

## RESPONSES IV

### CENTERS AND RETREAT HOUSES

& Paraguay

Ramon Juste

Yesterday and the day before, we held our usual monthly meeting of the Pastoral Team of Santos Mártires and we handled [the request for reflections]. I had given out a schematic summary of Fr General's letter, which some had already read and discussed when it came out. From the various "characteristics" of ignatian spirituality which Fr General singles out as deriving from the *Exercises*, we highlighted as more pertinent to our world today the following.

1. The need to expose the hidden contradictions and ambiguities in many human situations. That is to say, the importance that *discernment* has for today's Christian. Living in a society dominated by moral relativism and the loss of the human values in Christianity, the Christian cannot get along without a stable disposition for evangelical discernment. This is one of the objectives we set for all of the services we offer at Santos Mártires, and we honestly believe that we are managing to reach it. Yet it is remarkable to discover that for the majority of those who come to the center—who are used to doing what they please—the constant search for God's will turns out to be difficult. This is even truer when one has lived for a long time in the unwitting conviction that the will of God in almost every case means something negative for one self.

2. The Christ of ignatian spirituality is a *Christ in action*, and one who calls Christians in order to send them on a *mission* which is the continuation of the one that He received from the Father. For us, this is utterly central for every kind of Christian spirituality, and above all in the dynamic of the *Exercises*. Hence, the promotion of justice and the struggle for peace are and should be logical expressions of the Christian's faith. At the same time, we believe that we ought not confuse *mission* with *activities* or identify the two—as in fact they have been identified and often still are. We are glad to recognize the strengthening reaction of many religious against *activism*, which has been so common among them, and their repudiation of being valued as members of the Church and of civil society because of what they do and not because of their consecrated lives.

3. The apostolic vocation of Ignatius was tightly linked from the beginning with the search for companions and with the formation of a group or community which over time would develop into the Company of

Jesus. Likewise, his sense of Church made him aware that evangelization is done “with others.”

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We are growing more aware these days that the “others” are not only other Jesuits but also men and women—even non-Christians—who share our dissatisfactions and our dreams for collaborating to build the Reign. Here at Santos Mártires more than four years ago, we put together the Pastoral Team, including three Jesuits, eight or ten religious women of various

congregations, and two lay women. Our objective has been to realize a true Christian community—a objective that weaves into all the activities of the Centre and gives them value. I sense that we are convinced of the importance of the *apostolate in partnership with the laity*. We support it and we promote it. We have the impression that many who come to Santos Mártires appreciate the witness of our team, and some tell us that explicitly.

4. The use of human means *tantum-quantum* for the transcendent end of the human person, we see as closely linked with overcoming mediocrity. In a society and a culture pretty much dominated by the “more-or-less,” and which regularly puts the means before the end, we consider the *tantum-*

*quantum* and the *magis* as ignatian offerings of the first importance. We believe that on these two points, precisely, we ought to evangelize our culture in a special way. Both in our teaching and in our *modus operandi*, we try to project our deeply personal conviction that the building of the Reign requires labourers who act on these principles.

*Ramón, Juste, S.J., who has been provincial of the province of Paraguay, directs the retreat house Santos Mártires. He insists that the team of directors always include women and men, lay and religious. The Pastoral Team for 2001 includes the PP. Ramón Juste, Nicanor Martínez and Carlos de la Cruz, S.J.; the sisters Antonina Gagnon and Fany Villalba, Cong. Vida Evangélica; Teresa Drapeau, Hnas. de la Caridad de Quebec; Hermelinda Riveros, Educacionista Franciscana; Caty Mazacote, Franciscana Misionera de María; Rosa E. Cálcena, Compañía de Sta. Teresa; Fermina Medina and Juana Benigna Gutiérrez, Cong. Inmaculada Concepción, Azules; Lilian Bordón, Sdos. Corazones; and Señoras Adela C. de Irrazábal and Cecilia N. de Sánchez.*

## & Great Britain

### Ruth Holgate

Fr Kolvenbach's letter "To Friends and Colleagues of the Society of Jesus" was written at a time when I was not a 'colleague', though I had studied at a Jesuit college. In the intervening years, my association with the Society has grown. This is a brief, personal response to the letter from my own experiences of ministry, initially as an individual and more recently living and working alongside Jesuits. There are two aspects that particularly engaged me, firstly the spirituality of Ignatius that draws individuals into a relationship of love and service of God and secondly the way in which such relationships can be expressed in common, through community, association, or working alongside others.

