

## FIRST THINGS

### Finding the Church

A Christian who fears “globalization” is missing something big. It’s not just the human history. For humankind has been hustling around the globe for millennia, pursuing trade and knowledge, territory and slaves. Some empires and some wars grandly viewed themselves as worldwide. They were no such thing. Until the current rush of globalization, and with one exception, it was all helter-skelter.

The exception began when Jesus of Nazareth showed humanity how to love not only family, city, and nation, but even enemies. The exception got institutionalized when the Risen One gave his mandate: “Go forth and teach all nations.” The upshot was the Church, “catholic and apostolic,” the first intentionally global institution.

Arguably, the Church was a global institution for almost two thousand years before the next entrant. Or entrants – they came in a crowd. Now that Teilhard de Chardin’s “noosphere” has arrived, it’s quite a contest. The Church is being hidden under, behind, and within other global institutions as wildly different as satellite TV, the web, and OPEC. Business is global and terrorism is global. The United Nations pushes global politics and AIDS pushes a global epidemic.

The Church now looks “global” the way everything else is global. Other religions, earlier on limited by national or ethnic boundaries, have opened up globally, too. There are mosques in Tokyo and zendos in Austria. The French government is puzzled by head scarves and the India has somehow grown Hindu. Vivid images of all this shoot around the earth in the media. And as a part of it, for a generation now, the world has been watching popes travel and collect massive crowds. Popes, among the best-known and most popular world figures, have been showing “the church.” (It is also getting some unwanted attention – abuses, conflicts, connivance in genocide.)

This is the Church everyone sees in the “global culture.” There is another, the one that has been globalizing across all the continents for

two millennia. It has to be sought out and looked for. Sociologists do not know how to measure it and politicians cannot manipulate it. It is mentioned in the media about as often as Bernoulli's principle. But whether anyone watches or not, this Church lives its daily life. Christians say the creed and worship Christ in the Eucharist. They baptize their infants with joy and bury their dead in hope.

This is the Church that Rome Consultation 2004 was looking for. Seventy directors – Jesuits, religious, and lay – of Jesuit-sponsored houses and spirituality centers came from all continents to ask what this global Church needs. They wanted to know what their 250 houses and centers were offering it and might offer it. Right at the beginning, they found out that their spiritual ministry has been heavily affected not only by this new globalization, but even more by the oldest of all. The Church that is the first globalized institution has been spreading like leaven. So the summary report of their consultation begins this way: "As a whole, the ministry of Exercises flourishes in many ways apart from retreat houses and spirituality centers."

Had they come to Rome to defend their institutions, this beginning would have been bad news. They had not, and it was not. Instead, they found it both good news and bad news, just what sensible people find in the present globalization as a whole. The good and bad are so mixed together that the old categories do not always help to tell which is which.

The bad news, on one view, starts with the thirty-day retreat: fewer people are making it. Even fewer of those who do are laity. Furthermore, in the area of one-to-one directed retreats, fewer people are making the eight-day retreat. Those who do rarely follow the Four Weeks; what's left of the four-century-old custom is just the eight days and the silence. The rest is improvised. Both of these diminutions might sensibly be considered negative, moderated by the fact that the priests and religious who used to make all those retreats are themselves fewer.

The good and the bad are also mixed in the exuberantly global growth of Exercises in Daily Life. To say that hundreds of people are currently giving Exercises in Daily Life is no exaggeration. Neither is saying that those who give them display more zeal than preparation. One result is that what they give as Annotation 19 Exercises are rarely that, since few who make them make an election or a serious decision. What they give are,

rather, the “ejercicios leves” of Annotation 18. Participants did not find this news altogether bad. They could not just skip over the fact that many give Exercises and many make them. So what if nothing happens but some good spiritual conversations and some good hours of prayer? Catholics are learning to talk about their ex-periences of God in Christ and Protestants are learning once again to pray with the Gospels.

The directors of the retreat houses and spirituality centers reported to one another that the globalized ministry of Exercises is now producing plenty of fruit, in four big baskets.

The first is a ripe new way of reading and studying the text of *Spiritual Exercises*. The “old” way would have to include, with careful respect, those commentaries written by Jesuits (only Jesuits) who had not given or made personally guided exercises, but only preached retreats. Aloysius Ambrozzi comes to mind. Many of these studies still prove valuable to those who give directed Exercises. The “new” way, clearly in evidence in the Rome Con-sultations, is to study the text out of, and remaining faithful to, personal experience of giving and making the Exercises. In this new way would have to be included the several full commentaries of recently past decades – Gilles Cusson’s comes immediately to mind – and the many serious articles in both international and local publications.

