

SPACE FOR THE SPIRIT ACADEMIC CENTRES OF IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

Hermann Rodríguez Osorio, S.J.
*Academic Dean at the Faculty of Theology
Pontifical Xavierian University of Bogota, Colombia*

Background

In the context of the Congress on the Spiritual Exercises held in Loyola, Spain, in 2006, a group of Ignatian spirituality specialists realised the value of holding an international meeting every three years. The aim of these meetings is to create space for communication among researchers on issues of Ignatian spirituality at world level. Five criteria were established for participants

Academic- Participants were expected to be university professors or researchers on Ignatian themes. The idea was to create dialogue among scholars producing knowledge in the area of Ignatian spirituality at international level.

International- All geographical areas of the world were to be represented and participants were invited from five continents

Limited- The meeting was to have no more than 50 participants and, as far as possible, they were to be under 50 years of age. This rule was not strictly applied but served as a guideline in selecting participants

Trilingual- The meeting was to take place in three languages (Spanish, English and French) without simultaneous translation. At least a passive knowledge of the three languages was assumed, so that communication could be lively and fluent.

Feeling and tasting- Care and attention was to be paid to the liturgy and other moments of prayer in order to “feel and taste internally” the Ignatian spirit. The meeting was not intended to be cold, dry and academic but instead infused with Ignatian charism originating in the methodology inspiring the meeting itself.

The Ignatian spirituality Group (GED) of the Southern European Assistency looked after the organisation of the meeting, which was held in Barcelona, Spain, from 24 to 30 August 2009. All the participants were accommodated at the San Felipe Neri Spirituality House in the heart of Ciudad Condal.

As part of the meeting, representatives of distinct regions and spirituality centres present shared their experiences of the state of academic work on Ignatian themes in their respective countries or continents. We attempted to capture something of the results of what was shared, knowing any report would be incomplete and risking omitting other significant experiences which it was not possible to share at Barcelona 2009.

Each of the countries or regions represented at the meeting received guidelines to assist them in preparing a report on their spirituality centre or area of influence. The report was to incorporate the following aspects – A short history of the Centre. Academic programmes. Publications. The most important contribution made towards promoting the study of Ignatian spirituality. The perspective this is done from. To what point they are conscious of this perspective and the reason they opted for this. The public for which this is intended. Areas of research and doctoral theses. Shadows and emptiness perceived. Guidelines and areas of interest for the future. Obviously not every centre responded to all of these questions, nor did all the regions have representatives providing a detailed report on all activities, but with the information we were able to gather and share, we have produced this article.

South Asian Assistency

Our companions from the South Asia Assistency, all of them studying here in Europe for a Degree or PhD in spiritual theology, shared their experiences with us. They first emphasised the enormous size of this Assistency, composed of 18 Provinces and two Regions, and more than four thousand Jesuits, including Sri-Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

It must be noted that the context in which Jesuits are working in South Asia is a pluri-religious and multi-cultural one, marked in addition by the economic poverty in which great part of the population is plunged. In February 2009, the Ignatian Spirituality Secretariat of the South Asia Assistancy was established. This Secretariat has filled with hope those in difficulty with the Spiritual Exercises and all those linked in some way to this dimension of the activity of the Society of Jesus in this immense region of the world.

Almost every Province has an Exercises house and has had some type of spirituality centre. As well as the pastoral ministry accomplished through the Spiritual Exercises, many provinces offer religious formation courses including the themes of vocation, personal and community discernment, spiritual direction, spiritual direction and counselling, religious leadership, spirituality and the Scriptures as well as courses in Indian spirituality. In a brief overview of the main spirituality centres present in the South Asia Assistancy, we would like to highlight the following -

Maybe the oldest and most important centre in India is the **Sadhana Institute**, founded by Tony de Mello in Pune in 1973. Later it was transferred to Lonavla, where it is currently under the direction of the India Provincial. It was initially conceived as a spirituality centre for preparing people in SpEx accompaniment. Along the way it has transformed into an Institute which attempts to integrate psychology and spirituality, without neglecting the interest it has had since its founding in integrating Christian spirituality with the spiritual heritage of India. Maintaining the Ignatian tradition while open to the signs of the times, it has managed to adapt to the current cultural context.

