

NOTES FOR THE ONE GIVING EXERCISES

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The case in brief: A committee of CIS, expert in Spiritual Exercises, came from around the world to Rome during February. They brought their experience to focus on four questions: Whom are we inviting to make Exercises? What are we offering them? What do we expect to happen? What actually happens? They identified some common facts about the director and some widely held truths about the dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises and the Cross. Their findings are outlined here in six sections: one on the director, one on each of the four questions, and one on the core of Exercises. Among the more startling findings: that the one who directs has not always remained at a balance; that Annotation 18 describes authentic Ignatian exercises; and that the Exercises lead to the embrace of the cross. The committee members and their backgrounds are noted at the end.

Introductory notes about the one directing Exercises

◆ **Concerning expectations.** What the director expects and hopes for seriously affects exercitants' experience, as the elections of each of the First Companions to go to Jerusalem reflected the hopes of Master Ignatius; Annotation 15 states two expectations: being at a balance during Exercises and being zealous to encourage the greater good outside them. ◆ **Concerning the interior life of the director.** The director of full Exercises has personally mastered the dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises; lives aware of being a sinner called by Christ who knows failure; feels zeal to spread the fire of Christ's love yet remains free to defend others' convictions [22] and to listen at a balance; really believes in grace, that God wants much more in us than we want; lives aware of movements of consolation and desolation and keeps discerning their sources; has the self-knowledge and indifference required to listen and respond out of one's own experience. ◆ **Concerning the process of directing.** The more serious the Exercises, the better the director needs to know the exercitant; the director, not a mirror or a sponge, guides the exercitant reflectively; the first discernment during the interchange of direction concerns the movements in the director's interior and the second concerns the movements in the exercitant's interior; the director listens actively--giving feedback, reflecting back what is said, summarizing, asking, and even confronting; the director does not judge the person but helps him or her judge the experience; remaining at a balance, the director may ask whether the exercitant has considered some greater good; both director and exercitant trust that the Spirit acts during the interchange of direction.

◆ **Concerning the director's preparation.** Directors prepare by experiencing Exercises; directors of

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Annotations 19 and 20 Exercises need a lot of personal experience of *Exercises*; experience alone does not suffice but study--not only of *Exercises* but of insights from psychology and social analysis--must be part of preparation; they who do not pray habitually do not do well to try to direct others' prayer; besides being a charism, listening is a skill demanding learning and practice; some training in psychology is useful, e.g., to recognize transference or denial; directors are helped by having their own spiritual directors and peers to consult with. ♦ **Concerning programs to train directors.** The Company of Jesus has swiftly expanded training programs; the programs succeed that are creatively adapted to lay life; the last stage of training, mentoring--individual guidance of new directors--is imperative; simpler training is given to the spiritual witnesses who accompany Annotation 18 Exercises, more drawn out training to directors of full Exercises; Jesuits are systematically training younger Jesuits, particularly at the ignatian centers; the "curriculum" for training programs is partly quite obvious and partly dependant on local needs and cultures; all programs combine theory and praxis; intensive residential training programs last four to ten months; programs in everyday life generally last three years. ♦ **Concerning the contexts of directing.** Teams of colleagues help professional growth; teams give support through sharing experience, studying cases, noting new materials, and offering peer support and counsel; teams are functioning well when they include religious and lay colleagues, men and women; Exercises respond to larger social movements such as ecology, feminism, and conservatism.

Question I: Whom are we inviting to make Exercises?

♦ **Concerning social cohorts.** We are inviting the poor, the marginated, and laborers; lay adults both younger and more elderly; people at retirement age choosing a new lifestyle; groups identified by their profession; religious and diocesan clergy; seminarians preparing for ordination; Christian Life Communities; parish and diocesan leaders and pastoral workers; colleagues of Jesuits and of ignatian institutions like schools.

