

CIS

Promotio Iustitiae



Faith that does Justice Justice that seeks God

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Fernando Franco SJ
Edward Mercieca SJ

The Spirituality of the Social Apostolate

Jean-Yves Calvez SJ

Theologian's Reflections

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Claudio Burgaleta SJ
Jorge Costadoat SJ
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Jean Ilboudo SJ

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Faith that does Justice
Justice that seeks God

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INTRODUCTION

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“Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down saving justice, let the earth open up and blossom with salvation, and let justice sprout up with it” (Is 45:8.) This issue of the Review of Ignatian Spirituality is a collaborative venture of the Secretariats for Social Justice and Spirituality at the Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome. It responds to a double dynamism: one from the Social Justice Secretariat, whose aim is to find, to deepen and to explain the motivation and the Spirit which guides and accompanies its action on behalf of the poor and marginalized; and the other from the Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality which aims to be faithful to the Lord Jesus in promoting the faith and justice which that same faith implies. Social action without a profound spirituality turns into ideology, ends up discriminating and becomes a severe hindrance in expressing the gratuity of evangelical love; a Christian spirituality which does not lead to a conversion to the reality in which Jesus is incarnated and to a greater commitment to humanity runs the risk of individualism as well as a distancing from the Ignatian ideal of “loving and serving in all things” [Spiritual Exercises 233] and of turning into self-absorption.

Today we—all the Ignatian collaborators in Christ’s mission—are living together a moment of grace when the dialogue between faith and justice, culture and spirituality, not only has become possible and cordial but is felt to be a necessity. As never before the social centers of the Society of Jesus and the persons caught up in the area of social justice desire and are asking for more spirituality. The Spiritual Exercises are an explicit reference for and energizer of their

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actions and programs. In a complementary fashion, retreat houses, as well as spirituality centers and centers for faith and culture which are springing up everywhere, are trying to integrate spirituality with life in all its dimensions, and, starting from the experience of God in Jesus Christ, tend towards committed action. The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life, now practiced on all continents, are an obvious manifestation of this.

The two aspects of the “social” and the “spiritual” are purified in dialog and in shared action; they enrich and challenge each other mutually. Whenever one of these two sides monopolizes the apostolic action of the Society and does not allow itself to be challenged by the other it cannot reach its full potential and the evil spirit gains strength. The intersection of both apostolic forces becomes typically Ignatian when the tensions are discerned in the Lord, not giving up “seeking and finding” a faith that does justice and a justice which searches for God.

Three sections form the body of this issue of the Review of Ignatian Spirituality: first, the article, “The Social Apostolate and its Spirituality” (Jean-Yves Calvez, S.J.) gives the ensemble a theoretical and historical framework; next, various reports from all the continents inform us of the lives of several individuals today who are committed to social justice and their faith experiences; and finally, a Theological-Pastoral Reflection by experts in diverse cultures reflects upon the above-mentioned personal narratives.

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Reading slowly the 14 narratives, one feels like bowing before holy ground, before many burning bushes (Ex. 3, 1-5). These narratives recount literally the history of many burning lives of Jesuits and lay persons; lives spent faithfully and wholly for and with the poor. It seems preposterous to interpret this ‘burning’ in exclusively psychological terms, an interpretation that often indicts the activist as irrational, and unbalanced. The burning these pages speak about is one that gives warmth, life and light, even if, at the end, in the act of giving life it consumes itself. It is the burning that made visible to Moses the living God, the burning bush that calls us to a life of union with God and the poor.

THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE AND ITS SPIRITUALITY

THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE AND ITS SPIRITUALITY

Jean-Yves Calvez
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Paris

What is Innovative after the Council?

The commitment to the social apostolate is not a recent invention in the Society of Jesus. From my own experience, as a young religious, right after the war, I knew a large number of Jesuits both young and old, committed to the poor, working in prisons, with migrants, with nomadic peoples, with exploited workers, with women domestic workers. Generally these were men of profound spirituality and indefatigable devotion. I had the chance in 1947 to meet Fr. Alberto Hurtado of the province of Chile whom the pope has lately included in the catalogue of saints: I immediately understood the meaning of the life of this companion; he was so enthused to respond to Christ's wishes for him, with a marvellous spontaneity. What was perhaps new - surely not absolutely new - in recent times following the Latin-American Episcopal conference of Medellin (1968), the Bishops' Synod *Justitia in mundo* in 1971, and Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1975), is the insistence on the demands of justice – a word which cannot simply be conflated with charity – the insistence also on “structures” to be reformed, to be transformed, therefore the insistence on action which would have an effect on the institutions. C.C.32 said that “the structures of society are among the principal formative influences in our world, shaping people's ideas and feelings, shaping their most intimate desires and aspirations; in a word, shaping mankind itself. The transformation of these structures in the interests of the spiritual and material liberation of fellow human beings is intimately connected to the work of evangelisation.” (Decree 4, n.40). It is important to note that Fr. John-Baptist Janssens, Superior-General right after the war years, had strongly insisted in his Instruction on the social apostolate

(1947) on the importance of action on structures in the social apostolate. This concern was for him most crucial in defining this apostolate.

The Response of the Jesuits

I must add, even if there are opinions to the contrary, that the Jesuits have committed themselves rather modestly on these lines which are specific to their call. Decree 4 of G.C.32 had other concerns which partially led in another direction, which attracted much attention: the concern to incorporate the social apostolate into *all* the apostolate of the Society of Jesus. This is what both Fr. Arrupe and Fr. Kolvenbach sought with much effort to achieve, this is what both G.C.33 and G.C. 34 have supported. G.C.32 insisted that “The review of our ministries and the deployment of available manpower and resources must pay great attention to the role in the service of faith and the promotion of justice which can be played by our educational institutions, periodicals, parishes, retreat houses and the other apostolic works for which we are responsible. Not only should our structured activities undergo this review, so should our individual apostolate.” (Decree 4,n.76)

G.C.32 said that “all our work (n.29), all our life is involved in this process. Our life and our style of living were clearly referred to and through the spiritual aspect of our commitment. One hoped, at the 32nd General Congregation for a conversion of our ways and styles of life. “Alterations are called for in our manner and style of living so that the poverty to which we are vowed may identify us with the poor Christ, who identified Himself with the deprived.” (n..48)

On the whole from what I know, I can say that much has been achieved over the past thirty years. The number of Jesuits in works which bear the mark of G.C. 32 has definitely grown. Even considering the decline in numbers in certain regions, the number of Jesuits in these areas of work has been definitely larger than in previous times. Today the presence of Jesuits in poor environments, shanty towns, suburbs, and *favelas* is definitely more prominent than ever before. In all kinds of meetings of the Society in all its provinces, time and space are dedicated to those who are socially committed to take stock of their spiritual experience. Many Jesuits have friends among the poor – as Ignatius wished from the very beginnings of the Society.

What has motivated the Jesuits?

The fundamental *inspiration* for this commitment for the vast majority of us, and also that which inspired G.C.32, in its decisive word, marked by the documents of the Church in the post-conciliar era. “The Gospel demands a life in which the justice of the Gospel shines out in a willingness not only to recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights. It demands an openness and generosity to anyone in need even a stranger or an enemy. It demands towards those who have injured us, pardon; toward those with whom we are at odds, a spirit of reconciliation.” (Decree 4, n. 18). And “there is no genuine conversion to the love of God without conversion to the love of neighbour and, therefore to the demands of justice” (n.28).¹

*justice is always the
first step
towards love*

Have there been any changes in this regard? I think one must note that there could have been a temptation to tamper with or sweeten this call when this was introduced in the Church, perhaps controversially sometimes, the theme of the preferential love for the poor, alongside the preferential option for the poor. But Fr. Kolvenbach has reacted specifically at the start of his office as General Superior of the Society, against any abuse that some could have been made through the use of the first formula, which is *softer* and preferred for that reason. Fr Kolvenbach maintained that it is no less demanding, and that justice is always the first step towards love; he has held this position firmly notwithstanding some criticism.

In relation to the “Spiritual Exercises”

The question put to me is about the relationship between the commitment to the social apostolate and the major traits of our spirituality – let us say of the spirituality of time *immemorial* of the Society of Jesus, which we receive specifically through the Spiritual Exercises. We know how much this was present in the documents of G.C.32, it brought together the essential elements of its message, in the true spirit of the *Exercises*: “To promote justice, to proclaim the faith and to lead others to a personal

encounter with Christ are the three inseparable elements that make up the whole of our apostolate” (n. 51).

Definitely Fr. Arrupe had to maintain this deep orientation, against some secularising tendencies which manifested themselves at times, in his letters and major conferences on the spirituality of the Society of Jesus especially in his letter: “For an authentic integration of the spiritual life and the apostolate” (1976), his Prayer to Jesus Christ our model ‘I have discovered that the ideal for our way of proceeding was your way of proceeding, etc...’ (1979) and his conferences “The Trinitarian inspiration of the Ignatian Charism” and “Rooted and Grounded in Love”, in 1980 and 1981.

The most frequent reference made by the Jesuits engaged in the social apostolate in recent times to the *Spiritual Exercises* has undoubtedly been to the contemplation of the Incarnation. They have referred less frequently to the Kingdom or the Two Standards (the *programme* of the Lord). Definitely one can refer to humanity before the Incarnation, in a way rather flatly to underscore God’s universal concern for all men and women. The Jesuits very often have gone much further, insisting on all that is miserable and violent in our world, according to the terms used by Ignatius : men “at war”, people “who are crying”, “sick”, men “who are dying”, surely alongside others who are at peace, in good health or have a whole life ahead of them (this same contrast is also part of the picture). Men who are “blind”, and men who “beat up” their neighbour, who “kill”, and thus go “to hell”. After all it is to these men to whom we are called – just as the Word was sent to them - and this is the social apostolate, in the wider meaning of the term, the call to the social apostolate is definitely part of all these human situations.

The response is, on the other hand, *love*, according to St Ignatius in his Contemplation for obtaining Love: effective *love*, love which “works”, love which is “reciprocal communication”, which is precisely at the root of all the social apostolate. I think that these characteristics have been truly present in the Jesuit social apostolate since 1975.

Stages

Have we known different successive stages since the great awakening of the 32nd General Congregation? It seems to me that at a certain time we gave too much importance to the differentiation and distinction

between spiritual and social apostolate, as “sectors” of the apostolate- and that a particular Jesuit is part of this and not of the other, or he is dedicated to the first but not to the second at the same time, or to the second but not to the first. Definitely there is an element which plays a part which is the demand for a certain specialisation (this was not less true before G.C.32.) but we used to distinguish between a specialisation in the field of education and a specialisation in the field of the social apostolate, seldom making distinctions about the spiritual apostolate except in the case of those who were specifically assigned to retreat work in our house for retreats or those who were spiritual directors in seminaries.

Certainly there have always been some tensions between the spiritual aspect and the social aspect of the apostolate – notwithstanding the fact that the inspiration of the social apostolate is evangelical. In a short biographical note, five years ago, I noted this about my own itinerary: “I have often asked myself questions about the meaning of the social apostolate and the study of the social questions in particular especially in 1965-66. The Second Vatican Council which was nearing its end had inspired and generated questions; one can also say destabilised the established order. It seemed to me that the essential element of the social apostolate in its various forms consisted in helping one’s neighbour from the point of view of his relationships, even the institutionalised ones, helping one’s brothers together with others to live as brothers, brothers of Jesus Christ [...] Some types of social apostolate which did not put one in direct contact with men and women, which help others only indirectly (e.g. research on some models of society) can be problematic sometimes. Interpersonal communication, through “conversation”, a term which seems to me essential to St. Ignatius, is truly at the centre the rest is ‘indirect’”. I would insist: “However this indirect aspect is necessary, I have never been able to escape this conclusion each time that I put these questions to myself”. “There are on the other hand some illusions, I would add, that the idea of immediate communication does not hold water”.² I have reflected often and at length on these questions and definitely there are no simple solutions.

There is, in a way close to this argument, the opposition which one can make and that is often made between the “spiritual” need, the spiritual hunger of the world, and the “material” or social needs, important but not primary, some might say except in exceptional cases. We have definitely become more sensitive to this opposition after a long period of time when we were not. There are definitely the extreme cases which are not easy to

unravel. But the decisions in a number of situations are never easy. And the Society necessarily always lives these tensions.

Different forms and different problems

If one takes the term social apostolate in its wider meaning to include such activities as the direct commitment, through advocacy (defence of those who are suffering), the organisation of pressure groups in the struggle for justice, certain research work, formation of leaders, one cannot but help note big differences in the difficulties encountered by those engaged in one field or the other. The first type of activities lead to a politicisation, let us take the word in its most pejorative meaning, that is more concern for the means rather than the end.

This can also lead to ideologies which can often characterise political action. At the end of the 70's in several regions of the world it was noted that many were "burnt out", a condition of both physical and psychological fatigue and eventual spiritual emptiness which knows no

rest or retreat. One burns the candle at both ends and quickly one is empty of all resources. This is not only true of the social apostolate, but definitely in the social sector it has often been observed.

In the intellectual field of this apostolate one encounters the same problems as in any other intellectual work, mainly in the areas of research, to which Fr. Arrupe had previously drawn our attention. A distancing from concrete experiences and a satisfaction from the intellectual mastery of things becomes merely pretentiousness.

Research, one must note has changed in nature in the social apostolate. There was a time right after the war and the era when *development* came to the forefront as the major problem, as well as the *revolution*- when one felt capable of offering solutions for the transformation of "society". The awareness of the complexity of social realities invites us today to more modest responses. But we are definitely less stimulated. And

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perhaps the creative contribution of Jesuits towards a Christian social thinking has decreased. The social apostolate has focussed mainly on the participation through lived experiences, and the accompaniment of persons in their life situations without necessarily hoping to transform these situations. We note that we have fewer illusions but we are also less present in those projects and proposals that are linked to structures in society.

