

SOME REFLEXIONS

Centre of Spirituality at Manrese in Quebec

Precis: Responding to "Notes for the One Giving Exercises" (#87), the team of the Centre of Spirituality at Manrese in Quebec reflected on the "spiritual democratization" of their approach and programs. They have experimented for four years, adapting Exercises to the New Evangelization and beginning with each person's concrete experience. The program, based on enunciated theories of Exercises, covers six years in three cycles. The first cycle roots the person in humanness; the second, in the Gospel commitment; the third, in the Pentecost experience of Church. The training of guides parallels that movement, following serious professional standards and reaching a genuine professional practice. The apostolic team are aware of some risks and feel some criticisms as they continue. The report was composed by Sr Lise Robitaille for Le Comité responsable de l'animation, and will also be printed in the Centre's Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne.

1. Preliminary observations

In a global context, we recognise ourselves quite well in the spirit and statements of the document presented by the CIS committee. However, the term *director* of the Exercises, used freely throughout the text, does not correspond with our way of conceiving or practising the ministry of the Exercises. We rather prefer words such as *guide*, *helper*, or *the one who accompanies*, which appear to us to mirror better the sober Ignatian term ("the one who gives the Exercises"), the spirit of Annotation 15 (favoring an encounter with God "without intermediary"), and the sensitivity of contemporary culture (a sacred respect for the freedom of the human subject).

2. What our contribution intends

It seems to us that the value of our contribution to this project on a "manual for the Exercises to-day" concerns rather the manner, original in some respects, of presenting the Exercises, with, as a corollary, a certain procedure for the formation of ignatian spiritual guides for to-day's world. With this in view, we answer first of all the second question (#87, p. 17): What are we giving as Exercises?", while our reflexions, by this means, touch on aspects of the other questions which are proposed.

3. The mission of the Centre of Spirituality at Manrese in Quebec.

For a start, it is useful to situate our proposal on the basis of the identity and mission of our Centre. Founded in 1976, the Centre of Spirituality at Manrese is involved entirely in the service of *spiritual democratization* according to the ignatian method, i.e., it searches to make accessible, for the greatest number possible, the integral way forward [*cheminement*] of the Ignatian Exercises. With this purpose, it has set up a School of Spiritual Experience, available to everyone wishing to be accompanied in his or her spiritual journey, as well as a School for the Formation of Spiritual Guides, aiming at the formation of multipliers laboring in the four quarters of the world.

The approach of the Centre is rooted in a characteristic interpretation of the Exercises which has favored the emergence of new pedagogical methods with which to respond to the imperatives of the "New Evangelisation". Among the principal pedagogical means adopted, the practice of the Exercises in Daily Life, shared in groups together with individual accompaniment, recommended itself to us as a way particularly suitable to our times. As a result of this characteristic stress, we have become, in the course of some years, a true source of reflexion, of research, and of experimentation in a fresh way of understanding and of giving the Ignatian Exercises and, as a consequence, in forming spiritual guides.

Two "resource-works" as well as some writings selected from our publications give ample witness to the evolution of our thought and manner of preceding.

4. The challenges of the New Culture

On rereading, year after year, our way of accompanying the Exercises in Daily Life, we have been more and more impressed by the needs presented to us by new generations. In sympathy with modern culture, these people—with horizons less and less traditional—have conveyed to us two fundamental preoccupations which have gradually influenced our way of offering the Exercises: (1) Spiritual research, in the future, must borrow more radically than previously from the royal path of the "humanness" of the *human subject*, which presents itself as the individual endeavouring to create life by beginning with freedom and personal conscience, and not by beginning from a religion inherited from the past or from a God outside the self. (2) Consequent on this view, the Church in the eyes of new spiritual seekers appears precisely as a controlling institution turned towards the past, which becomes an obstacle on the road towards the spiritual experience of God.

Urged on by these two signal observations, the Centre of Spirituality at Manrese in Quebec undertook a recasting of its presentation of the Exercises, drawing in a better way from Ignatian sources, confident that it would find there profound convergences with the new culture. From this has resulted a pathway of exercises stretching, for the full ignatian way forward [*cheminement ignatien complet*], over three cycles of two years each.