♦ **Concerning ecclesiastical condition.** We guide the *doctrinalized and sacramental-ized* who have never been evangelized and need their hearts moved; some religiously *illiterate*, having only a child's understanding of sin and life in Christ; many in non-sacramental marriages; the separated or divorced; the unchurched and disbelieving baptized; the alienated from the Church such as feminists and the very liberal or very conservative; seminarians. ♦ **Concerning religious condition.** We find many *seekers*; some desire simply to live a more interior life; many are looking for

something more--to find God better or more securely, to give greater service, or to reach deeper union with Christ; some have an interior desire, spontaneous or reflected on, to experience Exercises; some are grappling with sinful structures and some are suffering from or in them; Christians not in union with Rome; members of the

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other great religions such as Jews and Hindus; people in recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs. ♦ **Concerning some qualities of those who make Exercises.**

We are helping people who trust that their relationship with God in prayer is pertinent to their human relationships; they are rooted in the real world and aware of it; they have or develop the ability to reflect on personal and interior experience; they can communicate interior experience to a director; they are willing to learn and open to guidance--*teachable* or *docile*; they have the ability to discipline self and put order in daily life; we often face the multiplier, who will pass along what God creates in him or her.

♦ **Concerning personal spiritual dispositions.** We take through Exercises persons who are willing to go through Exercises; those who already know how to pray and many who do not; those willing to learn how to pray in the ignatian manner; those who feel called by God and are willing to follow the Holy Spirit; some who are (and some who can be) deeply committed to the faith that does justice; some on the occasion of electing a way of life or making some serious decision; some who have gone through psychotherapy and even some who continue in it; abused people who are deeply wounded. ♦ **Concerning how we contact exercitants.** We direct many in groups that have been gathered by ignatian centers or in several other ways; some exercitants simply come to directors, houses, or centers to ask to experience Exercises; some move into Exercises during spiritual direction or through the Sacrament of Reconciliation; directors personally invite likely persons; some are urged by those who have made Exercises; some are sent by superiors.

♦ **Concerning exercitants in certain groups.** We work with groups who are making a serious decision as a group--school administrators, apostolic teams, parish staffs; groups whose members share a common interest or profession--spiritual directors of seminaries, religious superiors, psychologists, lawyers; members of the "Anonymous" groups, whom we guide with caution; groups of multipliers in basic ecclesial communities; Christian Life Communities; youth in university, college, and secondary schools. ♦ **Concerning some who need help before doing Exercises.** Those not ready to pray; those who insist on praying their own way; some burdened with psychological problems which hinder prayer and discernment; men and women in consecrated life who are mandated by their superiors to make Exercises as a solution to some problem, or to make an election whether to remain in vocation; seminarians mandated to make the long retreat before ordination; people living an exclusive vertical relationship with God and cut off from others; members of a cult.

Question 2: What are we giving as Exercises?

♦ **Concerning the matter of *Spiritual Exercises*.** Fundamentally, we offer the full and complete materials of the book following the dynamic and pedagogy detailed there.

♦ **Concerning the dynamic or the pedagogy of *Exercises*.** The "dynamic" of the Exercises refers to the characteristic movements in an exercitant whose experience in

Christ unfolds according to the Exercises, while the "pedagogy" of the Exercises refers to Holy Spirit's powerful leading of the exercitant through Exercises into spiritual freedom; the core experience of Exercises is following and even imitating Jesus Christ; the dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises lead to embracing the cross (as explained below); the description of Exercises in the first Annotation is poorly understood except within the Mystical Body and as centered on Christ; the generosity named in Annotation 5 commonly characterizes exercitants in all formats. ♦ **Concerning adaptations of Exercises.** The text of *Exercises*, open through constant experience since St Ignatius's time, guides all adaptations of *Exercises*; major adaptations are indicated in Annotations 18, 19, and 20; using Annotation 18, we give *some Exercises*, using Annotations 19 and 20, we give *the Exercises*; besides adaptations, directors make applications of *Exercises*, using the materials for various purposes; adult catechesis, retreats for the young and for specific groups are instances; these do not follow the dynamic or pedagogy; commonly, they prepare people to make Exercises.

♦ **Concerning Annotation 18.** All authentic adaptations of the *Exercises* according to Annotation 18 have these distinctive characteristics: silence or solitude, personal prayer, brief points for guidance, spiritual direction which incorporates discernment of spirits, and some Christ-centered materials from *Spiritual Exercises*; these Exercises are given in daily life over some months and in ignatian retreats of three or more full days; they help groups as well as individuals; they were intended

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for and currently help large numbers of people; they offer a distinct spiritual experience for those seeking meaning in life, some peace of heart, or a way to keep growing in Christ; not a nondescript retreat, they

