

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

I. Presentation

When at the end of July 2004 I arrived at the Secretariat of the Ignatian Spirituality in the Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome to take over the direction of this office, most of the 107th issue of the CIS Review “Catholic Religious Practice and Ignatian Spirituality” that we are presenting here, already had been prepared for the most part by Joe Tetlow, S.J., my predecessor in the position of editor of this publication. The Review during the last eight years has witnessed a new turn in orientation and openness. Moreover this edition harvests in certain way a work accomplished during this last few years and in particular the fruit of the consultation of Rome 2004, studying the characteristics of the Ignatian centers of spirituality and the retreats houses and at the same time looking for a greater openness on the part of these places to the believer who seeks to grow and serve within a more traditional pattern of religious praxis.

Indeed throughout these published articles is found an apostolic and evangelizing restlessness that was present in these last years in the mind and additionally in the heart of the Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality: the suspicion that we, Jesuits, work often and well with the elites (this is, on the social level as well as on the level of spiritually formed people within the Church) and with the poor and the marginalized, but that we do little on a conscious level, planning and reflecting with the vast majorities of

believers, those many Catholics who frequent parishes and sanctuaries and identify themselves with the institutional Church by means of the sacraments and celebrations; Catholics who live their faith day by day helped by religious practices, prayers, and gestures of solidarity.

In this respect some questions emerge:

What are we doing to support, accompany, and increase the faith of those Catholics who are sustained by the sacraments, devotions, and traditional religious practices?

What happens to the 18th annotation of the Spiritual Exercises that either we ignore or even worse see it as an inferior reality as something additional and/or marginal to that which is really important in our ministries?

Why do we speak so much of the Spiritual Exercises but rather little of the dynamisms and orientations that these same exercises offer so profitable to most Christians in their daily life?

Why have we forgotten in large part the way of proceeding and the familiar relationship with which the First Fathers of the Society treated most believers?

What has happened? What is really happening to us?

It is important for us to continue deepening these problems in the coming years from different perspectives. It is a work that certainly requires a great deal of listening and in particular a great deal of sensibility to appreciate the lay Christian existence in the situations where they are inserted: family, work, social life, relaxation, Church, etc. This search becomes difficult if not impossible without team work — especially with the laity. It is the New Apostolic Subject to which we are called today to build and strengthen and for which we would like to form both the laity and Jesuits. (See C.G. 34 Doc.13 No: 8-9). For this goal we are publishing the recent conference given by Fr.General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ. at Creighton University, Omaha, USA and a letter “In service of the lay vocation,” written by Francisco Ivern, SJ., President of the CPAL, for Latin American jesuits.

The Service of the Word cuts across our very various ministries which are directed to very different groups of people. The written word, the spoken word, the conversational word, the word of radio and television, the word on the internet: it is the Ministry of the Word under a hundred different forms that has a greater outreach to those “millions of Christians.” “*Lex orandi, lex predicandi: Placed in Companionship with a Laboring Word*,” by Paul A. Jonowiak, s.j. illuminates and challenges us on both a profane and sacramental level that we tend to take it for granted without giving it the entire weight of grace that it entails.

The articles on *Spirituality and the daily life of the laity* (Javier Uriarte, sj) and *Spirituality and Religion: how the two meet in Parish Life*, (Thomas P. Sweetser, s.j.), bring us closer to the Christian life of a large number of people and encourage us to foment and accompany the People of God from the tradition and the contributions of the Ignatian spirituality.

“*Sin and the First Week in our current faith*,” (Hans van Leeuwen, s.j.), outlines in a contemporary language and sensibility the inherent problems in the first week of the Exercises: forgiveness and mercy, love and fidelity, lack of a sense of sin, grace-freedom, sin and culpability, personal and collective sin, conversion. To give “abbreviated” exercises to those who “cannot well bear” (Sp Ex: anot. 18) is not an excuse for not deepening and inviting these people to mature in their faith. Many of the author's intuitions are already in a person's religious existence but are not verbally expressed. One needs, indeed, a patient and not superficial approach to this phenomenon in order to discover it.

Sharing experiences of education, meetings, concrete actions and orientations in the tradition of Ignatian spirituality stimulates and inspires our creativity and ministries. Often it confirms and encourages us in what we are already working on. Interior strength also is given to us by feeling part of this Ignatian Apostolic Network that wants to serve the Church for the evangelization of today's world. Hopefully the Ignatian experiences that close this edition of the review will help in this feeling of inclusion.