The **Atmadarshan Centre** in Patna, in northern India, offers a formation programme called AMR (*Awareness Meditative Relaxation*). There they work very seriously with meditation, relaxation and the relationship between spirituality and the body, responding to the need to seek response through spirituality for psychosomatic illnesses. The course they offer lasts four months.

Moreover, the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in **Dindigul**, in the Province of Madurai, has implemented a ten-month formation programme on different aspects of spirituality. The Spirituality Centres in Bangalore, Calicut, Calcuta and Pune have been offering Spirituality and Counselling since 1995.

Another important centre we would like mention is the **Institute for dialogue with cultures and religions (IDCR)**, in Chennai, dedicated to research on conflict between religions and cultures, seeking roads to dialogue and understanding. Affiliated to the University of Madras, it offers a PhD programme on comparative religions and cultures. This centre has a very important mission in the cultural and religious context of India.

The journal **IGNIS** was founded in 1972 and is currently edited by Paul Coutinho, who also directs the **Seminary of Ignatian spirituality**. The Seminary runs three-month courses open to Jesuits, religious and lay people, accompanying them in an in-depth study of the most important writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. The journal **IGNIS** publishes only articles related to Ignatian or Jesuit spirituality and is read in particular by Jesuits and lay men and women, especially by CVX, not only in India but in many other countries.

Recently two doctoral theses have been written, one in the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and the other in the Pontifical Comillas University in Madrid. The first is entitled - “*A comparative study of Bhagavad-Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the process of spiritual liberation*” and was written by Varghese Malpan, in 1992. The second is called “*The problem of the quest for confirmation in the Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*”, written by Kunjhu Kunjhu George Panikulam, in 2004.

With regard to publishing houses, we must mention Gujarat Sahitya Prakash in Gujarat and Vaigarai Publications in Madurai which publish books in English and Tamil on themes of Ignatian spirituality.

Perhaps the most important challenge encountered by the South Asia Assistancy is ensuring Jesuits write good articles offering in-depth analysis in a satisfying and accessible way. Members of the South Asia Assistancy at the Barcelona-2009 meeting expressed the need to work more as a team at the level of the entire South Asia Assistancy, trying to maintain and strengthen a special attention to dialogue between Ignatian spirituality and Oriental religions, without losing sight of the contributions of psychology and issues of justice and education in a reality such as South Asia.

*ensuring Jesuits write
good articles offering
in-depth analysis in a
satisfying and
accessible way*

ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT

East Asia Assistancy

The sole representative of this Assistancy came from Japan and has a PhD in spiritual theology. He is currently working in the University of Sofia. His experience following his return to Japan with a PhD in spiritual theology has been difficult. It is complicated for him to dedicate his time to studying Ignatian spirituality since he is so taken up by a mission requiring a more immediate task of announcement and evangelisation.

From a pastoral viewpoint, the creation of the **Seseragi** Spirituality Centre within the Theologate of Kamishakujii must be mentioned.

Perhaps the most significant challenge in the East Asian provinces is the formation of expert researchers in Ignatian spirituality, who can then adapt the Spiritual Exercises to the new social and cultural context they are working in. Response to this challenge requires serious research on the same Ignatian texts, in order to understand, from an academic perspective, their content and their inner dynamic. To make this possible, libraries specialised in the Spiritual Exercises and themes of Ignatian Spirituality need to be created in this East Asia Assistancy.

Africa Assistancy

The Africa Assistancy was represented by three Jesuits who are studying for their degree or PhD in spiritual theology in Spain or in Rome. Their participation was very active and they showed great joy in being able to share their reflections in this forum of studies on our spirituality at world level, especially knowing that Africa has often been absent from the great flows of knowledge, as much in a general theological and spiritual sense, as in dealing with Ignatian spirituality in particular.

