

### *The Ignatian Prayer of Consideration*

The second moment is not *meditate* but *consider*. That’s the goal of what we are doing when we give Points for Consideration. The prayer of consideration is important in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as is clear in the second paragraph of the text. “Annotation 2” urges the one giving the Exercises to be brief. Then the one praying, “considering for himself, finds something which makes the events a little clearer, really brings them home to him—whether this comes through his own reasoning, or because his intellect is enlightened by the Divine power.”

Master Ignatius uses the word “consider” fifty-eight times and “contemplate” seventy-nine times. That’s a ratio of 3 to 4. This suggests that consideration figures large in the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In my experience of guiding long retreats, it is often the way a retreatant will pray most of the time. As the aforementioned passages

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<sup>37</sup>Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., “How to Practice Lectio Divina,” on <beliefnet.com >. It also can be found in print, as the next footnote points out.

<sup>38</sup>In *Give Us This Day*, every Morning Prayer and the Evening Prayer includes a Scripture text. After it comes the rubric “Read, Ponder, Pray,” and a reference to p. 345, the brief instruction by Father Dysinger, which also omits the “Contemplate.”

from *The Joy of the Gospel* show, consideration is the way that I “apply it to myself.”

The prayer of consideration weaves together Word and world. It connects God and world, grace and nature, prayer and life. In my experience this is the normal, regular, consistent consciousness of any of us who live active lives while seeking to find God in all things. Leave *contemplatio* to those who lead contemplative lives; we in the Jesuit tradition go to *discretio*, which we translate as “discernment.” Instead of entering into contemplation—although we suggest that some people be ready to do this if the Spirit so leads them—people who are praying at the start of a busy day need to discern what they ought or might do. I believe that this combination of *consideration* and *discernment* shapes the mental prayer of mature disciples today. If we are going to “find God in all things,” we are going to find an active, busy God, constantly creating and redeeming. We follow the Master who said, *I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise* (John 5:19). We all say what one retreatant wrote to me: “I always want to do God’s will.”

This makes it possible to follow Paul’s mandate to the Thessalonians: *Always be joyful. Pray constantly. And in all things, give thanks. This is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus* (1 Thess. 5:16). The “pray constantly” happens when the devout keep aware that God is acting always with us. If we are *praying constantly*, we will live aware that God is engaged in our acting, living, and in our being. My mother responded to the screech of tires (we used to play in the street) with, “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” That was not a curse; it was a prayer.

Here are some of the Points for Consideration that might help people: How do you pray in the morning? Sitting at your desk to work, how do you respond to God’s dwelling in your heart? Consider the main concerns and plans that are driving your days right now and ask God to bless them (then add a space to write 1 . . . , 2 . . . , 3 . . . ).

## VIII. Discernment: Graced Interplay of Head, Heart, and Hands

For most of the twentieth century, we thought of discernment in terms of the “discernment of spirits” such as we find in the “Rules of the *Spiritual Exercises*.” We had good instructors in Fr. Thomas Green, S.J., and others. But practicing discernment of spirits took a great deal

of concentration and prayer, and it seemed to most people to be something for experts.

Then the Second Vatican Council declared that “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>39</sup> The phrase “signs of the times” appears just this once in the council documents, but it was the catalyst that sprinkled discernment over all our daily activities. Every pope since John XXIII has insisted that God speaks to us in the events of our lives. A brother develops cancer, an adult child makes plans to marry, one feels disappointment with the new liturgy, the city wants to build a highway past one’s house. All these are events that retreatants have brought to us for counsel. One man wrote a vivid remark about the signs of his times: “I only wish that my business owner would have been here to hear the talks; life would have been much easier at work.”

We take these signs to our prayer. As Pope Francis said in his interview with Antonio Spodaro, “Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor.”<sup>40</sup> But what exactly this discernment in the Lord’s presence entails has seemed to grow and broaden in ways hard to synthesize. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, for instance, announced that we apply our consciences’ synderesis to concrete situations “by discernment.”<sup>41</sup> Until now, discernment had to do with choosing between two or more good options. Now, it’s part of our consciences.

