

INTRODUCTION

OUR LIFE-STORIES OF CONTINUING FORMATION

Edward Mercieca, S.J.
*Secretariat for
Ignatian Spirituality*

This issue of the Review of Ignatian Spirituality, hopes that your schedule will permit you accept and take seriously Our Lord's invitation to "*Come aside to a place apart: rest awhile and be refreshed*" (Mark 6, 31). This we do as persons to love and be loved, to grow in our capacity to serve through our presence and work, and as Christians to deepen our faith in the Lord, rediscovering in each of our phases of life we are living, our deep vocation and mission.

Formation in life does not end with our last permanent commitment. Continually we are challenged to mature in all human dimensions: physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual. Difficulties on the way help us realise this more deeply and invite us to be conscious actors of our growth as persons and as apostolic instruments. What we initially experience as losers, hard times, limitations, comes to be a gift, a grace donating us a new vision of life and things. Some time ago a provincial of a religious congregation commented in an international meeting that a major superior who does

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not take seriously 'on-going formation' has no right to receive new members in his or her order.

Still even if the scope of continuing formation is as wide as life itself with its normal setting and unexpected surprises, the place and kind of living and working are the chief places of continued formation. Our growth takes place naturally and accompanies us all along our personal history. In this sense, awareness of these interior and exterior movements and changes is vital and remains so, all through our life cycles. It is the key to ongoing formation.

In our human spiritual journey we are invited to develop along the way the capacity to be aware of:

- What our senses are attracted to,
- Towards what our interior movements tend to push us,
- Our motivations and deep desires giving meaning to our plans and actions,
- Our talents to be discovered and developed integrating them in our lives,
- The challenge to accept more peacefully and naturally our limitations,
- etc. etc.

Through the years, these conscious efforts and practices come to be part of our way of being and acting, a sort of sixth interior sense. To be aware at the right time of these happenings in us facilitates growth. It is the secret to grow in consciousness making good use of our deep desires, so intimately linked to on-going formation.

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To learn to distinguish our common or rather superficial desires from those deeper, which usually have the last word in defining our identity and our way of life, is not something to be taken for granted. Deep desires help us discover God's desires for us along the way life leads us.

The internal dynamics, processes and the role of accompaniment, experienced by the person doing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, have

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a lot to do with awareness of what the Spirit is leading and doing, in our pathway to find God in all things and all things in God.

To be attentive to, to discover or rather to re-discover, to search, to learn how to learn, to make use of new callings and circumstances; reflect the same deep dynamics that continuing formation implies. It is “learning to learn” in and from life itself.

< *Rekindle the gift of God that is within you* > (2 Tim. 1:6). We are urged to have an increased awareness and audacity to grow in our servant leadership to do our share in Christ’s saving mission. We are responsible for our own continuing formation. Our responsibility is linked to our commitment to serve well the People of God through pastoral ministries and through our own faith testimony.

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This said, there may be outstanding moments and times of personal and spiritual renewal that invite us to re-read and renew our deep lives and commitments, together with at the same time acquiring and integrating ways of coping well and creatively with the new challenges according to needs, places and personal histories. We talk of Sabbatical Time.

Some common elements of these renewal experiences are: helps to get more in touch with one’s personality and history, theological and pastoral updating, deeper and more regular spiritual accompaniment, living in a personalised form the Spiritual Exercises, sharing and participating with others in a group setting, getting new insights into life and future commitments. This intense process of formal continuing formation pretends to facilitate growth towards human, spiritual, intellectual and apostolic maturity.

Reading is a privileged at hand instrument we all have access to, adapted to our free time, rhythm and interests. That is why in this issue, we are including the up-dating of Ignatian Spirituality Reviews, some twenty of them, present in all continents.

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After an introductory article on 'Learning to learn' specifying what continuing formation is and is not, readers of this issue may share life experiences or testimonies on on-going formation in and through life, coming from persons within different socio-cultural contexts.

You are invited to be more aware of your continual growth in life and to dare plan more consciously your personal and communitarian needs together with your possibilities to serve better at this stage of your life.