

THE SPIRITUALITY OF MY SCIENTIFIC WORK

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Introduction

Science is a powerful instrument that influences the lives of people in various ways. It plays a pivotal role not only in determining what we have and can have, but also in shaping what we are and want to be. Science provides human beings with a most effective means to collaborate with the creator in the ongoing plan of creation. It provides us with the tools to understand the world, analyze the problems and arrive at solution. Humans are encouraged to share a continuous creation with God through scientific research.

Rigorous intellectual pursuit especially in science and technology has been integral part of the society's mission from the beginning. Innumerable numbers of Jesuits have excelled in the fields of science and technology and have contributed greatly to knowledge and development.

Scientific Involvement

The seeds of my interest in scientific research were sown already during my undergraduate study days. Later it was nurtured through constant interaction with nature, especially plants and insects. I remember the many field visits I made during the time of philosophy studies which helped me to develop a sense of awe and wonder. Once I was

ordained, the society gave me an opportunity to immerse myself fully in teaching and research which propelled me to unravel the mysteries of nature and at the same time admire and adore the wonderful works of the Master and Lord. More than 10 patents have been filed based on new discoveries. More than 230 research articles and 30 books have been published. One insect has been named after me (*Jakthrips ignacimuthui*). In all these there is an underlying current of intellectual contribution based on the Jesuit tradition and an experience of God's immanent presence.

Contemplation to obtain Love

Ignatius' meditation on contemplation to obtain love is the cornerstone of my spirituality since I had learned to find God in all things and all things in God, already from my younger days. This foundational experience motivated me very strongly to serve God and people in and through scientific research. The more I understand the mysteries of nature, the more closer I have become to God.

Ignatius saw how God is involved with his world and with each one of us. His vision of God working with creation and inviting each of us

to labor with Jesus changed his life.

Ignatius tried to share that vision and enable others to enter into it through his book 'The Spiritual Exercises'. Ignatius intends that we experience God's active presence and laboring in life and in creation.

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Ignatius invites us through the spiritual exercises into the experience of that same vision which he had, a world charged with the grandeur of God.

The contemplation to obtain love is a bridge between the spiritual exercises and the world. Experiencing the Divine and growing in that relationship with the Divine in the midst of everyday life is the hallmark of a Jesuit. This implies that Jesuits live in God and live for God and work with God.

Contemplative in action

Genuine contemplative prayer will lead to a contemplative life which is 'the abiding state of union itself in which one is moved both in prayer and in action by the Spirit'. If Jesuits are grounded in the spiritual exercises, and have experienced this genuine contemplative prayer then constant communication with God will become their way of life. All that Jesuits accomplish will thus be in union with God and their lives will be an expression of their relationship with the Divine. To seek and find God in all things, not only in prayer but also in work is very important precisely because 'God dwells in all creatures' and works and labours in all creatures.

There is no opposition, no dichotomy, but perfect synthesis. There is no need any longer to be torn between the call to prayer and the call to the apostolate, the former drawing us within, and the latter turning us outwards. Love of God is what matters, and we find God everywhere, in both prayer and action. To seek and find God in all things, to love and serve him in all things, is our answer to a God who is present everywhere and labours and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth.

Fr. Arrupe said: 'The contemporary contemplative in action engages not only in classic Jesuit examination of conscience and spiritual discernment but also in that reading of the signs of the times whereby we interpret the phenomena of history and the world'. What is important and must be common to all Jesuits, especially in our days, is the permanent attitude of reflection in the light of faith. An essential component of a genuine commitment to a Jesuit intellectual life demands a closer integration of spirituality and the intellectual life.

The spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola can be perfectly defined as dynamism of seeking and finding God in all things and all things in God'. The vision St. Ignatius had at Manresa helped him to see all creation in a new light. All creation acquired a new meaning and relevance. This experience enabled Ignatius to find God in all things. This is one of the central characteristics of Jesuit spirituality.