4.1 The first cycle of exercises: Ways of Life. Giving full force to the Ignatian intuition ("Man is created for" [*SpEx23i*]), in the forefront of the spiritual way forward [*cheminement spirituel*] we have by degrees developed a long "preparatory phase" to the Exercises, centred entirely on the subject looking into himself or herself, in the deep desire for life, leading to the power of discovering the yearnings of the desire for God. (*JStage of human taking mot: fir-st year*). From there, the person is invited to accompany those who have sought God through the Bible, in order to deeply root confidence in the God of Life so that one may have a personal experience—new or deepened—of Jesus as Lord of the world and of one's life, as the One who liberates and

saves from evil, from the power of death and of sin in one's life and in history, and as one who invites to share His mission. (*Foundation, First Week, opening to the Kingdom: second year*).

This first cycle of exercises makes for a real phase of spiritual enrooting, and is seen at the same time as both (i) a step toward the maturing of as many capacities as possible in order to live an integral experience of the Exercises; (ii) a modern adaptation of Annotation 18, respecting always the desires and capabilities of the persons.

4.2 The second cycle of exercises: The Ways of the Gospel. For those who have attained the spiritual maturity or the fruit sought in the First Week of the Exercises, a second cycle of exercises is proposed to stimulate the interiorisation of the Gospel and identification with Christ in all aspects of life. The first year is made up essentially of the Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises. Relying on the *evangelical election* (understood as one's personal spiritual identity) welcomed and confirmed in the course of the stages, the second year takes as its axes the practice of discernment in day-to-day life combined with the Contemplation for Obtaining Love [*SpEx* 230-37] and the Spiritual Examen of Conscience [*SpEx* 4[^]].

These cycles of exercises, which correspond to *the phase of the radicality of the Gospel* should allow the development of a personal spiritual identity which is sufficiently consistent to prepare for assuming, interiorly, the ecclesial dimension of the mission entrusted by Christ.

4.3 The third cycle of exercises: The Ways of Pentecost. Inspired by the spiritual journey of Ignatius who, after having discovered his *evangelical vocation* at Manresa, had to learn little by little to insert himself in the real Church—which led him from Jerusalem as far as Rome—we now offer a course of exercises the purpose of which is to learn to think with the Church [*SpEx* 352-370], i.e., to integrate the ecclesial sense of personal spiritual identity. The method adopted presupposes, for the persons of this cycle, a personal election, strong and vital enough to be capable to appropriate the *we* of the Church, and of thus identifying with the social Body of Christ.

In progress through the first year's course, the persons are invited to become familiar with the history of the universal Church—beginning with

Israel, the Church in *germ*—so as to be able to make their *ecclesial election*, i.e. their way of feeling themselves to be involved personally in the real Church. The second year, which aims to incarnate the ecclesial election in a particular Church, recommends the rereading of the history of the Quebec Church, the deepening of the ignatian way of becoming involved in the Church in some sort of experience of a concrete ecclesial engagement.

It is thus that at the end of two years, the persons are able to choose to insert themselves in a movement, in a network, or in a particular community, such as the Community in Daily Life (CVC), which brings together lay folk who see themselves living ignatian spirituality and in the spirit of the Centre or Spirituality at Manrese in Quebec.

4.4 Our way of preceding. For each of the three *completes the process* cycles of the way forward, the size of groups can vary from five to twelve persons. We often succeed in organising groups aged between twenty and thirty years old, at least for the first cycle. The group meetings take place regularly every two weeks. The individual accompaniment meetings are expected to take place at least once per month. A graduated school of prayer (personal prayer in the first two cycles, liturgical prayer in the third cycle) completes the process.

4.5 A clientele more and more diversified. While offering a way forward [*cheminement*] which envisages itself as being more in keeping with the new culture, we bring together persons more and more diversified in type and race, whose only common attribute is their spiritual search, moving from a quest for a meaning in life to the desire to bring alive some pastoral involvement, and with the aspiration of being welcomed in situations canonically irregular. Thus we can actually find in one group: those living together, married couples, religious women and men, homosexuals openly living their sexual orientation, priests, etc.; those adhering to the New Age, practicing Catholics, persons who have frequented sects, persons estranged from the Church, persons associated with other religious beliefs, etc.; professionals of all types, persons on social assistance, construction workers, persons on strike, etc.

