

RESPONSES III

CLC & OTHER PARTNERS

& Malta

Anthony Frendo

On 5 February 2001, six Maltese—one married couple, two single women, and two married men—made a public commitment as Ignatian associates during a Mass which was celebrated on the tenth anniversary of the death of Father Pedro Arrupe S.J. They committed themselves publicly to share in the apostolate of the Jesuits in Malta; indeed, they would be receiving their “particular mission” from the Jesuit Provincial although this was done without the establishment of any juridical ties with the Society of Jesus. Moreover, it was also made clear that their commitment was not a vow. The commitment was made for a year, and thereafter it could be renewed for three years.

After the Mass, during a reception held at the Jesuit residence near the campus of the University of Malta, the Jesuit Provincial came up to me (one of the new Ignatian Associates) and asked me to write something brief about Ignatian Associateship. I preferred to jot down some general ideas on the topic rather than trace the history of the Ignatian associates in Malta.

Indeed, such a history is rather brief: the aforementioned six persons had approached the Jesuit Provincial of Malta in two different groups quite independently of each other, back in 1998. They told him that they felt impelled “in Christ” to participate more closely in the apostolate of the Society of Jesus.

The provincial then gathered us all together; then in early autumn 1998 we started having a series of meetings (prayer, discussion, and discernment), generally together with the provincial, in order to see more clearly where this whole thing would be leading us. On one occasion, on 8 December 1998, we were lucky to have Fr Joseph Tetlow with us; in that particular meeting he talked to us about ignatian networks and associates elsewhere in the world. The upshot of our meetings was that we all felt that we should collaborate more closely with the Society of Jesus in Malta by becoming Ignatian Associates. One crucial condition for becoming an associate was to have done (in one of their possible forms) the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in their entirety.

Thus, to be an Ignatian Associate implies a closer link with the Society of Jesus both in its spirituality and its apostolate. I feel that this is an important point; indeed, I think that whilst every associate of the Society of Jesus is its collaborator, not every collaborator is an associate. For to be an associate of the Society of Jesus implies that one knows, treasures, and lives the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Indeed, it also means that one feels that Christ the King is calling one to share more intimately in the apostolate of the Society. For an Ignatian Associate, the Spiritual Exercises function as a springboard whence one can dive into the contemporary whirlwind of apostolic challenges. One realizes that one is somehow fighting under the banner of the Cross alongside the many Jesuits who have literally given up everything to follow Christ more closely.

The Ignatian Associates want to listen to and talk to our wounded world which is often gasping under the pressure of illusion, injustice, poverty, war, and apparent meaninglessness. Indeed, the associate has to be a person who is trained in the school of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* so that one can literally find God in the midst of all things. Now that means finding God also in the midst of suffering just as Job had done, namely experiencing God even in trial and affliction. Indeed, as Job said towards the end of his trials: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you" (Job 42: 5). Thus, Job gradually came to see and realize—experience—that God is a mystery to be wholly loved and adored but never to be thoroughly grasped; indeed, as Ignatius would often say, God is our "Creator and Lord". The Ignatian associate also knows that to maintain the strength to find God in all things, one

needs to grow in love, which is impossible to do without a growth in the life of prayer. And that means being ever more intimately united with Jesus Christ, and checking whether that is so or not via the daily Examination of Conscience or as it is now often called “Examination of Consciousness.”

Both the world and the Church are engulfed in the wave of post-modernism, and consequently of gross relativism. In the midst of all this, the associate remembers Christ’s claim to being “the way, the truth, and the life.” In remembering such words, the associate derives solace, but this is a consolation which one cannot keep for one’s self. On the contrary, an associate of the Society of Jesus strongly believes that her or his spirituality is a spirituality of service; one can never erase from one’s mind the picture of Christ washing the feet of the disciples. Thus, in close collaboration with the Society of Jesus, associates will be sent to the various types of people in our world, such as the poor, the sick, the innocent child, the intellectual, the scientist, the artist, and the one who suffers in silence—perhaps in her or his heart—unseen by the world. And they will be sent to bring Christ’s message of love. Thus, the Ignatian Associates will be found in poverty-stricken areas, amongst illiterate persons, alongside the sick and those in prison, in universities, and at the crossroads where the Christian faith and contemporary cultures intersect.

