

## NOTES TWO FOR THE ONE GIVING EXERCISES

*The case in brief It grows—the project to collect experiences of giving and making Exercises. The first 'Notes for the One Giving Exercises,' collected in 1998, were widely distributed and printed in the Review, #87. Many responded to them—see the facing page-sharpening a number of issues. Those first Notes and the responses to them gave the renewed Committee on Giving Exercises (14-20 February 1999) its starting points. The members were guided by the responses in expanding on the first Notes. They could not address every issue sharpened by the responses, and they mention in the text some bigger omissions. This exercise of gathering current experiences will be repeated and broadened, particularly adding events in Latin America, India, and Africa. And everywhere—the committee experience suggests—those who give the Exercises need to be mindful of what Annotation 22 says about ordinary Christians.*

### **Introduction**

These Notes collect the experiences of those for whom *Spiritual Exercises* are a wonder—a strongly pertinent grace around the globe. The committee members who read others' responses and reported their own experiences marveled at how the Holy Spirit is bringing this grace to the Church.

The Notes are filling a niche between extensive commentaries on *Spiritual exercises* and practical handbooks for directing them. They cannot be understood apart from the commentaries which everyone has learned from; they ask, how does the wisdom of those commentaries get into the experience of the Exercises? And these Notes must not be understood as a substitute for the handbooks which are helping to enculturate *Spiritual Exercises* everywhere; they report what happens when those handbooks are applied.

The Notes necessarily take account of diverse cultures and theologies. They will have to deal with adapted practices like that of Eastern forms of meditation and that of client-centered forms of spiritual counsel. They rise

out of current challenges, urgent opportunities, and difficulties in giving and making the Exercises.

### Expectations and effectiveness

There is today, for instance, some sober questioning about the effectiveness of *Spiritual Exercises*. Are they truly effective? Do they produce what we hope for? Under these questions lies a presupposition: We have some definite expectations about the effects of making the Exercises.<sup>1</sup> We need to inquire into these expectations, and these Notes have begun that. One expectation thrives everywhere: When we give *Spiritual Exercises-not* just some Exercises-we faithfully follow the book. For *Spiritual Exercises* are currently being thought of as a process going on while a person responds to his or her own needs. Hence, the Exercises proceed at two levels. So we have to be clear that we expect an identifiable *process* in every experience of the Exercises, and that we expect an entirely individual experience as an exercitant meets his or her own needs and makes his or her personal choices. Some who give the Exercises have an "ideal" experience in mind, which they hold in tension with the "real" experience of the exercitant before them. An ideal is best formed by solid commentaries. But the ideal and the real will always remain in tension. This issue is dealt with in the sections further on concerning Annotations 19 and 20 of *Spiritual Exercises*. There is also an expectation today, perhaps not often clearly formulated, that the exercitant will practice an ignatian spirituality after making the Exercises. This expectation was probed in some responses to the earlier Notes. We need to make a careful distinction between the experience of the Exercises and a way of living after them. For we give the Exercises to Carthusians, Franciscans ('a fine Franciscan experience,' one said after the Exercises), and to many who live another traditional spirituality. We would expect that their experience of the Exercises would help them to live their own tradition more deeply thereafter. Ignatian spirituality is not normative for those going through the Exercises.

However, *Spiritual Exercises* can indeed promote a distinctive spirituality. Experience indicates that they do, in fact. It is well known and is summarized in various ways, with elements like these: *Spiritual Exercises* are for those seeking to find the will of God and they bring a heightened awareness of God acting intimately in the world. They establish a realistic personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They present various ways of praying, all of them combined with choosing. For ignatian spirituality consolidates prayer and decision-making. It focuses on desire and promotes mature discernment. Helping a person be more reflective about life, it prevents unconscious or unreflected decisions. And ignatian spirituality raises the effective desire "to help souls," to be in mission with Jesus Christ.

All of these expectations rise in the many cultures where the Exercises are being practiced today. The problem of *culture* remains, and also of language (what does *dynamic* mean in various cultures? or its alternative, *pedagogy*?).

Perhaps the way the document on the place of women in Church and world was readily accepted into the different cultures illustrates that communication across cultures does happen. The great point here is that people in all cultures are accepting the Exercises into their own cultures. These Notes are meant to track and facilitate *that process*, which is what the Notes report.

### **The One Giving the Exercises**

About the one who gives the Exercises, the tradition emphasizes this first of all: God our Creator and Lord deals directly with each and every person. The giver respects this relationship when giving the Exercises in any of their forms. Some like to say bluntly that the Holy Spirit is the real director of the Exercises.

The one who gives the Exercises interacts with the one making them in more than one way. The terms currently used for these ways of interacting differ from place to place: director, guide, companion, presenter, facilitator, (even representative or witness). These terms have various meanings even in one language as it is used in various places around the globe. Across the languages, their equivalents vary greatly in meaning.

The terms, in reality, are not important. Rather, what is important is to recognize that a continuum exists in the interactions between the one who gives the Exercises and the one who makes them, depending on how much of the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* the giver brings to bear on the prayer of the one (or the ones) making them. At one end, in very simple introductory exercises, the giver can and should actively intervene in the experience of the one making the Exercises: explaining, instructing, encouraging, showing how to pray. These simple exercises may be a school of prayer or an introduction to the interior life. On the other end, the Exercises help make a life-long election. In this case, the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* is brought to bear on such a decision or election, and the one giving the Exercises might not intervene at all beyond giving some points or reflections.

It is important to have some clear ideas about these ways of interaction and the terms used for them. More has to be said of them in the sections on Annotations 18, 19, and 20.

### **General remarks on the relationship**

The one giving the Exercises will come to know the one making them as well as is possible in a given situation. The more far-reaching the need of the one making them, and the more fully the form of *Spiritual Exercises* is called on, the more the giver would want to know the one making them. One point is particularly important today. We have come to recognize how a person's life history continues shaping the person and affecting that person's freedom. Consequently, the giver will want to know as thoroughly as possible the person's history in prayer and the interior life.

In whatever kind of *Spiritual Exercises*, mutual trust between the giver and the one making them is a basic element. The one who gives the Exercises must responsibly establish that trust.

The notion that "giving the Exercises" can mean beginning one evening with disposition days and then ending with the *Contemplatio* needs revision. The responsibilities entailed are discussed in later sections.

What has become clear is that the one who gives the Exercises in any one of their various modalities needs to be attentive to the dispositions of

the one who wants to make them. It seems that in many cases, the giver must begin by helping persons get in touch with their own interior life or come to some quite basic spiritual freedom.

### **The authority of the giver**

The giver of *Spiritual Exercises* always stands in a position of some authority towards the one who makes them. In the first instance, the authority derives from the simple fact that a person approached the one who gives the Exercises asking for help and guidance. But the authority also derives from another fact: The giver of the Exercises stands in the tradition and somehow makes it present (represents it).