The centres such as the Centre de Recherche et d'Action Sociale, or CIAS in Spanish, have sometimes suffered, alongside a distancing within the same provinces to which they belong, when they should be playing a leading role in motivation. Fr. Kolvenbach has recently recognised this type of difficulty and asked insistently that we not give up.

The most important problem

Observed over a long period of time – of about fifty years - the social apostolate in the Society of Jesus, one can conclude, has had an uneven history. On the contrary, for the Society it has been a difficult yet essential enterprise. In recent times one has noted failures as well as regressions. The texts recently published by *Promotio justitiae* bear witness to the fact that the various interventions made by Fr. General Peter- Hans Kolvenbach in the different meetings of Provincials as well as of Procurators, or of coordinators of the social apostolate. We are affected by the small number of vocations in various regions; the effect of this on the social apostolate is very noticeable. We also feel the effects of the dominant pastoral tendencies in the Church today that are often hardly favourable to the social apostolate and we have to be aware of this.

But the most important problem seems to be a question of integration, in the strongest meaning of this term. We must avoid a concept which renders the social only an *ethical* dimension of Christianity, something lateral, “deduced” from that which is essential, even though of great importance: this direction is not convincing and one often ends up “tiring oneself” a ending up worn out. One must, on the contrary, make the social a theological dimension, indeed an integral part of theology, a dimension *of the faith itself* as a commitment to God which demands a commitment to the neighbour and cannot be separated from it. “Slightly less than a god” this man, this brother according to the Psalm! One can therefore distinguish between a spiritual apostolate and a social apostolate as (relatively) different

specialisations, but it is important to recall that we give ourselves to God though our giving of ourselves to our neighbour – and there is no true self-giving to God (“whom you do not see”) without the gift of self to one’s neighbour (“whom you see”). Ethics is fashionable, but it is not always considered as a dimension of the faith itself, in such a situation we must never be satisfied with the ethical view point.

It is clear that the demand for integration which I have emphasised has its effects on the “spiritual” apostolate, which must always include, intrinsically linked and always present, the “social” dimension – the spiritual apostolate as often understood nowadays does not always include this dimension. What else but to invite a full and deeper sharing within the Society and among companions.

¹ “Hence fidelity to our apostolic mission requires that we propose the whole of Christian salvation and lead others to embrace it. Christian salvation consists in an undivided love of the Father and of the neighbour and of justice.” (ibid.)

² Jean-Yves Calvez, *Compagnon de Jésus: Un itinéraire*, Desclée de Brouwer, 2000, p.29-30

NARRATIVES

Social commitment and faith experience

MY EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL APOSTLESHIP

Álvaro Alemany

Biographical Profile

I was born in 1947 in Zaragoza, Spain, into a middle class family which lived out its Catholicism in a natural and traditional fashion. My father, a medical doctor, dedicated many hours to volunteer service as a member of Catholic Action and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. My three brothers and I were all educated in Jesuit schools. When the oldest among us joined the Order, the rest of us also dreamed of becoming Jesuits some day; and, one after the other, each one began to hear, and act on, the call to join the Order, despite the fact that our mother's health began to decline as a result of our going away.

I, being the youngest, joined the novitiate at Veruela in 1964. I studied Humanities for a year in Salamanca and then did two years of philosophy in Munich, Germany, after which I longed to embark on an education in the sciences. I studied mathematical science at the University of Zaragoza and, before the end of my final year there, had joined a Jesuit community in the neighbourhood of Picarral (a working-class ghetto in Zaragoza) to which I still belong. We are a "Workers' Mission." Some of our companions are involved in salaried manual labour; others are in charge of pastoral duties in the parish of Our Lady of Bethlehem. For my part, I worked as a teacher of mathematics for 25 years in a Catholic elementary school in the same neighbourhood.

Since I didn't want to give up the work I was doing there, I requested permission to study theology through a distance learning programme associated with the University of Comillas. I was ordained priest in 1978. I then spent 13 years as parish priest, during which time I also assisted in the politics of the local unions and participated actively in the Neighbourhood Civic Association. In 1999, I stopped teaching

MY EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL APOSTLESHIP

in the elementary school to join a team of Jesuits at the Pignatelli Center, an organization with a long history of service in the name of faith, culture and justice. But in 2004, I returned to my old work in the parish.

I have participated in numerous Social Action meetings and also meetings of the Spanish and European Workers' Missions. From 1992-99, I was coordinator of Social Action in my Province (Aragón), and for eight years now I have coordinated the Inter-Provincial Commission for Social Action for all the Spanish provinces. I have played an active role in the initiatives of the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus and was a participant at the Naples Congress in 1997.

Watershed Moments

Ironically, it was to be in Germany, while studying philosophy, that I discovered the world of the Spanish working-class, since there were large numbers of Galician and Andalusian immigrants (not to mention Turks, Yugoslavians and others) who were working there in wretched conditions, far from their families, supplementing the precarious Spanish economy with their remittances to their loved ones back home. It was then that I learned to distinguish the hidden mechanisms at work within our historical and social reality, perpetuating structures of inequality, injustice and poverty. I also witnessed radical Christian living there such as I had never seen before; for example, the case of Marcelino, a Spanish diocesan priest, an intellectual and mystic, who lived in the hovels of the working-class ghetto while completing his doctoral thesis.

When I returned to Spain to study mathematics in 1969 during the final years of the Franco administration, our Spanish universities were in a feverish state, politically speaking. My companions and I were interested in harmonising devotion to scientific culture with our concern for the student and workers' movements, our commitment to universal brotherhood and the promotion of social justice as a sign, anticipating the promised Kingdom. At this time, many of my preconceived notions and conventional perspectives began to crumble, but I also learned that not all crises are necessarily negative. I began to value the autonomy of what is "human" as distinct from religious considerations, and came to think of this as being ultimately a gift from God, not as opposed to the Divine Order. The call to a more intensely radical approach burst forth from the external historical

circumstances and the internal psychological evolution I was experiencing. At this point, some of my colleagues (not all of whom were Christians), and I, felt compelled to make significant commitments in word and deed to the service and welfare of the poor in a particular working-class neighbourhood. We searched for a “more” (magis) that persisted through time and through all our incongruencies.

The Political Dimension

Once in Picarral, I began to experience in a more intimate fashion the importance and limitations of the struggle to change the political and social structures of our society. My contact with local political figures filled me with profound admiration for their capacity for self-sacrifice and service. But the diversity of political strategies for achieving even a minimal improvement in human rights, coupled with the defects of our still nascent democracy, made it all too clear that there was a systemic resistance to immediate radical change, and that we would have to redirect our attention to long-term goals. My experience in politics has come as a result of my activism at the grassroots level; namely, my association with the labour unions and other neighbourhood organizations. It wasn't long before I noticed the corrosive forces stemming from the temptations of power, individual enrichment and favouritism, the very issues that plague humanity in a more universal sense. To really bring about a true change of heart in individuals and political systems, it is necessary to make a slow and deliberate effort to transform the existing culture. We, as Christians and Jesuits, must always refer back to our personal closeness to Jesus Christ among the poorest of the poor; otherwise we will succumb to the temptation of converting our pastoral service into just another mechanism of domination.

we must always refer back to our personal adhesion to Jesus Christ among the poorest of the poor, if we are to avoid the temptation of converting our pastoral service into just another mechanism of domination

MY EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL APOSTLESHIP

Notes on Exclusion

The economic development and modernization of the country, facilitated by the shift to a democratic system and our reintegration into Europe, have done little for the weaker sections of the population who have been quietly excluded from the general rise in the standard of living.

While carrying out my functions in the community I have witnessed directly the dark side of this scenario: how those who are jobless for extended periods are blamed for their situation; how rapid technological transformations are forcing many into early retirement in various industrial sectors, to say nothing of the ravages of drug addiction among the underclass, the gross exploitation of the adolescent and youth labour forces, the struggles of the elderly trying to sustain themselves on measly pensions while dealing with debilitating physical or mental illnesses, and, in recent years, the increasing number of immigrants who live and work in wretched conditions, deprived of their rights, like those Spanish emigrants I remember from my days in Germany. Our Jesuit community, in attempting to combat or relieve these social ills, does not concern itself so much with the foundation of new organizations and institutions as with cooperating with organizations that have already sprung organically from the neighbourhoods themselves. Many of my companions do intensive work in centres that work to intervene in social and work-related activities among the local youth, with those who are most in need and who find themselves disenfranchised vis a vis the mainstream. I am personally involved in a centre where I make use of my skills in mathematics to train adults in this subject, especially women, hopefully empowering them and instilling at the same time a sense of pride. This is the way in which, as a Jesuit community, we are in contact with the marginalized groups in our city. It is true that we are often overwhelmed at the thought of all the work that remains to be done, and by the fact that, despite our efforts, we don't seem to have answers to all the problems facing our communities.

Cultivating Spirituality

Among the networks of people working in similar circumstances and engaged in social commitments such as ours, it may be true to say that

we have occasionally grown excessive in our activism but that other dimensions, such as cultivating the faith that underpins our social dedication, remain relatively impoverished. To compensate for this tendency, we have turned to supportive activities (base communities) aimed at revitalizing and renovating our ecclesiastical affiliation. In this sense, we have also benefited from an increased reliance on the Spiritual Exercises in daily life and other forms of Ignatian spirituality. At present, I am working with a team comprising one nun, one ex-Jesuit, and six married laypersons, the majority of whom are women.

In 1989, my Provincial invited me to participate in a policymaking round table for social affairs, culminating in the Commission of 1991. At that time, “social insertion” and Ignatian spirituality seemed to be quite distinct aspects. However, for me and for so many of my companions, both lay and religious (as well as for a significant number of women religious), the spiritual expression linked to our work (for example, the Workers’ Mission, working-class parishes, and other forms of service in marginalized areas) was and will always be a fundamental concern. Little by little, news about activities such as ours began to see the light of day, surfacing in chats, conferences and eventually in periodicals with extensive distribution. One volume in particular, which we published at that time, no. 4 in the Ignatian collection “Manresa,” contributed greatly to the diffusion of our commitment to a social justice inspired by Ignatian spirituality. These were the same policies that would be formally reiterated in the G.C 34 (d. 2, no. 8).

Experiencing Death

In my years of experience together with my companions and with the people of the neighbourhood in Picarral, I have survived all sorts of peaks and valleys, everything from celebration to mourning, enthusiasm to dejection, progress to regression. It is because of this that I have learned not to allow myself to be seduced by the allure of quick or short-term success; and I have also learned to be wary of overconfidence in my own capacities.

With that in mind, I would like to say a few words about one of the greatest challenges that we face in our efforts. I am thinking here of the human experience of death. When it comes to the social apostolate, it is

impossible to reduce this to an individual or interior experience. Our mission is a collective endeavour, and the loss of one affects the whole.

For example, it often happens that the death of an individual brings about the decline or cessation of an entirely worthwhile project in which we had placed all our hopes and aspirations. Sometimes death touches us in the form of work-related accidents or traffic accidents, and many people in the community are affected by these dramatic circumstances in which we are called upon to offer words and deeds of consolation. The hardest to understand are the heart wrenching cases in which children and adolescents are involved in fatal, sometimes accidental, circumstances.

Then there is the fact that our companions must face up to the illness and ageing that are a prelude to death. Over the years we have lost some of our dearest friends and loved ones, resulting occasionally in the termination of some of the most cherished projects on our socio-political agenda. Time and time again, we are humbled by a sense of helplessness as we comprehend “how Divinity is hidden”; all we can then do is turn to Christ and put our faith in Him, and act as agents of Christ’s mercy through “the office of consoling that Christ our Lord brings.”

At this point I should like, if I may, to acknowledge a very recent case, the struggle of Julia, a widow and a dear friend, who had no formal education and only a meagre pension, yet a woman who has lived her life in complete and humble service to others. As I write this note she is fighting cancer, undergoing chemotherapy in her tiny living quarters, where she tells me the same words she has always told me: “My faith gives me the strength to carry on.”

To live-with

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge that my life has been lived out for the most part with an emphasis and a reliance on community. I have enjoyed and cherished the company of many friends and colleagues, especially the modest people of my neighbourhood as well as others who share our values and commitments. It is important to point out that my sense of the Holy Spirit working in my life has come about within the context of “being-with” and journeying together, and I am grateful that the road I have chosen has been one of companionship.

All this has enriched my life and has helped me to correct the erroneous tendencies within me of “voluntarism” and “perfectionism”. As a result, I have been able to surrender myself to a larger sense of service rooted in the present conditions and circumstances as I experience them together with my companions and neighbours.

ALWAYS ON THE MOVE BUT AT HOME

HUMANITY BECOMES WHOLE IN THE RESURRECTION

Christian Herwartz

Owing to frequent change of residence during my childhood I often experienced being a stranger, being left out or marginalized. But moving from place to place I also felt that my real home was in the family, in the Church. The geographical uprooting and my failure at school, fortunate perhaps for me, occurred at a time when a whole nation was in the process of being painfully uprooted and divided. The history of National Socialism in Germany, with racism present even in the Church, led finally to the unleashing of the Second World War. The pain of being marginalized mobilised within me the energy to search and the strength to resist. I discovered the gift of solidarity with the homeless, hunger for a religious community and for missionary action in the greater context of the world. I started training in mechanical engineering in a large shipyard. There I made interesting observations. 24th December 1960 was only half a working day. On our way home by boat to celebrate Christmas with our families I noticed that almost all my colleagues were drunk, a fact which I could not understand. Later, I realised that the feast of the Incarnation of Our Lord was an event demanding of many people more than they could handle. For many it was a time of discord, loneliness, even thoughts of suicide. My suffering increased because of the ideological restrictions in my country. Why did people not bear witness to their faith, call injustice by its name, even if it meant becoming an outcast? Why were so few Christians in prison in the Western part of our land? In the East the government called belief in God an interference with its ideology and fought against it.

