

WHEN YOUNG IGNATIAN RESEARCHERS GET TOGETHER...

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The year 2006, a year of Ignatian anniversaries, was marked by two great events “ at Loyola and then in Rome “ concerning the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions*. The youngest Ignatian researchers who on this occasion had become acquainted with one another or had met up again, had expressed the wish to pursue these exchanges in order to share their research. This is how the project of regular meetings, every three years, for Ignatian researchers of the younger generations came into being. The aim was to enable us to share our research and concerns, to stimulate us, to support us and to promote greater collaboration at the service of research in Ignatian spirituality. A first session organized by the GEI (Groupe de Spiritualité Ignatienne de l'Assistance d'Europe Méridionale) was held from 24 to 30 August 2009 in Barcelona.

Thus it was a first meeting with an exploratory nature; a first phase of mutual knowledge is necessary if one is to get an idea of the interests, issues and challenges to be faced. I think I can say that it was unanimously acknowledged to have been a success, which encourages us to pursue the initiative, making more room now for shared work. The few pages that follow give a descriptive account – or rather *an* account “ of the Barcelona week. While trying to faithfully describe how our meeting went, like any narrator, of course, I can only give my personal view of what we experienced.

YOUNG IGNATIAN RESEARCHERS

Our group consisted of twenty-nine people – twenty-two Jesuits, five lay people and two women religious – the majority teachers, but also some who were studying for doctorates and most of them were under 50. The majority came from Europe but our group was enriched with the presence of Jesuits from other continents: three Congolese, three Indians, who are studying in Europe, one Japanese and one Colombian. Obviously, the absence or the very few representatives of the United States, Latin America and Eastern Europe was a shortcoming and raised questions. We communicated in English, Spanish and French without simultaneous translation.

The simple and fraternal atmosphere was enhanced by the very pleasant house that welcomed us, the Sant Felip Neri Spiritual Centre, located in a residential district of Barcelona and recently renovated, animated by a whole group of very attentive and cordial volunteers associated with the Filipenses Sisters. The palm trees and oleanders in the garden gave the work meeting a holiday feeling... The welcome given to us by the Catalan Jesuit Province, the visit of Barcelona by night and the day in the middle of the meeting spent at Montserrat and Manresa – so moving for those who were discovering these important Ignatian sites – contributed to bringing us together. The common prayer also played its part, in the form of the Eucharist, listening to the Word of God, hymns and a brief recollection for us all together and sometimes shared, in the middle of the day.

It was a common concern that brought us together and motivated us during the meeting and for its follow-up. Fundamentally, one question pervaded the whole of our week: what worksites should we open or support in the field of Ignatian spirituality? What means should we use to be best able to face the challenge together?

How did our week go?

A first part was devoted to an overview of Ignatian research. The work started with the help of a text provided by Fr. Santiago Arzubialde, professor at the Comillas Institute of Spirituality, on “studies of Ignatian spirituality in relation to the evolution of post-conciliar theology”. In examining “the background to the dogmatic basis of the Ignatian corpus”, Santiago Arzubialde observes that in general theological research regarding Ignatian spirituality has tended rather to adopt a Christological approach,

giving priority in Ignatius's experience to La Storta rather than the Cardoner. According to Fr Arzubialde it is the split between a metaphysical theology, focused on creation, originally patristic, more oriental, and a Latin historical theology focused on salvation that constitutes the major challenge of contemporary theology, called upon to emerge from this separation of the two lungs of Christianity, the East and the West. This is why Santiago Arzubialde's research is centred on the relationship between the *Logos* and the *Pneuma* to find the hermeneutic horizon by which to read the Ignatian texts.

Taking up this proposal, we examined our own position with an initial discussion in small groups, focusing on the way in which we received it and how we personally perceived the theological challenges that Ignatian spirituality

is currently facing. This starting point was valuable to us since it made us aware that for a large number of us the fundamental issue is that of the relationship between theology and spirituality, and that it is no longer addressed to us in exactly the same way as it is expressed in S. Arzubialde's text: it is less a matter of searching for a theological back-drop to approach Ignatian spirituality, with the risk that a theological perspective would precede the study of the Ignatian texts and would influence the reading of them, than of honouring the dimension of experience inherent in the *Exercises* and in all spirituality, of showing a theological interest in it and of reflecting on the epistemological status of spirituality. Wouldn't both theology and spirituality be the losers without such reflection?