The giver might exercise authority in various ways and intensities. At all times, however, the authority functions within the faith and hope in Jesus Christ that all share.

The authority of any giver of the Exercises might derive from a *charism* given by the Holy Spirit. Some who give the Exercises are famously gifted. In some cultures today, though, charism must be held in tension with professionalism, that is, the current demand for skills and training in any interpersonal relationship. Almost everywhere, people are giving the Exercises in the ignatian tradition who cannot sensibly be called professional; but almost everywhere there is a desire and eagerness for further training and instruction in giving the Exercises. This tension between charism and professionalism is proving rather a creative energy than a burden.

The authority of the giver can also derive from an *official position* that he or she holds, such as instructor of novices or director of a retreat program, whether lay or cleric. With respect to positions, we need to recognize that today the authority of the laity and that of the clergy may be seen as different. It is important, however, that each one who gives the Exercises recognize the kind and intensity of authority that he or she actually enjoys or is perceived to have.

### **Some responsibilities of the giver**

Concomitant with this authority and its variations, the one who gives the Exercises has several responsibilities. He or she has to know the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* in its processes and structures—for instance, the graces of each Week. With this knowledge, the giver will be responsible for moving those making the Exercises along through the Weeks, or of delaying them or giving repetitions. For instance, an exercitant praying late in the Second Week may continue burdened with a false image of God; the giver will need to know how to handle that according to the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*.

The giver is also responsible to know his or her own interior life and condition, including social and political convictions, so as to be able to appreciate with detachment the movements in the spirit of the one making the Exercises. This means standing aside as the Holy Spirit works directly with the one making the Exercises. This detachment of the giver is signally important when the one who makes the Exercises hopes to come to decision or election.

Several situations in the development of Church practice and teaching bring particular tensions into giving and making the Exercises. More important among them would be annulments of marriages, dispensations from celibacy and from the vows of religion, issues concerning sexual orientation, and the position of women in the Church and society.

On moral issues, the one giving the Exercises cannot simply allow anything. In some cases, when an exercitant presents a moral judgment or a moral action, the giver has the responsibility of taking a moral stance. He or she would not *correct the* exercitant. Rather, the first responsibility is to give the wrong judgment or action its proper name, thinking within the Church. The giver may have to confront the exercitant, gently and not as a judge. If the wrong action continues, the one who gives the Exercises has to decide whether continuing is collusion in doing wrong and may have to carefully end the Exercises. In all of these cases, the one giving the Exercises has the responsibilities of knowing what his or her authority is and how he or she is perceived by the one making the Exercises, and of owning the adequacy of his or her own preparation to handle the moral issues.

In some particular cases where a person wishes to discern whether a permanent decision made earlier in life needs to be changed, the one who gives the Exercises must responsibly ask two questions. The first is whether the person is truly seeking what God wants and might therefore be helped by *Spiritual Exercises*. And the other is whether the person is at this point even free enough to seek what God wants.

### **The Simple Exercises of Annotation 18**

The simple exercises, which St Ignatius mentions in Annotation 18 as "ejercicios leves," form part of the ordinary ministry of the Church. They unite people to Jesus Christ and help them live aware of the Holy Spirit shaping their own lives, the Church, and the world. The simple exercises plainly have a validity of their own, giving many precisely the spiritual help that they need. Hence, these exercises are more than merely preparation for a further experience of ignatian exercises.

Perhaps the simplest exercises are experienced as a school of prayer; yet even they move the exercitant toward choosing to live better and love God more. The ignatian way of helping is characterized by the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*, which is marked by the prayer *for what I want*. Ignatian spirituality expects that authentic desiring will go beyond the personal to reach the Church and the world.

The purposes of these simple exercises are achieved everywhere in the world by activities familiar everywhere: days of prayer, workshops on spiritual topics, prayerful studies of Scripture, courses on spirituality, and retreats of various kinds and lengths.

How can exercises that the whole Church uses be ignatian? To begin with, the one who gives them makes a serious effort to find where the person (or in retreat houses, the persons) stand in their religious and spiritual life. They begin the exercises there. Then, the giver keeps each person mentally and affectively aware of the world and its needs, with some system where that is possible. And he or she is always watchful whether those who make the Exercises are ready or desirous of moving on--of "making progress" in Master Ignatius's phrase. These attitudes add up to a realization of the ignatian *magis* in the one who gives the Exercises.

The simple exercises are being offered to individuals and to groups. They are the staple of the traditional week-end retreat of Jesuit retreat houses. They are sometimes based in the parish, sometimes form part of a house's or a center's outreach programs, and sometimes work independently of any institution.

The materials used in these simple exercises may be taken from the book of *Spiritual Exercises*. Popular texts for what are called "Nineteenth Annotation Exercises" offer the materials of all Four Weeks. These books ordinarily aim to achieve the purposes of simple exercises, and do not intend to draw people to experience the dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises*. But the materials for simple exercises need not be taken directly from the book of *Spiritual Exercises*. They may begin with quite simple helps for prayer, and often introduce people to praying with Scripture. Many books of ignatian inspiration are available, in many languages. But today, the one who gives the Exercises easily prepares materials aimed at the needs of the person or persons making them.

The simple exercises respond today to widespread urgent needs. Among them would be the need to move people beyond a ritual observance of their faith into a personal relationships with God in Christ. This move makes it necessary to help people find an orderly approach to their spiritual growth.

### **Current needs in the Church**

At a basic level, people everywhere today need to get in touch with their own interior lives. This need can be responded to by a secular process or by some other religion. But it can just as well be taken into simple exercises, which bring people to find God in Christ working in their self, their history, and their present lives. Ignatian spirituality responds to this need by helping people learn their own authentic desires, and to distinguish out and trust those of their desires that come from Christ's Spirit. Today this is usually referred to and desired as *discernment*; but even



where the word is not used, people in the Church today need to find a way to know what God hopes in them.

People come to simple exercises aware of their own needs. They manifest a (sometimes fear-filled) need for silence in a noisy time, and for a systematic way to come to silence in God's presence. Many express dissatisfaction with their prayer and feel an invitation to learn to pray in better ways than they know. In particular today, they feel drawn to learn how to pray with Scripture.

Many individuals today, in all of the cultures, go beyond a desire to find some contentment in their interior lives or in the Church. They are *seekers*. They may know little about Revelation. Or they may be trying to regain the creedal system of days past. Or they may be struggling to create a new way of believing or of being Church. Whatever be the case, they search for meaning, for a way to unify their relationships with God and their world. They search for connectedness, for some way to be community. The simple exercises are responding to these seekers.

### **The Exercises in groups**

The group experience in ignatian exercises differs from most of the group experiences current today. In these, the focus of the group is the individual in the group (as it is in group therapy and Twelve-step programs), or the group itself (as in many civil organizations and movements). In any group gathered for simple exercises, however, the focus and center is Jesus Christ.