The letter begins with words of gratitude to the many people involved in the work of the Society. My response to Fr Kolvenbach's letter and to my own experience over the years in which I have studied and worked alongside Jesuits is to echo that gratitude. I find myself thankful, not only for the

education, support and encouragement I have received personally but also for the growing vision, expressed in the letter, of the how Ignatius' insights can draw people into this "great enterprise."

When this letter was written ten years ago, I was working in a parish in the south of England. Outside London such jobs were fairly rare, and though it was a good experience of pastoral work, I struggled somewhat with what it meant to be a lay woman in full time ministry. There were few

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other lay ministers in my vicinity with whom to explore this question of identity and it was not easy to keep hold of the sense of rightness for this calling I had felt whilst studying theology. An opportunity arose to take part in a three month experience of Apostolic Spirituality at St Beuno's Jesuit retreat centre, which included making the Spiritual Exercises in a thirty-day retreat. The retreat was a

pivotal experience for me, confirming what had been my vague sense of calling to work with Christ and introducing me to a framework of prayer and reflection on which to base such a life. In this way ignatian spirituality drew me to centre my life on Christ, and to the realisation that it is this that informs my identity rather than a particular ministry, lifestyle, or position.

Ignatius' words to lay people expressed in Fr Kolvenbach's letter—to be in relationship with God, living in a world filled with the Spirit, to be with Christ in his mission and to work for the greater glory of God with all the means at our disposal—have a timeless quality. Whatever the works, the culture, the struggles, this is a message that carries words of hope and inspiration, particularly in this time of changes in the Church, in technology, and social conditions.

For the past six years, I have been working with Jesuits, Sisters of Loreto, and other religious and lay people in Loyola Hall [spirituality centre near Manchester]. We live and work as a community rooted in the Exercises: this is the common ground out of which each of us grows and serves in their own way, according to their particular gifts and calling. Over the years that I have worked here, I have had an increasing sense of being part

of something bigger, not simply as an employee of a large organisation but as a partner and colleague. This partnership is a valuable gift and I suspect a relatively novel experience in a church that continues to explore ways of incorporating lay people into active ministries. In his letter, Fr Kolvenbach speaks of reflecting on “more structured forms of lay association” (no. 20), and though the large variety of ways in which people share in Jesuit works may make such reflection complex, the fruitfulness for apostolates could be very significant. In my own experience, being part of a larger network who share a common grounding in the Exercises and work in different ways with Christ in his mission is both fruitful and life-giving. There is, however, a significant difference between what is effectively a temporary association for a particular job and a more permanent arrangement that involves mutual commitment and exists for the needs of the apostolate. A decade ago Fr Kolvenbach suggested that this had not been thought about sufficiently. Ten years on, if there are significant numbers of lay persons who do feel called to such a formal association with the Society of Jesus, could this be a way of continuing to grow in partnership?

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As we respond to the Spirit who calls us to be with Christ in his mission, whatever our state of life, our gifts and our weaknesses, we also need to continue to reflect on how we can best live out this response. In this letter, Fr Kolvenbach indicated ways of listening and responding within an ignatian framework, alongside the Society of Jesus. Ten years on we can take heart that the gift of the Spiritual Exercises and ignatian spirituality seem to be reaching more and more people, and that creative ways of living and working “apostolically in association with others” are becoming increasingly possible.

*Ruth Holgate is a lay theologian with a degree from Heythrop College of the University of London. She has been and continues living in community at Loyola Hall with religious women and Jesuits and giving Exercises in various forms.*

## &amp; Brazil

Raul Pache de Paiva

Itaici is a village of Indaiatuba County in São Paulo State, Brazil. Villa Kostka is a big house, constructed in the fifties to be a Jesuit formation house. Times and formation style have changed. Villa Kostka became a Retreat House in the seventies. In that decade were introduced the intercongregational Exercises [religious of all congregations making their annual retreats together] and the house was open to meetings like the annual Brazilian Bishops Conference. After these beginnings, the cooperation of some religious women was welcomed.

In February of 1989, the first staff of the new Ignatian Spirituality Center (CEI-ITAICI) had its first meetings to prepare its work rules and method and also to specify its aims. The staff itself expressed the idea of *partnership*.

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Sisters belonging to congregations inspired in the ignatian tradition and Jesuits were working together. One of the central aims was defined as preparing people—also lay people—to do spiritual companionship according to the *Exercises* and to give the *Spiritual Exercises*.

So, in the last decade of the past millenium, more than three hundred people were formed in our Qualification Program. This program includes, first some eight-day Exercises with spiritual guidance, in group or directed; then the complete Exercises, in everyday life or in the thirty-day retreat; and then two Qualification courses with corresponding supervised training periods. The first course is about the method and themes of the Exercises; the second focuses on possible responses of the people who make the Exercises, and includes a “spiritual companionship laboratory.” Every one of these activities is prepared and done by staff working in a group.

