

PILGRIMS OF IGNATIAN RESEARCH A GLIMPSE OF FUTURE STEPS

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The geographical distance covered by Ignatius teaches us this, at least: finding your way means that you have a great desire, but that doesn't keep you from long walks, deviations and stops. As the days go on, Ignatius finds more of what he is looking for, without being spared moments of confusion. It is notable that on this road, places of pilgrimage attract him: Aranzazu, as he leaves Loyola, to 'draw new strength'¹; Montserrat, where, surrendering dagger and sword to Our Lady, he opens up for the first time to a man about his projects.² Two places captured first of all, on foot, by a crippled man. Strength to carry out the desire does not come from arms but from vigils where the most fertile work is done, even though uncertainly, because it germinates during the night. It can only blossom because he tells someone else what decision this desire has led to. Is that all? One can also be surprised by what these pilgrimage places allow Ignatius to do: he goes where others go and he walks like anyone else towards the sanctuary where each one believes he can get what he is looking for. He finds in God alone the strength which allows him to go towards the most universal by way of these places frequented by all and sundry. In this way Ignatius will help others to walk towards the many places where God dwells, and each one will be able to raise up his own altar to God and bring his praise to the assembly of those who worship him in spirit and in truth.

That may enlighten us at the beginning of these reflections on the conclusions from our meeting and the way

ahead that can be glimpsed from it. I have no authority to do this, apart from the authority conferred by the doubtful privilege of being asked by an organiser, when on the point of catching a return flight, if you couldn't just put a few pages together. The main conclusions and the perspectives opened up at Barcelona have been collected in Sylvie Robert's article. This is as much as to say that these few lines don't pretend to do more than carry on the discussion and open it up to others. To sketch out the steps to come, in the direction of Bogotá, I can only share, without arms and after a few vigils, the reflections which this Ignatian pilgrimage has led me to make. What roads should we take, at what places might we stop, as we go on our way as researchers in Ignatian spirituality? We might well ask ourselves what it means to be researchers in this field. These questions will guide my steps and yours, if you will.

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***A change of objectives in a new situation
for studies in Ignatian spirituality?***

The meeting in Barcelona, happy and stimulating, also made us feel our precariousness. The shortened leg does not prevent walking, provided that strength is mobilised by a clear desire.

There is no lack of efforts to pursue the development of Ignatian spirituality. Translations based on critical texts have still to be undertaken in many languages and knowledge of the sources of Ignatian spirituality is waiting for a new generation of teachers so that the work already done may not be lost. The needs for formators in the Society are great, as with those close to us in women's congregations, and in the Church more generally. They call for men and women with experience, familiar with the Ignatian tradition. The work accomplished under Fr. Arrupe's generalate needs to be followed up. Saying that comes from a legitimate desire to extend Ignatian studies and promote them. The efforts made in the Spanish language, and in French and English, to enable us to have the texts of the first generation of Jesuits at our disposal, should be kept up for other languages. These

texts deserve to be known by the present researchers into Ignatian spirituality who belong to other cultural periods, and by the youngest generations in Europe and North America.

These enterprises of translation and transmission call for formation in the Ignatian tradition and require people versed in critical methods of editing texts, in history, and also in experiential knowledge of the spiritual life as Ignatius outlined it and as it is lived today. They depend also on an ability to translate not only linguistically but also culturally, which long stays in the European formation centres by Jesuits and other Ignatian people from Asia, India and Africa make possible. That assumes that knowledge of the sources, their history and their reception, remains alive in these centres. One might

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think the same thing of the historical tradition developed in North America. The conference on the history of spirituality held at Loyola this summer for scholastics, through the initiative of the Western Europe assistency, and the desire to intensify exchanges between the teachers of spirituality in Madrid, Paris and Rome, are new responses to this challenge of transmission. All the same, let us not forget that in this matter nothing happens without generous openness to the life of the Spirit in each one.