The simple exercises in a group differs from other group experiences in another way: the group often helps a person in it to make reflected, free choices and decisions. Sometimes the group includes a group guide who can help each individual; other times, the group as a whole helps through its faith-sharing and a kind of communal discernment. It should be noted that the one who gives these exercises to a group does more good when he or she has some training in guiding groups as groups.

Christians today need a place to give witness to their own faith and hope in Jesus Christ, and to have their experiences resonate in others' experiences and be confirmed by them. They find solidarity in Christ. They

find support in the isolation caused by some cultures in which religion is seen as an individual affair and in which belief is seen as curious in a secular world-both pervasive problems in some cultures. Any simple exercises given in and to a group, then, is drawing the persons into the Church. This is strongly the case when the simple exercises are based in the parish. Here is an important instance of the ecclesial dimension of *Spiritual Exercises* coming to the fore and being appropriated.

Many seekers today do not want to hear about the Church, initially; they may not be drawn to it and many have been alienated from it. The ignatian guide today faces significant complexities in thinking within the Church, and may hesitate to urge or expound on it. But the guide emphatically expects that the Spirit who is creating the Church and any given individual will draw each person to the Church.

Hence, ignatian simple exercises are given in the hope that the one who makes them will be drawn into the life of the Church. In this sense, too, the simple exercises are the ministry of the Church.

These exercises regularly prepare people to be active in their own parishes. And in fact, the whole ministry of *Spiritual Exercises* seems to be equipping the Church for this time when too few are entering priesthood and religious life to continue the forms of worship and service developed in past centuries. Very notably, the lay ignatian guides are already realizing this. Many people will approach a lay guide who do not at a particular juncture wish to approach a priest or a religious.

### **Elements of the Exercises in groups**

It may be useful at this juncture to describe elements in group and in individual development, which seem in one or other form to be widespread if not practically universal.

Ordinarily, a group is gathered by an individual, a parish, or an outreach program from a center or retreat house. In some instances, the group takes an initiative and asks for some guidance. For several weeks, then, a guide or a team visits the people to help them learn to pray. The guide or team may meet with them only as a group, or only as individuals, or in some combination of the two. They give exercises and supporting

materials that are quite basic and uncomplicated. At the end of this prayer experience, the guide or team moves those ready for it into an experience of Exercises in Daily Life (dealt with below).

They might give the Exercises in Daily Life by directing the persons individually, with some minimum of instruction or prayer for the whole group. Otherwise, they may take a group through the experience all together. Perhaps meeting every week or every two weeks, they continue four or six months or even longer (though some make this first experience shorter). When they meet, members of the group pray together and then, commonly enough, those making the Exercises share their experiences. A guide may then point out some helpful things about the experiences, the group may reflect on each others' experiences, and then the guide will suggest material for continuing. The material is commonly prepared beforehand, sometimes taken from a book and at other times prepared by a guide or the team.

There remains a third kind of activity that has become very common today. The members of most groups wish to continue their spiritual contact. So some of them (rarely, all of them) continue with group activities. One purpose of this activity is the deeper personal appropriation of the prayer and decision-making experiences, which seems to take time today. Another is for support and mutual confirmation in faith. And a final one-shared by those who give the Exercises and those who have made them-is to prepare the people who have had this experience to pass it on to others.

All of these are common elements in group Exercises according to Annotation 18.

### **Elements of individuals' experiences**

Individuals, of course, come to *Spiritual Exercises* by routes so different that they cannot possibly be classified. Yet today, these routes display some common elements worth noting.

Individual persons attend an evening of prayer or a week end to help learn to pray, often enough brought along by a friend. They may then continue with other such activities. They often join some praying group, or the Christian Life Community. At some juncture, they find their way to

receiving spiritual companioning or direction. They may make a retreat. By this time, they have probably moved out of simple exercises, the results of which prepare people for a fuller experience of *Spiritual Exercises*.

The result of simple exercises would be first of all familiarity with God in prayer. That is, a familiarity with the God of Jesus Christ, correcting what is often today called a false image of God or what may well be a mistaken or even heterodox understanding of God. The persons who do them, in whatever form, get in touch with their own interior life, with the Spirit of Christ moving in them. Commonly, as their knowledge of the true God clarifies, their understanding of their self changes, as well. They go from thinking of what they *should* be to thinking of what they *choose* to be--a deeper spiritual freedom. The person doing these simple exercises comes to accept the creature whom God our Creator and Lord is bringing to be. Just as commonly, they come to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

At the end of simple exercises, the giver watches for some ordinary signs that an individual person may be prepared to move on. Here are some common experiences: An individual may increase the time given to prayer, even without it being suggested. Another desires to have spiritual companioning or direction. Another might have found that he or she has a decision to make. And finally, some find themselves unsettled in and by their prayer and want to seek further. When the one who gives the Exercises sees such signs as this, he or she asks and even urges the exercitant to go on further into the Exercises.

For while the simple exercises have a validity of their own and a good purpose in the Church's current life, they often begin a longer process which sometimes concludes with the full *Spiritual Exercises* to make an election or for an amendment of life.

### **Exercises in Daily Life**

Exercises in Daily Life take more than one form today, each of which has a special validity. They are sometimes given for some particular purpose, such as forming a parish team, or helping people deepen their

ignatian spirituality as members of the Christian Life Community. They are everywhere given to people in groups, sometimes with individual guidance and sometimes with only a minimum of individual contact. With rare exceptions (as when one person gives another the Exercises), these Exercises include some talks or instructions given in a group. Probably the greatest number of Exercises in Daily Life given today are in fact the simple exercises described above, which St Ignatius mentions in Annotation 18.

However, many people who cannot make the long retreat and some who simply do not find it attractive, nonetheless wish to call on the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* to renew or reform their lives, or to make vital decisions or an election. They, too, are making Exercises in Daily Life, sometimes in the time available, but more commonly for a year or more. They are given the Exercises by one person and may or may not pray along with others or attend presentations on themes related to their prayer. The more they experience the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*, the more entirely their movement through the Weeks depends on their own experiences.

Before going into an experience of Exercises in Daily Life that would include the full dynamic in some lesser or greater intensity, the one who makes them needs to have had some spiritual experience. To begin with, he or she needs to have prayed for some time and to have some familiarity with forms of prayer like lectio divina, meditation, or contemplation. It should be noted in this regard that some persons are better able to pray in the ignatian manners than others, and that some persons are not able or willing to do so. Ignatian guides note these factors, and hesitate to invite those who will hardly profit from them to make *Spiritual Exercises*.

Besides having some experience of prayer, the one making the Exercises needs to be able to tell about interior experiences with some clarity and candor. And the person who makes a more complete Exercises in Daily Life has to be able to trust a guide.