Every group retreat here in Itaici has one spiritual companion to ten exercitants. That method, of course, has supposed a real partnership.

Religious and lay people are truly prepared to make possible this service. Annual meetings and constant supervision has provided the permanent formation of these cooperators. Many of them give the Exercises in parishes, to seminarians, and also to clergy and to religious congregations. People who give the Exercises have the opportunity of attending an annual meeting. The quarterly journal, *ITAICI—Revista de Espiritualidade Inaciana* and “The Letter of Itaici” help the permanent formation of our partners.

Six years ago, a little group of lay people, men and women, were associated as members of our central staff. This little group of partners have become responsible for the Exercises in progressive stages, the weekends for lay people who have difficulties starting directly with an eight-day retreat. Now, we have five stages, every one directed by the group, which is increasing and has a special permanent formation program. They have become officially the “Lay Dimension” of Itaici Center. The central staff has meetings during a week or more eight or nine times a year. The “Lay Dimension”, of course, needs another rhythm of work. The partnership supposes adaptation and flexibility.

Another form of partnership is the invitation to lay people and Jesuits, religious, and others to prepare articles and other writing for *ITAICI—Revista de Espiritualidade Inaciana* and “The Letter of Itaici.” This is the work of a small staff.

In sum, partnership is a daily reality in our mission.

Thank heaven!

*Raul Pache de Paiva has been a Jesuit for thirty-nine years and a priest for twenty-nine. He has been principal of a high school and formator of young Jesuits. He had written or edited twenty books and has two more in progress, and is the founding editor of ITAICI Revista de Espiritualidade Inaciana, which over the years has systematically published articles on each part of the Exercises, beginning at the beginning. In 1989, he was named to the team which opened the Centro de Espiritualidade Inaciana in what had been the novitiate and juniorate, and has collaborated in the opening of the team to religious and lay members.*

## & North Wales

**Helen Bamber**

In 1991, I joined the team at St. Beuno's Ignatian Spirituality Centre in North Wales, having recently spent a year in the Staff Associate Programme at Guelph in Canada. About the same time I also became involved in the "Outreach Work" being initiated by Fr Damian Jackson (then director of St. Beuno's) and the IBVM Loreto sisters in the Diocese of Wrexham.

Already at that time the partnership and collaboration described by Fr Kolvenbach in his letter was very much in evidence. Women religious were working alongside Jesuits both in the retreat house setting and in the local parishes, introducing people from every walk of life to ignatian spirituality in its varied forms, including the experience of the full *Spiritual Exercises* in both the Annotations 19 and 20. Many of the Catholic parishes in the diocese were offered "Weeks of Guided Prayer", a four-week period of individually guided prayer for anyone who wished to participate, and the following year, the opportunity to experience the Annotation 19 Exercises in a group setting over nine months. From 1991 to 1994 I facilitated several of these groups.

Some of the people who had participated in these programmes were invited to train as prayer guides. They attended study days to prepare for this work and they helped with the group facilitation of the Exercises in Daily Life. Gradually, the number of prayer guides increased and they began to take over much of the work in the parishes. Today there are seventeen of these prayer guides, all fully trained, working in parishes throughout the diocese.

As I was no longer needed in this ministry, I continued my work in the Retreat Centre. When I first started working at St. Beuno's, the three-month course in Apostolic Spirituality, centred on the experience of the individually guided Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, was already well established. It had begun in the early 1980's as a training course for directors but over the years had become an experience in Apostolic Spirituality which could provide the basis and inspiration for a variety of ministries in the service of the Gospel in many parts of the world:



At the very centre of this course is the making of the Spiritual Exercises. What precedes the retreat is designed to serve as a preparation for the Exercises. What follows deepens the experience and helps participants use it in their future apostolate.

Over the past ten years, the course has been evaluated and refined according to the recognised needs of the participants. Some interesting developments have been the use of art images and the encouragement of the participants to use the creative arts—e.g. clay, painting, poetry—to help them focus on their own experience both in the preparation for the Spiritual Exercises, and during the process of making them. A very important part of the course has always been a few days workshop after the retreat relating the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius to the whole area of social justice and the Church's teaching on this. Another aspect of this course is the Ignatian understanding of discernment and its value for collaborative ministry in the Church today. Still another is the exploration of the various ways in which the experience of the Exercises might be shared in the participants' future ministries (e.g. spiritual conversation, spiritual accompaniment in various forms, C.L.C., Weeks of Prayer in parishes or with other groups, etc.).

