

## THE EIGHTEENTH ANNOTATION

*Précis: The final three Annotations indicate who make Exercises. The Eighteenth indicates persons with certain capacities and certain dispositions. The director must discern these and not be too eager to give the whole Exercises. The author finds that the Annotations distinguish among the Exercises, some Exercises, and light exercises. The Annotation sketches two examples of some Exercises, both an experience of the First Week. These and the light exercises today require catechesis and an introduction to praying with Scripture. Both can lead to holiness. Those who give Exercises need to keep the three in mind creatively.*

**A**nnotations collect some directives necessary both to the one who gives the Exercises and to the one who receives them. In all their complexity, they have this single purpose: "that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul" [15].

But to whom are we to give the Exercises? The final three Annotations describe several kinds of exercitants. Annotation 20 and Annotation 19 present those who are able to receive the integral Exercises, whether they leave their ordinary surroundings completely, or remain in them taking care of business that cannot be put off. Turning to Annotation 18: this presents other kinds of exercitants who, depending on their capacities and their dispositions, will not receive *the Exercises*, but rather *some Exercises*. We note in passing that this Annotation will perhaps encourage us to shorten the list of those whom we have all too readily categorized in Annotation 19 and even in Annotation 20. We should study Annotation 18 more closely to see what it invites us to know about the exercitant, and what it recommends about adapting Exercises.

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### Knowing the exercitants

The issue here is discerning their capacities and dispositions.

*Their capacities.* In Annotation 18, Ignatius calls attention to "age, education, and ability," and becomes more explicit in mentioning "someone who is uneducated or has a weak constitution," or "those who have little natural capacity or are illiterate," or again, one who "has little aptitude or little physical strength." The Latin word *rudes*, translated here as *illiterate*, designated in Ignatius's day someone who could not read or write. That person lived, consequently, in an oral culture, which was still very widespread.

The list of elements singled out by Ignatius takes into account the bodily dimension of the exercitant and the intellectual as well as, framing them in his or her life story (younger or older, cultivated or not). His concern is about not wearing exercitants out and not giving them things that are simply useless, from which they get no benefit. Today, it is true, there are not many *rudes* left, and at any rate they do not come asking

for accompaniment. Whatever be that case, it remains imperative to take account of the real capacities of the exercitant: Is he or she in good health, or not? And what about emotional balance? How intellectually and psychologically flexible can he or she be, to accept being touched and changed profoundly and efficaciously by the Word of God?

It is advisable, clearly, to have a good look at the capacities of a prospective exercitant. But there is more to do.

*Their dispositions.* It is also advisable to discern their dispositions: "according to his willingness to dispose himself for them," Ignatius wrote. He is referring to the actual

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desiring of the exercitant. There is no question at this point of the dispositions of Annotation 5, of "magnanimity and generosity toward his Creator and Lord," ready to offer everything "that His Divine Majesty may dispose of him... according to His most holy will." Rather, this exercitant is presented as one "who wishes no further help than some instruction and the attainment of a certain degree of peace of

soul." This exercitant simultaneously searches and demands; he or she is playing in two keys at the same time--intellectual and affective. A adequate performance in instruction will slake their soul's thirst and bring them contentment.

This attitude of theirs, even articulated in little natural measures, can bring an opening to God which is relished and bears fruit, if the Exercises they receive are well adapted.

Annotation 18, actually, collects the first requirements laid on the one who gives Exercises: ♦ To discern the capacities and dispositions of the exercitant, and his or her desires as well. Do the capacities match the desires? Is the exercitant likely to do what he or she desires? ♦ To reap from this discernment an unexpected benefit for the one who gives the Exercises: getting a certain distance from a subjective desire to give *the Exercises!* This entails a consistent interior liberty to keep finding *some Exercises* adapted to the exercitant, and to work creatively to find them. ♦ To seek solely to help the exercitant, so that he or she will find what is "more helpful and profitable," what will promote "some instruction and the attainment of a certain degree of peace of soul," and what will help "retain what he or she gained."