4.6 Promising Fruits. We have been pursuing this integral process for too short a time to be in a position to evaluate in an exhaustive way the full impact of our choices on the quality of lived experience. However, we believe we are able to affirm, after four years of experimentation, that the actual process of the first cycle allows a greater number of people to effectively approach the Second Week of the Exercises while at the same time making accessible to a much more diversified clientele a way forward [*cheminement*] inspired by the Annotation 18, of which one of the most visible fruits is a better rootedness in a profoundly spiritual *taste for Hiring*. Further, thanks to the length of the complete way forward [*cheminement*] and to the introduction of a cycle of exercises revolving specifically around the "ecclesialisation" of personal spiritual experience, it appears to us that the capacity to engage oneself, in a solid and free way, at the heart of the real Church—embracing the Cross of continual renunciation in whatever image one may idealise that it may take—is more practicable for a greater number.

4.7 Real Limits. Our option in favour of a long process does not offer only advantages. While deliberately aligning ourselves against the "fast-food" culture, it also becomes more difficult to attract that part of the population which fears a long commitment. Moreover, certain categories of people, such as students, those without stable employment, male and female religious of different congregations, those located at a distance from our Centre, all at times find it too arduous to envisage a way forward which could last for several years. Finally, the length of the Stage of Human Enrooting (one year)—during which the explicit question is not the God of Jesus, or even of God—discharges a small number for whom such an approach is not consonant with the expected spiritual fruit.

5. Our manner of forming spiritual guides

The challenges of the new culture also influence our mode of planning the formation of Ignatian spiritual guides. On one hand, the dynamic of the Exercises in Daily Life, over a long period of time, helps us to understand in a better way how they constitute a paradigm for spiritual development (through their various stages) and a paradigm for the pedagogy of accompaniment in every spiritual journey (by way of the Annotations, the rules for

discernment, etc.). On the other hand, modern demands—illustrated among others factors by the rapid development of human science and of varied types of human knowledge which have arisen from it—for a process of accompaniment favouring the integral development of the human subject have urged us to emphasise the rigor of our programs aiming clearly at the formation of *professionals* for the office of spiritual guides. Thus we now offer three cycles of formation each leading to the award of an official certificate, from which arises the need to specify the pedagogical methods and the appropriate modes of evaluation.

5.1 Graduated programs. Whatever may have been the situation concerning our School of Spiritual Experience, we have been led to differentiate, for the formation of spiritual guides, cycles of formation corresponding to the distinctions made by St Ignatius between the incomplete Exercises (Annotation 18) and the full Exercises (Annotations 19 and 20). Before arriving at a cycle of more advanced formation, one must first have completed successfully the preceding cycle. Thus, the first cycle, called *general formation* (duration: one year of intensive formation or two years during daily life) aims at making one capable of accompanying those engaged in the spiritual way forward not beyond the state of maturity attained in the First Week of the Exercises. The second cycle, called *thorough or profound formation* (duration: one year of intensive formation or three years in daily life) aims at making the guide capable of accompanying those in the spiritual way forward up to a mature stage equivalent to the Fourth Week of the Exercises. The third cycle of formation, more nuanced and more gentle, aims to ensure professional autonomy in the practice of accompaniment leading to obtaining the certificate of *accreditation as spiritual guide* (duration: between two and five years, during daily life only). Finally, blocks of complementary sessions allow one to acquire a more specific competence for the accompaniment in stages of development associated with the phase of "ecclesialization" of spiritual experience as well as the animation of communitarian spirituality.

5.2 Rigorous pedagogical processes. Our way of preceding, from the start, follows the dynamic of ignatian pedagogy which relies essentially on human experience continually reflected upon, as fully as possible objectivised and verified. With this in view, all human means possible should be used, i.e., put at the service of a formation geared to the preparation of spiritual guides capable of serving evangelisation-in-depth of the people of the new culture. That is why all our programs are rooted in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises—in Daily Life (including the sharing of groups) or in the long retreat—reexamined in a teaching approach which presupposes theoretical sessions and practical workshops.