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*The Vatican Council was explicit that the laity live “in intimate union with Christ” and bring Him into the world that they inhabit. This is unthinkable without prayer, and the Council called on the laity to pray beyond the liturgy.*

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<sup>39</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, para. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Antonio Spodaro, “A Big Heart Open to God, An Interview with Pope Francis,” *America* online, at words “things that happen.” The interview was printed, slightly abbreviated, in the September 30, 2013, issue of *America*. All references here are from on-line.

<sup>41</sup> In para. 1780.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl wrote that Catholics need ongoing conversion of heart, which “essentially involves discernment.”<sup>42</sup> Larry Gillick, S.J., told me while we were tertian directors that the mature disciple discerns as “a way of sensing what is going on all the time.”<sup>43</sup> Georgetown’s Dr. Edmund Pellegrino pushed it further: our Christian freedom means that we can discern not only what God wants us to do, but even what God wants us to be.<sup>44</sup>

This expansion of the meaning of discernment explains why, when I introduce discernment to retreatants, I have to say that we are still sifting out everything that it might mean. But when I quote Pope Francis’s appreciation of discernment, people feel that it is clear and practical. In his interview in *America*, the Pope used the term more than twenty times. But he had explained to journalists well before his election as pope that “a spiritual discernment” is one that “responds to a need that arises from looking at things, at people and from reading the signs of the times.” So it involves what we can see and know, what we feel, and a “reading” that pulls in our minds. They interrelate tightly: “It’s fundamental that one thinks what one feels and does; feels what one thinks and does; and does what one thinks and feels. You must use the language of the heard, the heart, and the hands.”<sup>45</sup>

Pope Francis connects discernment with *lectio divina diaria*. He ends the prayer of consideration with discernment and enactment. So when he looks at a passage in Scripture, as we already noted, he asks himself, “Lord, what does this text say to me?” This is the work of the head finding what is revealed to me and in me. And, “What is it about my life that you want to change by this text?” This reaches into what I am to do, the enactment of my faith and believing. And then: “What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this? Or per-

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<sup>42</sup> Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C., “Pass It On,” *America*, February 28, 2011, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence D. Gillick, S.J., cited in “Ignatian Spirituality Conference,” by Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., *National Jesuit News*, April/May 2005, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Dr. Edmund D. Pellegrino, “*Evangelium vitae*, Euthanasia, and Physician-Assisted Suicide,” in *Choosing Life: A Dialogue on “Evangelium Vitae,”* edited by Kevin Wm. Wildes, S.J., and Alan C. Mitchell (Georgetown University Press, 1997), 243.

<sup>45</sup> Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 2013), 57.

haps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?" Each of these asks about the affects and commitments of my heart, that is, about believing.<sup>46</sup>

Pope Francis is always exploring head, heart, and hands. He attends to the movement of spirits, but has moved to this broader way of understanding discernment. He also corrects the over-intellectualizing of the past century. Take for example the "*Reglas para en alguna manera sentir y cognoscer*" the movements of the spirits ([313ff]). The 1914 translation by Elder Mullan, S.J., available on the Internet, reads: "Rules for perceiving and knowing in some manner," which is pretty heady and prompted us to focus on the rules. And the 1951 translation by Louis Puhl, S.J., which became the standard for U.S. Jesuits, pushed it even further into the mind: "Rules for understanding to some extent." It was all too easy to weave rational structures that the spirits were supposed to live in. Francis has brought back the *sentir y cognoscer* in all their glorious complexity.

Mature disciples instantly grasp the reality of the interplay of mind and heart and hands. They see, when it is pointed out to them, the contradiction between claiming to embrace Jesus' Commandments and hating Muslims, Democrats, Republicans, or anyone else.

After these conferences, we read evaluations like this one: "Rest, prayer, review, discernment."