At present there are four major institutions providing academic formation in Africa, two for Philosophy, Arrupe College in Harare, and the Saint Pierre Canisius Higher Institute of Philosophy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, and two for Theology, Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya and the Theological Institute of the Society of Jesus in Abidjan. However, in none of these are there, properly speaking, schools of Ignatian spirituality studies. They do run courses and there are Jesuits who dedicate time to academic work on Ignatian themes, but in Africa there are no centres completely and exclusively dedicated to these studies

The **Manresa Spirituality Centre** in Kimwenza, Kinshasa represents the greatest effort to animate reflection and publication in the subject of Ignatian spirituality throughout the continent. The Centre was founded in 1958 by Fr. Joseph Mols, a Belgian Jesuit who wanted to offer space for interior growth and support the mission of the Society of Jesus in the Congo. This centre has promoted many activities of spiritual and human formation throughout these fifty years. Although study and reflection are among its principle goals today, for many years it was dedicated solely to pastoral activities and as an Exercises house and a welcome centre for different groups. More recently the Centre has been able to offer spirituality formation to many people, many of whom are linked to the works of the Society of Jesus.

The fruit of these formation courses offered in the Manresa Spirituality Centre has been published in several books, among which we would like to mention, “*Servants of the mission of Christ*” in 1997, “*Sharing our spiritual and apostolic heritage*” in 1998, “*Discernment in times of crisis*” in 1999, “*Mary in God’s plan and popular devotion in the Congo*”, “*Pilgrims’ bread. Ignatian Eucharist and Spirituality*” and in 2001 “*Encountering God in everything. Praying in the footsteps of Ignatius of Loyola*”.

Furthermore, in different parts of the African continent books and articles have been published on themes which may be classified into three main groups - 1) Themes of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius and spiritual discernment. 2) Jesuits, their history, vocations and apostolic commitment. 3) Existential and socio-political issues. The bibliography is extensive and reflects dedication and an increasing interest in spirituality themes.

The Africa Assistency representatives shared some of the themes they consider priorities in reflection and study of spirituality in this continent. We indicate some of these.

- Studies on the Spiritual Exercises and how to adapt them to the African context, to help their people encounter an authentic experience of God amid their own religious contexts.
- Reflections on discernment and vocational accompaniment and the management of affectivity to help clarify the multitude of vocations in consecrated life emerging in Africa
- Work on peace, conflict resolution and quality governance and leadership, in the light of the Institute Formula, the Spiritual Exercises and

ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT

the Jesuit leadership model in order to offer solutions to the problems of Africa.

- Research on suffering, AIDS and other difficult realities in Africa today..

Latin America Assistancy

The spirituality sector in Latin American countries is directed by the Conference of Provincials of Latin America (CPAL) which offers a series of formation courses for Jesuits and lay people from all over the continent. Each year CPAL provides a workshop course for SpEx companions lasting five weeks, held each year alternatively in Loas Teques, Venezuela and San Miguel, Argentina. In addition, CPAL offers a workshop course in Community Animation for Jesuits working as superiors or preparing to do so in communities in the various provinces twice a year.

Also under the guidance of CPAL, Ignatian spirituality centres have formed a Confederation of Ignatian Spirituality centres (CLACIES) which has been holding a congress every two years for more than twenty years now. One of the projects the Spirituality Centres are committed to is the drawing up of a '*Directory of Exercises for Latin America*'. There are 45 Spiritual Exercises houses and 18 spirituality centres in the provinces of Latin America. These centres offer Spiritual Exercises courses of various durations, formation courses for SpEx companions, workshops on psychological and spiritual dimensions, spiritual accompaniment, ecological exercises and other types of formation courses for people to gain experience of the Exercises.

Furthermore the spirituality centres prepared material to support the Jubilee Year 2006 and the assimilation of GC 35. The most important journals are El Boletín de espiritualidad (Argentina), Itaici (Brasil), Cuadernos de espiritualidad (Chile), Apuntes ignacianos (Colombia), Mirada (Mexico), Diakonía (Nicaragua), Boletín de espiritualidad (Paraguay) and Cuadernos de espiritualidad (Peru). All the intellectual work and production of the distinct centres is collected in these journals.