Training in the Society of Jesus

With a hunger for solidarity and community I entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty-five. But the story of exclusion or being marginalised continued there too. Fortunately however, I also experienced friendship and acceptance among my Jesuit brothers. I take here the opportunity of making special mention of my encounter with Michael Walzer, a student companion in Munich. He had noticed that after four years in primary school, the children not only continued their education in different schools but also communicated at a different social level. On their way to school some now sat in the front of the streetcar, the others at the

*Jesus lives among
us at our
working place*

back. They had different topics of conversation now; their behaviour had changed. Michael became engaged in German-French encounters, reconciliation between those who formerly had been enemies during the war. On one of our walks he said suddenly: "After the study of philosophy I would like to work for two years in a factory and confront our estrangement from each other.

Would you like to join me in doing this?" Up to this very day I'm still amazed about my spontaneous yes, an affirmation which was going to be decisive for my future way of life. Our first attempts failed and we had to part. We were assigned to different places. But after seven years we started work in a factory in Berlin, and there we founded a small Jesuit community of which I am still a member today. Michael developed a cerebral tumour and died about 20 years ago.

During my study of theology in Frankfurt I was especially accepted by the foreign students at the college. They would meet regularly and cook traditional dishes according to their culture and background. I was the only German student and was excused from cooking. The local kitchen supplied their everyday fare. But these encounters gave me courage and strength. In this way I discovered the foreign workers in Germany. During my studies I worked regularly as a day labourer for a removal company where I met a number of people, even some who had just finished their prison sentence. I also sought encounters with young people. My commuting to work was a real boon, because I could spend that time profitably reading the Bible. This experience was another indicator for my future. After my studies, which for me had been a special training in listening, I went to France where I stayed as trainee with a group of SJ worker priests and workers. The motive

of my search became clearer to me now: Jesus lives among us at our working place, amidst the exertions of, and the distinct disdain for, the worker. How could I get to know him better, speak to him, discover the worker? Could we live in community together or only partially? Would it be possible, together with others, to participate as a simple worker in the faith life of the Church which was influenced by social and foreign elements?

I went to France without any knowledge of the language. But despite this lack I soon found work in Toulouse. My French companions who had invited me and knew the conditions knew the pain of understanding neither the language nor the culture of a foreign country. Due to their concern and the mission for worker priests in France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Society of Jesus became my home. Against this background I was also able to cope later

France also gave me a second kind of belonging. At a celebration for foreign workers I noticed and came to appreciate the following: I belong to this crowd of foreigners though I lived in community with my French Jesuit companions. This knowledge showed me a new aspect of my identity. From this point on I was no longer engaged as consultant or adviser for either foreigners or my colleagues, but was one of them. At a later stage I discovered feeling myself a foreigner among my own German compatriots.

Factory work and founding of a new community in Berlin-Kreuzberg

By the time I returned to Germany at the age of thirty-five, I had learnt that my search for community with Jesus leads one across many boundaries or frontiers. Faith uprooted often becomes alive in a climate of scepticism about old social and religious ideas. Despite this somewhat unusual milieu I noticed how my identity as a Jesuit had deepened, and how everyday life, for example, had become a direct interpretation of the pilgrim's story of St Ignatius. This gave me inner peace. With our small community in Berlin-Kreuzberg we had entered a path till then unknown in Germany. The new is often suspect because it cannot be proved by experience and is understood only on the basis of its concept.

We have frequently waited in the "market places" (Mt 20,3) of Berlin, hoping that somewhere a door would open, inviting us to enter a working place, join gatherings of social interest, visit prisons, housing estates. A particular challenge was the foreign Germany one street away, where the

boundary, a huge, strictly monitored wall divided the city of Berlin. Across the boundary a new culture had come into existence; the language too had changed. The many difficulties notwithstanding, we crossed the border and went to the other side after work because our friends there could not come to us. They gave us an important insight into our capitalistic society. After some time I entered this completely different world with a feeling of coming home and could even understand the language there better. There was no telephone on the other side and our crossings of the border had to be invisible; so we frequently waited in the streets, often for quite long periods, until one of our friends turned up. The time we could spend together was always too short. The waiting – today I would rather say our prayer during the wait— was part of this enriching time in the foreign country so very near us.

In our Kreuzberg suburb live many people of Turkish origin. They help keep the foreigner in me awake. This need was supported by a journey to Turkey where we learned to appreciate the culture of our neighbours.

But decisive for our learning process was the work place. As lathe operator, and later as warehouseman, I gained additional knowledge and discovered possible forms of relationship and communication when doing piecework. Together with my colleagues we broke bread amid all the muck and dirt of the work place. Three years later I defended them in a conflict against our boss. This was a far-reaching experience for me, to feel their solidarity and to act because of it. After that I have spoken at big gatherings, at trade union meetings where I have been applauded or rejected. How quickly one feels uplifted and altogether a different person when put on the pedestal! “Aren’t you not afraid to lose your job” I was asked frequently. After such public requests to speak, it was important that I withdraw and work quietly, not wasting another word on the event; it was important to experience even within myself the estrangement it had caused. To the annoyance of my colleagues I declined various functions in our organisations, important though they were for the survival of labour in a democratic hostile world with its own prison structures.

Life of Inculturation

As time went on our Jesuit community members adhered to different cultures in our city, and we began to question our identity. Day after day

we spent our life between them and home, spoke, felt, reacted with a different vocabulary and gestures. Did we only play different roles? This was a churning question. But in this process I increasingly found my identity in the fact that I had to cross the bridges of hostile and opposing religious, social and political cultures, and live every affiliation as a pilgrim without contempt of the others.

The loneliness I experienced when crossing alone the narrow social bridges or walking past the prison walls of Berlin has remained. But the joy of reunion and my discovery of new people on the other already familiar side were great rewards.

After a few years our small community increased and usually had only two Jesuit members. Homeless people from varying, very different circumstances asked for shelter. Some were without work, others had been dismissed from hospital or had finished their prison sentence, many were addicts, many were sick. And many were refugees fleeing from one Germany to the other Germany without the necessary papers required by our bureaucracy. Our small community offered shelter and home. Some people remained only for a few days, others stayed for years. Because they came with a particular need, I saw them initially only as people with this problem. But then

*to live in the presence
of the Risen One and
discover His waiting*

I followed an invitation to an international meeting of Jesuits who lived together with Muslims. There my eyes were opened and I realised how one-dimensionally I had treated our fellow-occupants. They had remained people with problems and needs that I did not have. Because they had truthfully described their situation they had become marginalized. Now, because of their experience, culture and religion they could become teachers. These people from more than fifty nations, with whom I had shared my room over the years, taught us hospitality through which we could discover their humanness and faith. The suffering of their needs could not be ignored. After some time we discovered their suffering also within our selves. But we also enjoyed reading together the Bible or the Koran, and in this way discovered what we have in common, helping us to be more human. Going to sleep every night among the people of this concrete worldwide community is a real gift for me. The inter-religious prayer which took its beginning here has now taken on a public dimension. Once a month we

meet with friends in one of the public squares of Berlin in order to pray for peace.

A Life without limits and rules

For more than twenty-five years now I have been cultivating personal relations on a long-term basis at work. Now I keep crossing new boundaries and by doing so I discover I grow as a person through the incarnation of Jesus. God has become man and in Jesus he has crossed social and religious boundaries. He was pushed to the very margin of society, was even put to death because He crossed boundaries set by social structures. He ate with customs officers and sinners and so threatened the life of the ruling class. Our present rules and regulations are surely questioned by Jesus. We are allowed to eat or celebrate with people who are not distinguished by society, but we also notice that because of our other responsibilities or engagements we marginalize them in spaces where they can meet. Feeling the pain of this, I understand that Jesus is not an official who has to protect an institution. Rather than belonging to us under our conditions, He lets himself be marginalized. Therefore, when making decisions, I seek out the person concerned before the decision-making process. Though it might mean separation I believe that the Risen Christ is present in this situation and will accompany the now unwanted person and I hope that I may enter into a new relationship with this person. It really has happened like that quite often in a wonderful way.

In the Gospel we read how the Risen Jesus walked over the water and through walls. When, after a long wait, I notice that Jesus has already taken taken us with Him in this manner for some time now, I begin to perceive what it means to live a life of resurrection with Jesus in the here and now.

No escape into the future

A few years ago I lost my job in the factory. I had no work and now I receive a pension. Today we live with about ten people in our apartment, among them Franz Keller, an elderly Jesuit from Switzerland. We do not

need to understand the meaning of our life. It is enough to know that we have been called and sent to this place. In this here and now, heaven has its beginning. I have experienced that I don't need to fabricate a spiritual way, neither for myself nor for others, but that I can fully rely on Jesus' prayer within ourselves. It sets free our spontaneity and makes possible unusual intercultural action that overcomes distances and walls created by fear, thought or imagination. In this way I begin to understand what it means to live in mission - to discover God's presence and action in other people and respond to it accordingly.

To live in the presence of the Risen One and discover His waiting

For some years now we have been inviting people of our district to make the 'Spiritual Exercises in the Street' (Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2002). We do this in other cities as well. The participants sleep in provisional accommodation and go downtown with the question: Where will I meet God? Where does he wait for me?

The Exercises begin with an introduction to prayer (Principle and Foundation). They have not left their troubles but have come with their pain, anger or sadness. So we ask the participants after their longings in which is also contained the name of God personally entrusted to them. We invite them to address God with this name e.g. "You, who look at me so kindly" and seek to enter into a conversation with him. After two days we tell them the story of Moses who, while working as a shepherd, discovered a burning thorn bush which did not burn up. Moses, trying to get close to the appearance of God's love, is asked to take off his shoes. He was to stand wholly in the reality without any protective distance before God, free from every temptation to flee and without pride. Afterwards Moses stands among his people and hears the name of God who is always present and he is commissioned to become the instrument of liberation and serve this God in adoration.

The retreatants are given this story in the book of Exodus (Ch 3) as guidance so as to let themselves be directed from within and to go by prayer to where God awaits them. It is then a great help to take off, spiritually, the shoes of the heart and to listen. Quite frequently the retreatants go to places that they have earlier avoided. They see the situation in a new light. They discover the presence of God and take off their shoes before the people

living there and before themselves. Through this they can follow the poverty praised by Jesus (Mt 5,3), and are able to give up their different kinds of painful blindness, and light begins to brighten their life. In the evening they gather in one or two small groups of not more than five, accompanied by a spiritual director/directress. Here they report their searchings and findings. In those ten days a certain kind of silence takes hold of the group, not just an outward silence. They learn how to listen to each other, to the people they meet in the street, in the mosque, at the employment bureau... and what needs to be said. This helps them to participate in spiritual exercises which they can handle psychologically, while in other places they might meet with refusal or not be able to handle it well. This latest method of giving retreats with openness towards so many people in this form of frontier-crossing and spiritual search gives me great joy. As one of the retreatants remarked, this is God's own business, "the Chief's own affairs". He Himself directs them and shows Himself in new ways.

BEING IN TUNE TO GOD'S LOVE IN ME

Michael Bingham

Biographical Introduction

I was born in England in 1941 of a Protestant father from Northern Ireland and a Catholic mother from London. I was sent away to a Jesuit boarding school for 10 years, after which I joined the novitiate in 1959. Philosophy followed, then graduate studies in English at Oxford. I taught in another Jesuit boarding school for three years before starting theology at Heythrop College in London, which I completed at Regis College in Toronto, Canada, returning to England for ordination in 1974.

After a few months studying Spanish in Mexico I took up residence in Medellín, Colombia, attending the *Instituto Pastoral Latinoamericano* for another few months before doing Tertianship in a poor neighbourhood under Miguel Elizondo from 1975-6. I stayed on for a further three years in the Jesuit parish there as a member of the staff, moving to another poor parish of ours in Cali for two years, and lastly to a country parish near Barrancabermeja before returning home at the end of 1983.

Since then I worked in a Jesuit parish in inner-city Liverpool for 14 years, and in 1998 moved to Northern Ireland to join a small insertion community in a 'nationalist' (catholic) area of Portadown.

My Life in the Society and the Social Apostolate

It was not till I moved to Canada in 1972 to complete my theology that I felt able to develop my interest in social justice. I first did a pastoral placement in an Institute for young female offenders, and then as member of a small community did supervised chaplaincy work in prisons. On several

occasions I stayed at various Jesuit missions to the native American people.

In 1975 I visited various basic Christian communities, mainly in Mexico, before arriving in Medellín, Colombia, to study pastoral practice in Latin America following the principles of the 1968 CELAM Conference. In Tertianship there we ministered to the poor amongst whom we lived. Afterwards I helped briefly in 1976 on the mission teams in the diocese of Riobamba, Ecuador, being caught up in the military raid on the Latin American bishops' meeting there, detained briefly and expelled from the country.

Until 1983 I was assigned to poor parishes in Colombia. Besides performing regular pastoral duties I was chaplain and catechetical coordinator in the Fe y Alegría schools in Medellín (until I was effectively declared 'persona non grata' by the bishop), and in Cali did some conscientising work amongst neighbourhood groups. The Jesuit social centre CINEP in Bogotá offered training and reflection to those of us in the popular pastoral sector. Before leaving Latin America I helped out for several weeks in a parish on the outskirts of Managua in Nicaragua, at that time facing the Contra rebellion. For the next 14 years from 1984 my work in an inner-city parish in Liverpool, marked by high unemployment and sub-standard housing, was part pastoral, part community development. I helped to organise housing tenant groups, children's play schemes and adult learning, all in a context of good relations with the local Anglican church. I did some work with drug addicts, studying for a Master's degree on the subject. During the 1980s I was active in promoting Central American solidarity, and took part in protest rallies against the presence of nuclear bases. Within the British Province I belonged to our Social Apostolate group, becoming a member of the social ministries Commission, and helped to host two meetings of the northern sector of Mission Ouvrière.