Again, anyone entering into the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* by praying in daily life needs to have established a personal relation with

Christ. This basic relationship would be one of the main fruits of simple exercises, and exercitants do not do well in Exercises in Daily Life unless it is already established. Without some such relationship, they can be puzzled by the first colloquy with Christ on the Cross, do not really grasp the Second Week's petition to know and love Christ better, and are not in a condition even to understand what it might mean for them to follow Christ in their everyday lives.

A longer experience of Exercises in Daily Life, working with an individual guide and following the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*, would be the kind of experience Master Ignatius explains in Annotation 19. It may be an adaptation of the Annotation, but the experience is proving wonderfully useful and fruitful in every culture. Several outcomes are notable. For instance, the person praying over some months (or in cases, even a year or more), ordinarily comes to a clearer grasp of sin in daily life and of the way sin is structured into ordinary living. This includes a clearer sense of social realities as sinful disorders repugnant to God. He or she can come to a deep and detailed self-knowledge perhaps better than in any shorter experience. Possibly consonant with this, it is worth noting, the one making Exercises in Daily Life may well find the examen of conscience an important and very fruitful practice.

One great advantage of Exercises in Daily Life is the experience of God working all day, every day. That experience takes a relevant form as the person goes through each of the Four Weeks. It is, of course, closely related to the usual interpenetration of having prayer and everyday living. When an exercitant makes a decision or an election, or chooses a real amendment of life, that experience is firmer and better established by the long weeks of prayer. Often enough in our day, the deeper changes wrought by the Exercises come only after a year or two, or even longer. It is advantageous that the one giving the Exercises can continue until the one making them has come to decision.

## The Dynamic of Spiritual Exercises

### Exercises in Retreat Houses

The thirty-day Exercises offered in retreat houses today are ordinarily made by people in a group, though some houses are also open to individuals at any time. This practice of the retreat in a group presents both fine opportunities to help people—which ought not be passed up—and some difficulties. The principle difficulty is deciding whom to invite.

The centers regularly screen those who ask to come to make the Exercises. The screening is unavoidably faulty, and some come into the thirty days who are not ready for the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*. They present a problem to those who give the Exercises, for it is not a simple matter to cut someone off or to send them away (though this sometimes has to be done). In most cases, those who are unready continue through the month anyhow, and generally can be helped to have a good long prayer experience.

The houses are having particular difficulty with seminarians getting ready for ordination who are required to make the long retreat. They have not usually been prepared in any way, and all too often they are doing the Exercises pro forma. Some houses have begun conducting programs of prayer for seminarians in their earlier years of study. The same kind of difficulty happens with retreatants who come to make the long retreat as part of a curriculum or as part of a congregation's standard sabbatical program.

The houses need to attend to the fact that some people want only to make the Exercises, a good desire but not one that prepares a person to be truly open to God's action, and not one that responds to the dispositions named in Annotation 5, or not very fully.

Among the members of any group making the thirty-day Exercises, some will be experiencing the full dynamic and others will not. Those who do experience it are easier to guide, as the guide seems rather to be following them than to be leading them—which is done by the Spirit. Even the sometimes difficult decision whether to move to the next Week seems simpler here.

Among those who make the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*, there is another common experience in our day. Some may develop their decision or election during the thirty days, but they may well make it only some months or even some years later. This is not a matter of implementing it, but of actually deciding or election. And they recognize their act as a part of the experience of the Exercises.

For this reason and for others, it has become clear that continuing contact with long retreatants after their experience in the Exercises can be altogether helpful. The forms of this contact are not yet established.

The full discussion of the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* requires thinking both in terms of a linear experience-people do indeed go through one Week after the other, and so on-and a spiral or cyclic experience-for exercitants go back over graces received in earlier Weeks as the later Weeks progress. For instance, a person comes to a deeper feeling for the disorder of sin when joining Christ in what He suffered because of this disorder. And a sinner knows himself or herself loved well enough at the end of Week I, but even more completely and deeply during the following Weeks.

Anyone who gives *Spiritual Exercises* needs to keep studying the commentaries on them, both classical and those published in our day.

#### **Annotation 20**

The thirty-day retreat has been thought of as the paradigmatic experience of *Spiritual Exercises*, as the book clearly indicates. While this experience continues today, another way of experiencing the full dynamic has become common everywhere: Exercises in Daily Life. Some people who could not go into retreat for a full month, and some who simply were not attracted to pray in solitude, have made these Exercises. Further, a perception of problems with what long retreatants experience and achieve brought those who give the Exercises to take seriously the adaptation suggested by Annotation 19. Those who give the Exercises feel that this is a valid adaptation; they also judge that both forms offer an excellent ministry in the Church. At the same time, there is room for continued evaluation and discussion of both.



The dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* is more readily seen in the thirty-day retreat than in Exercises in Daily Life. The reasons are plain: the more concentrated experience, the solitude, the freedom from distracting events, the uninterrupted prayer and focused movements of spirits, the close personal interrelations. At the same time, those who give Exercises in Daily Life can also see the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* unfolding through the weeks and months. In particular, they can see the movement of spirits better contextualized in the whole of life.

The full Exercises are also being given in *etapas* or stages. The several formats are not just convenient ways of doing the Exercises, but are allowing a notable appropriation of the graces received. Some retreat houses simply offer individual Weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises* during several distinct times in the year, and those who are guided to make a given Week, or those who simply wish to, may come to do so. Some houses decide with each exercitant whether to proceed to the next Week. Some individuals who give the Exercises one-to-one also guide an exercitant to make one Week at one time and then pause before moving on. All of the ways of using *etapas* or stages are being tried and evaluated as adaptations to current realities.

Every way of giving and making the Exercises must begin in the book of *Spiritual Exercises* and be evaluated using the book. For the book is in some way normative, not as a dead text, but as an open text which is continually experienced. This is clear: the better the one who gives the Exercises can hold in tension the normative experience described in the book and the ongoing experience of the exercitant, the better he or she can guide and help the exercitant. For this reason, those who give the full dynamic must responsibly know the book, itself, which they can scarcely do without knowing the serious commentaries being written out of current experience.

It makes good solid sense to talk about a "normative experience" in the Exercises. Some who give them today think of it in terms of an "objective dynamic" of *Spiritual Exercises*, or an "objective journey through them" (*cammino oggettivo*), which interplays with a "subjective dynamic" or the interior journey of each exercitant. The dynamic does not depend as much on the selection of Scripture passages as on the grace asked for.

For it does not require a metaphor to understand that the dynamic experience of *Spiritual Exercises* takes shape from the "id quod volo," the! "what I want" that the book calls to introduce each time of prayer. These<sup>1</sup> are the gifts and graces indicated by *Spiritual Exercises* as normative for each exercise in each of the Weeks. This normative id quod volo interplays with the exercitant's personal experiences of receiving and accepting those graces. (The Latin term serves as a reminder that there is something more in the Exercises than an exercitant's experience or a guide's interactions.)