What is more, the trainees in the cycle of profound formation are called upon to accompany persons, with individual or group supervision, in the actual experience of the short or complete Exercises (including the use of group or individual meetings of accompaniment). The supervision method being centered more on the life of the guide than on that of the person being guided, subjects the concrete situations experienced in the accompaniment to a systematic rereading. For this purpose, it makes use of pedagogical methods most adapted to modern culture: audio and video, recordings, texts of interviews, analysis of progress forward, etc., taking into account the need for discretion and the other exigencies of professional standards in this area. All these devices, sometimes directly recommended in the practice of the human sciences, are ordained to the meeting "without intermediary" with the master formator: Christ, the accompanier, who reveals himself in the Gospel, and whose way of teaching Ignatius has seized upon, as is illustrated notably in the annotations and the rules of the discernment in *Spiritual Exercises*.

6. Conclusion

It is clear that the challenges presented to us by contemporary culture are simultaneously immense and complex. We believe that we have devised a fertile path to make available a spiritual way forward [*cbeminemenA*] which takes account of the spiritual pluralism which characterises our epoch. We

firmly believe that we have been faithful to the ignatian spirit which invites us to adapt courageously to the needs of the world of our time. We are always conscious of the risks, of skepticism, even of the suspicions that such initiatives can engender; for some, there are too many anthropological preoccupations and not sufficient spiritual ones; for others, too much borrowing from the natural sciences, and, even in the view of a certain number, it is too divorced from the "authentic *Spiritual Exercises*." For our own part, we wish to develop in keeping with the identity and mission that is ours, continuing to deepen our contribution to *spiritual democratization* according to the ignatian paradigm, taking account as completely as possible the cultural fibre of our world, always admitting our own limits and fragility, so as always better to serve.

RESOURCE-WORKS

Gilles Cusson, *Pedagogic de l'expérience spirituelle personnelle, Bible et Exercices spirituels*, 1968; 3rd ed. (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986). English translation: *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, tr. M.A.Roduit, R.C. and G. E. Ganss, S.J. (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988). The basic interpretation of the Exercises explicated in this research was made current in a synthetic presentation in five linked articles by the same author, appearing in numbers 84 to 88 of the *Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne*, 1997 and 1998.

Gilles Cusson, *Conduis-moi sur le chemin d'éternité*, Les exercices dans la vie courante (Montreal-Rome: Bellarmin, Presses de l'Université Gregorienne, 1973.) English translation: *The Spiritual Exercises Made in Everyday Life*, tr. M.A.Roduit, R.C. and G. E. Ganss, S.J. (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989).

In Collaboration, "Directoire pour dormir les Exercices", *Supplément aux Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne* no. 28, 1991.

In Collaboration, "À la recherche d'un esprit...", *Complément au Directoire pour donner les Exercices*, *Suppléments aux Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne* no. 34, 1993.

In Collaboration, "Directoire pour accompagner les discernements spirituels", *Suppléments aux Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne* no. 45, 1997. (See particularly chapter IV: "Le discernement dans les Exercices", 191-239.)

Christian Grondin, "Une pedagogic de la Nouvelle Evangelisation - les Exercices de saint Ignace", Supplements aux *Cahiers de Spiritualite Ignatienne* no. 41,1996-

Christian Grondin, "De la democratisation spirituelle a l'evangelisation de la democratic", Relecture d'une intuition fondatrice, Supplements aux *Cahiers de Spiritualite Ignatienne* no. 44,1997.

Christian Grondin, "La supervision au Centre de Spiritualite Manrese", Supplements aux *Cahiers de Spiritualite Ignatienne*, no. 46,1998.

In Collaboration, *Fiches pedagogiques* EVC 1, 1997; *Fichespdagogiques* EVC 2, 1998; [*Fichespdagogiques* EVC 3,4,5,6,1999-20027.

Why don't you go back?

.. .Understand that it is not simple, nor
easy,
avoiding past memory.

I can't remove from my mind
My traditional culture,
My sentimental torture,
The folktales of my childhood,
Never old, never dead,
Stamped in my mind
I have normal feelings,
I suffer for dignity.
Please do not kill my broken heart...

Jesuit
Refugee
Service

Yilma Tafere, Ethiopia, 1996

Its
Pastoral
Role

Run Run Run
Then you hear children cry,
Mummy, what is happening?
Where is Daddy?
Why do we have to rua?
Why Why Why
Then you break down in tears,
Looking for God.
With the worst fears,
Don't you hear the people cry?
The endless questions,
'What will happen to us?'
But all you get in reply is:
Hush Hush Hush

Marina Montina, Sarajevo, 1996