

INTRODUCTION

STUDIES IN IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

Edward Mercieca, S.J.

*Secretariat for
Ignatian Spirituality*

Study and research on spiritual theology, or a Christian spiritual tradition in particular, serve little purpose if not accompanied by Christian practice, transforming into a lifestyle and commitment to the Church and society. Although this is true, we often forget, especially those of us fully immersed in apostolic activity, that a particular spirituality experienced as a concrete manner of viewing the world and living the Gospel, requires in an adult a renewed and seriously rooted awareness of one's own spiritual existence.

This is what reflection, investigation and study bring. In fact, as Fr Demoustier, S.J., has aptly commented in his article "Ignatius, today", published herein *the new reality we are experiencing is raising new questions and discovering new indications within Ignatian spirituality itself*, heir to the life and institutions of Ignatius. And vice-versa – the experience that Ignatius has reflected on and shared with us, through his autobiography, letters, spiritual diary and the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, can shed new light and require from us a reappraisal of many of our visions and attitudes in the context of the new culture emerging in the world.

It is very probable that in all of the history of the Society there has never been so much use, variety and creativity in the practice of the Spiritual Exercises as there is

INTRODUCTION

today, “applying” or “adapting” the experience lived and proposed by Ignatius, depending on the situation, time and person. Jesuits, priests and religious men and women, particularly those inspired by Ignatian spirituality, and lay men and women, are living a complete experience of the SpEx and

many are preparing to accompany others, thus facilitating the originality of God in the life of each one of us.

*the new reality we are
experiencing is raising new
questions and discovering
new indications within
Ignatian spirituality itself*

Witnessing this reality on all continents is astonishing. It is not too much to say that over the last 25 years, increasing numbers of brothers and sisters from other Christian denominations are taking part in this experience, and encountering through Ignatian spirituality, especially in the

SpEx and style of Ignatius-inspired spiritual accompaniment, common sources of spiritual life. It must be added that today, the explicit practice and processes of spiritual life which Ignatian spirituality invites us to is now present in all the pastoral ministries and services of the Society of Jesus.

All this was the motivation behind the meeting of Ignatian spirituality researchers and scholars held in Barcelona in August this year and which we are illustrating in this issue of the Review. The overall presentation of this encounter is commented on by Javier Melloni, S.J., in *Ignatian Synergies*. The conclusions and indications to be followed are highlighted in an article by Sylvie Robert, “*When young Ignatian researchers meet*”. The truth is that without the support of research and a serious systematic quest for this same spirituality, in a few years, that same apostolic practice and creativity which is the source of the dynamic of our spiritual tradition and in particular the SpEx will be the poorer. In the worst possible scenario they will become distanced from the ideal, from the best we can offer our brothers, depriving the Christian community of the opportunity to avail of this providential support in today’s world.

The theological framework based on what has moved Ignatian spirituality over the last 50 years, in order to glimpse a way forward, is presented by Javier Melloni, based on indications proposed by Santiago Arzubialde, S.J., professor of spiritual theology at Comillas (Madrid). The article comments, reacts and draws conclusions in the light of the two great theological perspectives or the two lungs with which the Church has always

INTRODUCTION

breathed – the creational-metaphysical theology of a patristic Greco-Byzantine nature, apophatic and the historic-salvational theology, intrinsically Latin, in which Saint Ignatius mainly moves.

The contribution by Patrick Goujon, S.J., “*Pilgrims in the Ignatian quest. The way forward*”, touches on two main issues, the link between academic and pastoral research and the relationship between spirituality studies and spiritual life. This work leads us to a greater understanding of our communications and relationships with non Christian researchers also reflecting on Ignatius and our spirituality.

There is no doubt that these indications will productively illumine our thoughts and our work as “pilgrims”.

It seemed to us an interesting proposal to invite Rossano Zas Friz De Col, director of “*IGNAZIANA- Journal of Theological Investigation*”, to present this initiative of reflection and research, unique

in its kind. This journal is not published on paper but can be downloaded and printed from their website at www.ignaziana.org. It is issued twice yearly (in May and October) thus providing a simple and low cost link between scholars and researchers dedicated to theological reflection on the Ignatian way of proceeding, and in specialised studies on Ignatian spirituality. We consider this means of communication and networking a gift to all those interested in Ignatian spirituality and are grateful to those who offer this wonderful service free of charge.

Great will be the fruit of this current issue of the Review if, on reading it, more than one talented person is motivated to undertake research and serious study on any sphere of Ignatian spirituality. In this sense, the presentation of “*Ignatian Spirituality Publications since 1999*”, by Carlos Coupeau, S.J., reveals an array of books, articles, collections in different languages, and journals in circulation of great profit to the reader interested in a more profound approach to this theme. The authors cited have exercised a seminal influence on Ignatian spirituality and sown valuable seeds, providing us with a stimulating updated overall vision.

Although it is certain that the pastoral ministry inspired by Ignatian Spirituality - the SpEx, Spiritual Accompaniment, Formation of guides for communitarian discernment, etc – flourishes and is practiced today in many domains far and beyond the Society of Jesus, the circa 270 exercise houses

*the historic-salvational
theology, intrinsically
Latin, in which Saint
Ignatius mainly moves*

INTRODUCTION

and spirituality centres presided over by Jesuits throughout the world occupy a privileged place. This is not only because of the universal network this denotes but also as a reference gauge of the authenticity and quality of the spiritual experience in the Ignatian tradition. In his article, Hermann Rodríguez, a Colombian Jesuit, comments on some of the characteristics of these spirituality centres.

*the authenticity and quality
of the spiritual experience
in the Ignatian tradition*

We present last the first article in this issue of the journal - "*Joint Apostolic Discernment*", a conversation with Adolfo Nicolás, Father General of the Society of Jesus, on Monday, 19 January 2009. This was the first morning of the workshop on "Joint Apostolic discernment in the light of General Congregation 35", organised by the Ignatian Spirituality Secretariat in Rome, when a group of 86 persons, Jesuits and lay partners representing 33 countries were able to exchange with Father General in a brotherly atmosphere. His talk helped us open more fully to what the Lord is calling us to today and trust in the dynamism the Spirit bestows on us in this common quest.

Edward Mercieca, S.J.
Ignatian Spirituality Secretariat
Jesuit Curia Roma.