The one giving the Exercises recognizes that the intensity and content of the id quod volo reported by the exercitant at any given time tells much about what has gone before and what might come next. For example, the exercitant late in the second Week who has asked to stay with Jesus as He goes up to Jerusalem is telling a Second-Week love for the Savior and may be showing a readiness to move into the Third Week.

The id quod volo, it must be noted, always entails relationships. Throughout the Exercises, an exercitant asks for a specific relationship with God in Christ. For instance, the "desiring and choosing" in the last part of the Principle and Foundation expresses an appropriate relationship with God our Creator and Lord. In the first colloquy of the First Week, the exercitant asks the intimate question, "What have I done for Christ?" Even the gift of "shame and confusion" expresses a relationship: that God has saved one from the wreckage of humankind's and of one's own sin. During the long middle days, the exercitant begs explicitly to know and to love Jesus better and to be with Him. And then in the end comes the intense relationship with God our Creator and Lord evoked by the Contemplatio.

But the relationships indicated by the id quod volo are not with God, only. Currently, for instance, as will be said further on, exercitants recognize sin in their relationships with those nearest them, with the larger society of their surround, and in the fractious relationships among peoples and nations today.

### **The Principle and Foundation**

The text of the Principle and Foundation is interpreted in many ways. Since the book of *Spiritual Exercises* suggests no id quod volo for it-no

special grace or gift to be begged for—there seems to be no normative interpretation at the present time. Some who give the Exercises consider it a text to be read once or twice and taken to consideration. Others who give the Exercises develop considerations in terms of God's infinite love, or of God who creates each person continually. Guided by a major commentator, some take the Principle and Foundation as an invitation to enter into the whole of Revelation, to experience the Christ-event existentially and with reference to current life.

Indeed, the text is like an overture, drawing in bits and pieces of all that is to come. Considering it at the beginning of the Exercises does not mean exhausting it; the person can always come back to it. In fact, those

making decisions or elections will refer back to their experience of the Principle and Foundation later in the Exercises, as Master Ignatius suggests at key places in the book.

In general, there is no normative interpretation of the Principle and Foundation. But its existence is understood as a normative requirement that the exercitant going into the Exercises have prepared good dispositions.

### **Dispositions and Disposition Days**

The Principle and Foundation suggests that there is a phase "before" the thirty days begin, during which an exercitant has prepared dispositions. Though good dispositions for making the Exercises are difficult to detail, it is clear that few persons today are ready to enter directly into the First Week. Hence retreat houses and most programs of Exercises in Daily Life offer what are called "preparation days."

In retreat houses and in some programs, this preparation requires, even prior to the days, a written application by the exercitants. They are ordinarily asked to write about their lives and to give some details about their spiritual history. They are asked to say what moves them to make the Exercises. In some instances, the person is interviewed before being

invited to make the thirty days or to come into the program of Exercises in Daily Life. These measures not only help the one giving the Exercises to know the exercitant; they also elicit some important dispositions in the one making the Exercises.

Commonly, when people make the retreat in a group, a certain amount of scheduling is necessary, including a couple of days shared as "disposition days." In some arrangements, the retreatant arrives at the house a week or even longer before the Exercises begin, or the exercitant spends several weeks before going even to the Principle and Foundation. This time is given over to developing the dispositions mentioned in Annotation 5 and elsewhere.

Most exercitants profit from these preparations, but the givers of the Exercises note that in some few instances, individuals are already quite thoroughly disposed and these days could be better applied.

Several points about dispositions seem particularly urgent today. Before beginning the First Week, for instance, a person does very well to have developed a sense of gratitude to God for life as it is and for his or her own history. Those who make the Exercises need a kind of Christian anthropology, including a sense of hope for the world and for their own lives, and some intimate appreciation of God as Creator. These dispositions mean that the person senses the possibility of order in life-in the real world with all its social, political, and economic disorders and dysfunctions. Even if persons wish to be completely generous with God, without those disposition, they cannot know what generosity really means or might entail.

Another point is notably the case today. Exercitants' dispositions can include a lurking fear running through their experience. Very commonly, those who make the Exercises are handling matters of deep human grief and loss. They may have never faced these matters or, if they have, they have not yet adequately integrated the grief and loss into their interior life. These experiences may surface during the disposition days, but they may just as well rise later in the Exercises. The experiences, however historically conditioned and however psychologically intense, belong in the Exercises. For what may seem a merely secular event—an accident, an incident of abuse, a critical career setback-can be surrendered to be re-

aligned in the Redemptive action of Jesus Christ as the persons's salvation history.

It is important to note, finally, that the experience of the Principle and Foundation concerns desire and choice, as the phrase says: "I want and I choose." This is the fundamental disposition of choosing a holy and right relationship with God our Creator, the Lord of Love.

## **The Four Weeks**

### **The first Week**

To know oneself a sinner loved and sent belongs to an advanced stage of spirituality in our day.

The precise gift of the *id quod volo*, to know the disorder of sin in world and self, entails accepting responsibility for self as that self really is. Accepting this responsibility is a gift of grace and in our day it seems a cardinal gift. The gift regularly begins when a person is drawn to the love of God. To the extent that a person accepts how God loves him or her, to that extent can he or she appreciate what sin does and is and take appropriate responsibility.

It seems to those who give the Exercises today that the person who has not really loved and been loved by another or others will not easily recognize or accept the graces of the First Week's *id quod volo*. In this matter, the love in marriage is exemplary, for it is the experience of loving another imperfect and sinful person and, imperfect and sinful oneself, being loved by that person.

The experience of the First Week is being complicated in our day by more than one thing.

People today are readier to accept sin as a psychological reality than as a theological reality. That is—it would appear, in all cultures—people are ready and even happy to describe themselves as weak, vulnerable, wounded, and so on. It is a quantum leap from there to asserting, "I am responsible," and "I sin." The insistence that the person accept responsibility for their actions goes against the world's cultural climate.

Again, sin often comes from people's avoiding the pain and grief in their relationships, and living in obedience to their fears. Some people narcissistically hold onto their wounds and injuries; they do not easily forgive others. They need to be confronted. But there are today many persons who are truly victims, who have been blamelessly victimized, and who need thoughtful compassion. Everywhere today, persons who have been victimized in some way come to the First Week having to deal with that. They may already be very much in touch, personally and intimately, with sin in the world. In the Exercises, they can be brought to see that Jesus Christ has experienced this, too. Christ is sorry for it and knows in His own self the victim's pain.

There is another kind of problem operative during the First Week in various places in the world. God is being confidently proclaimed as an impersonal force or love or creative energy. This utterly positive God does not so much rebuke our sin as simply brush it off as nugatory. Many feel about their wrongdoing that "God doesn't mind." And they do not experience the disorder in their own sin very deeply.