Thanks to the careful work of Carlos Coupeau, professor of spirituality at the Gregorian University, the second section of this first part enabled us to take stock of Ignatian research in the last ten years: almost 13,000 titles in ten years... This abundant production includes some important reference works – such as the *Historical Dictionary of the Society of Jesus* and the *Dictionary of Ignatian Spirituality*, both of which came out in Spain, and the important commentaries on the *Spiritual Exercises* by Santiago Arzubialde and Adrien Demoustier. The work on the sources focused mainly on the *Exercises*, with different editions and translations,

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concentrated on great Jesuits of the first generations or on the Society in its early days. The list of the many theses already defended or in the process of being written reveals a great diversity of fields of interest and shows how lively Ignatian spirituality is. In the choice of subjects, one finds a predominance of the *Exercises* and a tendency to examine the text rather than pastoral aspects. Carlos Coupeau was inviting us to pursue the reflection

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by questioning us on the tendencies which, to us, seemed most prevalent in Ignatian research, and on the gaps or challenges that we could see, observing that, as regards Ignatian spirituality, the current productions were “in the third person”, since they deal with Ignatius’s experience, rather than in the first person, reflecting

explicitly on our own spiritual experience and, lastly, formulating the radical question posed by such profusion: is this abundance of publications and translations a sign of dynamism or of inertia, repetitive and without great creativity?

Our journey through the Ignatian works continued the next day with a vast panorama of the various journals of Ignatian spirituality, put together by Eddie Mercieca. The presentation of these journals was based on a fresco in which Eddie Mercieca depicted an early period that saw the enthusiastic dissemination of Ignatian spirituality which had just rediscovered its wealth, a phase marked by the founding of numerous journals. This was subsequently followed by a second period, in the last ten years of the twentieth century, marked by in-depth study of what the *Exercises* are and are not, and by attention to the Ignatian inspiration of works and of the apostolate. Five challenges were then presented as being particularly important today: how do we effectively live according to this spirituality? How can we make this Ignatian tradition our way of being and of acting? How can we collaborate in the mission and reflect this collaboration? How can we form our collaborators better so that they dare and are able to propose the Ignatian spirituality? How do we interest the men and women of today in working with this spirituality?

Against this background the inventory of the Ignatian journals, whether they are academic, of a reasonable level but without an academic approach, or for the general public, led us to reflect on the use that we make of these journals and, therefore, on their usefulness, on the interest of a complementarity between two definable orientations, towards the sources on the one hand and towards experience on the other, on the difficulties encountered in the work of publishing an Ignatian journal and the solutions that can be found to resolve them and, lastly, on whether or not it is appropriate to reduce their number.

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Naturally this panorama made us collectively aware of a multiplicity of publications and the weight this might represent: are there not too many? *The need to retain journals at two levels – academic and more pastoral – and to respect cultural diversity* also appeared to us clearly. Should we perhaps seek a better communication between journals, an exchange of authors and articles?

***The different university or spiritual centres
in the countries we represented***

To continue this survey of Ignatian studies, we then made a journey – a marathon one might say! – through the different university or spiritual centres in the countries we represented. This phase, very important for the improvement of our mutual knowledge of each other's backgrounds or at least for acquiring a taste for them, brought out our cultural differences more clearly. It is impossible here to provide more than a rough and limited sketch of what we were able to perceive of this rich but impressive and complex diversity.

Our friends in *India*, in a multi-religious and multi-cultural context, shared with us their own approach which is pastoral rather than academic, with the concern for an integration of Ignatian spirituality with the Indian spiritualities.

In *Japan*, where work on the Ignatian spirituality is carried out both practically and academically, university research is under way that concerns the text and the adaptation of the *Exercises*. Three priorities can be identified in the Japan Jesuit province: the formation of experts in academic Ignatian research, the translation of the basic texts of Ignatian spirituality – the writings of Ignatius and modern works on this spiritual tradition – and the creation of an Ignatian library.

The *African continent* has no academic centres or any journals of Ignatian spirituality, but it does have several spiritual centres that offer retreats, formation courses for collaborators and workshops on the psychological and spiritual dimension. The overall orientation is very pastoral, with special attention to existential, social and political issues. Research is carried out in relation to specific problems or to the practical challenges to Christian, religious, social, cultural or political life that arise in Africa. It is within this framework that there are a few publications about the *Exercises* and discernment, about the Jesuits and about current burning issues.

Latin America has an impressive organization with its confederation of Latin American Ignatian spirituality centres; it provides formation courses on the *Exercises* and on community animation and produces pastoral documents, including audio-visual material. It deals with the articulation between the psychological and spiritual dimensions; it is concerned with inculturation, the place of lay people, especially women, and the desire to share Ignatian spirituality with the poor and the marginalized.