These challenges come from a logic of development which our meeting also wanted to see completed. Isn't it possible to extend to other periods the work done so far on the first generations of Jesuits? Recalling the 'Mercurian Project', for example, gave rise to the thought that similar projects could be carried out in the same way. *The centre of interest in studies of the history of spirituality would then move progressively towards periods nearer and nearer to our own.* Thus a history of Ignatian spirituality would be covered generalate by generalate. The riches of these periods considerably later than the foundation and the first movements of expansion of the Society are undeniable. That is proved by work done for decades on these periods, by Jesuits or others, in fields marked out more widely than by concern for the history of spirituality (history of the missions, in particular.) Nevertheless, a question presents itself: are the principles and the methods of this approach applicable to the whole history of Ignatian spirituality? Can critical editions, philological studies, knowledge of the context, and

commentaries be multiplied to all the stages in the history of spirituality, in as many monograph studies? Who has the means to undertake that? Is it the right road? What sources should be studies?

It is not the objective of such a meeting to lay down norms for research into Ignatian spirituality. Certainly, on first impressions, there could be an outburst of lines of research from our meeting, each university, indeed each person, chasing after a subject in all directions, without common directions emerging. Moreover, a series of oppositions was recalled, one by one: theology/spirituality, academic research/pastoral work, history/theology, sources/experience, not, however, always proving to be very much to the point. Likewise the list of topics for theses and research might make the need felt for orientations to be defined and repetitions avoided. How can we manage not to stop at this fact, which might end in discouraging us, and which would make us think the abundance of work more repetitive than fruitful? I venture to make a suggestion concerning the pursuit of Ignatian studies, trying to indicate a criterion concerning our relationship with the sources.

A criterion for going forward: a reflected relationship with the sources

The meeting in Barcelona gathered together particularly teachers and researchers in Ignatian spirituality. The need and the wish for this had made itself felt as a consequence of the meetings in Loyola and in Rome 2006, where the group which met, very different in nature and size, suffered a little from its great diversity. Research work gains, we know, from another kind of meeting, where advances, questions and resources can be shared. So Barcelona was timely, at a moment when the present teachers and researchers no longer belong to the generation of the renewal of Ignatian studies begun in the 1950s and maintained up to the 1990s, particularly around the meetings at Chantilly in France. Barcelona was made up of teachers and researchers in fields as different as theology, history, psychology etc., and in various positions, sometimes held by the same people (editors of reviews, teachers, formators, researchers.) So we had taken care not to invite directors of retreat-houses, spiritual directors, formators (novice directors, instructors etc.) as such, nor those whom one might call, with a touch of humour, promoters of Annotation 18 in these very varied ways. This

choice proved to be right, but it does not fail to put questions to the researchers themselves who met together in this way.

From the content of our discussions, in fact, it appeared very clearly that Ignatian studies cannot be limited to an academic approach which would exclude pastoral approaches. Because we were a majority of Jesuits, and

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the other participants recognised themselves as sharers in the apostolic aim of Ignatian spirituality, this link between 'study' and 'practice' was taken for granted. All the same, the debate came back to this point fairly regularly. How should we go forward? It might be said that academic meetings are justified, that they do not prevent mixed gatherings on other

occasions, and at other levels than an international meeting like those in Loyola and Rome. But one can go further. It seems to me that difference of approach does not imply difference in aim: all are seeking to 'help souls', let us put it that way. But it applies to the different ways of relating to the texts.

Before recalling these differences, the fruitfulness of a common work between these two approaches must be stated again. As was recalled on the first day, the work on critical editions and accurate translations since the end of the 19th century and all through the 20th has convinced us that the most rigorous exegesis has succeeded in leading to a renewal of ways of giving the *Exercises* and of life in the Society according to the *Constitutions*. The return to individually-guided retreats or the publication of the 'Complementary Norms' are only two examples. So there is no question of opposing too summarily 'academic research' and 'pastoral activities', even if it is easy to recognise here or there research too forgetful of spiritual experience or pastoral initiatives which use an Ignatian label to cover practices in contradiction with a tradition already rich in variety. It can be taken as certain that what is profitable from one side is profitable from the other, in a reciprocal way, without concluding thereby that everybody ought to be running in all directions. . The good philologist can admit that he is a poor director.