In Northern Ireland, where I have been now since 1998, my work has been marked throughout by the issue of political and religious division. Besides helping in the parish and in a nearby prison, I have become involved in our local neighbourhood organisation, being currently on the management committee, and have supported people in their opposition to sectarian

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parades through the area. Within the town of Portadown I belong to an inter-church group of clergy and church workers, a lay-led group that promotes reconciliation, and another that offers mediation services to individuals and groups in dispute, aware of the recent influx of migrant workers into the area and the growth of racism. Further afield I work with Mediation Northern Ireland, based in Belfast, providing training sessions to groups on issues around conflict. I recently did a Master's degree in Reconciliation Studies in Belfast, and have done courses in dealing with trauma, suicide and depression. I also help to staff a telephone service for those contemplating suicide.

I continue to be a member of my Province's social ministries Commission, liaising with Irish Province representatives in the field, and maintain links with Mission Ouvrière. I recently contributed an article in a publication by the Faith and Justice Centre in Dublin on 'The Church's Social Teaching in Action'.

Times I have experienced Movements of the Spirit

In spite of a conventional, even privileged upbringing, around 1968 certain interests and concerns were emerging in my consciousness before theology, apparently extraneous to any religious or spiritual dynamic: awareness of social inequities, the call for radical change, the survival of human cultures and natural resources.

On a visit to a Jesuit mission in Northern Ontario I recall the sensation of getting down from the ice-bound train one Christmas and approaching the township almost on tiptoe through the snow for fear of damaging fragile sensibilities with my clumsy mental and cultural baggage. Hearing the stories of the inmates in a women's gaol in Toronto where I was chaplain, I found myself looking at the underside of society and discovering that it looked, and felt, completely different. I don't think I have seen things quite the same way since.

In a cramped little Tertianship house in the 'misery belt' of Medellín I wrestled with the contradictions and dilemmas posed by our 'parachuting' into the lives of these chosen neighbours around us. I felt again the sense of awe and hesitancy before the vulnerable existences and relationships disturbed by our appearance. Our professed 'poverty' was a sham in the midst of the humble yet dignified people, for we were by any definition

'rich' - in money, resources, power, influence, education and opportunities. Yet so poor we discovered ourselves when compared to them in terms of generosity, availability, mutual dependence, authenticity and spontaneity.

We concluded that taking a leading role would only perpetuate the people's sense of impotence and incompetence. It felt like a 'handing over' - or even 'handing back' - of power and dignity to those to whom it had rightfully belonged. We reasoned that the best gift we could offer them would be to accompany them in their pains and trials, their hopes and struggles.

As I settled into the rhythm of life in the world of the marginalised, it felt like being at the centre of the world. This was where lay new hope for a better order of things. Though the senses were continually assailed by sights, sounds and smells associated with the detritus of society, it was a privilege and a blessing to be there.

The sense of being part of a continent-wide community of purpose and commitment was a powerful support and motivator. There was a clear political and social project to establish a just society with which we could identify and to which owe allegiance.

Back in Britain, in a parish in a disintegrating part of inner-city Liverpool, I recognised the same world of ordinary human lives whom wealth, success and fortune pass by, here marked by unemployment, and superfluous to the national enterprise. Here again were the friends I had already made in Latin America, whose powerlessness is their greatest poverty, their humanity their greatest richness.

Lack of access to social participation, whether in the slums of Medellín or in an inner-city estate in Liverpool, produces characteristic patterns of behaviour, values and world-view. I realised that the faith that emerged from this experience was qualitatively different. I saw the spirituality of the poor as the paradigm of all spirituality, where a sense of dependence and impotence is the absolute condition of our relationship with God. Not only that, but these virtues that survive in our impoverished and cynical society have enriched my own spirituality. One day a young man whom I had known came to me asking for help. He was one of the many drug abusers in the neighbourhood. I became aware of the pain that was not as

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public as other ills of social marginalisation, but just as real. Having tended to focus on people more as a class or collectivity I became more attentive to individual and personal needs. Building relationships in Northern Ireland I have sensed the contradiction between living in solidarity with our Catholic neighbours and trying to bridge the rift with the Protestant community. How can I be committed to one and yet detached from both? If I pursue the cause of reconciliation, can I really affirm that I am committed to anybody?

Here the priority is the healing of differences and divisions. Between the rights and demands of each, one can occasionally glimpse in the gap the ideal of a higher, or deeper justice, where truth and compassion meet.

Where I have been inspired by Ignatian Spirituality

The link between justice and God came gradually for me. It was like a re-exploration of my faith as I matched my experience of the poor with my beliefs.

The image of Jesus, 'pioneer of our faith', the lowly leader who calls us to follow only where he has gone before himself, was very strong from my days of Tertianship, and the vision of his kingdom was the template for transformative action in the world. Jesus' option in favour of the excluded and vulnerable, and challenge to the upholders of power and privilege, sprang out from the pages of the gospel as I re-read them, and were reinforced by the 4th decree of GC 32.

I aspired to a more radical poverty in solidarity, like the generous 'emptying out' of Jesus, to the extent of accepting criticism and misunderstanding without defence. All choices, all judgments, tended to be made in this light – discerning them from the perspective of the poor.

In the early years of my experience little self-reflection took place, so focused was I on living out the consequence of my commitment. Only later did the people among whom I worked help me to look more closely at my moods and my desires, and integrate my own spirituality with my life-choices.

Learning to relate more to individual needs has led me to be more aware of movements of the spirit in myself, and become more understanding of people, the reasons for their being where they are, and their capacity for moving forward. Where once 'contemplative in action' was simply activity driven by a conviction, it has become more a being in tune to God's love in me.

SOCIAL MINISTRIES

REFLECTION - USA

Suzanne Geaney

Brief Biography

I was born the eldest of five children where I was “the religious one.” I went to Catholic schools most of my life. The College of the Holy Cross was my first introduction to the Jesuits. After two years of service in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, I worked for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. I was almost 30 years old before I decided what I wanted to do with my life. My graduate degree is from Bryn Mawr College in social work. The Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus employed me for 21 years. Now I work in a ministry started by two Maryland Province Jesuits, but its focus is national, the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps. My husband, who isn’t Catholic, has spent 21 years of our marriage singing in the church choir with me. We have two very musical and generous children who regard many Jesuit as their uncles.

Reflections

My eyes were opened to the social apostolate in 1968. I still recall my high school service work at a low-income, African-American grade school. I was struck by how their school had far less resources than mine had had. Soon I was writing for the high school newspaper where I (and the other writers) focused on the injustices we saw inside and outside the school. It was the late 1960s, a time of heightened social consciousness in the USA.

I went off to college, my father’s alma mater, which had been all-male school until my class entered in 1972. The College of the Holy Cross (a Jesuit school) was replete with opportunities to learn about, and respond to, social injustices. Faculty administrators encouraged us. Their mentoring was a great gift. I was protesting injustices on and off campus. My

particular passion was women's rights. I took every course that had the word "Women" in the title. For a couple years I raised funds for sheltering homeless women and children in the city. That eventually led to my becoming the first live-in staff member at the shelter, just after graduation.

In my senior year of college I was drawn to join the Jesuit Volunteer Corps: East (JVC). In JVC young people spend one year living simply and in community, fed by Ignatian Spirituality and working in a nonprofit organization. My first year in JVC was in Philadelphia where I did community organizing work primarily around housing issues. The combative and uncompromising style of the group I worked with was dispiriting, and I left to spend a second year in the JVC in another city, where I could address the structural issues keeping people poor. That placement was in the Social Ministries Office of the Maryland Province Jesuits.

What I loved about JVC in Philadelphia was our home. JVC's usually live in a house or apartment in a low-income community. My neighborhood was low-income, with many young Puerto Rican families that struggled with violence, drugs, crime, poverty and inferior schools. I felt like the predominant culture of our country was often in conflict with the values of the Puerto Rican families I knew. Many families practically disintegrated from the conflicts. After my JVC year in Baltimore, I returned to my former neighborhood in Philadelphia. I missed my friends who were my neighbors and fellow choir members at our local, multi-ethnic church. I ached to return to the community I missed so much.

My next four years in Philadelphia found me in a new job. I was a parish social minister, serving in a city parish that contained two housing projects as well as significant middle and upper class homes. I loved how my job addressed so many social needs. I worked with people in emergency situations (a lack of food or shelter), with homebound elderly people, and with amazingly generous volunteers. In fact, those volunteers and I created a cooperative food-buying club at the parish. We bought fresh fruits and vegetables in bulk, divided them up in accordance with the desires of the members. People of all economic backgrounds joined the club because the parish neighborhood lacked any markets with these fresh items. Each member was committed to working several hours every month, except for the homebound elderly people whose food was delivered to them by other club members.

I loved that job so much that when I tried to get interns to help with the parish's social ministries, my supervisor told me that I needed a master's

degree in social work to be a supervisor. So I applied to a graduate school, enrolled full-time in a master's program. I spent two years commuting to classes out in the suburbs (with a study focus on social policy and program development) while I stayed grounded by tutoring adults in a G.E.D. program at nights in my home neighborhood. (G.E.D. is "general equivalency degree" – akin to a high school diploma.)

The church in Philadelphia was not encouraging or enriching to lay people. My spiritual life was quite low. Perhaps that is one of the major reasons I decided to leave my favorite city and return to Baltimore after graduation. I was offered a job by the Province's Social Ministries Assistant in the Jesuit Province of Maryland, the same office where I had spent my JVC year in Baltimore. I felt two strong pulls drawing me to that position: the opportunity to address structural justice issues and the opportunity to deepen my own Ignatian spirituality by working closely with Jesuits. Two years into that job, I felt called to make the Annotation 19 retreat in order to more fully enter the spirituality of the people I worked with. Luckily I completed it just before the birth of my first child. (Afterwards would have been completely impossible.)

I spent a total of 18 years working on behalf of the social apostolate for the Maryland Province, followed by another 3 years doing fundraising for the Province. During that time, God blessed me with a wonderful husband, two children and numerous Jesuits who became my colleagues and friends.

My social ministries work was so varied: supporting Jesuits and laity doing direct social ministries; pressurizing USA corporations to act in a more socially responsible manner; making loans of Province monies to create housing, jobs or employment for poor people, both nationally and internationally; managing a summer family retreats program for urban families who would not otherwise have the opportunity to play and pray with one another; facilitating Jesuits and their lay colleagues to advocate for government legislation around justice issues. I loved going to work every day. Then in the 1990s my colleague, the Pastoral and International Assistant, took me with him on three different international trips where we visited both Maryland Jesuits and social ministries site in parts of Mexico, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil.

I will never forget one visit while in my province social ministries job. A group of social ministry representatives from USA provinces went to a Mexican border city, Juarez. There we saw **miles** of garbage dumps, where

people were living. Their “homes” were little more than metal lean-to’s. People survived from what they could scavenge in the dump. The place smelled awful (it was a dump, after all.) People looked hopeless and completely downtrodden. I was shocked and demoralized that we allow human beings to live like this. How can the economic policies of our world allow hundreds of millions of people to go hungry every day?

Somewhere in 1995 I was able to articulate a lacuna in my personal formation: I did not really know Ignatius of Loyola, which I desired to do. In 1996, the Provincial granted me a three-month sabbatical to study St. Ignatius and the early foundations of the Society of Jesus. In that time I read many books and made an 8-day retreat at the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth. That retreat brought about a reawakening of my spirit, such that I adopted the Examen as my primary way of prayer.

*Love in Deeds
of Service*

Skip ahead until 2002. God had been trying to get me to move on and I finally listened. The result was my new and current job, as executive director of the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps (ILVC). ILVC provides people age 50 and over the opportunity to serve materially poor people, to work for a more just society, and to reflect and pray in the Ignatian tradition. The mature, experienced, generous and wise people in ILVC find their eyes opened through their relationships with people living in poverty. I work to guide and strengthen the organization so that it grows where the Spirit is calling ILVC to serve.

I think ILVC is the ideal job for me. It provides service opportunities which facilitate spiritual growth. Though my work is only indirect with our members, it is their formation that gives me great joy. I witness their reverence for the dignity of each person. Our newsletter is entitled “Love in Deeds of Service,” an apt description of our unique and demanding program. We need to develop more connection to the structural justice aspects of these ministries and we will, in time.

When I left the Province’s employ, I questioned whether I had heard God correctly in my discernment. This is a hard job but I am so often filled with joy that I am reassured that God has me just where I am supposed to be. When I cannot see God, I have family, friends, co-workers and a spiritual director to help me recognize where the Spirit is.

My deepest consolations have always been the opportunities to be generous. To whom much is given, much is demanded.

Gregory Boyle

If you locate one job for one homie¹ from one neighborhood, be assured that eight other homies from that same barrio² will call you asking for a job. It was in late May that Chico called. “Kick me down with a jale,” he blurts out with what I think is a fair amount of nerve. This roughly can be translated as ‘Do you think you’d be able to locate gainful employment for me?’ “Well, I don’t even know you, dog. How bout we meet first?”

I schedule to go to his house, which is not far from my office and situated on a steep, hilly street behind Roosevelt High. Chico is 16 and from a neighborhood whose roots reach back to the forties and the Pachuco³ (Zoot Suit)⁴ era. I meet Chico’s mom, a sweet, diminutive woman, who clearly delights in her children and maintains, at the same time, an evident dread at the path her bald-headed, cholo⁵ son has chosen. Her appreciation at my arrival this day is palpable.