## IX. The Larger Context of Our Lives

The discernment our retreatants need has to include the social teaching of the Church. This is not an easy matter, but one of the strengths of the ministry of the preached weekend retreat is how clearly we are thinking with the Church in furthering its *aggiornamento*, which starts humbly with each person's individual conversion. The conversion also must be ongoing—that is the point of *annual* retreats—and leads to mature discipleship. For the Vatican Council was explicit that the laity live "in intimate union with Christ" and bring Him into the world that they inhabit. This is unthinkable without prayer, and the Council called on the laity to pray beyond the liturgy. "Only by the

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<sup>46</sup> These citations are from *TJG*, para. 153, given above.

light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments by discernment.”<sup>47</sup>

This puts a large burden on those who give the retreat conferences. We must make sure of our own ongoing social-political conversion. We all have our own social and political convictions, but we have to be detached from them if we are to witness to the mind of Christ. It requires reflection, prayer, and some serious study because, like everyone to whom we preach, we are people enjoying life in a free democratic nation. We are steeped in its pragmatism, consumerism, and exuberant can-do spirit . . . and we are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

It seems to me that we have to witness candidly to our unchristian prejudices and practices. Most retreats in our houses are full of white men and women, though we are happy when blacks and others appear, for instance, at Manresa in Convent or Our Lady of the Oaks. (I just celebrated Mass with a group of people of varying shades—this is the real South—including some black men.) But we all harbor strong feelings about whites and blacks and Hispanics. Many of us have to sort out what judgments we make about the poor and the homeless, about Communists and Muslims. And how many of us listen to hateful political talk without having any second thoughts? I sometimes give a conference on this. Here is part of one handout:

This is the culture we were born in and reared to. It is not ME—it’s US! In the larger picture, we are U.S. citizens. We are still an immigrant people. In 2015, seventy-eight million of us, counting all legal and illegal immigrants and their children, are immigrants. That’s one quarter of our total population. We are white, black, brown, tan, sallow—that’s ME, that’s US! We have lived through a world war, wars in Korea and Vietnam, and we live now a vicious war of terrorism.

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<sup>47</sup>Second Vatican Council, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” in *Apostolicam actuositatem*, para. 4.

Another paragraph notes that the Roman Catholic Church is the largest single contributor to the social safety net. Half of the approximately two hundred and fifty Catholic hospitals are in rural areas, and we are now educating two million children, not all of them Catholic. We have grounds to be grateful to God. This surprised one retreatant, a critic of our bishops, who admitted, "I never saw it that way." So in any talk about social teaching, I think I have to insist that this is "about *us*," including myself: all are in need of ongoing conversion that is not only religious but also intellectual, social, affective, and social-political. At the same time, we have to call people to gratitude for the enormous gifts that God has showered on the United States, because one of our common faults in this country is the conviction that we have done everything ourselves.

I think many ordinary Catholics find it hard to feel grateful for the gifts of our freedom and plenty, particularly those who regularly abide the talk shows on FOX or MSNBC. At the moment, extremism prevails. I had my own conversion to go through. Starting with the tragedies involved in the war in Vietnam, I felt rather critical (if not cynical) about our nation. I had to grow out of that, and a group of retreatants put the final touch on that transformation for me. I had finished giving the opening conference, and then went to the sacristy while the men were singing night prayer. Suddenly, I was surprised—and delighted—to hear them sing, "O Beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain." They were singing louder than they sang hymns at Mass. And so I confessed the sin of being ungrateful for who we are and what our nation has accomplished. Now I call each group of retreatants to be grateful for all that God gives us as a nation. That gratitude lays the only sound foundation for faith to do justice, which is no simple matter in this time and place.

That is where discernment enters. We read the signs of our own times, of our city and neighborhood and family. Our nation is strong. Our neighborhoods are sometimes hard to define, sometimes violent, and sometimes just gone. But they are much safer and healthier than neighborhoods in Beijing with its hideously polluted air or Homs, wrecked with Syria's catastrophic warfare.