The difference seems to me to exist in a relationship to the texts about which we might hear more in future meetings. The use of sources is

legitimately different for the one side and the other. The director, taking advantage of a reliable text, of which he shows a confident knowledge according to Ignatius' wish, tries to meet the experience of the one to whom he is giving the exercises. Likewise the Jesuit, called to live according to the Constitutions, is never dispensed from receiving and giving these rules according to the charity which discerns circumstances of times, places and persons. For his part, the Ignatian exegete (forgive me this title) can devote himself to clarifying the meaning of a word, the dynamism of the text, while being careful that his reading is relevant to the Ignatian tradition. But it would be surprising if what he is studying should not lead him to the spiritual experience engaged in this text, whether that of Ignatius or that of the persons for whom he destined these writings. To put it another way, the dialogue between text and experience is valid for the two kinds of approach, according to their different emphases, to the very extent that spiritual experience is at the heart of what these texts are aiming at, of what they are writing about. Differences of approach, then, are equal in demanding sensitivity to a balanced relationship between experience and text.³

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Might not the deciding of directions for research, both for work on theses and for subjects pursued by researchers in their different fields, make use of this specificity of the spiritual text which links it with an experience? *It is not a question of turning the experience into a subject for study, but of integrating it into the criteria for the orientation of our research.* It would then be as useful for the 'exegete' as for the 'director'. It could be formulated in question-form: is my *approach* to the Ignatian text coherent with the aim of the *text* which I am using in the *situation* in which this research is taking place? The answer to this question calls for verification, which will, according to places, be a matter either for supervision or for academic dialogue, and all the better if at times the two come together. Turning the text into an object apart from these uses which are effective in the spiritual life of these people for whom it is meant cannot fulfil the academic and pastoral demands of Ignatian studies. This reproach has been heard addressed to studies made by non-denominational historians. Let us take the warning to the very heart

of our ways of thinking about our relationship with texts in studies of spirituality.

Might not the criterion of coherence between text, usage and situation allow us to get out of a false debate which is always likely to break out again when relationship to sources is expressed solely in terms of orthodoxy or fidelity to the letter of Ignatius? The 'creative fidelity' dear to Fr. Kolvenbach, can only come in taking into consideration a usage of the

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text in situation, which is the distinctive characteristic marking Ignatian literature.⁴ We need a fundamental hermeneutical reflection, as called for by one participant in the Barcelona conference. The regulation of 'creative fidelity' cannot be content with textual criteria which would fix the interpretation, any more than with dogmatic norms stuck on

outside the dynamism of spiritual experience. *According to Ignatius the texts do not exist alone and apart from their usefulness, from a 'profit' to be drawn from them.* The hermeneutic of spiritual texts is undoubtedly of a particular kind, but isn't it part of what the scriptures teach us about every human relationship which sees itself through the medium of the written word? The letter always runs the risk of being received or not received, but the one who carries it is guided by the hope that it will be received, which all the same escapes him. Putting it in Ignatian terms, the dialectic of letter and spirit is in play in this way between the 6th annotation of the *Exercises* and no.22, between the verification that what is given is well received and the benevolent and dialogued presuppositions of the one who gives towards the one who receives.

The problem of communication brought up extensively in our discussions can also be seen to appear here. It concerns the need to pursue both the dialogue taken up in Barcelona and those carried on through the (too?) numerous reviews. The problem is not first of all to ensure a 'popularisation' of research or a 'bringing up of the problems on the ground.' It is much more about the mutual enrichment from which the different users of Ignatian texts might benefit on the common basis of this connection between the text and a situation. Reviews, on paper or on the internet,

places where exchange takes place, like colloquia, might allow pastoral and academic approaches to listen to each other in a nuanced way. Indeed, the diversity of our cultural and spiritual situations call for an effort to be open and readiness for a change of mind on what makes questions pertinent, depending on places. What use would it be for the Centre Sèvres in Paris to decide what ought to be done in offering the Exercises in Vietnam? On the other hand, all can learn from one another.

To take Ignatian studies further, it is obviously not enough to do more of the same activities: critical editions, new translations exploration of periods not thoroughly studied, questions brought up by situations that have not happened before, inter-religious dialogue, etc. That kind of growth is in danger of not leading very far. One is tempted to lay down a pastoral principle regulating research and its diffusion: only to develop what is permitted by a congregation of historians. On the other side, researchers might be tempted to object in the name of methodological principle to any approach which would not be first of all a historical study of the text. The risk was seen in Barcelona: innumerable studies of the same numbers in the *Exercises* have not necessarily led to a better understanding of Ignatian spirituality... Our discussions and our history tend rather to show that Ignatian studies do not develop like that. For that reason it would be important to take an interest in the periods which have led to a return to sources in the Society and to see how and why they took place.

