

AT THE FRONTIERS

Précis: Frontiers, by definition, open new spaces. Then the new spaces get settled, but only after some settling down. Recorded here is a settling down in the recovery of the practice of Spiritual Exercises. Also recorded is a settling down to spirituality as the frontier between religions. Otherwise, some new spaces are noted: between science and spirituality, between proclaiming the Good News and churchly life, and the odd space between authentic Exercises and what real people need .

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DIRECTORIES, HANDBOOKS, AND GUIDES to giving and making *Spiritual Exercises* are not exactly a dime a dozen but they multiply everywhere. Not long ago, before television and the atom bomb, such a book was a rarity and opened new frontiers in giving retreats. It spread a set of spiritual beliefs, created widely imitated models, and was translated and printed over and over again. Fr Aloysius Ambrozzi's *A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises*, for instance, was printed three times during the decade after he published it in Bangalore in 1928. His strongly activist spirituality marked many retreats to religious. His schemes for retreats of eight, five, and three days seemed like a norm. His recommendation of Fr Grou, Abbot Marmion, and Fr Faber helped make these writers' spiritual doctrine standard among religious.

Both the number and the content of these directories, handbooks, and guides have changed. They are still numerous, but they are not all by one author and they are rarely re-printed. In place of magisterial doctrine and paradigms, they report many peoples' current experience of *Exercises* and reflect on it. Examples could be multiplied. In Mumbai, for instance, Lydia de Souza pulled together her experiences into *Spiritual Exercises for Today* (1996). In Brazil, the editors of *Revista de Espiritualidade Inaciana* (from Itaici in Sao Paolo) have been making a fresh Brazilian translation of each section of *Spiritual Exercises*, footnoted by theologian Cláudio Werner Pires. They print brief notes and articles on the experience that each text elicits. German-speaking Jesuits have recently published number 72 of *Korrespondenz sur Spiritualität der Exerzitien*, matching tradition and experience. The Italian Jesuits began years ago with *Gli Esercizi Spirituali I*, which explicitly explored the Italian experience of Exercises, and having marched through the Weeks, have now published *XVIII*.

The great periodicals have changed to experience, too. *Manresa*, for instance, once made research and scholarship on the text and history of *Exercises* available to those who were adapting them. A recent issue printed, instead, six detailed stories about giving "light exercises." An article by its editor, Fr Ignacio Iglesias (scholar, practitioner, member of the Council on Ignatian Spirituality) reflects about whether our experience brings us back to Annotation 18.

Hence, the project being recorded in "Notes for the One Giving Exercises" may look like a frontier effort, but is actually in the middle of what's going on. The frontiers are in downtown Taipei, rural Togo, and hundreds of ignatian retreat houses and centers from St Beuno's to Mwangaza. The "Notes" project, therefore, is hardly a solitary labor like writing poetry or a small-team effort like computer programming. It already involves many people, like the genome project or the exploration of space. For quite literally hundreds of people have absorbed the conclusions reached by the great scholars early in this century (directly or at one or more removes) and are applying *Exercises* everywhere and in every way. Their directories, handbooks, and prayer guides both report their experiences and call for reflection on them. The project of finding and publishing what is common in our experiences and our writings--this is the hope--will eventually help those who give Exercises remain doubly faithful: to the great tradition of *Spiritual Exercises*, and to the actual inculturated experience of the person making them today.

*actually in the middle of
what's going on*

ABOUT CHRIST AND CULTURE, THE BISHOPS OF ASIA were clear when they met in their Synod in Rome. About Christ, they hold on to what has been handed down: Christ, the one Redeemer of all humankind. About culture, they wish to hold on to what has been handed down: *cultures*, a marvelous range of cultures. The bishops came to Rome already clear that their task is to bring Christ to culture. They left every bit as clear about this, but also a bit clearer about the task of bringing Christ and cultures into harmony, which is a slightly different matter.

Even before the Bishops' Synod, the provincials of the Jesuit Conference of Southeast Asia had moved onto the frontier between Christ and culture. For three days during February, they discussed *The Challenges of Culture* (St. Paul's, 1996) by Archbishop Thomas Menampambil, SDB, of Guwahati. The archbishop met with them and presented further "tentative and explorative" thoughts. The provincials wrestled with the notion that people's religious formation (in catechism, seminary, and novitiate) tends to shape Catholics in the likeness of a dominant group which may be in or beyond the people's cultures. In India, they probed the possibility that a "brahminical indianization" tended to make Jesuits and perhaps other religious oblivious of everyday cultural actualities. In their prayer and reflections, the provincials identified some shortcomings among Jesuits, for whom they could speak, which sounded a good deal like the ones listed in Decree 4 of GC34, "Our Mission and Culture": We tend to overlook some core values of our cultures, such as its religious character. Few of us have enough learning to distinguish culture's core values from its more showy manifestations. We rarely challenge our own cultures.