To be an Ignatian associate is to have understood and to share with others the basic Christian philosophical tenet that self-fulfilment is being for others. The model for this is obviously Jesus Christ whom Ignatius loved so dearly and followed so closely. Ignatian associates would like to do the same; and in order to do this better, they stick as closely as is possible to the Society of Jesus by sharing its spirituality and apostolate, all for the greater glory of God. Like Ignatius of Loyola and his sons, the Ignatian Associates are not happy with what is good, but they constantly strive for that which is better and thus more conducive to the glory of God.

Dr. Anthony Frendo is a former Jesuit, now married. He is professor of archaeology at the University of Malta, currently Head of Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Studies and also Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts. A close collaborator of the Jesuits at the University Chaplaincy and a member of the Centre for Ignatian Spirituality, he was on the team for the two-year formation course for givers of the Spiritual Exercises and spiritual directors.

& Rome

Gilles and Leah Michaud

*F*rom Gilles: We left Canada approximately three years ago (October 1998) to serve together as Executive Secretary at the CLC World Secretariat in Rome. The World Secretariat has had office space within the Society of Jesus' General Curia complex since the beginning of CLC's renewal in the 1950s. What we now know as the Christian Life Community was then known as the Marian Congregation. With that *new beginning*, there followed structural renovations in the governance of the CLC. One was the revision of the General Principles and Norms, which made necessary the election of lay members to the Executive Council. Another important addition was that of appointing a layperson as Executive Secretary of the CLC World Secretariat, thus representing the World Executive Council in Rome.

I am of the opinion that these changes have made a very positive contribution to the CLC in its growth and development as a lay organization. The establishment of a CLC Secretariat in Rome came about through the generous offer of office space at the General Curia of the Society of Jesuits. Paraphrasing the words of Fr Paulussen, *the offer of office space given to the CLC by Fr Janssens, later confirmed by Fr Arrupe and now by Fr Kokvenbach, is a visible sign of the ongoing relationship and collaboration between the Jesuits and CLC.*

Throughout these years at the Secretariat, I have had the opportunity to visit various national CLC's. During those visits, I have noticed that there are other similar arrangements between those countries that have active CLC members and a Jesuit Province. Once again, I find this to be a tangible sign of a partnership between the Jesuit provincial and the CLC national leadership. This partnership, I have often noticed, has facilitated dialogue and cooperation in a variety of mutual apostolates.

It would be very naive of me to think that this is generally an accepted practice in all countries and regions where we find the presence of CLC and Jesuits. It has become apparent to me that there are misunderstandings regarding the value of CLC, its lay vocation, its history, and the value of its being an autonomous organism of the Church. Because of this confusion,

there are tensions between Jesuits and CLC members. To overcome these obstacles, I believe that we, as members of a world community, and the Jesuits must make a greater effort in appreciating, respecting and affirming our unique call by God through honest and open dialogue. Inspired by our common ignatian spirituality, it is imperative, probably more today than ever before, that we continue in our efforts to cooperate.

So doing, I believe, would allow us to collectively discern *God's call to share in the great enterprise* while responding creatively and radically to living the Gospel in our time.

From Leah: A phrase that has wrapped itself around my heart is found in the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: "We offer Ignatian Spirituality as a specific gift for the animation of the ministry of the laity." With profound gratitude, I recall the slow unwrapping of the gift and putting on the garment of the Exercises that has served and sustained me ever since. It is with prayers of thanksgiving that I remember those who handed me this treasure and guided the unwrapping.

But it seems that I have been under some illusion that the partnership of mutual enrichment between Jesuits and laity that I first experienced as a welcomed member of the ignatian apostolate would grow and mature. Instead, what I sense growing is distrust, disillusionment and impatience. Alas, I fear that sharing an ignatian heritage and a passion for the Spiritual Exercises Apostolate are not necessarily the valued and sought after building blocks of yesteryear.

