


## IGNATIAN SYNERGIES

(BARCELONA, 24-30 AUGUST 2009)

  
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Under this title an international meeting of specialists in Ignatian Spirituality took place in Barcelona from 24-30 August. There were thirty participants from different countries in the world, from Japan to Latin America, via India, Europe and Africa. Women, religious and lay, working in the field of Ignatian research, also took part. Unfortunately there were few present from Latin America, and none from North America or Eastern Europe. The official languages of the Congress were Spanish, English and French, without simultaneous translation, so that a passive knowledge of all three was necessary.

The initiative arose three years ago at the congress in Loyola on History and the Exercises, as a need for the new generation of specialists— that is, those aged 50 and below - to meet each other. The first meeting was taken on and organised by the GEI (Ignatian Spirituality Group of the Southern European Assistancy).

The intention at the first meeting was not to take up a particular theme but to get an overview of the state of studies of Ignatian spirituality in the various international academic centres, and to assess the research methods and the publications promoted. It was important to know where we are, so as to see in which direction to move forward. Santiago Arzubialde was asked to present a panoramic view of Ignatian spirituality in the light of Vatican II. After reflection on his paper, and reaction to it, the various academic centres for Ignatian spirituality in the world introduced themselves, taking

into account that, properly speaking, they only exist in Europe (the Gregorian, Comillas and Centre Sèvres.) However, Latin America has many centres for formation and many publications (*Apuntes Ignacianos* from Colombia, *Itaici* from Brazil, various Bulletins of Spirituality, etc.) It was agreed that the setting up of such centres in India, the rest of South Asia and Africa should be promoted.

As regards publications, especially magazines, it was seen to be important to keep two kinds in existence: those dealing explicitly with

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Ignatian spirituality (*Manresa*, *Apuntes de Espiritualidad* from Colombia, etc.) and those which have opted for an implicit treatment, with some more specialised articles in each number (*Christus*, *The Way*, *Geist und Leben* etc.)

On the free day we went to Montserrat and Manresa. At Montserrat we visited some chapels, as Ignatius did when he climbed the mountain. In Manresa there was prayer in the Cave, in the chapel of the Rapture and in the place where we believe the Cardoner experience happened.

The second part of the meeting was divided into four thematic workshops or centres of interest: 1) sources and history 2) the Exercises 3) theology and scripture 4) anthropology, psychology, mysticism compared with other traditions and religions. Despite the variety of perspectives and approaches, it was surprising to note the convergence of insights.

In evaluating the meeting we agreed that it had given us what we wanted: that synergy had been generated among us. We have seen the need to work in a more co-ordinated way, bringing the best of our personal and institutional resources to promote the study of our spirituality, which calls for two things: deeper knowledge of the sources, through rigorous study, and at the same time openness to difference, that is, to the various anthropologies and currents of thought and contemporary spiritualities. It was appreciated also that a meeting of specialists had used Ignatian methodology, leaving times of silence and listening at different moments during the day, to enter more deeply into what we were sharing.

As regards languages, it was decided that at future meetings the official languages would be English and Spanish only. Spanish was kept because there was a consensus that we should encourage knowledge of it as a means of getting closer to many of the original texts.

It was seen as important that the promotion of this forum should be given over to the Society's government – that invitation to take part in it should not be on a personal basis, but as a mission from the Provincial. There is interest in responsibility for the geographical areas that were missing. For that reason we are grateful for the presence of Eddie Mercieca, director of the Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality in Rome, at the conference, and for the visit of the Provincial of Tarragona, who gave each participant a miniature copy of the sword that St. Ignatius left at the feet of the Virgin of Montserrat, perhaps to remind us of the difficult art of disarming ourselves.

The next meeting will take place in three years' time at Bogotá, in the Xaverian University. The topic decided on, to be approached in an interdisciplinary way (sources, theology, history, anthropology, comparative mysticism, etc.) will be a text of the Constitutions expressing what Ignatian spirituality is.

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