Among the goals of the centres is the dissemination and profound study of Ignatian spirituality so that people approaching these centres can discover and experience its deep spiritual dimension. They also promote the study of the Spiritual Exercises and form people for SpEx ministry.

The most important challenges facing the Latin American centres are first of all the economic difficulties which prevent them accomplishing their objectives. They feel the need to systemise their own experience and dedicate more time to reflection and producing materials rather than the immediate response to the enormous demand for formation and pastoral activities. It is also desirable for them to establish alliances with university formation centres directed by the continent's provincials, so the formation they are offering in the spiritual sphere is supported by the academic centres of the Society, with university titles and the qualification of Ignatian spirituality formation.

*the need to systemise
their own experience
and dedicate more
time to reflection*

United States Assistancy

There were no representatives from the United States Assistancy at the Barcelona meeting this year, only one student of Italian origin preparing his PhD at Berkley University in California. It must be said however that in the United States the biggest project deserving mention is the *Institute of Jesuit Sources*, based at Saint Louis University, Missouri, and several Jesuit professorships and institutes associated with initiatives in the universities of the Society of Jesus. Thanks to the Jesuit Institute at Boston College two important congresses were held in 1997 and 2002, with the theme of Jesuits – culture, science and art.

Europe Assistancy

In Europe we have several Ignatian spirituality centres and many of these were represented at the Barcelona meeting.

France- The first centre we would like to describe is the **Centre Sévres** in Paris. This centre was established in 1974 when the Faculties of Theology of Lyon and Chantilly were merged together. Its mission has been to ensure formation for Society of Jesus students and others, especially religious men and women, for whom the Centre provides Baccalaureate

and PhD diplomas. It offers solid formation in intelligence of the faith, according to university methods.

Within the Centre Sèvres is the Department of Spirituality and Religious Life, which is not, strictly speaking, an autonomous centre or a Spirituality Institute but one of the five departments offering services to Parisian students. The Department's academic programme begins at preparatory level and continues to research level. The formation process is centred on four main exercises

- Traditions and spiritual authors
- Particular themes
- A fundamental reflection
- History and theology of religious life

No specific journal is produced nor any particular spirituality collection. However the collection *Cahiers Médiasévre* includes *Cahiers de spiritualité* and *Cahiers de Vie religieuse*. Research carried out by students at different levels contributes to the study of Ignatian spirituality. This is

developed around two fundamental SpEx – work on the texts and the enormous contribution from collaboration with lay universities working on Ignatian spirituality.

*the most important
challenge the Department
faces is the issue of
generational renewal*

Perhaps the most important challenge the Department faces is the issue of generational renewal and the need to be more present in lay universities

in order to produce more literature on Ignatian spirituality and attention to the formation of lay people.

Great Britain- The first point to be made on the state of research on Ignatian spirituality in Great Britain is that it seems that the literature and thoughts of Saint Ignatius have taken a longer time to reach English-speaking countries since the context is different to that of Catholic countries. John O'Malley was the Jesuit who achieved an international impact with his studies on the history of the first Jesuits and, consequentially, recognition in the secular academic world.

The efforts of the British province have been linked for a long time now to **Heythrop College**. James Walsh, S.J., founder of **The Way**, taught spiritual theology when Heythrop College was a University outside the British university system. All his successors except the current editor have also had

teaching posts there. Between 1982 and 1994 there was a Spirituality Institute in Heythrop, sponsored jointly by the Jesuit Province and the College of Regents. The Institute publishes *The Way* to promote the teaching of spirituality not only in Heythrop but also outside the College. The initiative which has survived over time is the Master of Arts in Christian Spirituality which Heythrop offers, sponsored by the College itself.

Spain- The **University Institute of Spirituality** within the **Pontifical Comillas University in Madrid** was founded in 1982 on the basis of an essentially academic proposal, offering different courses at various levels. Over the last few years it has consolidated a range of courses centred on a Degree course in Spiritual Theology. Also offered are a PhD in theology, the title of specialist in biblical spirituality, an MA in vocational discernment and spiritual accompaniment in Salamanca and the diploma in the Spiritual Exercises.