Chico and I sit on the front porch. He is a lanky, funny-looking kid, really. As with most homies, his “pelon”⁶ cut has pointed large arrows at his overly-large ears. They are more pronounced than most. His smile is ready and willing, always hanging out at the surface and quick to appear at the slightest urging. Chico is shy and jittery, and yet will leap into areas of conversation that would normally take more time with other homies. We talk of his lady and family and the current status of his barrio with neighboring enemies. A most likeable kid, made all the more willing to me by his nervy request for a job, sight unseen.

“If I got you a job, mijo, is there some skill you always wanted to learn or pick up?” Chico is quick, needing no time to really consider my question. “Oh, yeah, computers. I really want to learn and know computers.” I assure him that I will work on this, promising only that I’ll do my best.

Some days later, I call Chico. My investigation of a computer job led me to Chrysalis Center, a non-profit homeless resource center. I knew that they had recently received a bank of computers, so I made them an offer. I told them that I knew this kid, Chico, who wanted to learn everything there was to know about computers. He goes to school in the morning, I tell them, and could work at the Center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. I will (gasp) pay his salary each week, somehow finding the money somewhere (bank heist?) and you folks would supervise him, teaching him everything you know. We will call it a job. They agree.

"Now, Mijo, you start at 1:00," I tell Chico over the phone, laying down our ground rules. If you don't go to school that morning, please don't bother to go to work either. And I'll know if you ditch school. A job is a privilege. Going to school every day makes you worthy. You will have two bosses. One of them, you'll meet on Monday and the other, you're talking to right now. So, if I find you're hanging, banging or slanging (and I'll know), then I'll fire your ass. Got it dog?" "I understand, G. Thanks a lot. I promise I won't let you down." I finish our conversation. "You know, dog, that I know thousands of homies. But I chose you for this job. I'm proud to know you and I'm sure you'll do just great. Good luck."

Monday turned into Tuesday, turned into Wednesday, and I still hadn't heard from Chico. I had resisted calling him, hoping that he would check in with me. Nothing.

I start to think that maybe he flaked out on me. Maybe my directions were bad and he never found the place. Perhaps something happened and he couldn't make it and he's too embarrassed to call me. I'm scratching my head and pondering Chico's failure to communicate, when a message starts to spit out from the fax machine next to my desk. I can spot at the top of the paper, the tiny typed "Chrysalis Center". The fax is a missive from our man, Chico, written in large, clumsy, handwritten script:

G –

I am learning to use a fax machine

I am learning a gang of shit here..

Love,

Chico

P.S. I love this job

thanks for getting it to me.

About two months later, the first call I receive at 7:30 in the morning is from Chico's mom, Rosa. She tells me that the night before, Chico is standing with some friends, not far from his front porch. A car slowly creeps up. Windows are rolled down, words are exchanged and finally, bullets begin to fly from within the car. One lodges very high up on the back of Chico's neck and he is now in the intensive care unit at General Hospital.

I leave immediately. I walk into the unit and I see Chico lying there, skinny and tattooed, wearing only an oversized jumper, heavily tubed, with all the requisite IVs. He is staring, wide-eyed and unblinking at the ceiling, riveted to the acoustical tiles. There is a doctor at the foot of his bed, scribbling notes onto a clipboard. I go to him first to assess Chico's condition. "You know, Father," the resident begins, "I've never seen a paralysis this high." The doctor points to the back of his own neck. "It is so high on the stem, that we suspect brain damage, though we're not certain." The doctor leaves and I walk closer to Chico. His eyes don't even register that I'm approaching. They remain transfixed on the ceiling and unblinking, stretched, it would seem beyond their capacity. I lean in. "Chico". No movement, no acknowledgement at all. I anoint him in the Church's "uncion de enfermos". I rub a generous swath of oil, hoping against hope that the balm will penetrate his frozen state, hoping it will lead us both to some divine compensation for this mad, mindless waste of life. No such penetration happens. I am left thinking only, "Menos mal."⁷ At least he doesn't know what's going on.

Truth be told, this was indeed a hard kid to visit the next day. Excruciating, really. A rush of memory kept at me in the hours after my hospital visit and it placed in bold relief the enormity of loss. I can still see Chico waiting for me on his front porch on every Friday afternoon. Unlike other homies waiting for their pay-checks, I never had to honk my horn, nor leave my car, in search of Chico. He was always there, seated on his porch, and I was almost always late. He would catch sight of my red car coming up the narrow, steep hill, and would hurriedly head for my car (homies don't run, unless in hot pursuit). He would hop in the passenger side of my car and there was no extricating him. There, he'd sit and talk and talk. Gone long ago was the reticence and shyness, he would just launch into it. He was, as we say, "bien pregunton."⁸ He'd ask a grip of questions. In fact, he'd invariably ask me questions about God (like I would know). "Is God pissed off if I have sex with my lady?" "What do you think heaven is like?" "Do you think God listens to us?" And, clearly, far more valuable than

the measly paycheck I'd hand him every Friday afternoon, was the time I sometimes had to spend with him, in that car, wondering what's on God's mind. And to this day, I regret I didn't spend more time. I did go back the next day to visit. I walked in and found Chico just as I had caught him the day before, with eyes pulled wide open, epoxied to the same spot on the ceiling. I approached, fully expecting the same response as the day before. But I made the attempt anyway. "Chico", I say, not far from his ear. His frozen eyes thaw in an instant and they dart to my own and they lock onto me and will not let go. I'm stunned by this and speechless. Chico's eyes become intense puddles. Mine do as well. "Do you know who this is, mijito?" And to the extent that his can nod affirmatively, they do so. He can only move his eyes. "Do you know, mijo, and these words are hard to say, that we all love you very much?" This last statement sets him off and he cries and cries. And his face says to me, in a most unmistakable way, "Get me out of this body!"

I anoint him as I had the day before, and think to myself, "the good news is, he's alive, and the bad news now, is that he knows enough to wish that he weren't." Our eyes tenaciously cling to each other as I back out of the intensive care unit. His eyes want to leap out of their sockets, they long to be transported anywhere else. The door closes behind me, but its closing is unsuccessful in shutting out Chico's desperately haunted eyes.

One week later, Chico's heart stops, unable to sustain any longer this traumatic ordeal. And as I blessed the gold cross resting on his coffin, and handed it to Rosa, with a long embrace, a thought comes to me. I inform myself that I really must let this grief in. Too long, I had suspended my own profound sense of loss here, and dutifully placed it on my emotional back burner. I needed to be there for Chico's family, his girlfriend, his homies. I gave myself permission then, to allow this pain into some cherished, readied place in my heart. Every homie's death recalls all the previous ones and they all arrive at once in a rush. I'm caught off guard, as well, by the sudden realization that Chico's burial is the eighth in a three week period. Remarkably, this thought does not become conscious until this very moment.

I decide to walk away from the coffin and spot a lonely tree not too far from the crowd. I stand there by myself and allow myself to feel this great loss and I cry. Before too long, the mortician appears at my side. He is more acquaintance than friend. Now he has broken the spell of my grief and unknowingly invaded the space I had carved for myself. I am overwhelmingly annoyed that I'm annoyed. There is an obligation, clear

and immediate, to break the silence, to make the mortician welcome in my space, uninvited though he be. I remove my glasses and wipe away my tears. I point feebly, at Chico's coffin, and I know that I need to find some words to fill our blank air. "Now that," I whisper to the intruder, "was a terrific kid". And the mortician, in a voice so loud and obnoxious, it turns the heads of the gathered mourners, says, *"HE WAS?" My heart sinks. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANS. THERE IS SOME SEVERE DISCONNECT HERE FOR HIM. SOMETHING ISN'T MAKING A FIT FOR HIM. HOW COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT A 16 year-OLD CHOLO, GUNNED DOWN, NOT FAR FROM HIS HOME, BE A TERRIFIC KID,* and yet, nothing can alter this fact: Chico was a son any parent would be proud to claim as their own.

¹ a gang member, a homeboy

² gang, turf, territory, neighbourhood

³ Latino gang member from the 40s

⁴ the suit gang members would wear during this period

⁵ Latino gang member

⁶ a shaved head, sign that one is a gang member (among latinos currently)

⁷ just as well

⁸ one who asks a lot of questions

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE

William Ryan

My story

I was born, in 1925, in the town of Renfrew, Ontario, Canada, as the middle child of nine in a family of modest means. My father abandoned subsistence farming for logging and sawmills in the Gatineau valley in Quebec, thus leaving his wife and children in a distant town close to schools and church. For my mother daily Mass was not optional for us boys. We children quickly learned hard work and responsibility. I spent my summers with my dad in the lumber camps and sawmills, carrying a full 10-hour-a-day job as early as 14 in abominable working conditions. But here I began a lifelong love affair with nature. I attended public high school and later St. Patrick's College in Ottawa. In 1944, I was about to join the airforce after making a retreat decision not to be a priest. A few days later, on hearing a Jesuit alumnus praising the Jesuits as good priests – I had never met a Jesuit – I knew instantly and forever that I must be a Jesuit. For the rest of my life in different ways I have always been trying to relate faith to justice - trying to give spiritual value to striving for a better world for poor people living and working in unjust conditions such as I had experienced in the sawmills, where I had risked being killed or severely injured.

Jesuit life and social apostolate

I loved novitiate life, discovered prayer and did not want the Long Retreat to end. However, I felt boxed in and took advantage of every available occasion to do physical work on the farm and to take long walks. I asked to join the new Canadian mission in Darjeeling, India. I could not escape

so easily my frustration with textbook neo-scholastic philosophy which put me in constant tension with my professors – and eventually with a Rector who considered me somewhat crazy because I could not fit into the system as other Jesuits did. Exhausted, I sought refuge in shoveling manure at the Guelph farm. Our provincial, Father Swain, missioned me to Darjeeling, but his consultation insisted that I study philosophy. An amicable agreement sent me to St Louis University to study economics.

At St Louis I came to grips with philosophy through the study of the history of economic thought. I understood the reductionist nature of all economic theory, indeed, of all scientific methodologies; and I felt a great

*discovering how the
Risen Christ was leading
all creation to its
eschatological fulfillment*

sense of freedom in doing so. I have never been beholden to neo-liberal economic theory or paradigms. I did my MA thesis on the history and ideology of the Catholic trade unions in Quebec, which gave me lasting insight into the ambiguous relationship in real life between the church and labour, between faith and justice. My thesis won me an invitation to expand it slightly for

a doctorate – but I felt that I should move on.

I asked to do my theology in Europe. With some hesitation, I was sent first to England and later to Belgium. I was bored with the theology presented at Heythrop, and spent much time cutting down trees to let the forest breathe. Arriving at Eegenhoven, Louvain, in 1956, was a totally different experience, living with Jesuits from 24 countries. The Dean, Father Malevez, immediately introduced me to the ‘forbidden’ writings of Teilhard de Chardin and Henri de Lubac. I was finally coming to grips with how to relate heaven and earth, my economics with my spirituality, and discovering how the Risen Christ was leading all creation to its eschatological fulfillment.

Rene Carpentier SJ helped me to integrate spirituality with theology, and with Andre Vachon SJ, I translated the seminal book of Gerard Gilleman SJ, *Le Primat de la Charite en Theologie Morale* into English. My licentiate paper was on the question “Is all our scientific and industrial work irrelevant to the coming of the kingdom?”

My Tertianship at Paray-le-Moniale was prayerful and energetically pastoral. I was accepted by Harvard for doctoral studies in 1959. I changed

my field of specialization from labour relations to economic development, because world poverty had become the priority problem of justice in the world.

Early panic at Harvard – an older Jesuit competing with young geniuses – gave way to exhilaration on discovering I could compete here. My professors were interested in Catholicism and indulged Jesuits, especially the Russian economic historian, Alexander Gershenkron, who was fascinated with the relationship between religion and development and directed my published thesis: *The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec*. Unexpectedly, my provincial and his consultants initially vetoed my thesis topic, fearful of opening old wounds in French/English Catholic and Jesuit relations.

I was bailed out from teaching economics at Loyola College, Montreal, by the Canadian bishops inviting me to join their national conference staff. These were the bishops' glory years, they gave their staff full trust and we ran with it – especially with Vatican II Catholic social teaching, developing social ecumenism and forging links with the exciting staff of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. In 1969 I became a problem for Father Arrupe. The Canadian bishops still wanted my services, as did the Gregorian University in Rome. The Vatican wanted me for SODEPAX, the new joint Vatican-World Council of Churches social justice centre in Geneva; and the American bishops wanted me for their proposed joint international development centre with the Jesuits. Father Arrupe missioned me to Washington where I founded the Center of Concern, owned by neither bishops nor Jesuits. We built on the insights and teaching of the Roman Synod on Justice in the World and had the enthusiastic support of religious, especially women religious, as well as many bishops and laity. It was the right model for the time and was imitated widely, especially in USA.

In 1978 Father Arrupe acceded to the wishes of the Canadian provincial that I succeed him as provincial. I came back to Canada pondering how to implement CG32. After months of consultation and prayer we came up with a plan "Our Way of Proceeding in the 80s", which Father Arrupe blessed, insisting that it should not be changed without his permission. Building up our Native apostolate had the highest priority - but other social justice projects such as a Jesuit Centre for Social Faith & Justice, a farm community for handicapped persons, etc were included. It was a good time

to work closely with the Canadian Conferences of Religious and of Bishops on social justice issues and social discernment processes.

In 1984, the Canadian Bishops Conference elected me their General Secretary - which opened up a still wider vista for promoting social justice. But my chief effort here was to work with a Task Force of senior bishops to rethink and update the CCCB. A serious concern was to have the bishops take stronger responsibility and ownership for their conference and its public statements on social justice and other initiatives.

