

THE 2006 JUBILEES AND THE PURIFICATION OF MEMORY

Jesuits like us who have been raised in the mystagogy of the *Spiritual Exercises* should have acquired the experience and should know quite well that everything starts by the history that is being told. History is the grain of contemplation and the place where grace operates. That is why the text of the *Exercises* often makes reference to this centrality of history. In order to meditate or contemplate, *history must be told accurately and we must extract the real foundation of it* to then feel and taste the said history. (2nd Annotation). Thus, in the prelude of the second week, we invite the person doing the exercise to become present in the history that must be contemplated. (Sp. Ex. 102). With respect to the text of Exercises, we could say that the first prelude is always the history (Sp. Ex. 111). A fresh and always new reading of the contemplation that is being offered, in search for the *real foundation*, will teach whomever is doing the *exercises* to trustingly read over and over again his own history, that magnificent book of his own existence that intertwines with the incarnated Verb that set its tent among us. This centrality of history was also a concern of the first companions, who had a brief history behind them. Juan de Polanco writes the first history of the Order *so that the memory of what the Lord has done and does in the Society may not die*. This recollection, which not only has sentimental value, becomes a norm or rather, is about possessing a sort of instruction on how you must proceed when the voice of the first founders will be silenced for ever.¹

The work of Planck was then continued by Possevino, Orlandini, Sacchini, Cordara, Jouveney, that is, by the official historians of the Order who continued to create memories. Father Francesco Sacchini (1570-1625) provided a series of methodological principles of major importance. In the prologue of his *Historia Societatis Jesu*, he affirms: *Non scribenda sola mirabilia et inimitabilia*. According to the author, the essence of history is to narrate both good and bad things, as long as they are of common interest. This being the nature and the essence of history, whoever only divulges good things would be deceiving men. Sacchini calls this pseudo-historiographical concept *historta selecta*; however, the historian should manage to write a *storia simpliciter*. Since truth is the essence of history, any reticence or manipulation of the same necessarily implies the death of history itself. Maintaining the memory is not always a simple or naive job. The Jesuit historiography knows times at which the real foundation gave way to apologetic and triumphing declamation which often tried to conceal crises and miseries, generating a mythology that often had little to do with our everyday life.

The convocation Bull of the Holy Year 2000: *Incarnationis mysterium* (November 29, 1998) indicates that *The purification of memory* is among the signs that may adequately help experiencing with greater intensity the exceptional grace of the jubilee. This purification consists in the process aimed at freeing the personal and collective conscience from all forms of resentment and violence, that the legacy of misdeeds from the past may have brought about, through a renewed historic and theological valuation of the events involved which leads to, if correct, to a corresponding acknowledgement of fault and contributes to an actual path toward reconciliation. A similar process may have a positive effect on present times because the faults from the past still bring about consequences and often remain, just as other temptations, to this date.

As such, the purification of memory requires *an act of courage and humility in recognizing for how long, shortcomings have been and still are attributable to so called Christians*. It is based on the conviction that, *with respect to that relationship with the mystical body that unites us one with another even though we are not personally responsible and without replacing God's judgement that only recognizes the hearts, we all carry the*

weight of the errors and misdeeds of whomever came before us. John Paul II adds: As a successor of Peter, I suggest that during this year of mercy, the Church strengthened by the sanctity it derives from the Lord, should kneel before God to beg for forgiveness for his children's sins, past and present. In reiterating then that Christians are invited to take charge of their shortcomings before God and the men offended by their behaviour, the Pope concludes: May they do it without asking for anything in return, powered only by the love of God that was poured into our hearts. (Rm 5,5).

