

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

- Topic: Moving Beyond Impasse: An Ignatian Approach
 Convener: Patricia A. Parachini, Washington Theological Union
 Moderator: Patricia A. Parachini, Washington Theological Union
 Presenters: Mary Garvin, Gonzaga University
 Edward McCormack, Washington Theological Union

In her introduction to this session, Patricia Parachini described a few of the more significant trends in contemporary spirituality, highlighting the contributions of Ronald Rolheiser and Sandra Schneiders who have written extensively about the effects of modernity and postmodernism on the contemporary spiritual context. Both of these authors have examined and addressed the divisions or impasses characteristic of spirituality today and the focus of concern in this workshop.

Using a creative dialogic approach in presenting the Ignatian contribution to moving beyond today's impasses, speakers Mary Garvin and Edward McCormack alternated in presenting their material. They examined two tensions that exist between theology and our contemporary understanding and practice of Christian spirituality. Mary Garvin addressed the tension or impasse that exists between personal faith and social justice using Ignatian spirituality as a case study. Edward McCormack explored the impasse that exists between a scientific approach to Scripture that objectifies and dissects the text and the Christian experience of Scripture as the voice of God speaking to us, using *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola as a test case.

In her presentation, Mary Garvin described the way in which *The Spiritual Exercises* can help to address the impasse between personal faith and social justice. Mary noted that the Exercises offer a way beyond impasse by fostering contemplation leading to the integration of spirituality and social justice in daily life, first, by naming the tension that exists between spirituality and religion and between spirituality and social justice; next, in setting a context for an Ignatian response by identifying the current practice of the Spiritual Exercises within the renewal of Vatican Council II; reclaiming the Spiritual Exercises both as a classic text of the tradition and as a dynamic personal experience for spiritual growth and social engagement. Such recognition then leads beyond impasse to the significance of the 19th Annotation Ignatian retreat interpreted in the light of *Gaudium et Spes*, the *Synod on Justice*, and Jesuit General Congregation Documents. What the retreat and the documents have in common is that for the contemporary Christian, union with God and engagement in the world are one and the same vocation and mission.

Edward McCormack addressed the impasse between two contrary approaches to the use of Scripture in contemporary spirituality, entitling his presentation, "Biblical Studies and Christian Practice: Reconciling an Estranged Couple."

Taking a view from history and citing several examples, Edward McCormack illustrated that participation in the Christian tradition involves engaging in a complex set of religious practices. These practices form the Christian community into

Christ-centered, kingdom-oriented people. Until modern times, there was a reciprocal relationship between the practice of Christian faith and the reading and study of Scripture. He noted that during the past two hundred years, however, the aims of biblical scholars have diverged from the aims of practicing Christians. As the church works to hand on the faith in this new century, she needs biblical scholarship and Christian practice to work together again. In his presentation, Edward McCormack called for a new working relationship between biblical scholarship and Christian practice by drawing on recent developments in biblical scholarship and insights from *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. He showed how a theological interpretation of the Bible and *The Spiritual Exercises* offer a way that Christian practice and biblical scholarship can move from estrangement to working together once again in service to the church.

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