In the period 1990-93 I worked with federal members of parliament and senior civil servants across political parties in informal discussion on issues of social justice. Later, I was special advisor to the International Development Research Centre, a respected secular centre in Ottawa, on a Science, Religion and Development project. My published research was *Culture, Spirituality and Economic Development: Opening a Dialogue* [1995]. It centered on a survey I made in 28 poor countries on how experienced people saw the relationship between development and culture and religion. I was also given the distasteful task of terminating the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, primarily for financial reasons. Since then I have been part of an effort to keep the Jesuit Centre alive as a smaller Jesuit project, and have been involved in research and public lectures on development, globalization, ecology and spirituality. Ecology and interfaith dialogue, especially with Islam, have gradually taken centre stage. With the help of John Coleman SJ, I organized an international seminar on Globalization and Catholic Social Thought: Present Impasse, Future Hopes - which will appear as a book published by Orbis and Novalis in fall 2005.

Spiritual Experience

Given the extraordinary grace of a strong vocation, I am not given to wide swings of consolation and desolation, and mostly enjoy peace at my core even in the middle of surface storms. The Spirit played a big part in my early spiritual life, but detachment - letting-go - was my chief preoccupation. First experienced as a negative burden of giving up friendships and other things dear to me, it gradually became a new freedom in my life. I came to identify the presence of the Spirit with energy, whether in myself or in others or a group. Boredom and impatience with dated textbook philosophy and theology was a source of frustration which I

compensated for with visits to nature where I began to find God present and active. Long walks became a chance to review happenings in my personal life as well as in my administrative decisions. In philosophy, my impatient restlessness was misunderstood by my Rector and my doctor, but somehow I was given the grace with the support of my spiritual father and another senior Jesuit to stay free in my critical stance. I came to see that spiritual freedom involved speaking the truth as I saw it, even if it cost me dearly. This trial strengthened me considerably on how to deal openly and humbly with authority and obedience without losing my deep peace. It also gave me a certain serenity in our soul-searching difficulties with Pope Paul VI during CG32 where I took a bold initiative to have the congregation link faith and justice in all its work even before striking the traditional commissions. In the complex difficulties in founding the Center of Concern as well as in my easier task as provincial I found strength and freedom in knowing that I had the complete trust of Father Arrupe. We did not separate justice from spirituality at the Center of Concern. We organized a task force on social consciousness and Jesuit spirituality and published its findings in *Soundings*, just before CG32. I found the warmth of good friendships and teamwork helped me to manage a deep anger that possessed me on first experiencing horrendous poverty in northeast Brazil in 1969. In accepting election as General Secretary of the CCCB I made an additional 30-day retreat seeking the grace not to compromise my spiritual freedom in undertaking this daunting responsibility. Over time I had come to appreciate how to live with uncertainty - trusting the Spirit to guide me in a prudent reading of the signs of the times.

I have managed to remain mostly faithful to my Jesuit spiritual practices of prayer and Eucharist – even if at times weekly breaks to commune with nature and freely review my life seemed more vital to my sanity and discernment. I never separated my struggle for justice from my union with God. Somehow, at least since my Louvain days, I tend to see things whole - both spiritually and intellectually. My enemy has been reductionism in any form. A holistic view that sees the economic system as only a subsystem of the ecosystem came naturally to me. My regular bridge between justice and union with God is built on a persevering search for spiritual freedom based on a stable attitude of gratitude, supported by prayer to the Trinity to receive the grace to be placed beside Jesus, carrying his cross for the recreation of the world and all its peoples – especially the poor; and also frequent prayer to see and find God present and active in

myself and every other person, and in every circumstance - and that my *Suscipe* be accepted. Sadly, I am all too aware that I do not heed generously enough the constant call to give more time and attention to prayer¹.

¹ For more detail on some of this see *Faith & Freedom: The Life and Times of Bill Ryan SJ*, by professional journalists Bob Chodos & Jaimie Swift [Novalis, 2002].

OUR JOURNEY ALONGSIDE IGNATIUS

Benito Baranda
Lorena Cornejo

Short Biography

We were born in 1959—Lorena in Ecuador and Benito in Chile—and we enjoyed the gift of being born into Christian families with numerous siblings (Lorena 4, Benito 9), as well as the gift of being educated according to the principles and traditions of the Society of Jesus (Lorena at The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Primary School and Benito at Saint Ignatius Primary School, both in Chile).

We have participated actively in Christian Life Communities (CLC), beginning with our college days (1977) and at the Catholic University, where we were studying psychology and where we met and fell in love. It was then and there that we learned, through the practice of the Spiritual Exercises, to inextricably link our faith in Jesus with the search for justice and love, and to apply this tradition to our daily life.

We followed a career path that would allow us to be fully prepared to serve to the most excluded communities: we married and adapted our lifestyle to one more like the lifestyle of those who lived in marginalized conditions. We worked side by side with them in the streets and within their very communities, as well as at the charitable youth boardinghouse called “Hogar de Cristo” (The Lord’s Home).

We now live in a municipality on the outskirts of Santiago—La Pintana—where we enjoy life with our six adopted children. Yet we still remain active in the “Hogar de Cristo” and in CLC.

Social Exclusion and the "Hogar de Cristo"

We have maintained close links with the Society of Jesus thanks to a simple system that orders and enriches our life and sustains both, our participation in the CLC, and our interventions in the work of the Hogar de Cristo in the areas of social justice and charity. We felt an early calling by Our Lord to serve in the cause for justice on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized in our society, and this early vocation led us to the "Hogar de Cristo", working with boys and girls whose rights had been violated in their own homes and by members of their own families. From the time we got married we have been working at a boardinghouse for street children here in Santiago.

We are fortunate to have the constant support of the CLC in these endeavours, and have found that our practice of the Spiritual Exercises has strengthened us in our efforts, enabling us to balance the requirements of faith and life, faith and justice, and contemplation and action, and allowing us to fully accept and carry out the mission that Christ has called us to.

Our lives have been forever changed through our work with these children, all of whom are poor and marginalized and many of whom have been abused and exploited. Our faith has been strengthened under these conditions and our outlook on reality dramatically transformed.

Through our work in the "Hogar de Cristo", we desire to build a more just society in Chile and ultimately we hope to improve the level of solidarity among the poor and marginalized, and also between them and the population at large. It is our goal to increase the awareness of the need to build bridges between individuals, families and community organizations to counter abuse and exploitation as well as isolation and loneliness.

Though society at large too often seems indifferent to such conditions, it is also our mission to raise the level of awareness and encourage the participation of the more fortunate members of our society in the lives of the poor and marginalized. These have been our objectives at the boardinghouse for street children and they have also been our objectives in our communal life in the neighborhood of El Castillo at La Pintana.

Inspired by the example of St. Ignatius, it has also been a priority with us to sometimes step outside the circle of the Jesuit Order in order to spread the word, seek support and recruit for our Gospel-based mission. Along these lines, Lorena has dedicated many hours to training university students so that they may learn how to associate as equals with those who

live in poor and marginalized neighbourhoods for mutual benefit and spiritual growth.

For Benito, the importance of establishing ties and pursuing our objectives at the political level has been a special priority, and he has been involved in the creation of foundations and social action projects sponsored by the national government with an aim at establishing greater justice for the poorest of the poor. An additional objective is to raise national awareness of the urgency of greater justice for those who are most in need. It has been of particular interest to Benito to get the Chilean youth excited about these issues and bring as many young people as possible into the effort.

This section would not be complete unless we mention the importance of adoption in our lives. Not being able to have biological children ourselves, we turned to adoption, through which we have had the chance to experience the joys and wonders of family life, and found new ways to explore the Ignatian mission of charity on a daily basis as we watch our children grow and assist them in issues of personal development and faith.

Curiously, the matter of child rearing has proved to be the ultimate challenge to us in our mission to link up faith and love in a concerted effort at forming comprehensive Christian communities. It has been essential for us to practice discernment, as outlined by St. Ignatius, thereby developing the skills that are necessary for a married couple to place themselves humbly before the Lord and beg His assistance as we struggle to raise our children responsibly and to increase the unity and solidarity within our family.

The arrival of our first child, Manuel, opened our minds to new dimensions in the call to service: and then came Constanza, Ignacio, Antonia, Santiago, and finally Magdalena, who has brought special challenges into our life due to the fact that she suffers from multiple handicaps. The support of the CLC has been indispensable to us in meeting the challenges we have faced in the realm of family and child rearing. Through this apostolic movement we practice community discernment and provide mutual assistance, all of us learning humbly as we go along in the footsteps of St. Ignatius.

Of course we have included our children in our missionary efforts, and they often accompany us enthusiastically in our work at the “Hogar de Cristo”. Our family maintains close relations with this organization – founded and under the inspiration of Father Alberto Hurtado whose spiritual presence we welcome in our home. We believe that our missionary commitment is

not a threat to our familial commitments; rather, it serves as a complementary and totally integrated source of Christian living and inspiration.

Some Experiences Related to our Missionary Commitment

When we married in 1982, we carried out an exercise of discernment together in order to “listen and see” what the Lord wanted from us; and what we definitively concluded was that we should move from the affluent neighborhood where we were raised and educated under our parents’ roofs to a small house in a humbler neighborhood where our neighbors would be the poor and disenfranchised.

As the years passed we were confirmed in our initial sense of our mission to the poor, and we soon came to the conclusion that we should deepen our commitment and take it to the next level; that is when we decided to join up with the recently founded “Hogar de Cristo” (1984) in the neighbourhood. We moved to a place nearby and dedicated ourselves wholly to caring for the street children who were housed there under the direct support of the CLC.

The paths of the Lord were being shown to us with wonderful clarity: first He led us to that neighborhood and then He provided us with the marvellous gift of being able to live with and directly assist the children coming in off the streets.

Our faith materialized fully in our relationship with these children, in the endless struggle to help them overcome their situation of abandonment and the violence of the street. We found ourselves building friendships with them, and with their cooperation, we were involved in building communities where they could feel safe and secure. Through this process we came to modify drastically our own perceptions of reality, of social justice, of Christian living, and of the role of prayer and the contemplative aspects of the faith.

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OUR JOURNEY ALONGSIDE IGNATIUS

Years later, after having studied for a while outside Chile, we returned to live and work in a municipality on the outskirts of Santiago, with a poor marginalized community marked by injustice and plagued by social ills. It is called La Pintana. Thanks to assistance from the “Hogar de Cristo”, we settled in a township known as El Castillo, having some 40,000 inhabitants.

It was founded by displaced people, folks who had been evicted from very poor areas in other municipalities of Santiago. It is from this place that the most helpless and needy children at the “Hogar de Cristo” used to come. The fruit of our exercises of discernment was that we should have come to live in this special place, and we are grateful for the opportunity we have had to participate in a CCL here, enjoy the satisfaction of communal living and labour, allowing us to sustain ourselves in this marginalized zone.

We have experienced the greatest consolations and desolations in our time here. Many in our association have been able to start new lives away from the drugs and violence that plagued them on the streets; and yet, we have had to deal with many tragedies as well, the suicides of several young people who were our dear friends, the maltreatment of children within their own homes, and the abuses of the civil and military authorities against the people. In addition, the exploitation of the local labour force was shown by their miserable wages and working conditions.

It has been a fierce and fast-paced life for us here, but we have also learned some profound lessons. Our children have been raised alongside the children of many friendly families in the neighbourhood, and we have been through a lot together. There have been times in which God’s presence was undeniably palpable and others when it seemed that He was absent, although deep in our hearts we knew better.

Since 1998, we have been associated with certain individuals and families outside Chile, namely, in Haiti. Our role there is to collaborate with young Chilean professionals on missionary work in that country, especially projects involved in social justice. This is all part of what we call Latin-American Solidarity.

It is important to acknowledge that alongside our experiences of joy, friendship and community we have also witnessed violence, poverty and abandonment, and we cannot help but ask ourselves sometimes, “My God, what is going on here? What does it all mean? What will come of all this?”

Nevertheless, while the rich nations of the world were declaring Haiti economically unviable, it was important to us to maintain our commitment there, even to intensify it. Our practice of the Spiritual Exercises and our experience in the CLC had taught us to appreciate a situation in which an entire nation was relegated to forgotten status because it had no great sources of wealth such as oil, gold or gas, and served no significant strategic purpose with respect to the interests of international conglomerates.

The abandoned status of this nation represents an opportunity and a calling for us, as missionaries, to be present wherever there is greatest need, wherever Christ leads us, even if it means transcending our national borders—the objective being to demonstrate that life can and will thrive, even in situations of apparent failure, exclusion and abandonment.

To exercise discernment, to practice a communal lifestyle (CLC), to remain faithful to the Spiritual Exercises while at the same time cultivating our formal relationship to the Church and the sacraments—these are the measures that allow us to develop and grow each day as we pursue our agenda of social justice.

Moreover, it is the very people whom we are here to serve who end up transforming us in return, who in turn help us to become better persons, better husbands and wives, better parents and better families.

A LIFE PERMEATED WITH LOVE

Ricardo Falla

I was born in Guatemala City in 1932 into an upper-class family, and raised on our plantations, where I used to play with the children of our indigenous workers. The brothers and sisters of the Marianist order were my teachers in my childhood. I graduated from high school in 1948; did two years of college at Georgetown (1949-51), the novitiate in El Salvador (1951-53), juniorate and philosophy in Ecuador (1953-58). I did my regency in the Seminary of San Salvador (1958-61), studied theology at Innsbruck (1961-65), and did my tertianship in Murcia (1965-66). I studied anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin (1966-71). I was Director of Political Sciences at the URL in Guatemala until about 1974. Then I was at the CIASCA, in Guatemala and in other Central American countries until 1979, researching methods of organization among rural working-class people. My research has not been published. I was in Nicaragua from 1980-82. And then I was in Ixcán, living in the war zone, from 1983-84. From 1984-87, I was in Mexico and Nicaragua writing about what I had heard and seen in Ixcán. I made a second trip to Ixcán in 1987, and stayed until 1992. I published *Massacres in the Jungle*. In December of 1992, the army discovered that I was there, and I had to leave. *History of a Great Love* was published. I went to Honduras and joined the ERIC - a team dedicated to thought, investigation and communication - 1993-2001. "Mitch" found me there. In 2001, I went back to Guatemala, and stayed in Santa María Chiquimula, Totonicapán, a Quiché parish, and I there have remained there till the present. I assist with the pastoral work and write about the indigenous youth.