Finding the Divine in creation

For Ignatius all the creation came from the hands of God the Father and all return to Him through the freedom guided by love. Life for Ignatius

was union and familiarity with the Divine. The whole creation manifests the presence of the Divine. Discerning and discovering the divine essence is central to the spiritual Exercises. Discerning the divine power and presence in creation is characteristic mark of the Jesuits charism. 'To see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower' (William Blake).

The purpose of religious faith is to find complementary meaning of our existence in the universe created and sustained by God. It is important to realize that we, as the stewards of the created universe, should have reverence also to the universal well being. Our life should be in harmony not only with fellow human beings but also with the created universe.

Our experience of prayer must be reflected in our life. Moreover, our work becomes in extension of our prayer. Our rootedness in God must be reflected in our commitment to people. As we live in a society which is secularized, which fails to see the divine reality in life, as contemplatives in action, we can experience God in whatever we do. This reveals our communion with God and with the creation. It is an invitation to become a mystic in one's day to day life.

Biology and Spirituality

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by biology, the heart is raised by spirituality and thus one reaches ever closer to God. 'Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature; it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves'.

"By means of created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and moulds us" (Teilhard). The whole material world is a setting for a profound, mystical vision of God. Human being is responsible for the welfare of the whole universe and each human being is the custodian of the environment with the imperative to search and find God in the creation. Biology and

spirituality converge upon the same view of the reality, that is, vision of God in the concrete world, a sense of awe and wonder in the august presence of the Almighty even in the tiniest particles in the universe.

Recognition of God's presence in the created beings in the universe is the outcome of one's union with God who became man. The meaning of incarnation is the transformation of divinity into humanity and assumption of humanity into divinity. Vatican II tries to understand the meaning of science and scientific advancement as how they could serve as instruments in the hands of led. "By the very nature of creation, the material universe is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws... Methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and in accordance with moral norms, can never conflict with faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. It can be said, indeed, that one who humbly and perseveringly applies himself to investigating the secrets of nature is being led, even unknowingly, by the hand of God, who, holding all things in existence, causes them to be what they are (Vat II, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 36).

Life and the universe

When we probe this vast world of wonders we are filled with awe-filled-reverence as we try to fathom the intricacies of universe and life. We become wonderstruck to realize that not only the cosmos is filled with mind-boggling complexity but even a single cell is so complex in nature from which other living beings could have emerged. In the beginning God set in motion the process of being to come into existence and the Lord of the universe also set within the matter the potential to become energy and life.

The material universe has many evidences of God's existence as creative power. The spirit is at work always in the universe taking it to God. God is the basic origin and goal of all reality and of all things.

Matter that evolved from God in the beginning of time reaches back to God in and through the Spirit, since in all the stages of formation and transformation the Spirit is at work giving matter awareness leading to consciousness.

Though mankind has been created from the dust of the earth, human beings are elevated to the spirit of God through human mind and soul,

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since each human being is 'formed' in the image and likeness of God in and through the Holy Spirit. Human being is an entity of matter and spirit and hence it is our responsibility to bring the created being to fruition.

God creates the material world and then brings about life from basic elements and finally brings about human being in His own image and likeness and makes the human being capable of entering into the ongoing world of eternity, i.e., from the world of matter into the glorious world of spirit.

The spirit is now at work to elevate humankind from this plane of universal consciousness to the ultimate goal of reunion with the Lord of creation. The spirit is at work always taking the universe to God.

The spirit is now leading humankind on its course of action towards fullness in the image and likeness of God, the creator. The spirit of God is the unifying force that dynamically brings all to fruition ever since creation began.

God's transcendence does not prevent God from being present every moment and in every aspect of creation, as God sustains the physical universe and the life within it, in its continuous processes of dynamic flux and becoming. Every moment of the world's existence depends upon the ongoing grace of God. God is revealed as the driving force as well as the point of unification in the biological diversity.