Here belongs the analysis of the rules “Sentire cum ecclesia” which Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach delivered to the Rome Consultation 2004. The analysis, studied by participants in late-afternoon seminars, is printed further along in this review. Crucially, this way of studying Exercises can hardly be done by Jesuits alone. Father Kolvenbach turned to “Sentire cum ecclesia” because participants, Jesuit and religious and lay, asked him to.

The second fruit produced by this spreading ministry is still ripening: the re-discovery of Annotation 18. Most consider this discussion oddly technical (*Manresa* recently dedicated an entire issue to it) and academic. They do not see how it applies to current experience. To begin with, guides give all four Weeks to everyone who makes Exercises in Daily Life, which makes the experience look at lot like Annotation 19. In fact, a very few of the exercitants need and enter into the full dynamic or pedagogy. Most do not intend to make any election or decision. Some begin with a serious intention, but then move to a simpler spiritual experience – this

is exactly the experience Master Ignatius wrote about in Annotation 18. The moving back and forth is what experienced directors like Bernard Owens mean when they say they are not sure they can “*fully* appreciate the efforts to distinguish between Annotation 18 and 19 retreats.” What people actually experience in Exercises is not likely to fit into neat categories. The two basic categories are, themselves, not so neatly distinguishable.

Rome Consultation 2004, nevertheless, drew a distinction, basic to ignatian authenticity, between *applying* Exercises and *adapting* Exercises. Master Ignatius uses the term *aplicar*, apply, only once in the text. He uses it precisely in Annotation 18, in order to point out that one cannot *apply* all of the Exercises for everyone. The earliest companions understood that they could apply *some parts* of the Exercises. This is what the annotation calls for and what those who give Exercises now are coming to see. They are calling on more of what Annotation 18 recommends, including the rules for discernment of the First Week and those for thinking with the Church, instead of drawing on spiritual resources drifting around the current globalization, such as zen meditation and the enneagram. They are slowly constructing an ignatian way to live in the ancient globalized Church.

Here is the third still-ripening fruit of the global ministry of Exercises. The ancient global Church offers “The Way” — quiet, not very visible, but definite. Ignatian guides quite slowly accept that ignatian spirituality, if only *one way*, is nonetheless *a way* to God. Hence, colleagues are looking to find a defined ignatian way of living Christian life. This is what moved the directors of houses and centers in Latin America to meet this year, for the first time, with lay colleagues. They wanted to discuss “ignatian spirituality in its lay mode.”

If one wants to understand an experience, one asks someone who has had it. The Rome Consultations illustrate vividly that the distinctions between clergy, religious, and laity are being blurred by the new globalization. In group discussions, participants are practically indistinguishable unless they choose to adduce a class-specific experiences. The ordinary experience of ordinary Catholic living really is like leaven, still spreading among us. As ignatian spirituality has spread globally, it has blurred or even obliterated the clerical category of evangelizers.

Here's the fourth basket of fruit of Exercises, already ripe: the laity are evangelizing. Almost everywhere, laity are choosing *Spiritual Exercises* as a means of the "new evangelization." Unlike the old evangelization, which was highly visible, this new evangelization evokes the ancient global Church. The term is recent, originated by Pope John Paul II. He thinks Christians need to call one another back to "the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ," in personal relationship. Doing this will demand a new way of proclaiming Good News, he believes. Ignatian spirituality, providentially, offers a way new to almost everyone: praying through the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the Four Weeks of the Exercises. The pope also contends that the new evangelization demands new language. How do the Exercises fit here? The text, after all, with its specifically Ignatian terms and images, is four and a half centuries old. What is new, however, is that these terms and images are coming from the mouths of adult Catholics. Mothers of families, retired laborers, lawyers, doctors confidently talk to others about discernment, examining consciousness, asking to know and love Jesus, the Kingdom, the preludes – this is new talk and in their mouths, a new language.

This is the Church being looked for: the ordinary Catholic living ordinary life and communicating it to the world around. Right here is the oldest institutionalized globalization. It will not be included in anyone's study of "globalization." Too bad; it's their loss.