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If we want to find means to direct and develop research into Ignatian spirituality we must take into more account the situations in which the texts from Ignatius and from the tradition he began are read and received. Consequently the contributions made by textual criticism and by human sciences like anthropology and psychology are precious. In the same way historical studies can be helpful, leading us to see how other generations responded to the challenges which were put to them. To put it in another way, and more briefly, *let us ask ourselves about what motivates our relation with the sources.*

Researchers into spirituality.

Finally, the development of Ignatian studies puts the question of the objectives and the nature of these researches. What does it mean to be a researcher and a teacher of Ignatian spirituality?

Academic work, the common point which characterised all of us who met in Barcelona, depends on methods (philology, history, anthropology, literary criticism, psychology, theology etc.) and objectives which vary according to disciplines, cultural eras, periods, but also quite simply, the interests of the researchers. The work depends just as much on

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the institutional place from which it is done. A researcher and a teacher respond to requirements and criteria which vary according to countries and types of institution. In many western countries the problematic cannot be expressed in theological terms, for fear of interesting only very few

people or simply of not being accepted according to the university criteria. This is so in Great Britain, through the fact of attachment to public universities and to the resistance against Catholicism in this university tradition. In the same way, the scientific criteria controlling publication for researchers from American universities are not those in force in the pontifical universities. The impact on the nature of the work is real. It would be wrong to underestimate these elements, which determine the direction of research-programmes. Finally, the types of institution with which a researcher is in contact also come into play. An institute of spirituality which has a publishing house at its disposal may find it normal that its work consists principally in editing texts from the Ignatian tradition, while a centre linked to a retreat-house will be more aware of the need to form spiritual directors.

It is fitting, then, to pinpoint both the different kinds of institution, their standing in the different countries, and the functions carried out by researchers (teacher, editor, formator etc.) These institutional factors direct the objectives of research in a particular way. All the interests of research cannot converge on one single objective and support one another completely. This situation makes meetings like those in Barcelona useful, but also limits their scope. So other avenues for exchange of views need to be developed. Why not encourage the few major reviews of spirituality

with an international circulation to present annually a selection of articles coming from other linguistic and cultural areas? The Historical Institute of the Society would no doubt also have its part to play.

Finally, in what is the researcher in Ignatian spirituality expert? Aware as we are of the institutional diversity that we have just recalled, it is important all the same to situate the kind of competence that is expected. This question is part of the challenges of our situation, the challenge already mentioned of the articulation of academic and pastoral approaches, but also the challenge of our presence in the non-denominational academic world, or of its absence from our meetings.

We are convinced of the profound unity that exists in spirituality between texts and experience, as I have tried to show briefly, and it is clear to us also, following Ignatius, that nothing can be undertaken, in the domain of studies of spirituality as in others, without the free openness of the researcher to the life of the Spirit.⁵ How, all the same, can we situate what the specialist in Ignatian spirituality is expert in? In the introduction to the *Fable Mystique*, M. de Certeau declared, in the opening words, 'This book is presented in the name of incompetence.' Didn't Certeau mean to describe in this way the distance, real but often hidden, between what makes spiritual life, which is more in its mystical dimension, and what comes from studies of spirituality? The researcher's authority is first of all academic; it is not that of the spiritual man, experienced in the life of the Spirit and known as such by those who are seeking, like him, to live under the Spirit's guidance.⁶ This difference of authority reminds the researcher that he cannot make into an object of study the experience of God of which the spiritual person speaks. The studies of spirituality are attached to the effects of that relationship, to the way it is expressed, to the traces it leaves behind. It cannot put the relationship with God under the microscope, any more than, strictly speaking, theology can reduce God to be the object of its learning. The researcher in spirituality cannot lay claim to anything more than the conditions required for university work. The rest, for him as for others, comes as an extra.