From the time of Ignatius, through years of strength as well as weakness, the Society of Jesus has found support in those lay collaborators willing to be at their service so as to better serve God. In the intervening years since Vatican II, a new awareness of being Church has encouraged a better-formed and educated laity to grow up. Many of us laity point to the *Spiritual Exercises* as having a major impact in our lives. We have changed and are still changing in response to the graces received. To be leaven in the world takes time...yeast, given the right conditions, slowly, silently, does what it was called to do.

Listening to the stories of CLC members whose lives have been shaped by ignatian spirituality reveal their attempts to be such leaven. A justifiable

criticism may be that they are busy trying to do too much in too vast a field resulting in few noticeable concrete results. Still, in the process of letting go and learning new ways of "growing up," there is a desire for relationships that reflect this maturing. Here, perhaps, is one area of tension between some members of the Society of Jesus and of CLC... changing relationships,

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in a rapidly changing world, between mature adults who are trying to honour their differing vocational lives.

As a member of the Christian Life Community there was, in the past, a sense of being collaborators with the Society of Jesus or, at least, of being companions on the journey. A shift has occurred; a distancing has taken place, more dramatic in some parts of the world than in others. Arbitrary yardsticks are being used that contribute to divisiveness without sufficient attempts to even agree on what is being measured or what is the desired standard. It seems to me that dialogue on this Lay-Jesuit collaboration issue may be increasingly happening *within* but to date rarely *between* the two groups.

In these times, the world sorely needs signs of unity and hope. Developing creative collaborative efforts, built on what is shared, is certainly slower, more painful and more difficult than going our separate ways. Change is a challenge for all of us, whether Laity or Jesuit. Being willing to participate in the struggle so as to be better signs and agents of change in the service of God is surely a desired way forward. I believe it is worth making and taking the time *to talk, to pray and to explore and to implement together*, new as well as old, paths of partnership ...or we risk preaching what we are not practicing.

Leah and Gilles Michaud are members of the Christian Life Community (CLC). Following the experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, they continued their formation as spiritual guides and are members of the Atlantic Association of Spiritual Directors of Canada. Married for over forty years they have three children, two daughters and a son. Their eldest daughter, Diane, died suddenly two years ago. They have four lovely and growing grandchildren.

& Asian Pacific

Jenny H. Go

Introductory Note: In 1992, Mrs Jenny H. Go of Manila and Australian Fr Daven Day, now provincial, invited a small group to form Inigo Friends (see review #84, p.20). Those invited were all members of the International Ignatian Network of the East Asian Jesuit Educational Conference. The small group was made up of leaders in their own regions, commonly senior faculty members or administrators. All of the members promise that every day they will worship at Mass, pray meditatively, and make the examen of conscience; and they commit themselves to read spiritual books regularly. Since they are spread widely throughout the Pacific—Thailand, Singapore, Hong King, Malaysia, and the United States—they can meet only once each year for spiritual exercises. The Review asked Mrs Go how the Inigo Friends is connected with the Society, and what its experience might teach the rest of us. The following is her reply.—Ed.

Regarding the Inigo Friends' relationship with the Society of Jesus, there is no juridical link, in the sense that we do not make vows or promises or contract with the provincials. From the very start, both Fr Daven Day and I felt that this would pose some problems in the future. For example, in case a person made a promise to the provincial to work for the Society without compensation or minimal compensation, but then decided to leave the group and at the same time to sue the Society for lost wages. It would be a sticky situation.

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We also wanted it to be a spiritual and moral link, but to belong to a particular group; the members must really live the Ignatian spirit. I think as long as the leader of the group is closely tied to the Society (perhaps I should say closely linked to the Society) through spiritual activities and spiritual support, we will have no difficulties. I am also aware that too loose a link can proliferate groups who do not really follow ignatian spirituality but who use the name for other

purposes. This would also not be good. I can see that there should be some kind of plan on how to proceed.