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As the three-month course experience was not in itself seen as an immediate preparation for people who are called to the ministry of retreat and spiritual accompaniment, we felt that there was need for another course to prepare people specifically for this. In 1992, I was involved in the setting up and running of a two-month course, "The Practice of Retreat and Spiritual Direction". Today this course has been extended to ten weeks and its purpose is expressed as follows: "To help course members gain experience and competence in giving Individually Guided Retreats on the basis of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola. Though emphasis is on retreat direction, the course will also be a preparation for the more general ministry of spiritual direction".

Many of the participants in these two courses are involved in spiritual formation and pastoral ministry, and most of them are members of religious

congregations or priests and this has been the case over the past ten years. Alongside these courses many other people come to St. Beuno's to make the full *Spiritual Exercises* and to make shorter individually guided retreats. Over the years the number of lay people has gradually increased and also the number of people from other Christian traditions.

The growing interest in the *Exercises* referred to by Fr Kolvenbach in number 8 has certainly continued in my experience during these ten years. I have seen many lay people seek and find in them "the strength to live a Christlike life" and often, the desire to bring others to have the same experience.

*Helen Bamber, S.H.C.J., has been collaborating on the staff of St Beuno's for more than eight years. She has been involved in the parish retreat movement and helped establish the course to form spiritual directors. She is currently directing the three-month program which includes the long retreat.*

## & Japan

### Manuel Amoros & Yoshiko Shinoda

At the end of 1998, the Japanese Province of the Society of Jesus started a new Spirituality Center in Tokyo. The original purpose of the center was to find new ways to answer the spiritual needs of the Japanese Church and the Japanese people. The idea was to present ignatian spirituality in a more appealing way in collaboration with diocesan priests, religious women and lay people. It was understood that in such a way the center could contribute to satisfy the desire for spiritual growth and deeper human fulfilment of the Catholics and people in general, through a personalized assistance in their individual prayer.

At this moment the center is directed by a team of three priests (two Jesuits and a diocesan priest), three sisters (from three different congregations) and three lay people with a good knowledge of ignatian spirituality.

Besides this core team, the center has some other helpers: two more Jesuits, six more sisters and two more lay people.

This collaboration has made very clear the different gifts we have received from the Lord, through so many different past experiences, in different backgrounds, and through so many different professions.

At the same time we have the opportunity to reflect on the wide variety in our relations to God and our personal experiences of God. Nonetheless, it is clear that all of us are influenced by a deep experience of the Spiritual Exercises: the majority of us have completed the thirty-day retreat and repeated many times the eight-day retreat. All this helps to deepen our personal relation to God and enables us to assist others to achieve and deepen their own intimate personal relation to God.

We intend to go on the internet and start the Home Page of the Spirituality Center in mid-April. We are thinking of presenting the spiritual legacy of humanity through parables and words of wisdom from the Scriptures and ancient and modern authors. We hope that some people will find better ways of opening themselves to God. The preparation of the Home Page is giving us the opportunity to realize how up-to-date and forward-looking is the ignatian spirit. Following the ignatian mentality we can help people discover that human life has meaning and the fact that God is already working even in the midst of human weakness and evil, so that we can assist people to be aware of the presence of the Spirit in their hearts and in their daily life.

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This is something very important when we see that these days a great number of Japanese people—men and women, without difference of age, even children—because of their hard experience, become disappointed, discouraged, tired of life, and commit suicide very easily.

Through our collaboration in the service of others, we are conscious that Ignatius urges us to go beyond superficial impressions, and disposes us to understand the drama of the complex modern human situation. In this way, by means of discernment, we can go beyond so many mythologies and

prejudices, which distort the objective perception of reality. At the same time we realize the contradictions and ambiguities of the world around us and in ourselves.

This becomes a good preparation for seeing clearly the injustice of many of the structures of the world, in which power becomes the criterion of so called *right action*, in spite of the constant suffering of a big majority of weak people. This is also a way of helping the formation of the conscience of some people who cannot help themselves.

As a fruit of this collaboration we are experiencing the joy of working together for a common cause, while we learn and practice the humility to give and to receive, so that nobody dominates others, but all of us feel very deeply that we are disciples of Christ and servants of His mission.

*Fr Manuel Amorós S.J. had worked in the provincial administration of the Japanese province before being appointed to form a spirituality centre in Tokyo. He has since also been appointed Director of Tertians. Sr Yoshiko Shimoda A.C.I. is a member of the Centre team.*