How is the preached weekend retreat to give witness to the Church's social teaching? Little by little, and carefully avoiding merely political topics, such as talking about presidential candidates. Consid-

er the aforementioned handout, for example, where the social situation of immigrants is present. But the Point to Consider could have started with Jim Goeke's question about Joseph and Mary being accepted in Egypt. Or again, to ask retreatants to pray that God will change the hearts of jihadists also invites retreatants to a holier attitude toward these human beings. To remind retreatants that we respect laws and pay taxes means we are honoring the very first papal encyclical: *For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution*. This is the way the first pope said we can *live as free people*, not enslaved by any human artifice (1 Pet. 2:13).

Social-political conversion happens, but slowly, really slowly. It starts with the retreatants' own prayer. As the old proverb goes, "Hearing, I forget. Seeing, I remember. Doing, I understand."

## **X. Challenges Are Not Obstacles but Opportunities**

Pope Francis has remarked that challenges are not obstacles but opportunities. He meant opportunities to dialogue, because, in his mind, if we open ourselves to what the Spirit is doing in ourselves and in others, we will get closer to the truth.

Maria Cressler dialogued with some Jesuits who had emphatically rejected the preached weekend retreat as authentic Spiritual Exercises. The outcome of the dialogue? Maria now schedules and promotes the Exercises of "Annotations 19 and 20" at Ignatius House in Atlanta, and the Jesuits willingly contribute to the weekend retreats.

Can we hope that General Congregation 36 will address our work in the retreat houses and spirituality center? Perhaps it will surprise us the way General Congregation 34 surprised even ourselves when we added caring for parishes to our apostolic priorities.

Here are some of the knotty issues at stake:

1. We have seen the need to have lay directors leading our retreat houses (three in the UCS Province already, with another on the way). Our choices have not been perfect. I made a mistake at Montserrat less than fifteen years ago. But directors Tim Murphy of Manresa, Jimmy Dausat of Our Lady of the Oaks, and Maria Cressler of Atlanta,



have been successful for some years now. Who comes next? We need to identify them. Jesuits established some criteria for leadership in our high schools, so perhaps we can establish some formation for the Jesuits, men, and women who will direct our houses.

2. We need to prepare ourselves—Jesuits, that is—to give preached weekend retreats. This does not mean doing doctorates in Spain in Ignatian Spirituality, or not only that. Principally it means that we must train ourselves in a rhetorical manner of giving passionate witness and, what is more, to do that in half-hour presentations that persuade, draw, and teach people to pray.

3. Along with training Jesuits, we need to form lay presenters. Will it continue to be enough for the occasional Duval Hilbert, S.J., to instruct the occasional charismatic layperson? It would be better to have a clear approach to formation on which we can all agree.

4. Every one of the lay men and women I have worked with has felt the lack of normative guidelines for retreat talks. The JSEA hammered out such guidelines for the high schools and thus freed people for creativity without chaos. The retreat houses have so far been content to assert that “we follow the *Spiritual Exercises*.” That has proven inadequate in some sectors. We need a collaborative effort, directed by the provincial(s), to establish guidelines about what is talked about and the way it is talked about in Ignatian retreats.

5. As our retreat houses turn to lay men and women for leadership, we Jesuits will face a challenge regarding obedience. A lay man or woman makes the final decision on the inner workings of our religious and spiritual apostolates. We will find it difficult to adjust to being not only men for others, but men with others—particularly when that “other” is our boss.

6. And the lay men and women who accept being house director in what has been an entirely Jesuit ministry? Governing us will present the challenge of separating out—or interweaving?—*cura apostolica* from *cura personalis*. We need to listen to those who have already been working in our retreat houses, so that we can all feel our way to the *magis*.

These challenges are ongoing and offer a fine opportunity for us to harvest the creativity that Jesuits and lay colleagues have been showing ever since Favre and Laínez told people in Parma that they should go out and gather a group for themselves, and pass on to others what God in Christ had done in them. That's really all we have to do. So we keep our heads down, and praise Him from whom all blessings flow.

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