But one cannot be content with this frontier between spiritual life and one's study, all the same. The call to holiness of life is addressed to every Christian. Anyone who chooses to lead his or her life according to a particular spirituality wants to take part in it. May we suggest this distinction, which will perhaps seem obvious or simplistic? We aspire to *a spiritual life*, an existence led in the Spirit and under his conduct. We study *spiritualities*,

that is, the complex of practices and images through which a person leads and understands his or her life under the guidance of the Spirit, and the coherence of which is transmitted by a figure recognised as an authority who passes on a tradition. In this way *Ignatian spirituality involves a complex of practices (Exercises, retreats, spiritual direction, Examen, etc.) and of images (good/spirit/bad spirit; enemy of human nature; powers of the soul...)* whose unity makes sense through Ignatius' own spiritual journey. We know, for example, that historically understandings of the way in which this unity is brought about have varied. Ignatius has not always had the same aspect and his spirituality the same emphases. One can re-read Rodriguez to measure how spirituality is modelled in history and cultures. The distinction between 'spiritual life' and 'spirituality' is more than a play on words. It is situated radically at the place where what we say and what we practise are called by the Gospel to correspond. *So one can hope that the researcher into spirituality will not live in a way that is disconnected from what he studies.* But this distinction, which calls us to vigilance and modesty, also allows us to think about and to live in a peaceful way our relations with our 'non-denominational' colleagues, if one can speak of them like that.

In distinguishing in this way, without separating them, object of study and manner of life (studying Ignatian spirituality/living according to the Spirit as a follower of Ignatius), one is given the opportunity to understand the difference in points of view which can exist between Ignatian studies as they have developed in the Church and research on Ignatian texts outside any approach to faith, without the assumption that Church membership is the ultimate mark of difference. Certainly, a good number of such studies may be at fault through their ignorance of fundamental elements which make up the very object of these researches. In that case, it is the academic criteria themselves which should disqualify these studies. But at the present time studies are available, sufficient in number and in quality, which, far as they are from the Christian faith, still throw light on the fundamental issues, perhaps in a new way. In the French-speaking era, the edition of the *Ecrits* (Writings) of Ignatius directed by Fr. Maurice Giuliani was shared with a team of Jesuits and two non-Jesuit specialists on the Society, Luce Giard and P.-A. Fabre. It is also to the last-named that we owe very recently the new edition of the Diary which, apart from any theological reasoning, shows to what extent the decision on poverty leads to the discovery of the anthropological foundation of the decision, where the relationship between

God and man comes into play.⁷ One remembers his intervention during the days in Loyola in 2006 devoted to the reading of letters requesting to be sent on mission ('Indipetae'), which gave the opportunity to question with new freshness the election and its being written into the Society's manner of government. In Spain, in Italy, in Belgium similar works enrich Jesuit research.⁸ Although a first impression of the strangeness of the suggestion might provoke distrust, this kind of approach makes visible the decisive contribution of Ignatian spirituality to conceptions of man and God. If one remembers the objectives given by the Complementary Norms to Jesuit intellectual apostolate, this association can only be fruitful. The absence of these partners in dialogue from our meeting in Barcelona invites us, perhaps, to consider the style of intellectual and interpersonal hospitality which we keep up with these researchers in good faith.

It is time to conclude. Ignatius at Montserrat left his weapons at the foot of Our Lady's altar. Which weapons of our academic and Jesuit research must we lay down, to receive a new impetus from God alone in studies of Ignatian spirituality, and to discover the many places where God dwells?

¹ Ignatius of Loyola, *Reminiscences* 13. References to Ignatian texts are taken from the French edition, Ignace de Loyola: *Ecrits*, ed. M. Giuliani et al., Christus, DDB, 1991. See *Saint Ignatius of Loyola Personal Writings*, ed. Joseph A. Munitz and Philip Endean, Penguin Books, 1996.

² *Reminiscences* 17

³ One might for example re-read the introduction to Ignatius' *Ecrits*, written by Maurice Giuliani sj, who is so well able to reconcile the two approaches.

⁴ Another example of the articulation of these two approaches is to be found in P.-H. Kolvenbach's studies. See, among others, the studies collected in P.-H. Kolvenbach, *Fou por le Christ. La sagesse de Maître Ignace*, Lessius, 1998

⁵ Cf. *Exercises*, Annotation 5, or *Constitutions* X [812]

⁶ See the qualities of the novice-director according to the Constitutions, [263-264].

⁷ Ignace de Loyola, *Journal des motions intérieures* (Spiritual Diary), P.A. Fabre (ed.), Lessius, 2007

⁸ See the works of B. Majorana (Università di Bergamo), A. Romano (EUI, Firenze), R. Dekonink (UCI, Louvain). On these perspectives of research and its interaction with studies of spirituality, see *Recherches de science religieuse*, Paris, January 2009, 'Nouveaux problèmes de théologie spirituelle', articles by S. Robert, P.-A. Fabre and P. Goujon.