Again, in some places the nostalgia for the orderliness and rule of a past time draws powerfully. People try to re-create that former law and order in their religion and their spiritual life. In consequence, when they come into the First Week, they can easily feel sin as just the breaking of a law. They know that they need forgiveness; they do not know that they need redemption. They might go readily to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as though taking their sins to a washing machine. Their experience of the First Week will not be very powerful, unless concerning certain disorders in the world around them.

And finally, exercitants everywhere ordinarily suffer from the self-absorption common in the world's various cultures. In consequence, some exercitants think mainly about themselves during the First Week, or at best about carefully amending their own life. The *id quod volo* requires that we review our own lives, of course, begging for sorrow and tears, shame and confusion. But the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* brings the exercitant to

discover sin as relation; it is Christ on the Cross who teaches it, if the one making the Exercises will attend to him. Sin is not a psychological experience merely; it is a relationship, a broken relationship, with God in Christ. Hence, the true *id quod volo*, the true grace of the First Week, can come only with a real acceptance of the love of Christ.

When a person continues to focus on the self, that suggests that the person has not received or accepted the graces asked for. The focus must be first on God in Christ, for sinful guilt is about life in Christ. At the end of the First Week, having to suggest text after text about God's mercy to the exercitant would suggest that something has gone wrong or, at best, not very right.

Overall, the loss of the concept of sin is a real loss and those who give the Exercises struggle with it. But this loss also provides an opportunity to lead people to appreciate sin as relation. This appreciation of sin goes against the narcissistic individualism of global culture. It requires helping the exercitant grasp the injustices structured into all human existence.

But it must be repeated that grief and sorrow are not naturally sought after, particularly in our analgesic times. Today's exercitant must ask God to reveal what sin is.

## **Confession**

The ignatian tradition has something to say about making a general confession during or at the end of the First Week, as has the book. This does not seem to be as common today as it has been in the past. Some who make the Exercises go through them without making any kind of general confession, and some who give the Exercises do not encourage it. Complicating this change in practice is the fact that many who give the Exercises today are not priests. Yet they often "hear the confession" of the exercitant in the course of guiding the Exercises.

It remains the case that exercitants may well choose to receive the sacrament during the course of the Exercises, and some make a general confession at a time they find good.

Yet the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a tremendous grace, and the Exercises, as the book points out, is an unusually good time to ask for it. One current practice is to have the exercitant go to a priest who, with a minimum of detailing of sin and sinfulness, celebrates God's forgiveness.

## **Hell**

The practice of the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* today seems to include an adapted form of the meditation on Hell. Two elements in our current situation influence this: First, people have a very unproductive idea about Hell. There is, for instance, confusion about whether God would send anyone to Hell and force the creature into permanent separation from its Creator. Theologians have contributed to this questioning. And second, the reality of Hell—for whatever reason—does not have in our day the kind of apostolic force it has had in the past. No one goes on the missions as in the past "to save the pagans from going to Hell."

The *id quod volo* of the exercise suggests the place of this contemplation in current experience of the Exercises. It helps deepen and intensify the gratitude of the sinner to God, who has saved the sinner from bringing himself or herself to this pass. The fruit of this contemplation today seems to be rather this gratitude than a deeper horror of sin.

Some who give the Exercises omit the contemplation. One reason is that they do not feel any great confidence in the power of the exercise. Yet they sense a clear lack in the dynamic when they omit it, wondering whether this may reveal the enduring *sensus fidelium* that unless Hell is a possibility human freedom is not real. In any case, the meditation is being adapted in more than one way. The one who gives the Exercises, for instance, sometimes suggests imagining life in a vicious despotism, in which total distrust, alienation, and fear pervade every moment of living. Some who give it suggest that the exercitant "create the Hell that you would be in if you were condemned." and this seems to be a fruitful way. Considerable more theological reflection on these experiences seems clearly indicated.

The theoretical problems about Hell—It is possible? Is anyone there?—are an obstacle. But the grace, the *id quod volo*, while it may not carry the



force the contemplation might have had in the past, does contribute to the deepening and clarifying of gratitude to God our Savior and Lord.

## **The Second Week**

How the one who gives the Exercises understands and interprets them strongly influences the way he or she gives them (for instances, the Principle and Foundation and the Kinds of Humility). Their understanding and interpretations become particularly important when they guide the Weeks during which discernment enters the dynamic in a crucial way and decision or election become a central concern. Hence, they need to keep mindful of what was said earlier about continuing to study helpful commentaries.

The commentaries offer indispensable guidance in the matter of discernment of spirits (paragraphs 313 to 344) and about the experience of coming to choice (paragraphs 135 and 169 to 189). Neither discernment nor election are yet systematically addressed in these Notes.

It is useful to recall that the materials of the Second Week are very widely applied to the simple Exercises, where they further faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Those who give simple Exercises would not anticipate clear signs of the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*. For instance, they would not expect the one making the Exercises to be tempted by long convoluted thoughts to abandon a decision.

In the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*, the Second Week initiates a person into discipleship and holds out the invitation to imitate Christ. The movement of the Second Week today draws people to feel a paradox: on the one hand, the peace and joy of joining with Christ in his earthly mission. On the other hand, a dawning recognition that there will be consequences to any given reform of life, decision, or election. Following Christ creates tension between the joy of being with Christ and the embrace of the cross in daily life.

The core dynamic of the Second Week continues the one begun in the very first colloquy of *Spiritual Exercises*. In that colloquy, the exercitant stood by Christ on the Cross and prayed "as to a Friend." The Second Week's *id quod volo* is the deepening and intensifying of that friendship with Christ, and the entire dynamic of the Week unfolds around that love.

The Ignatian meditations of this Week are meant to clarify the *id quod volo* and its concrete consequences in the life of the one making the Exercises. The Two Standards, the Three Couples, and the Three Kinds of Humility are like sounding boards. They call on the exercitant's understanding, affectivity, and freedom even as they raise spirits and incite the movement of spirits. An instance would be a fear of poverty stirred by the consideration of the Standards. All of the person's powers come into play. So today the "agere contra"-asking God precisely for the gift of what the person may be afraid of-will seem less voluntaristic and more real when understood as taking a negative feeling to the Lord and asking to know what to do about it. But all is done in the love of Christ.

The Two Standards presents a particular problem in a day when there is so much discussion of and strong feeling about the social structures of sin (discussed below). One consequence of this is that some exercitants remain on the intellectual level. But the dynamic-the *id quod volo*-pushes the exercitant to grow into a kind of instinctual feeling for the way each of the two standards works. One way used today to move the exercitant out of merely thinking is present a scriptural passage as the point of departure for the consideration.

### **The Kinds of Humility**

The book of *Spiritual Exercises* suggests no *id quod volo*, no *what I want*, for the Kinds of Humility. The consideration, however, makes sense only in terms of love for Jesus Christ.