Thus, by starting from where the exercitant is, the one who gives Exercises adapts them and gives some light exercises.

### Giving adapted Exercises

Ignatius goes on to develop some examples of *light exercises* to respond to those who present themselves.

*First situation.* The prospective exercitant feels a double need: intellectual (to be instructed), and affective (to find contentment of soul).

Ignatius suggests offering a series of exercises which comprise: the particular examen, then the general examen along with the way of praying for half-hour on the Commandments, the capital sins, and so on. Also, the weekly confession of sins and the reception of the Eucharist every two weeks or, if it would help progress, every week. He puts channel markers for the exercitant along times and tides: a daily order with prayer in the morning and the examen, and the weekly flow through frequent reception of sacraments.

What is more, Ignatius calls on him or her to construe each of the Commandments, the capital sins, the precepts of the Church, the five senses and the works of mercy. This is an intellectual process which we would classify as *catechetical* today. Here again, a kind of journey is proposed. It begins in the exercitant's elementary Christian memory. He or she has indeed got the Commandments by heart; but one can open the Bible to discover there the living word through which God wishes to covenant with each person. It establishes the mediation of the Church (the precepts), that of the body (the "five senses") and then that of the connection with the world (the works of mercy). For in the end, the explain the works of mercy is to give the exercitant a full grasp of the Christian mystery: "Faith is like this: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead" (Jas.2:17). The love of God and the love of neighbor are one love.

Catechesis goes along with prayer--the point has to be emphasized. In coming to grasp the foundations of the Christian mystery and the way the Church enacts them, the exercitant--by way of the examen, prayer, and the sacraments--interiorises them, comes to a firmer Christian awareness, to some knowledge of himself or herself before God, and to some knowledge of God. The benefit that the exercitant can gain here will be a feeling of personal wholeness in faith. This process can open a genuine way to holiness to someone who is not engaged in making an election.

*Second situation.* Here, "the exercitant has little aptitude or little physical strength...[and is] one from whom little fruit is to be expected." The discernment brings to light a new criterion for the guide [*accompagnateur*]: he or she does not anticipate much fruit, compared with other situations, "when much better results could be obtained with other persons, and when there is not sufficient time to take everything."

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This is a criterion to apply with sensitivity, that is to say, keeping mindful of what has been established earlier on, not to give exercises "that he could not easily bear, or from which he would derive no profit." This text seems to suggest that there should be benefits for both persons, and that the benefits of the one who gives Exercises are always connected to those of the exercitant.

These exercises are called "light" and they were developed for the first situation. Nevertheless, "to confess more frequently than was his custom before" is meant as a way "to retain what he has gained"; there has been, then, some benefit from these exercises, which it is important not to lose.

This actually envisages a situation with an exercitant in which those who give *the Exercises* not infrequently find themselves. They come to see the exercitant realistically during the First Week, and conclude that the exercitant will get more out of *light exercises* than out of *some Exercises*.

All of these exercises have a single purpose, to take the exercitant by various ways through the journey of the First Week, foundational experience of Christian faith. But one does not adopt the perspectives called for by the election during the Second Week.

*... to someone who is not engaged in making an election*

### Summary

*The Exercises* in the full rigor of the Four Weeks assemble some extraordinary means which one ought not engage in--even if one has a strong constitution, is young, and endowed with plenty of natural ability--until one has worked through all the ordinary means. These are the means described by Ignatius: examen, prayer, sacramental life, all informed by an understanding of the faith.

The spiritual guidance which precedes *the Exercises* are part of what the Exercises offer. Depending on the situation, that guidance will include foundational catechesis (often indispensable in our day), but will also lead the way into prayer with Scripture or with daily life [*avec la vie quotidienne*].

Annotation 18 reminds us of all of this. It can keep us from hurrying people into *the Exercises*. And it opens a broad field for creativity in the actual conditions of a search for God.

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