I have told the groups in the different countries that we are not after numbers but after quality people. I think it is also important that there be some criteria used to select the lay people who will conduct the Spiritual Exercises, including those who conduct the Annotation 19 Exercises. They should undergo training.

I close with a sense of gratitude that you are asking these questions which have been on my mind, too. Answers should be very helpful in making the groups even more alive and spiritually rich.

Mrs Jenny H. Go—mother of three and grandmother of two—is Executive Secretary of the Jesuit Education Commission in East Asia. She is also a member of the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, of the International Jesuit Education Leadership Project, and of the Council on Ignatian Spirituality. She travels extensively to help educators grasp ignatian pedagogy, and is the convener of a great gathering in Jabore in August 2001 on the ministry of Jesuit education.

& Philippines

Cristina Ong & Arsenio Nunez

We are grateful to the Society for accepting what we are and want to be. Yes, we lay women and men wish and aim to share in the work of the Jesuits in this high school. This is why we aim to be truly present and share in the mission-vision of this work of the Society.

When we say “present” we mean to work with and be accepted in position of authority and responsibility, but beyond that, to truly be with the Jesuits as *collaborators*. We believe that the document, *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* calls on the Jesuit to be “animator,” “witness,” “inspiration” ...in a school. Well, we Lay Friends in the Lord aim to be something like this.

We want to emphasize this because it is possible that even some Jesuits, when they talk about lay collaboration, mean that the laity should be given

positions of authority. We don't think that this attitude exist among us Lay Friends in the Lord. When we say that we wish to be truly collaborators with the Jesuits, we say that we want to collaborate: (a) as *lay*, this is what we are; (b) *co-working*, (c) *supported*, not only financially, but we are to be supported certainly *spiritually* and *academically*; (d) and for this we need to be helped and enriched by the charism of St Ignatius. We believe that a true lay collaborator of a Jesuit institution should be given the opportunity to make eight-day Exercises regularly, and furthermore, be given the basic formation to be able to give directed Ignatian Exercises (Annotation 19, three or eight-day retreats, etc...). Of course, the Society, concretely through the institution, should give the needed support for this.

Last February, thirty Lay Friends in the Lord met for a day of recollection. The main topics which we discussed and shared on were—according to our Mission-Vision—that we are (1) a lay initiated group; (2) of Jesuit co-workers; (3) committed to journey together with the support of the Jesuits; (4) in proclaiming and witnessing the Kingdom of God; (5) with our different personal gifts; and (6) the charism of St Ignatius, particularly the Spiritual Exercises.

And then when the group shared about what the Jesuit presence is to do among us, we emphasized the following points, among others: (1) to enrich us with the Ignatian charism and keep alive the Jesuit tradition; (2) to be leaders to inspire us to have the vision of the Jesuits and help us to be formed as men and women who value Christ's mission above everything; (3) to be examples of selfless service instead of career climbing; (4) to be concerned with the wholeness of the person instead of with task requirements and efficiency.

Again, thanks, in union of prayers.

Mrs Cristina A. Ong helped launch the Lay Friends in the Lord in 1992 and is now the administrative coordinator of nearly forty members, teachers, and staff members. Fr Arsenio C. Nunez, SJ, is campus minister for faculty and staff. Their activities were reported in the last review, #95, in "At the Frontiers."

& Australia

Robyn Treseder

Looking back, not ten but just over twenty years, I remember that at the interview prior to my son being accepted as a student at Saint Ignatius' College for his final eight years of school education, the interviewing Jesuit asked what I expected the school to do for my son. I replied that I expected the school to do what we could not do at home: that was educate him to his potential which would allow him to take up his chosen career and continue what we were doing at home, that was to raise our son to be a moral, thoughtful Christian young man. The Jesuit answered that that was what they usually asked the parents to do, assist them. My response was that it seemed to me that if we didn't work together, we would find it difficult to get the wanted result. This was probably my first experience of Jesuit/Lay co-operation—without it having the title. This kind of co-operation has existed for a very long time.