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offer specific materials from the *Exercises*; directors today use all four Weeks but do not try to elicit the proper dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises; directors at times adapt even the Kingdom, the Two Standards and the norms on thinking within the Church for adult catechesis; exercitants not uncommonly make decisions about lifestyle or faithlife; they commonly want to make further Exercises; after experiencing these simple Exercises, many people want to and can, without any great training, pass them on to others. ♦ **Concerning**

Annotation 19. The Exercises in Daily Life elicit the dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises for spiritual freedom in elections or decisions; exercitants are drawn to the experiences named in [135] and [189]; this form has proven well adapted to life today; prayer and life experiences remain closely intertwined; the Exercises occasion prolonged regular spiritual direction; silence, solitude, and recollection need to be carefully attuned to daily life; a few experimenting directors guide groups as groups to make an election or decision in this format. ♦ **Concerning Annotation 20.** The *Official Directory of*

1599 remains very pertinent; the long retreat follows the dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises; today exercitants profit from careful preparation (dealt with below); Exercises given to novices today are understood to be for election; the Exercises made by unprepared seminarians and others are accommodated, even Annotation 18, Exercises; many centers include time at the end of the month to review the experience.

◆ **Concerning Exercises by *etapes* or *stages*.** In this experimental adaptation, the exercitants do the full Exercises, not straight through, but one Week at a time with breaks between; they do these stages during one or more calendar years; they and the director discern whether to move beyond the First Week. ◆ **Concerning the eight-day retreat.** These Exercises serve several purposes, e.g., the annual retreat and as preparation for a long retreat; materials are freely adapted; spiritual direction follows the retreat's purpose; the more experienced may go through all four Weeks, pray in one Week, or use other materials entirely; the less experienced do well to use all four Weeks; retreat houses offer exercises other than Ignatian. ◆ **Concerning the Additions [73f].** The Additions, adapted according to the text itself, firmly express Ignatian method; they need special adapting for Annotation 18 and 19 Exercises; today activities not envisioned by St Ignatius help exercitants find what they want--daily Mass, writing and centering during prayer, movement and dance, media; additional "handouts" are appropriate as are instructional talks. ◆ **Concerning prayer.** Directors are emphasizing these particulars: the Ignatian modes of contemplation; repetition, the review of prayer, and, particularly in more serious Exercises, the application of the senses; examen as review of the day's prayer; "what I want" and the grace sought; the norms for discernment; at times, directors of more experienced exercitants make place for other methods of prayer and carefully accommodate exercitants' religious cultures. ◆ **Concerning preparation for Exercises.** Today exercitants need *disposition* or *preparation* days before Exercises; a variety of programs are helpful: guided prayer during some days or weeks, a series of weekends or workshops, an eight-day retreat, or a combination of all of these; some use the *Autobiography*; this is adult catechesis in the Principle and Foundation. ◆ **Concerning the use of Scripture.** The Exercises differ from *lectio divina* because they require spiritual direction and have a specific dynamic and pedagogy; Scripture is much used in the eight-day Exercises and in disposition days; using Scripture is thinking within the Church; the points indicated by the book of *Exercises* [261-312] direct prayer; preparing for prayer, exercitants use scripture and the text of contemplations of *Exercises* in various combinations.

Question 3: What do we expect to happen during Exercises?

◆ **Concerning process.** Directors expect that exercitants will talk frankly about their experiences; that they experience movements of spirits; that they pray in the ignatian manners; that they bring their real past and present life to Exercises; that the exercitant find the fruit of each Week; that they review their life as graced history and feel the communal graced history of family, lifeworld, and humankind as a whole; that, where

it is appropriate, the exercitant be willing to share spiritual experiences with the group.

◆ **Concerning the person.** We expect to guide persons who show character and creative energy; eager to fulfill the conditions or *contract* stated by each director or center; who have what St Ignatius called *subiecto* and today we call a sense of self, of identity, or purposeful living; persons of magnanimity; we expect to keep finding multipliers; we hope that the Annotation 19 and 20 exercitant have had actual experiences of sinful structures, e.g., innercity poverty, or AIDS victims. ◆

Concerning the exercitant's experience. We have learned to expect: A true conversion of heart of some depth; a move from head to heart, from rational religion or extrinsic observance to spiritual experience; a re-appreciation of life as gift; a clearer and firmer sense of personal call; deeper union with God; a greater personal love of Jesus; a sense of living as a messenger of Good News; that their interior experience of God in Christ will flow to the exterior in action; some greater awareness of sinful social structures; some serious decisions about lifestyle; decisions of various kinds, sometimes barely discernible to the exercitant or the director and often worked out later in everyday life.