We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Rom. 8, 23

Looking back on these almost 73 years, my life seems to me to have been a continuous series of crises, each one of a different kind. The first was in my adolescence, when God began to set his seal on my heart, and I discovered my vocation to be a Jesuit. I joined the Order in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, after several years of opposition from my father, who had sent me to the U.S. to study. My mother had died by then, an emotional blow that would remain within me all the days of my life. My training in the Order involved strict discipline, intense studies, and a somewhat forced piety. After “CA” we went to Quito (Cotacollao), where we enjoyed immensely climbing the summits and snow-capped volcanoes of that marvellous country. We were living alongside Quechua communities, and, as we climbed Condor’s Gorge, we passed through their villages, but we didn’t speak to them. We found them puzzling.

I continued with my education, taking my teacher’s certificate in the Seminary of San Salvador. The seminarians came from both rural areas and the urban middle class. I loved them spontaneously; I felt I understood them, and that I could identify with them. But there wasn’t any authentic social consciousness within me at that time.

Later, a strong change took place within me when I was at Innsbruck, where I had been sent to study theology. We took a trip to the snow-capped mountains nearby, and we skied, though we skied badly. I met Jesuits there who were far better than I in many respects. One of them who told me about the worker-priests and their experiences influenced me greatly. He was convincing enough to make me give up skiing in favour of assisting the Galician immigrants who had come there to build the highways. That changed my vision of the world, turning it about 180 degrees. The tourists passing by would give us cigarettes. My world was turned upside down. I had always looked upon the street laborers from the inside of an automobile. Now, I was one of them. My reality had been turned inside out. My life would never be the same again.

And then there came Rahner. He became my passion. We arrived at Innsbruck when Vatican II was just starting. There was a storm brewing within the Church. I had come there with a mentality that allowed no room for bending the rules, a mentality that I had been steeped in during my novitiate. And suddenly I discovered that among my theology classmates there was a movement of subversion against the rules. The rule of not eating in our rooms; we did it anyway, because we were hungry. The rule of attending classes; we didn’t like them and often we didn’t go. The rule against

going to the movies; we liked movies and we went often. Ellacuría was one of the most subversive, and later Coreth told me in confidence that he was on the verge of being recalled to his province. But all this subversion required a justification. This is where the writings of Rahner came into play for me. They liberated me spiritually and intellectually. “Ah,” I said then, “in the Society, the foundational charisma is to be found in the discernment of the spirit, and the rule of obedience should be a consequence of the former.” I felt suddenly free. I felt profoundly Jesuit, and profoundly of the Church. A new theology opened up to me, one that is not learned by rote memory, but is rather one that springs from reflection, questioning, creativity, and entertaining new ideas, although to others they may seem heresy. (We were also a bit presumptuous.)

While studying theology, I discovered the *Popul Vuh*, the sacred text of the Mayas: and I studied it carefully, though I did not understand it very well. My interest in anthropology was born at that time. My Provincial sent me to the U.S. to study, and there I received my doctorate, though I spent each summer vacation in Guatemala, labouring in the countryside. At one point, I stayed with the Yaruros in Venezuela. Another change was developing inside me. The cultural shock of two and a half months spent on the savanna with the Orinoco tribes was an experience that has stayed with me to this day. These were people who still used bows and arrows; people who made do without matches, or advanced agricultural methods; people who hunted deer disguised as white storks, with a primitive system of familial relations, such as the ones described by Lévi Strauss. These were people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. They were also people who habitually consumed drugs, ingesting hallucinogens and dancing all night. There I was, embedded among them, like an alien being to them, though they treated me with kindness. In that place were the seeds of the Word, in that place was human intelligence, in that place were vice and lies... and in that place was humanity in its origins.

After my studies, I returned to Guatemala and Central America. We began to question the political and social structures. We were a tight-knit group. There were people much more socially conscious and intelligent than I around me. There was César Jerez, who has since passed away, there was Juan Hernández Pico, who is still in the struggle, there was Fernando Hoyos, killed serving in the Guatemalan guerrilla front, and there were many others, some young, some old. We went to live in a marginalized zone, the then famous “Zone 5” in Guatemala. We were the “CIAS” of the “CA”. We

were glorious; wherever we landed we made waves. Some were dedicated to investigation, others to action. Those who tended toward action pulled us in their direction. Eventually they became organically linked to the revolutionary vanguard and they left the Order, but we remained Jesuits.

This was the moment of my most profound and painful conversion. While engaging in a particular research project, I fell deeply in love with a companion of mine. Despite the repressive impulses tightening around us, I was happy, discovering love at forty years old. This may have been a reflection of the need to fill the void left by my mother's passing, for there was something similar in the indescribable tenderness that I found in her. I remember the first time she told me she loves me. I was astounded. How could she love me, ME! At that point, I was caught in a confusion of not knowing whether or not to leave the Order. I performed the Exercises in a sea of tears and sobs. There is where I learned that my tears were the very same ABBA of St. Paul, and the same ones appearing so many times in the autobiography of Ignacio. Nonetheless, there was an insistent calling within me heralding the imminent death of that love and my own death (absence of meaning). I was in anguish. And I decided to leave Guatemala around the end of 1979 to do the Exercises, but this time separated from her by a significant distance. Cabarrús was my spiritual guide, though it wasn't he who broke through to me, rather it was Jacob's angel. And I left her... This was a terribly upsetting experience for her and in her desperation she attempted suicide, cutting her wrists. But I wouldn't allow myself to be lead astray. My faith guided me, pulling me along. I don't know if I did the right thing. I think that I did. I think so, but I don't have any way of proving this, it's just that I felt as if I were making a pact with Yahweh, the unnamable, and that he would care for her better than I would be able to. She had said to me, "Falla, Falla, you're going to fall in love with another woman," but no, Yahweh would be my safeguard, so that nothing like that would ever happen. He gave me his word. He wouldn't fail me; and I wouldn't fail him, by giving myself later to another love.

From Mexico, where I had done the Exercises, I went to Nicaragua and I worked for two years in agricultural reform with the Sandinista government, until the chance came to go to Guatemala, to the jungles of Ixcán, which was a war zone. I was to be a pastor to the civilian population. I had to contact the guerilla forces in Mexico in order to make a clandestine entry into the country, and there I spent six years, on two separate occasions, supporting the communities of the civilian resistance who were hiding from

the army in the shadows of the mountains. It was a time of losing lots of weight, knowing hunger, fleeing this way and that from the hail of bullets, of changing camp whenever they burned out palm-leaf huts, and of living with all my possessions inside a backpack which I carried slung over my shoulders, eating only what the people would give me. There was no coined currency there. And the emptiness inside me caused by her absence followed me all over the mountains and made me weep in “sonorous solitude”, as St. John of the Cross says; but from there came my strength to resist alongside the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. And indeed we resisted; the army couldn't finish us off, and we refused to flee into Mexico.

My work was pastoral, but I didn't abandon my research, and during a return trip to Mexico I was able to write a book about the massacres in the jungle in which I vehemently denounced the army. Months later, the army discovered a cave in the mountain where I kept my papers, and they accused me of being a member of the guerilla forces (1992). I had to leave the jungle to explain to the bishops what had happened. They backed me up with their testimony, confirming that I was not among the guerilla forces, only a priest doing pastoral duties. But I was obliged not to return and my Provincial sent me on to Honduras, to a more monotonous line of work. He also sent me to the 34th General Congregation where I met many Jesuits from all over the world. At the end of the Congregation, they awarded me and another Jesuit from France the prize for the best poets; in my opinion, this was simply a nice way of saying that my contributions had been charming and clever, but truly insubstantial.

And now I find myself once more among an indigenous Guatemalan community, somewhat dispirited because I haven't the strength that I once had. These days I write about the youth, and I think that there is something in common which binds us together. The great Erikson said that identity crises repeat themselves throughout our lives. At this stage in my life I suffer the temptation of not wanting to grow old, throwing in the towel because it seems that I am getting too old to continue. I hope that the young people who read what I write live long enough to experience many such crises. That is the beauty of life, of a life permeated with love. And now there is nothing more to say.

PILGRIMS ON A MISSION

Bows and Arrows: Community and Travelling Missionaries

Fernando López

Personal Profile

I was born on the Canary Islands, Spain, to Lucas and Araceli, the eldest of five children in a middle class family. My childhood and early adolescence are inextricably linked to the sea and to my parish church, St. Francis, with Don Juan at the helm. I retain many fond memories of those days — daily prayer with my family; frequent attendance at Mass; and caring for Manuel, a friend of mine who lived with his parents in some caves in a ravine: mother would invite him to eat, play and bathe in our home. We loved him very much. Later, I learned that Manuel means “God is with us.”

When, at the age of fifteen, I began working as a catechist, I joined the others in proposing to our parish priest that we carry out our catechism in the fishermen’s district, since their children typically didn’t come up to the main office. It was there that I came face-to-face with the harsh realities of extreme poverty, profound human suffering, and premature death. This is when I first posed the questions, “Why is the world like this, my God, why the gross inequalities, some with so much and others with so little?” It was in those days too that I began to identify passionately with the life of Christ. I kept the Bible under my pillow and I dreamed of its teachings. I assailed my parents with questions: “Why do we have so much and they so little? What is the reason that Christ was born poor? Shouldn’t we do as the Bible tells us, and dedicate our resources and our lives to the service of the needy?” My parents, in their infinite patience, did their best to respond to my inquiries. Thus it was in this period of my life that I became familiar with the foundational experience of love towards oneself, one’s family and others.

I studied physics in Seville. Seeing so many of my peers at the Colegio Mayor involved in promiscuous sex, drugs and alcohol caused me much confusion and pain. It was a difficult experience. My lifejacket of salvation at this time was the university group run by Fernando García S.J. We met once a week to celebrate the Eucharist and to socialize, and twice a week we performed pastoral work with Gypsy children as well as with the elderly from a local retirement home.

My four-year relationship with my girlfriend was also a vital influence on me at that time. She was instrumental in helping me to realize my missionary vocation. Initially, as lay volunteers, we had wanted to go to Africa together; but after a long process of reflection, it became clear that we were being called in different directions, and she told me: "Fernando, you must find your own way, and pray for me that I may find mine." Though we loved each other very much, we sensed, as we meditated on the presence of Christ in our lives, that we were being called to separate destinies and we decided to break up at that point. Instead of Africa, I went to Paraguay.

On the Road with the Society of Jesus

I arrived in Paraguay in January of 1985 in the company of Jesuits, and shortly thereafter I entered the novitiate. They were the final years of the Stroessner dictatorship — poverty, fear, repression and injustices were a part of everyday life. As a novice, my apostolate work was carried out among a community of poor farm-workers, severely exploited by the local landowners. The injustice of it all made my blood boil.

During the month of my apostolate I began to call everything into question, seeing these poor Christ-figures in the midst of injustice all around us. I asked myself, "What have I done for Christ? How is it possible that, given all this injustice and oppression, Christians, priests and religious, are not being murdered everyday for protesting against this situation?"

In the junior novitiate, the rector wouldn't allow me to participate in the political mobilizations because he was afraid that, as a foreigner, I would be expelled from the country. My peers, however, were participating in protests against the dictatorship; and I was supporting them with my prayers in the chapel.

It was during my studies in philosophy that I became an activist. Along with other students, we formed a group of non-violent activists called

the Monsignor Romero League of Thought and Action. There is where I learned to practice the Gospel of non-violence, to turn the other cheek, to be as gentle as a dove and as clever as a serpent. Out of that experience, the Paraguayan Society for Peace and Justice was born.

It was also during the time of my studies in philosophy that I lived immersed in the poor urban community of the “Northern Marshes,” in Asunción, a flood zone within the city located near the Paraguay River. During the second year of studies we also began serving in the “Southern Marshes,” one of the trash dumps in Asunción. It was a very moving experience, walking the downward slope from the high part of the city to the lower flood plains. I felt an intense degree of spiritual consolation and gratefulness to God for being able to leave the university and go down to the marshy areas where I would live among the least of God’s people - meeting God there in the dumps, not high in the heavens: how ironic! We were also blessed to have the chance of living in those shacks for five months when the rainy season was its height. It is hard to describe the joy and confirmation in my vocation that I felt in those challenging circumstances, and I recalled the words of Arrupe: “May our discipline and institutions live up to the greatest challenges the world has to offer, yet, more importantly, may our way of life testify to the Gospels that we preach.” And I was also reminded of his additional advice: “It is true that we value teaching in the university, writing articles, researching in institutes of social studies; however, we should always keep our feet planted in the mud, alongside the least of God’s people.” This is the way it must be for me, or else I find myself unsatisfied. The professors who most influenced my life were those whose teachings were rooted in a profound social commitment, including community outreach among the poorest of the poor. And my own best achievements in philosophy stemmed from the joys and pains that I experienced in my apostolate work.