In *Europe*, there are many university institutes and spiritual centres, as well as journals. Apart from Great Britain where the situation is difficult because spirituality has trouble finding its place, both culturally and institutionally, the countries we represented offer certain riches. Spain has the university Institute of Ignatius of Loyola at Deusto, which works on the promotion of academic research on the history of St. Ignatius and the Society, Ignatian spiritual theology, anthropology, literature, language, art and iconography and organizes congresses and conferences. In Madrid, the Institute of Spirituality at the Comillas University is dedicated to the great masters of spirituality schools, with two focal points, the Ignatian and the Carmelite traditions. Its fields of research include systematic spiritual theology, the history of spirituality and biblical spirituality. Links with the *Manresa* Journal, on the one hand, and with *Sal Terrae* and San Pablo on the other, make publications possible. The Institute also has a structural

relationship with the St Ignatius Centre in Salamanca and the Carmelite Centre for Mystical Studies in Avila.

In *Rome*, the Institute of Spirituality at the Gregorian University offers a course for seminary formation teachers and a specialization in Ignatian spirituality. The courses fall into six main areas: systematic, biblical, historical, psychological-pastoral, theology of states of life and Ignatian. The specific input in Ignatian spirituality concerns reflection on the nature and proper methods of spiritual theology, on God's will and the "antonymous pairs of the Gospel message on holiness" such as action and contemplation, the discernment of vocations and the importance of spiritual direction. The theses and certain courses are published on the spot, as are the proceedings of symposiums; works by the teaching staff are published in the journal *Gregorianum* and in other European journals on Ignatian spirituality.

In *France*, the tradition of work on the Ignatian texts continues. We also benefit from the wealth of relations with other non-confessional research institutions. And we are lucky enough to have a very good library at the Centre Sèvres. The Department of Spirituality and Religious Life at the Centre Sèvres, which is not an Institute of spirituality that issues canonical diplomas but rather a section of the Theology Faculty, offers courses that range from the propedeutic level to research, following four main lines: the traditions and spiritual authors, spiritual themes, a fundamental reflection on the spiritual experience, the mystical language, the notion of "spiritual authors" and the history and theology of religious life. The Ignatian tradition has a privileged place in our proposals. We approach spirituality from different perspectives: history, the philosophy of language and fundamental spiritual theology in an interreligious context. We have regular contact with the Journal *Christus* and several publishing houses. The Editions Facultés jésuites of Paris also publish, as books and off-prints, the works of teachers and the proceedings of symposiums. Our current concerns are focused on the formation of younger members to pursue the work on Ignatian spirituality and on ways of supporting interest in academic work on spirituality and communicating its value and fruitfulness for the practice itself.

This long voyage through our different contexts led us to understand clearly how each one of us approaches Ignatian spirituality on the basis of and in our own context. We can thus speak of the same texts, of the same strong points of this spirituality, all showing an interest in the anthropology and in the psychological dimension of the spiritual experience, apparently using the same language, but in fact are we really saying the same thing?

Taking this dialogue further would oblige us to explain and to recognize important differences that deserve not to be ignored or concealed. A first encounter like the one we experienced enabled us simply to sound it out and to desire to continue our work.

The places-sources of the Ignatian experience

After this first intensive phase of exchanges, another journey to the places that were the source of Ignatius's experience took us to Montserrat for the conventual Eucharistic celebration, followed by a fraternal period in small teams on the impressive mountain of Montserrat. The descriptive sobriety of *A Pilgrim's Journey* does not allow one to imagine the unique scenery of these powerful, naked rocks, massed block on block or block against block, that dominate the valley and that one can easily imagine to have been Ignatius' Sinai! And, leaving Montserrat for Manresa, where we looked back and saw the imposing and beautiful mass of the Serrated Mountain – since that is the meaning of its name – how could we not understand why Ignatius was attracted by this desert while he was seeking the path to God? At Manresa, our gaze was captivated by what Ignatius himself saw – the rocks that were the framework of his life while he was doing his own first spiritual exercises, the little chapel of the hospital, the waters of the Cardoner, the Church of la Seu. Despite all that has disappeared of his times or that has been added by successive devotions, we could still glimpse enough of what he saw...

Workshops on four themes

The resumption of work the following day took the form of four thematic workshops to which we were allocated, as far as possible according to our main individual interests. The themes were: *sources and history of Ignatian spirituality, theology and the Bible, anthropology and psychology, mysticism and other religious traditions*. It was an opportunity for each one of us to share the state of our individual research work more precisely, but above all to make progress on the main purpose of our meeting: what should we work on in our field in the next ten years? How can we collaborate between ourselves and with others?

As regards the worksites to be opened or to continued, the workshop concerning the sources stressed the importance of these ancient texts, of their hermeneutic and critical approach, of the research work carried out in collaboration with lay universities, of the link between history and spirituality; work has already been done on Ignatius and his first companions, it is now important to extend it to the successive generations and generalates.