◆ **Concerning Annotations 19 and 20 Exercises.** We expect exercitants to live the dynamic and pedagogy of the full authentic Exercises; that they grow aware of the continual creative activity of the Jesus Christ our Creator; that they prove able to sustain this intimately personal union with the Creator; that they accept as given to them personally the love that led to the cross; that they personally love Jesus Christ; that they find the cross; that they come to serious election or decision, even electing a way of life.

◆ **Concerning Annotation 18 Exercises.** We expect the exercitants to follow the program; to grow in the interior life and to begin developing a spirituality; to come to a personal and even intimate relationship with God; to come to a heightened social awareness of God's absence and presence in social structures; to make prayer a way of life; to grow in acceptance of God's call in family, in the ministry of presence in their lifeworld; to move toward evangelization and social transformation; to keep making progress in Christ.

Question 4: What actually happens?

◆ **Concerning the experience taken as a whole.** What happens depends on the starting-point; the preparation days ordinarily make people want to go on to the whole experience; the Exercises always bring a *new* experience in some surprising way; a great deal of healing of life's hurts; greater peace of mind, deeper hope, greater optimism; they bring some genuine conversion of heart, at some level and in varying intensity; after

serious Exercises, few simply return to their former way of life; very commonly, the Exercises prove a paradigmatic experience to which people can refer and return. ◆

Concerning self-appreciation. Exercitants commonly come to a simple self-acceptance; a deepening of self-appreciation; more appropriate and less inappropriate self-

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love; acceptance of life history as graced; commonly a deepening of trust in God and a giving up of control over one's own life, or the beginnings of these; among the more graced, the appreciation of how one is trapped in and by sin; comfort in the thought that God is going to call; forgiving those who have hurt them. ♦ **Concerning common experiences.** In all forms of Exercises, people experience that God comes first; in all, a new awareness of God, of self, and of life; ordinarily, coming to know and love Jesus in some measure; the desire to have a spiritual director, or a confessor; a growth toward discerning; greater interior and spiritual freedom; among the married, a felt sense of the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony; the desire to share with others who have had the experience and to be with like-minded people; a desire to live actively in a community; some come to the desire to belong to Christian Life Community; some desire to be closer to the Company and its missions. ♦ **Concerning prayer.** It regularly happens that people learn how to pray; prayer commonly changes from a formality to a personal dialog with God; each Week brings its own graces; a strong sense of the Creator working in the creature; commonly, a return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and a deeper appreciation of the Eucharist; learning how to ask for what one needs to ask for; Scripture comes alive.

♦ **Concerning evangelical or apostolic awareness.** Commonly, exercitants feel a desire--sometimes vague, sometimes sharply focused--to communicate the Good News to others; a sense that the experience of Exercises is not for themselves alone but for others; some sense of being apostolic or evangelical; many come to a desire to serve; some come to a desire to be closer to the poor and marginated; an awareness of the relevance of their faith to sinful structures; a sense of being part of the sinful Church and a love for it. ♦ **Concerning some deeper spiritual experiences.** False gods get identified and repudiated, as do self-made crosses; some come to know Jesus Christ who loved them and died for them, and come to love Him so as to die for Him; a few come to wish to share Christ's pouring-out of Self and his life of self-sacrificing service; confirmation in vocation in life; a greater awareness of lifestyle and a relativising of cultural values; a heightened consciousness of deception and deceptive practices; in the interior life, a deeper sense of being beloved sinners who further sinful structures and are called for the sake of the world; optimism; conversion of heart in the sense of taking responsibility for self in concrete *subjecta materia*. ♦ **Concerning some few.** The Ignatian Exercises do not discernibly help some exercitants, who may get more out of other things.

Introduction to what we actually mean by *embracing the Cross*.