Made in this spirit of love for Christ, the consideration enlightens the election or the reform of life, and indeed the whole of the Second Week. Those who give the Exercises today usually guide the exercitants to read the text reflectively and then to ask themselves how that affects the graces of the Second Week. In particular, they are to ask how reflecting on the three kinds of humility affects their affirmation of reform of life, decision, or election.

The third kind of humility continues to be understood as a grace given by God. Some who give the Exercises even consider it quite a rare grace. And on those grounds, some few hesitate to give the consideration, in the

thought that the person who considers this great grace and feels no call to it at all may end up feeling inferior.

Along another line, some think that more people live the third kind than show it in any dramatic way. Master Ignatius, himself, suggested that God offers the third kind in two moments: the impulse to go and seek out a life of poverty and labor in imitation of Jesus, and the impulse to accept whatever cross comes into life as a union with Christ. It is this second way of living the third kind of humility that seems to be rather more lived than is easily observed.

The Exercises in Daily Life gives some evidence of that today. Very commonly, people have family, work, or personal crises during the time they are praying the Exercises. They quite readily learn to accept suffering as Jesus accepted the necessities in his own earthly life. When they consciously join their experiences to those of Jesus out of love for Jesus, they seem to be practicing a third kind of humility.

They have to learn this. Often at the beginning of Exercises in Daily Life—which require dedication and genuine sacrifice—the exercitant feels problems and obstacles keenly and even finds himself or herself suffering. The problems and obstacles simply come from everyday life, but exercitants tend to re-frame them away from being merely secular events. They put them into the frame of the spiritual journey of the Exercises. That is at the beginning. But as the Exercises go on, they begin re-framing hard experiences yet again into a sharing with the risen Lord Jesus Christ, whose love becomes the meaning of their suffering.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Third Week**

The first thing to be said is that both the Cross and Resurrection are present in the Exercises from the first day.<sup>13</sup> People who make the Exercises today are commonly aware that they live both Passion and Resurrection existentially, even while praying through the story of each. Often an exercitant in the exercises of any given Week will have the experience of living out of the Cross or of the Resurrection.

The *id quod volo* of the Third Week gives it its shape: it is a continued *being with* the Lord Jesus Christ who has become a friend. This defines the experience at its core.

In general, the experiences of the Third Week (and also of the Fourth) differ to such an extent that there does not seem to be any "typical" experience. Yet the varied experiences can be well understood when collected together as two rather different ways.

Commonly, exercitants go into the Third Week longing to be with Christ, to accompany their Friend in his trial. When they are granted to be with the Lord, their *id quod volo*—sorrow, compassion, shame; anguish, tears, and deep grief—come to them as great consolations given by the Spirit. In some cultures, this is the more common experience. Even in those cultures where aggressive control of life is almost instinctive, contemplating the passiveness of Christ is a profound consolation. This experience of the Week evidently seems to confirm any decision or election that has been made.

Another larger way of experiencing the Week is to enter into the "hour of the power of darkness." Jesus' mission has been taken away, and with it, the exercitant's. The exercitant may even find that Christ is an absence. Not only has the Lord's mission been taken away, but the Lord, himself, seems gone. This powerful experience is often grasped as an existential living of the Third Week; humankind are still in it, filling up the sufferings that Christ has still to undergo for the sake of His Church.

In this experience, the exercitant may feel the temptation that the election was an error; it has brought on a deep desolation, and should therefore be changed. But the exercitant usually stays with the Church, like the disciples in the upper room, and even in the darkness keeps faith and hope in Christ's Resurrection. Hence, though more difficult and harder to discern, this experience, too, can be a confirmation of the decision.

There are some common problems in the experience of the Third Week. The first is that an exercitant may concentrate on and remain with his or her own feelings. This problem is not uncommon, and it can be a simple temptation. At times, it rises in the form of a mistaken return to absorption in one's own sinfulness. Or it can simply be a temptation to attend to one's own feelings and on the self instead of on Christ.

It is notable that the *id quod volo* given in the first contemplation includes the thought that Christ goes through all of this because of sin. Thereafter, it does not (compare paragraphs 193 and 203). It is notable that today exercitants have a clearer and stronger experience of being with Christ when considering that He did this "for me" rather than "for my sins." The dynamic of the Week is the love of friends.

Another difficulty, perhaps not common, involves the intellectual problem of evil. At times, it is a struggle with the *image of God*. Can God let this happen? Does He? Why would he not prevent it? During the Exercises, the problem can be a temptation to escape discipleship and even to get away from Christ, himself. But it can also be a genuine intellectual and affective struggle in their lives, calling for all of the giver's empathy and intelligence.

Still another difficulty involves the drive for empowerment and Jesus' abandonment to powerlessness. Today we speak of empowering the poor in the world, empowering the laity in the Church, and in particular of empowering women in both church and world. When some who make the Exercises feel called to join the powerlessness of Jesus in his passion, they have a hard time. For their own experience of dispossession and exploitation makes it extremely difficult to see these as anything but inhuman realities to be extirpated. These experiences are compounded by problems with Church authority. They are finding no simple solutions. The one who gives the Exercises helps best when he or she remains firm in the faith, trusts grace entirely, and is compassionate altogether.

In the long retreat and, notably, in Exercises in Daily Life, many find the "*passio Christi conforta me*," passion of Christ strengthen me, almost without praying for it. The Third Week comes as confirmation of choice.

### **The Fourth Week**

Those who experience the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* today generally receive the grace of joining Christ's joy in a quiet and mild way. The quiet and mildness at times raise the question whether the person is actually receiving the grace, particularly in view of the fact that the *id quod volo* asks for "intense" joy.

Quite commonly, the intensity has less to do with emotional feelings and more to do with a deeply serene sense of new meaning. The experience of the absence of Christ in His death is often healed simply as life as a whole becomes more transparent. As in the apparitions to his disciples, Christ seems to be everywhere. This precisely begins a life marked by Christ's joy.

The grace of the Fourth Week is, from the first, connected with mission. Christ returns as the consoler; this is his mission: to console and confirm. This is, in fact, His joy. Today, the common experience of entering into Christ's joy—quietly, perhaps in many experiences not even perceptibly for a long while—is accepting the mission of consoler.

Some fairly standard problems in the Fourth Week are not difficult to diagnose. In the thirty-day Exercises, there seem to be too few days for the Week. And commonly, people are quite tired or even exhausted. Both of these problems also happen even in Exercises in Daily Life, especially those shared in a program or done along with a group of others.

There is a subtler problem in the shift to the fourth and fifth points (paragraphs 223 and 224), and in dropping the prayer in the middle of the night. Those who make the Exercises may feel distracted and, compared to the Third Week, do not feel a lot. They may fret that they are letting the Lord down. For this shift to the Fourth Week is a shift to more passivity, which can often give retreatants the feeling that they are doing less.