With regard to the *Exercises*, the work of critical editions, the study of the text, of its structure and its inner dynamic must be pursued and our findings and work methods must be shared in our different milieus; so too should the theological work on the *Exercises*; the history of the manner in which the *Exercises* were given in Ignatius's time and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is of great interest; a study of the vocabulary that is no longer accessible, of the inculturation of the *Exercises* and their adaptation, of their use in the context of interreligious dialogue would be necessary; many of us practise and teach spiritual direction: an exchange in this area would be fruitful; lastly, in Latin America, there is the question of a new directory of the *Exercises* for today.

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From the point of view of theology and of the Bible, it would be necessary to reflect on the biblical exegesis most appropriate for approaching the Ignatian text. And in the theological field, which path should be followed? There seem to be two distinct lines, as it were, geographically and culturally defined: one is European, concerned with discernment, whereas the other, Latin American, is concerned with its relationship with the present context; and if theology is done in the Gospels on the basis of the life of Christ, couldn't Ignatian theology be more centred on the life of Ignatius? Lastly, what does it mean to do Ignatian spiritual theology and on which theme should the definition of the theology of Ignatian spirituality be focused?

The last workshop proposed to concentrate the reflection on a single question – what can Ignatian spirituality contribute to contemporary anthropologies? – and to focus on becoming better acquainted with our conversation partners today – a secularized and agnostic culture, the various anthropologies and the path proposed by other religious traditions – as well as to examine the social implications of our spirituality.

YOUNG IGNATIAN RESEARCHERS

Several groups mentioned the *precariousness of Ignatian research and the importance of motivating and forming younger people, within the Society as well as more widely, in this field*. We all stressed the importance of group work and collaboration. It is quite urgent to develop collaboration with Africa, India and South East Asia. Links between researchers are already beginning, through a better understanding of each other's work – if only by the mutual reading of our respective theses with the exchange of commentaries they give rise to; a virtual platform might also be a good tool.

An opening to the future

Thus we gradually moved towards an opening to the future. The aim of the last phase of our meeting was to gather, in the form of a project to be implemented, the fruits of these four days. Personal time was given to each of us to answer the following questions: how would I formulate the challenge or challenges Ignatian spirituality is facing? What decisions should be taken institutionally to give an impetus to work on Ignatian spirituality? What kind of encounter do we want to have in three years' time? Where? With what method? Finally, how do I continue working with those who share my focus of interest?

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A rich and full listening session followed. We saw in it the resurgence of several major preoccupations concerning the challenges of our times: the issue of Ignatian formation, the growth and transmission of the Ignatian spirit; the issue of relations between academic research and pastoral practices and applications; the issue of dialogue with cultures and religions. But fortunately we did not seek to focus artificially on a single objective.

On the other hand, to ensure the exchanges and collaboration among Ignatian researchers a future and continuity, more or less everyone thought that an institutional support was necessary and that, while overseeing the wider opening of the Society, the Jesuit Provincials were an indispensable support insofar as it is they who allocate the missions and as the Society represents the largest group of Ignatians. We also feel strongly that something must be done about the journals for a better communication of feature articles.

As can be seen, far from discouraging Ignatian scholars from pursuing their exchanges and working together, the Barcelona meeting gave all of us the desire to continue. This is why we opted for a new gathering which, to allow us to create greater cultural openness, will be held in the summer of 2012 in Bogotá. The work will focus on the text of the *Constitutions* which, since it has been less studied than that of the *Exercises* should lend itself easily to a true comparison of the readings and usage as applied in our different cultural areas.

The team that prepared our days in Barcelona had entitled them: “*Ignatian synergies*”. This title gradually became a reality for us and at the same time a desire and a project, an opening to the future. The first step that we took together this summer calls for another and makes it possible. It must no longer be merely a common wish or the preparation of a better devised or shared work but rather a full opportunity for this: the next step, the step we desire to take in Bogotá.

Basically, aren't these “synergies” in the spirit of collaboration that Ignatius wanted when he said: “As regards the number of workers to send [on a mission], and as to the composition of the group”, as always on the subject of the mission with a concern for the “greatest divine service and the most universal good” and recommended as follows: “whenever possible, it would be good for them not to be alone, but at least two; and this is not only for them to help each other in spiritual and corporal matters, but also so that they may be able to produce more fruits in those to whom they are sent by sharing works in the service of others”?¹

¹ *Constitutions*, 7th part, chapter 2, Declaration F, n° 624, *Ecrits*, ed. M. GIULIANI, Desclée de Brouwer, 1991, p. 550-551.