On October 28*, 2003, as he addressed the members of the Papal Committee of Historical Sciences gathered to commemorate Leon XIII and historical studies, John Paul II recalled the Ciceronian-type quote that Pope Pius IX made on occasion of the opening of the Vatican archives: *Primam esse historiae legem ne quid falsi dicere audeat, deinde ne quid veri non audeat; ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo, ne qua simultatis* (Leonis XIII Acta, III, 268). The first rule of history is neither to dare affirm anything that is false nor to omit a truth, so that there may be no suspicions of partisanship or aversion in writing. *These words of great wisdom - concludes John Paul II —farce the historian to refrain from being an accuser or a judge of the past, rather to patiently make efforts to understand each thing with maximum depth and width, in order to delineate a historical picture that is in accordance with the reality of the facts, as much as possible.* Then John Paul II resumes the successful expression-purifying the memory to avoid any exploitation of the truth. It is likely that as he wrote these lines, the Pope was referring to the recent dramatic events which took place in the Balkans where a national feeling of hatred, both ethnic and religious, arose from dark historiographic archetypes. Revenge requires a petrified reading of history so that it leaves no room for forgiveness and understanding.

Why should we not believe that the violent crisis that was experienced by the Church and the Society of Jesus as of the 60' was not also determined by ignorance about our own history? Why not think that the wonderful Jesuit tree gradually lost touch with its own roots and was slowly eradicated? It seems that studies and reflection on their own history were quite weak when it came to formation. Often the "history" that entered novitiates or scholasticates was, according to Sacchini, a selected history (*historia selecta*). Saint Agustin

rightfully recalls that our time is the present" and history is written in the present, thus we've not always had occasion to revisit commonplaces, clichés, stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, purifying memory will also require subsequent and creative re-writings of our history, to prevent the myth from killing curiosity, or to silence questions, and to ultimately distance us from the ones who have preceded us in our common vocation.

Especially in times of crisis and confusion, a mature knowledge of our own history cools down affirmations, fades absolute opinions, suggests the essential elements beyond the swinging of time and fashions and opens paths of hope. We need the old Jesuit to know and meditate history in order to overcome fatalism; it is also necessary for the young to identify with real models as from their very first years after joining the Society, since archetypes cannot last long regardless of their beauty and perfection: they do not provide warmth nor do they help to live life fully while overcoming its contradictions.

Father General entrusted the Historical Institute with the organization of two conventions to be held during the celebrations of the year 2006. The first one will be held in Loyola from August 20' to the 26' and will focus on the subject of history and the practice of Spiritual Exercises. The second conference will be held in Rome, at the Gregoriana Pontifical University from October 15' to the 21st and will deal with the text of the Constitutions and the development in our way of proceeding. Whomever decides to participate in the Loyola conference will be able to do the Spiritual Exercises from August 12 to the 20 . Major Superiors must provide the organizing committee with a list of the Jesuits who will take part in these conferences by May 1st, with a maximum of one participant per conference.

The Loyola symposium will include approximately 33 Jesuit conference speakers and 10 more presentations given by non-Jesuits. The principal themes will focus on the development of the spirituality of the Society following De Guibert and Nadal's work and the Exercises, the theology of Exercises in the Society today, the adaptation of the Exercises, the Annotations 18 and 19, Francis Xavier and the experience of the exercises, the psychological and social consequences of the Exercises, the Exercises outside the Catholic tradition, the Exercises and the Constitutions. The meetings will commence at 9-30 am and will be carried out in a mixed System of conferences and "round tables" which will facilitate following up on major themes.

On the other hand, the conference in Rome will be more balanced as far as Jesuit and non-Jesuit participation. It shall deal with a number of themes such as composition, promulgation, loss and rediscovery of the Constitutions, government language, innovation in the Institute of the Society of Jesus with regards to other reformed priests, innovations regarding the Constitutions and anti-Jesuitism, missions of the early Society, purity of one blood and racial themes in the Society, the Ignatian family, policies about the canonization of Jesuit saints.

We do not want these conferences to be the usual evocative celebrations; they must represent an awakening of our vision of our own history and of our present; we want them to help us understand the Lord's will and comply with it completely (*y està interamente cumplamos*).

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NOTES

Juan de Polanco, *Sumario de las cosas mas notables que a la institución y progreso de la Campaña de Jesús tocan*. Mon. Ign., FN 1,152.

Tempera sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens et futurum, sed fuisse proprie diceretur: tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris... praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus intuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio. Confessionum, Liber Undecimus XI, Caput XX.