

INTRODUCTION

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“Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down saving justice, let the earth open up and blossom with salvation, and let justice sprout up with it” (Is 45:8.) This issue of the Review of Ignatian Spirituality is a collaborative venture of the Secretariats for Social Justice and Spirituality at the Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome. It responds to a double dynamism: one from the Social Justice Secretariat, whose aim is to find, to deepen and to explain the motivation and the Spirit which guides and accompanies its action on behalf of the poor and marginalized; and the other from the Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality which aims to be faithful to the Lord Jesus in promoting the faith and justice which that same faith implies. Social action without a profound spirituality turns into ideology, ends up discriminating and becomes a severe hindrance in expressing the gratuity of evangelical love; a Christian spirituality which does not lead to a conversion to the reality in which Jesus is incarnated and to a greater commitment to humanity runs the risk of individualism as well as a distancing from the Ignatian ideal of “loving and serving in all things” [Spiritual Exercises 233] and of turning into self-absorption.

Today we—all the Ignatian collaborators in Christ’s mission—are living together a moment of grace when the dialogue between faith and justice, culture and spirituality, not only has become possible and cordial but is felt to be a necessity. As never before the social centers of the Society of Jesus and the persons caught up in the area of social justice desire and are asking for more spirituality. The Spiritual Exercises are an explicit reference for and energizer of their

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actions and programs. In a complementary fashion, retreat houses, as well as spirituality centers and centers for faith and culture which are springing up everywhere, are trying to integrate spirituality with life in all its dimensions, and, starting from the experience of God in Jesus Christ, tend towards committed action. The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life, now practiced on all continents, are an obvious manifestation of this.

The two aspects of the “social” and the “spiritual” are purified in dialog and in shared action; they enrich and challenge each other mutually. Whenever one of these two sides monopolizes the apostolic action of the Society and does not allow itself to be challenged by the other it cannot reach its full potential and the evil spirit gains strength. The intersection of both apostolic forces becomes typically Ignatian when the tensions are discerned in the Lord, not giving up “seeking and finding” a faith that does justice and a justice which searches for God.

Three sections form the body of this issue of the Review of Ignatian Spirituality: first, the article, “The Social Apostolate and its Spirituality” (Jean-Yves Calvez, S.J.) gives the ensemble a theoretical and historical framework; next, various reports from all the continents inform us of the lives of several individuals today who are committed to social justice and their faith experiences; and finally, a Theological-Pastoral Reflection by experts in diverse cultures reflects upon the above-mentioned personal narratives.

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Reading slowly the 14 narratives, one feels like bowing before holy ground, before many burning bushes (Ex. 3, 1-5). These narratives recount literally the history of many burning lives of Jesuits and lay persons; lives spent faithfully and wholly for and with the poor. It seems preposterous to interpret this ‘burning’ in exclusively psychological terms, an interpretation that often indicts the activist as irrational, and unbalanced. The burning these pages speak about is one that gives warmth, life and light, even if, at the end, in the act of giving life it consumes itself. It is the burning that made visible to Moses the living God, the burning bush that calls us to a life of union with God and the poor.