The Institute has no exclusive publication as such, but they do avail of different Spanish journals, mainly **Estudios Eclesiásticos** and **Manresa**. For books, they use the following publishing houses, according to the different collections –“Teología Comillas” Collection (San Pablo–UPC) and “Manresa” Collection (Mensajero- *Sal Tarrae*), as well as the spirituality publishing house of the Discalced Carmelites.

The **Ignatius of Loyola University Institute** is an interdisciplinary centre for scientific research and dissemination of the life and works of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus, set up on the occasion of the fifth centenary of the birth of Ignatius of Loyola, in San Sebastian (Spain) in 1992. The Institute is associated with the Ignatian Library in Loyola (Guipuzkoa) and is run directly by the Rector of the University of Deusto.

Also of note is the work done by Jesuits in the Tarraconense Province through the **Luis Espinal Foundation in Barcelona**. Their reflections and contributions regarding the study of Ignatian spirituality are published in the journal **Eides**.

Italy- The **CIS in Naples** was founded by Pietro Schiavone, S.J., in 1990 and he directed it until 2005. At the moment this centre is undergoing refurbishment and no academic activity such as courses or lectures are taking place. They publish a journal on an irregular basis, *Appunti di Spiritualità* (one or two editions a year) and *Ignaziana* (weekly), as well as *Mysterion*.

The *Italian Federation of Spiritual Exercises* (FIES), an ecclesiastic association founded to promote and disseminate the Spiritual Exercises in Italy, was founded in 1964 and is recognised by the Italian Bishops

Conference. Organised in regional and diocesan delegations, the Centre publishes two journals, the *Vento* and *Tempi dello Spirito* (quarterly). The journals can be found at - <http://www.esercizispirituali.it/index.htm>

The **Spirituality Institute of the Pontifical Gregorian University** last year celebrated its fiftieth anniversary (1958-2008). At the very start the Institute was the Chair of Spiritual Theology (1918, endorsed by Pope Pius X the following year). From the start, the Institute adopted a double orientation - theology and history, offering two cycles of lectures (of three sessions each).

Among the courses developed between 1950 and 1959 were the *Quaestiones aceticae de Exercitiis spiritualibus*. While the Faculty of Theology maintained the ascetic approach, the Institute opened gradually to the mystic issue.

Later the Degree course in Spirituality was established. The exercise around which the Institute's study plan is structured is the intensification of the Christian experience. There are two paths to attain the Spirituality Degree with a specialisation – the CIFS programme for Seminary formators and the specialised programme in Ignatian spirituality.

Among the Institute's publications, we must mention the Yearbook, which includes the text of the lectures, in the *Maior* and *minor* series, as well as the doctoral theses defended by the students of the Institute and the course notes for some of the courses, for internal use. The articles produced by the Institute are published in the *Rivista di Spiritualità Ignaziana* (Roma), *Apuntes Ignacianos* (Colombia), *Manresa* (Madrid), *Appunti di Spiritualità* and *Ignaziana* (Naples).

The Institute promotes university research on the history of Saint Ignatius and the Society, spiritual theology and Ignatian anthropology, languages and literature, art and iconography. Since 2005, they have also proposed research in the service of the original charism, researching, comparing and co-relating the purposes of the Institutional Documents of the first Society of Jesus and the social documents of the present Society.

Alongside these more renowned European centres, there are also works in the Europe Assistency run by Jesuits in Belgium, Sweden and Portugal, to mention only those represented at the *Ignatian Synergies* meeting in Barcelona 2009.

Conclusion

The wealth of studies on Ignatian spirituality throughout the world have been barely reflected in this article. Practically all the information contained in this report was contributed by participants involved in the work of the meeting held, as already said, in Barcelona in 2009. Undoubtedly there are many more efforts being made not recognised here and which we would like to know about in order to seek, as the meeting last August intended, ***Synergies*** in common projects. This path is only beginning and each one of the centres and researchers on Ignatian spirituality in every corner of the planet must bring their grain of sand in order to build together a common project to continue to illustrate the wealth of our spirituality, not for our own glory, but for the greater glory of God every day