The grace of the Fourth Week, as it is experienced currently, is connected with mission.

## **Two Urgent Issues in the Exercises**

### **Faith that does justice**

The one who gives the Exercises subtly but without fail conveys his or her enculturated values to the one who makes them. Hence, the faith that does justice defines another part of the responsibility of giving the Exercises.

For the giver's unspoken presuppositions will come through, both in what he or she says and in what is left unspoken. To guide someone through the Exercises without ever mentioning faith doing justice, for instance, is to convey a strong and unambiguous religious value. Alternatively, to use the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* as an instrument for bringing a person to feel conviction about a particular political or socioeconomic viewpoint is a serious abuse.

Those who give the Exercises at this time recognize two things. First, that those who have had some experience of injustice and being on the margins of society can experience the full dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises* more readily than those who have no such experiences. And second, that those who give the Exercises are not yet able to explain clearly how they might integrate the faith that does justice into individuals' experiences of the Exercises.

Certain things, however, have become clear. The one who gives the Exercises has the responsibility of thinking with the Church. The teaching Church from the Council to the ordinary magisterium has come far in consensus about structured injustices. The one giving the Exercises will want to stand with that consensus. In this, it is immensely helpful for the giver to have had actual experiences of poverty, casteism, and the like. Experience teaches.

In simple Exercises, the giver sometimes teaches and sometimes persuades the exercitant to think with the Church on the dignity of the human person, for instance, or on the human rights of the poor.

In giving the complete dynamic, in which didacticism is quite inappropriate, the giver nonetheless appropriately challenges the exercitant to recognize realities in the world around, to shake off unreflected cultural values and convictions, and even to integrate theologically sound convictions into decision and election. To do this, the giver will need to be clear about his or her own cultural value system, and about convictions on justice issues. If the giver feels strong social, political, and economic convictions which have not been reflected on, he or she almost unavoidably infringes on the retreatants' freedom. This point belongs to ignatian spirituality, for it means that the one who gives the Exercises keeps a respectful detachment from his or her own justice convictions, however passionate.

In a reversal, often enough today, it is the exercitant who confronts the giver with a cultural or value system different from the giver's. The giver gives the best help when he or she can listen with open mind, expecting that the exercitant will help the giver to greater freedom. Paragraph 22 functions importantly here, as it does in the following matter concerning culture.

### **The enculturation of the Exercises**

There seem to be four situations in which those who give the Exercises are faced with issues of culture and enculturation: First, when guiding a person who belongs to another culture. Second, when the one who gives the Exercises goes to give them in another nation or in another culture. Third, when the giver is among the first in her or his own culture to be offering the Exercises, and must make the cultural accommodations that help. And finally, those who give the Exercises sometimes find themselves facing theoretical problems about religion and culture.

Some points concerning the one who gives the Exercises have become well understood. To begin in the giver's own culture, it must be said that he or she may find exercitants in that same culture who have what can usefully be understood as different "cultures." For a thoroughly middle-class person to listen to and guide a person who has labored in poverty all life long demands truly great care and compassion. For instance, this giver may be culturally unaware that such a poor person may have no place to be alone and quiet.

The expectations of the giver function variously in the different cultures. In cultures where the individual takes important messages from the family or from larger groups concerning self-identity and self-importance, the expectations of a giver may have a subtly strong influence that needs to be recognized and accounted for. This same influence functions when the persons from cultures with strong group identity are given the Exercises away from those cultures.

Again, in some cultures much influenced by non-directive therapies in counselling, those who give the Exercises today are less willing actively to direct than guides have been in the past. It becomes important for a giver



to note, then, how much his or her expectations and procedures are influenced by psychology and therapy as well as by other cultural values.

Those who give the Exercises are not convinced that they have done enough to think through the issues of cultures and *Spiritual Exercises*. At the same time, they are convinced that probably nothing very wrong has gone on. For their experience is that the vast majority of people who give and make the Exercises have found little practical difficulty bridging cultures.

In this matter of culture and enculturation of the Exercises, at present the giver's key values would surely be flexibility and adaptability.

A few things have become clear also about the one who makes the Exercises. To begin with, the one who makes the Exercises needs some basic faith convictions about justice, or the experience of the Exercises seems to float above real life.

Spiritual freedom reaches into this area, too. Thus, the person who holds firmly to a socioeconomic or political ideology—that is, to a set of interpretations and convictions about current human affairs that are firm and relatively fixed—has a hard time entering the dynamic of *Spiritual Exercises*. This is not unrelated to foundational detachment. Thus, a man who is convinced that the Church is entirely unjust because it will not ordain women seems attached to an interpretation of life in the Body of Christ that is likely to limit his freedom in discipleship.

It must be said tentatively that helping culture-bound or unreflective people to come to good dispositions concerning faith and justice falls outside the work of the thirty-day Exercises or those in the full dynamic of Annotation 19. At the same time, giving this fundamental help to Christians may well be part of the simple Exercises in our day. Certainly, many centers and retreat houses seem to be acting in this belief in their design of the simple Exercises.

*Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality  
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## END NOTES

See some expected outcomes in the first Notes, Question 3: What do we expect to happen during Exercises?, *Review #87* p.20.

Here, the word *dynamic* includes the sense of the Spanish and French *pedagogogy*. See "Concerning the dynamic or the pedagogy of *Exercises*," *Review #87* p. 17.

Read this in light of the experiences detailed in Question 4: What actually happens?, *Review #87* p.21.

These paragraphs fill out "Introductory Notes about the one directing Exercises," *Review #87* p.14ff. Many responses dealt with this subject. Throughout Notes Two, these terms will be used: *the one who gives the Exercises* and *the one who makes them*.

"Concerning the interior life of the director," *Review #87* p. 14.

The marks of ignatian simple exercises were listed in "Concerning Annotation 18," *Review #87* p. 18.

Further purposes of simple exercises—concerning self-appreciation, prayer, and further outcomes—were listed as "What actually happens," *Review #87* p. 22.

"Concerning ecclesiastical condition" and "religious condition," *Review #87* p. 16. The *seeker* is mentioned there.

"Concerning how we contact exercitants" and "Concerning exercitants in certain groups," *Review #87* p. 17.

"Concerning evangelical or apostolic awareness," *Review #87* p.22.

These paragraphs further the considerations in "Concerning the experience taken as a whole," *Review #87* p.21.

Many responses to Notes #87 called attention to the truth that *embracing the cross* cannot be understood except in the light of both Passion and Resurrection.

These paragraphs put some balance into the "Introduction to what we actually mean by *embracing the Cross*?" of Notes #87 p 23f.

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Dr Mary Mondello, U.S.A., 1999

Fr Brian O'Leary, SJ, Ireland, 1999

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