*the frontier between
Christ and culture*

The provincials found a name for the challenge we face--Asian bishops, Indian Jesuits, and all the rest of us--*transcultural personality*. Since they conclude that each of us has to "die" to our own culture and be "reborn" in another (or in changing our own), the challenge sounds a lot like embracing the cross. Contact: Fr Lisbert D'Souza, S.J., Provincial for India / Jesuit Conference of South Asia / 225 Jor Bagh / New Delhi-110 003 India. From abroad, FAX: +91-11 463 3277. email: jcsai@de12.vsnl.net.in

PERHAPS TRANSCULTURAL PERSONALITY APPLIES to Christians who work in the scientific culture. At any rate, at the Manresa Center near Budapest, forty theologically literate Jesuit scientists from eleven European countries discussed creation, cosmology, and evolution. At this, their fifth gathering, they spent one long afternoon considering scientists in the Company. Among their conclusions: Their identity both as Jesuits and as scientists is rooted in the ignatian tradition and in *Spiritual Exercises*. It is difficult to keep rooted in both scientific and spiritual realms, because scientific culture (particularly in the West) has perfected a division between the two. But--to use that suggestive phrase--the "transcultural personality" is possible. For all scientists, religious or agnostic, have come to acknowledge that scientific research is not simply a way of discovering absolute ahistorical truth; rather, scientific research is integrated into the historical process of producing culture. Hence, scientists in the ignatian tradition can, as one participant expressed it, "see science and technology as an historical feature in which the Kingdom and its justice are at stake." No research for its own sake; rather, research drawn from and feeding into social, political, and economic actualities. This really is a frontier, where most of us would still to find expect an unmoving settlement. Contact: Fr Chris Moss, S.J. Group Convenor / Heythrop College / University of London / Kensington Square / London W8 5HQ England. From abroad, FAX: +44-171 795 4200. email: c.moss@heythrop.ac.uk

SINCE MANRESA AT CONVENT is one of the most successful retreat houses in its category, the results of a recently survey might prove instructive. Manresa takes more than a hundred men through a three-day silent retreat every weekend of the year (right: more than five thousand retreatants a year). The house's questionnaire was developed by a professional and its forty-two questions were answered by half of the two thousand retreatants randomly selected, a good response giving valid conclusions. Who are these men? What do they want? What do they find?

Fr Anthony Ostini summarized briefly what the men value: First, the silence. And then the quality of the retreat program, four brief talks a day, devotions, a lot of quiet

time. They also appreciate, according to the random valuing of the questionnaire, the beauty of the place, the Jesuits, and the food. Ninety-five percent of them place very high value on the silence, and insist on it. They say that ongoing conversion is what these retreats are about. The men are grateful for the opportunity for spiritual direction. They expect some moral instruction. Virtually all of them answered that the retreat has an impact on their family life. They prioritized what they look for in the retreat director: someone who will help them in their prayer life; someone who will help them appreciate the Scriptures; and finally--these men all have television--an excellent speaker. Ninety-six percent agreed with this statement: "The *Spiritual Exercises* advance my theological understanding while teaching me to pray." The men are confirming their strong approval by supporting the construction of a new building. Contact: Fr Anthony Ostini, S.J. / Manresa House of Retreats / P.O. Box 89, 5858 Hwy. 44 / Convent, LA 70723-0089 / U.S.A. From abroad, FAX: +1-504 462 3147.

WHEN THE GRUPPE FÜR IGNATIANISCHE SPIRITUALITÄT gathered in Frankfurt in April to discuss the "Notes for the One Giving Exercises," its three members brought to bear a total of a century of experience. Called together more than ten years ago to serve German-speaking countries, the members had already witnessed several shifts in the practice of *Spiritual Exercises*. They were there when we rediscovered individual directing, one-on-one. They have seen and promoted the development of Exercises in Daily Life. They began training spiritual directors and directors of Exercises in the early 1970s, and have conducted many two-year programs. Now they are watching the Exercises spread out into parish life, as dioceses inaugurate programs that are facilitated by the graduates of their training programs. During the last few years, they have been discovering that the thirty-day Exercises done in seclusion do not serve well many of the people they contact. All three have moved more and more to using the Exercises in Daily Life, having separated off the "light exercises" and those according to Annotation 18. Some few of their thoughts appear in the "Responses" in this issue. It may occur to other language groups in other regions of the Ignatian world that such a team offers a superb paradigm. Contact: Fr Alex Lefrank, S.J. / Elsheimerstrasse 9 / D-60322 Frankfurt / Germany. From abroad, FAX: +49-69 7191 1420.

MEXICO, THE CITY AND THE UNIVERSIDAD IBEROAMERICANA may be what some are looking for. Led by Dr Ernesto Meneses Morales, the university has launched a six-month program called "Diplomado sobre la Compañía de Jesús." The program, open to all qualified people, runs from August through January, in fairly intense two-week segments. The opening fortnight this August will be filled by Prof.