Since Father General Kolvenbach's letter "To Friends and Colleagues of the Society of Jesus" in 1991, my experience of Jesuit / Lay co-operation and partnership over these last 10 years has been of a different kind. It has been through my involvement with the Australian Jesuit Alumni Association (AJAA). Formed in 1990, the AJAA opened to me an opportunity to participate in Jesuit / Lay co-operation and partnership and ignatian spirituality by my taking an active role in its mission to assist the Society of Jesus with the promotion of faith and justice. Listed in the vision statement of the AJAA are three ways of achieving this aim: (1) It initiates collaboration and partnerships between Jesuits and Alumni/ae; (2) It integrates the faith of its members with their personal and professional lives; (3) And it promotes justice by infusing the members' professional and civic responsibilities with Gospel values.

When the AJAA was formed, the Jesuit initiating the formation called together a group of six alumni of Australian Jesuit schools and asked for their ideas on what work could best be done by this new Alumni Association. In discussion it was decided that there was little or no contact with young adults after they left our schools and that not much was offered that

was specifically designed to assist in their “whole person” development. This was seen as one area where the AJAA could assist.

So, for some years now we have run “Leadership Courses” for young adults, mainly from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. By this age the young people have completed training, university courses, or have established themselves in careers and are well into their working lives, devoting long hours at getting their careers on line. A Jesuit is the director of the course and I assist with maybe one or two other ‘older heads’ – we who have lived and dealt with life a little.

We gather ten or twelve participants and during the time we have together, get them to stop and take stock of their lives: is there balance—what is lacking—what could be improved—is there a place for their faith? We follow a formula, but every course is different because each course sets its own agenda. After several discussions, we come up with a list of issues raised as problem areas, and queries that have surfaced on different subjects, including faith. This then is their agenda. It is interesting to note that, while each course is different, there are two areas common in every course: the demands of their careers and faith issues. Regarding the latter, they always make excellent use of the priest-director, with whom to discuss their concerns and queries.

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During the course we introduce participants to “Prayer for busy people.” The course participants are asked to centre themselves, invite the Lord in and review their day or week, and consider their responses in this quiet, thoughtful, prayerful environment ... the Examen.

Leadership is also discussed: what makes leaders, the importance of good leaders and how they, themselves, as the up and coming generation, may be asked to lead in their families, in their communities, in their careers, and so forth. They are very articulate and questioning young people, who want answers. They respond very well to the environment created during the short courses and participate very well. We try to hold two courses a year, with a Mass and gathering at Christmas when the different groups get a chance to meet. We also have one weekend retreat a year.

This, then, is one way we in Australia are sharing in Jesuit / Lay partnership and ignatian spirituality and one of the ways the AJAA works towards our mission as part of the larger community of the World Union of Jesuit Alumni/ae.

I recently returned from a Council Meeting of the World Union held in Rome at the end of January 2001. There I met with delegates from around the world, all working in different ways through Jesuit / Lay partnership, to assist the Society of Jesus in the quest of "faith and justice for all." It was a privilege while in Rome to have had Father Kolvenbach address us, the Council of the World Union of Jesuit Alumni/ae. His message to us in January 2001 echoed his letter of 1991: it was to reassure us of his and the Society of Jesus' commitment to Jesuit / Lay partnership and of the Society's deep value of our working together—*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*.

I end with the inspiring words with which our Australian provincial completed his homily at the Mass to mark the close of the World Congress of Jesuit Alumni/ae held in Sydney, Australia in July 1997 ...

*Friends in the Lord,
may we feel the strength of the Ignatian family behind us,
may we dream with freedom and creativity,
may we love our Lord dearly,
may we live life fully,
and may we bring hope to all we meet on our way.
AMEN.*

Mrs Robyn Treseder, who lives in Sydney, Australia, is the Secretary/Treasurer of the Australian Jesuit Alumni Association and Editor of the publication, the AJAA Journal, published tri-annually. She is also Council Member-Oceania of the World Union of Jesuit Alumni/ae.