♦ **Concerning the cross in the Exercises.** Embracing the cross shapes the fundamental dynamic and pedagogy of Exercises, from the first colloquy to the Contemplation; the theme emerges in different ways at all stages of the

... and his life of self-sacrificing service

Exercises; throughout, the movement is from accepting the love of Jesus who loved to suffering and death to loving Jesus and joining him in human suffering and death; the basic decision to continue making progress as in [189] means dying to self and embracing the cross. ♦ **Concerning the meaning of the cross.** The profound mystery is that Jesus our Creator and Lord has come to the cross because of love for us; Jesus' suffering reveals simultaneously his total embrace of sinful human nature and his total surrender to God; to *embrace the cross* is to choose, not simply to interpret; most radically, accepting the cross means choosing to accept the gift of life in one's own *subjecta materia*, one's concrete gift in a disordered world; the cross comes with every humble obedience to Christ our Creator and Lord, whether demanded by personal need or church or lifeworld; the cross does not mean crucifixion, for every decision to follow Jesus Christ instead of world, sarx, or darkness is a decision to embrace the cross. ♦ **Concerning the social meaning of the cross.** The experience of Exercises leads to a recognition that social disorder must be accepted as a personal responsibility; the Exercises confront the fear that suffering is an impersonal force with the hope that human suffering can be interpersonal, as was Jesus'; the fundamental sense of the cross is linked to mission in the world; in the Church, the disciples live both the suffering and the glory of Christ the Redeemer. ♦ **Concerning the Weeks.** The First Week deepens the human experience of being with the pain of love in a sinfilled world; each one can accept through grace that Jesus suffered for him or her, and this is indispensable in the full Exercises; throughout the Weeks, one accepts the truth that, though he is One of the Trinity, Jesus goes to the cross because he loves; the central experience includes that one has done this to Jesus; the prayer of the other Weeks puts the exercitant into harmony with Jesus pouring himself out; *taking up the cross* means the radical decision to walk as Jesus walked with the Father; an instance of finding the cross important in today's world is Jesus' desert temptation to go the shorter way of power and control instead of the longer way of the cross. ♦ **Concerning some errors.** Several diverse errors plague disciples today: False mysticism that suffering is good; refusing to be in touch with the real wounds everyone suffers from sin-in-world and personal sin; self-pity instead of union with Christ; crying over one's own sins and sufferings as an escape into self-absorption; taking up the cross, not with Jesus, but in order to prove that Jesus ought to love one; Christian fatalism, the conviction that suffering is inescapable and one must join oneself to Jesus as a kind of escape from reality; the mistaken notion that *suffering* and *the cross* refer only to crises and not to every time one places trust in God.

*Committee on Directing Exercises
of the Council on Ignatian Spirituality*

Members of the CIS committee on Directing Exercises.

Members. ♦ **Dr Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer** of Rio de Janeiro's Ignatian Network (C.L.C.) has directed people of every kind through closed retreats and through Exercises in Daily Life and guides a long training program from an Ignatian Center for Culture and Spirituality. ♦ **Mrs Roswitha Cooper**, Executive Secretary of the World Council of C.L.C., came to Rome after training in and practice of Exercises in Munich and has guided the development of an ignatian formation program for worldwide C.L.C. ♦ **Fr John English, S.J.**, among the earliest in directing Exercises one-on-one and author of some of the most influential books on *Exercises*, developed a complete set of programs for making and guiding Exercises in all of their formats as director of the Spirituality Center in Guelph, Canada. ♦ **Mr James and Mrs Joan Felling** were for a decade diocesan spiritual directors in Victoria, B.C., Canada, and for the immediate past decade shaped in St. Louis MO, U.S.A., a complete program that includes parish prayer experiences, year-long Annotation 18 and 19 Exercises, and training and mentoring directors. ♦ **Fr Witold Kròlikoski, S.J.**, as director of the Ignatian Center for Spiritual Formation based in the retreat house in Gdynia, Poland, is responsible for the formation and training of Jesuits and colleagues as directors of Exercises. ♦ **Mr Dindo Paradela** co-authored a book for offering Exercises to the simplest laboring people and besides directing Exercises as a staff member of the Jesuit Retreat House of Cebù, Philippines, has begun a training program for spiritual guides of Basic Ecclesial Communities.

Consultors. ♦ **Sr Barbara Ehrler, r.c.**, has been superior general of the Religious of the Cenacle during the past twelve years, as the congregation adapted *Exercises* powerfully. ♦ **Fr Herbert Alphonso, S.J.**, of the Bombay Province, guided the work of the Center of Ignatian Spirituality for many years and is widely known as an ignatian author. ♦ **Fr Marcel Otene Matungulu, S.J.**, General Assistant for Africa, has published studies on ignatian spirituality and African cultures.