José Ignacio Tellechea, author of the much acclaimed (and much read) biography of St Ignatius, "Alone and on Foot." Fr Tellechea will begin by detailing Iñigo's world and tell his life story. Jesuit Fr Francisco de Borja Medina will march through the Company's history, general by general, until the suppression. And so on with established authorities through ten modules: history, education, pastoral labors, spirituality, and politics, with long side-trips into Jesuit humanism, science, and the arts. For the diploma, all of the usual academic requirements obtain, including a thesis. Excellent preparation not only for many lay and Jesuit scholars, but also for novice and tertian directors in the ignatian congregations. And not a bad sabbatical, either, if one adds prayer. Those who wish to work in English could try Heythrop College of the University of London or Boston College. Contact: Dr Ernesto Meneses Morales / Universidad Iberoamericana / Santa Fe Ciudad de México / México. From abroad, Tel: +52-5 267 4000. email: ernesto.meneses@uia.mx Contact: Fr Howard Gray, S.J. / Center for Ignatian Spirituality / Boston College / Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-3802. From abroad, FAX: +1-617 552 0085. email: grayhow@bc.edu

QUITE A FEW NEW THINGS turn out to be old things. This is surely the case with the purpose of the "Groupe Ignatien Européen de réflexion et d'initiatives pour l'annonce directe de l'Evangile." The group of Jesuits and lay men and women is not yet very numerous but has already reached from France into Belgium, Spain, Poland, and Slovenia. This is a small beginning with a large, clear purpose: direct evangelization. The word as the ignatian group uses it means announcing Christ's revelation directly, person to person. How is this purpose to be realized? The group promotes "schools of evangelization." Members of Protestant churches know instantly what these are, because most of the denominations train their young (and expect the elders) to witness to the Word, to enter into Christian fellowship, to bring new members to church. As Fr Édouard Gueydan remarked at the opening of the Ignatian Group's third annual meeting, "The time has perhaps arrived for widening our horizons and for working in partnership with others." The denominations long ago settled into lay ministry. But when, anywhere on the earth, adult Catholic approaches another adult Catholic to talk about God, the two stand on a frontier. It needs to be settled. Contact: Fr Édouard Gueydan, S.J. or Fr Daniel Dideberg, S.J. / Annoncer l'Evangile / 6, rue Fauchille / B-1150 Bruxelles Belgium.

HERE IS AN IDEA FROM LEBANON for Cenacles, ignatian centers, and retreat houses that serve religious ministers. These generally make week-long Exercises annually, and commonly need to know more about *Exercises*. But few religious and even

fewer lay ministers can find the time and funds to spend forty days or, for heaven's sake, four months in these efforts.

The Maison de Retraites Notre-Dame at Tanail in Lebanon offers this alternative. Eight days on "The Dynamic of *Exercises*" with Jesuit Fr Adrien Demoustier, well established authority from Paris, followed by eight days of *Exercises* guided by the same authority. Contact: some ignatian authority within reach.

GROWING NEED FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS after the retreat--says an item in a list that continues: All five locations want the retreat again next year. The retreats were over-booked. Virtually every parish in the deanery was represented.

These items are taken from the evaluations by teams of directors who had just finished running three-week Exercises in Daily Life. They ran the retreats in some of southern Australia's rural areas, where spiritual resources are as scarce as eight-day retreats in China. They collaborated with the chancery office and with priests and leaders in the parishes. The teams included, variously, C.L.C. members, diocesan priests, religious, laity, and Jesuit tertians. They offer what anyone would recognize as "light exercises," aimed at giving laity the experience of praying with scripture, connecting real prayer with the real world, and deepening their interior life with the help of a spiritual director. For three weeks, retreatants prayed about a half-hour daily, using Scripture in ways explained and shown to them. They met with their directors twice a week, just six times. The team handed out the usual handouts and gave the usual explanations and exhortations; and they talked and prayed together.

Such a simple matter. Yet the remarks of retreatants have the ring of authentic thanks said by someone just off the scorched outback who has been given a long drink of sweet water. Ground-breaking experience. Real encounters with the living Lord. Healing of relationship with the Church. Dramatic growth in the awareness of the Holy Spirit in ordinary life. Discovery of real connections between real life and prayer. Discovered Jesus as real. Contact: Fr Gerald Coleman, S.J. / P.O.Box 136, Pymble / NSW, Australia 2073 / From abroad, FAX: +61-2 9983 9760.

WATCH THE STAMP on your next letter from India. It may portray Fr Jerome D'Souza, S.J., to commemorate the centenary of his birth in 1897. It commemorates a good deal else, emphasizing the broad and deep faith of a man of extraordinary intelligence and judgment. Fr D'Souza not only lived through India's epochal growth into the world's largest democracy--he helped bring it about. He is one of the founding fathers of India's Constitutions. He was among India's first delegation to the UN General Assembly. Is this faith doing justice, or what? Contact: someone in India.