For my teacher’s certificate, it was proposed initially that I should study at the College of Christ the King, but I explained to the Provincial that I had been praying for an opportunity to have an outreach experience among the rural peasants and farm-workers, where I was hoping to learn Guaraní and about their way of life. The Provincial agreed, and I lived for a year in a small town with a family of sixteen. We all slept in one room on leather mats, the two smallest ones sleeping right beside me. I couldn’t fall asleep those first nights. It was moral indignation that kept me awake - the two little ones were pressing up against me trying to catch some of my body

heat, and I wept tears of indignation at the injustice of this family's situation. "Why, my God, is there so much inequality in this world?" I would ask myself, as I lay awake during the night. With the rural peasants I learned quite a bit — how to work the land, to plant and harvest cotton, rice, beans and corn; and to chew "pety" (tobacco), though the first time I tried this I felt queasy and vomited, causing all who witnessed my reaction to break out in uproarious laughter.

I began to study theology in Brazil (ISI) at that point. This was a tough time for me, the time when I experienced that greatest crisis of my life. The cause of my crisis may have been the contrast or the distance that I felt between the cold, complicated reasoning of our theological studies in comparison with the simple, warm, communitarian missionary work that I had been engaged in earlier. By the grace of God and through the assistance of four Jesuit professors, as well as the children of the streets, I was able to survive this period.

In the third year of my theological studies, I performed my three-day devotional Exercises of renewal under a bridge, alongside some of the street children with whom I had developed a tight friendship. I often asked them to pray for me in those days. To find food to eat they had to go around stealing — a common plight for many children in those parts. I contributed to their food supply with regular donations of bread. Whenever they saw me feeling sad, they would make a circle around me and recite the Our Father. Without any mystical visions, yet with great clarity, I felt that through their mouths God was telling me: "I want you to serve Me through these little ones; you're confused right now about the studies you are presently carrying out, but it is vital that you should finish your training in theology." The little ones saved me. Thanks to them, the "faces and voices of God," I made it — *not without bruises* — to the end of my theological studies.

At the end of my studies, in order to help me recover from the crisis, the Provincial allowed me to make a four-month retreat in the South of the Brazilian Amazon. I had to go to Bolivia and then return to Paraguay, crossing the Chaco. With a backpack on my shoulders, I left, feeling the strong desire to find God once again among the simple folk. I was in the company of Don Pedro Casaldáliga and the Sisters of Foucault (Tapirapé Indians) as well as my Jesuit companions from Mato Grosso (Rikbatska Indians). Often I had to sleep wherever I could find a place to lie down. A few times I ended up sleeping on the doorsteps of parish churches, and people would toss coins at me as they entered. How much good that

experience did me! How much I learned! Ascending to La Paz, Bolivia, on the wooden flatbed of a truck, it was so cold that I thought I would freeze to death. Many families were travelling with us but they were all wearing coats and I was wearing only the light clothing that I had worn in the jungle. I survived, thanks mainly to the canvas canopy stretched over the flatbed. In Qorpa, near Lake Titicaca, in the company of Father Pepe H., I stayed with the Coca growers, and he encouraged me to contemplate everything there from the “high plateau inside oneself.”

Throughout that pilgrimage I recalled the revelation of la Storta many times: “I want you to serve Me in them.” I felt a strong calling to be where the crucified ones of the earth are.

Upon returning to Paraguay, I was assigned to our missions in San Cayetano, one of the trash dumps of Asunción. The work and the experiences of those years had a profound impact on my life. The workmen in the garbage dump would bring home the dead babies found in bags in the trash dump to pray for their souls. They would wash them, clothe them, make a little coffin for each, “baptize” them, watch over them all night in prayer, and then bury them in their backyards near the flowerbeds: this being the customary burial for the “Little Angels” in Paraguay. How much humanity there was in those garbage dump workmen!

In my vocational process, it was never clear to me that I should be a priest. From the time of my novitiate up until after my studies in theology, being a brother was all that I felt called to be. Working in the trash dump, the workmen began to urge me to become a priest so that I could celebrate the Eucharist there among them. That is how the years went by, and my apostolate in Christ of Solidarity parish began taking shape. One fine day, I went off to do the Spiritual Exercises with one who had been my teacher in the novitiate, Father Tomás, and as a theme of discernment he proposed that I should consider an apostolate in the remote regions of the Amazon in Brazil. The Spirit was moving me in a new direction now, and I felt within me a voice telling me: “I want you to be ordained.” With many tears and without a single doubt or even the ability to doubt the calling coming from within me, I went to Tomás to tell him of this. We both cried with pleasure, thanking God. I wrote a letter to the Provincial, telling him about what had happened and saying that — *if he and his advisers agreed that it was the right thing to do* — I believed that God was calling me to be ordained a priest. When he asked me where the ordination should take place, I told him that I would have to consult with the workmen at the trash dump, since

they were the ones who had been God's mouthpiece for me in the first place. The workmen at the trash dump agreed that my ordination should take place there, the very place where I had first sensed the calling to become a priest, on the 29th of September 1997. The majority of my Jesuit companions from the province were present. That day we converted the trash dump into a grand cathedral. A few ecclesiastical officials protested, saying that it was not a worthy place for such a ceremony.

After four years of practising the Exercises of discernment and volunteering, I was finally assigned to the "Distrito dos Jesuitas da Amazônia" (DIA), in October of 1998. The chance had come to once again take up my backpack and sail down the waterways on a new two-month-pilgrimage, headed for Manaus, the headquarters of the DIA. I crossed the Paraguayan and Bolivian Chaco, and I climbed up through the Chiquitos Reservations — founded in the 17th century by Father José de Arce Rojas S.J., a missionary from the Canary Islands, the very same island where I was born, in fact — and I visited Trinidad and Moxos. How moving it was to sense the spirit of our Jesuit forefathers among those communities. If they could do it, with God's grace and in conditions much more precarious than the ones in which we found ourselves, then why couldn't we?

*"I will reveal
myself to you
in the Amazon:"*

As we traversed those jungles, I couldn't help reflecting on the fact that God had been so good to us and to me. In response to the harsh reality in those impoverished rural areas, the question arose: "How might we serve and assist these the least of God's people, in a place where the wounds of history run deep and human dignity is generally threatened?

At last, after six days on a boat down the Madeira River from Porto Velho, I arrived at Manaus, on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, August 4, 1998. During those two months, my fundamental sense of being on a pilgrimage never waned. "I will reveal myself to you in the Amazon:" it was not hard for me to imagine myself following in the footsteps of Ignatius. The moment would inevitably come in which "one had to close one's eyes and jump," leaving behind all securities, leaving behind those spaces that are controlled and familiar, letting oneself be guided, and planting "the seeds of Faith" in new lands, alongside the poorest of the poor — those who are excluded, those who are estranged — with the only certainty being that

God would not let the seeds we sow spoil; rather, they would germinate and grow.

I consider myself fortunate as a Jesuit to have been able to spend fourteen out of my twenty years in the Society joyously engaged in missionary work among such poor and remote communities. The wisdom of Arrupe is always with me: “All should act on behalf of the poor, many should be near to the poor, and a few should be as the poor.” But why are there so few of us now among the poorest of the poor, when there should be so many? And everyday there are fewer and fewer! It is true that the temptation constantly arises — as I see it — to rise up the administrative ranks, to assume managerial posts charged with preserving our institutions; but the danger is that we may lose sight of our most radical mission, whereby “all should act on behalf of the poor.” How do we discern and decide on the institutional forms that will be most helpful in advancing our mission of acting on behalf of the poor, being near the poor and being like the poor? How do we weave the interpersonal and inter-administrative networks — within and without the Jesuit Order— aimed at stimulating transformational synergy focused on the purpose of advancing our dedication to the poor?

Missionary Travels in the Amazon (DIA)

My pastoral mission in the DIA is the most challenging and innovating that I have ever carried out as a Jesuit. The DIA was created in May of 1995, in the province of Bahía. Father Claudio Perani S.J. was the first superior. The total area of the DIA measures 3,100,000 square kilometers (six times the size of Spain!). It is an immense region in the heart of the Amazon with 8.5 million inhabitants, belonging to a great diversity of indigenous communities (more than 100), as well as immigrants from various nations and “caboclos” (mestizos).

The “Travelling Missionary Project” was created in order to meet the challenges presented by this region, a decision taken at the first conference concerning the DIA, in June of 1996. The project takes its inspiration from Jesus, particularly his itinerant way of life (“from village to village”) and his way of announcing the Kingdom of God. Of course, we were also inspired by the lives of some of the first Jesuits, those who travelled about the world as “light cavalry” and as “pilgrims,” at the service of the Church and in the imitation of Christ. It was very inspiring then, to learn of

the great mobility of the first brethren who came to this Amazon region in the 17th century. Inexhaustible, they traveled in small boats with sails and oars, visiting all the towns and villages along the great fluvial network of the Amazon. They went up and down the Amazon River, from the Atlantic to the Andes. To this day it is difficult to get to some of these places; imagine what it must have been like for them in those days. In my travels I always try to remember those first inexhaustible itinerant brethren, and then the impossible doesn't seem so impossible.

The document of the bishops of the Amazon that states: "The Church becomes flesh and pitches her tent in the Amazon" (1997), also served as an inspiration for us. We had to use light equipment and manage with as little as possible in order to have the greatest mobility in our mission. And as a theologian friend of ours, Father Paulo Suess, used to say, "If the early Church was made on the road, then the Church in the Amazons was made on the river."

Various bishops and institutions were of great assistance to us in the development of our mission to carry out pastoral work in these distant communities, and the question was raised: "Why not place ourselves at the disposition of the communities, organizations and institutions of the region, with light and mobile services?" And we decided to follow our natural intuition to "support the initiatives of these entities," to "put ourselves on the side of" these institutions and communities, so as to complement them in their efforts.

At the beginning, the enthusiasm, courage and independence of Father Claudio Perani was essential to our efforts. With only twenty Jesuits in the DIA, he allowed three for the Travelling Team, telling us: "Commit yourselves to traveling all over the Amazon. Visit the communities, the local churches and organizations. Observe everything attentively and listen carefully to everything the people tell you - their demands and their hopes, their problems and solutions, their utopias and dreams. Participate in the daily life of the people. Observe and record everything. Take down what the people say to you, their very words. Don't worry about the results. The Spirit will take care of you, showing you the way." Then, opening the map corresponding to the DIA with a great smile, Claudio concluded: "Begin wherever you can!"

Initially, the mission was difficult for me. I arrived in Paraguay, offering my services to the indigenous peoples. They had written to me about the possibility of serving in Alto Solimões (on the triple Amazonian

border of Peru-Columbia-Brazil). I was excited about this idea and dreamed of founding a fixed and normal pastoral community, inserted among the Indians. But Father Claudio told me that he didn't have anyone to join me in setting up such a community, and that if I wanted to, I could join up with one of the teams of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI, organ of the CNBB), or else I could join the recently formed Travelling Team. His proposal frightened me: joining a Travelling Team to work with any and all the indigenous peoples of the Amazon? If it had already been so difficult for me to learn Guaraní in Paraguay, how was I going to handle traveling among so many distinct peoples and cultures? I asked Claudio to give me a month for consultation, prayer and consideration of the proposal. During that period, the first thing I did each month was to pray over the map of the Amazon. At first I couldn't even open it: it filled me with great fear and my stomach turned at the thought of all that immense territory, seven times larger than Paraguay. Rivers and more rivers, jungle and more jungle: a territory where I knew no one. Where should I even begin? Yet the words of Father Claudio resounded again and again, "Begin wherever you can."

Then gradually I started opening up the map and studying it little by little and I began to overcome my fears. Deep inside me, with each passing day, I felt more and more convinced that the Lord was inviting me to embrace this project, to enter those jungles and submerge myself in those rivers, to plant the seeds of the Faith in those distant lands, even without understanding fully or having total clarity about what I was trying to accomplish. I recalled the following words: "One has to be buried like a seed in order to germinate," and "I will reveal myself to you." After considering the proposal in consultation with various individuals and organizations — many didn't seem to understand what it was all about — and praying hard, I decided to join up with the Travelling Team, because something told me deep inside my heart that it was God's will.

The first Travelling Team was made up of two Jesuit priests, Albano and Paulo Sergio (January 1998). Their mission was in the "favelas" on the peripheries of Manaus, and also with the riverside villagers on the banks of the rivers. In October of that same year, Sister Arizete C.S.A. and I joined, hoping to work beside the indigenous communities in coordination with the CIMI.

During the two first years of the project (1998-1999), each one of the members lived in his or her respective communities and we joined up

to travel, plan and evaluate as a team. This brought about certain difficulties with the communities to which we belonged, since the operations of each institution were somewhat disrupted by our comings and goings.

At the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000, reinforcements came: we were joined by Father Paco S.J. and Sister Odila F.S.C.J., as well as Tadeu and Claudia (laypersons). Each had been sent by a distinct institution. Together we brainstormed and finally decided to create the “Tent of the Travelling Community of the Holy Trinity,” with the objective of carrying our itinerant missionary work, and as a space in which to share our faith, life and pastoral vocation. We searched for a base of operations in the poor neighborhoods in Manaus, and found three shacks in a cluster: one for the men, one for the women, and one for the common activities of kitchen and chapel. Around us was a drug-dealing neighborhood, the unofficial name of which was “mouth holding a puff of smoke.” Our neighbours were fighters, poor people who had come from the interior. They took us in as if we were family and they helped us to learn to live there. Living in the community was a voluntary choice within the greater Project of Travelling Missionaries. As part of our pastoral community, we keep a small office offering assistance with employment or job placement.

An important step was taken in 2002 when the four institutions participating in the project joined forces to constitute an “inter-institutional network of services.” It was wonderful to see that the project also came to be supported by institutions other than the Jesuit Order and that there was collaboration and cooperation among a variety of organizations and institutions. It was particularly the women, those who had come from other sources, who helped us to see that this was truly an inter-institutional endeavor. The fact that the Jesuits had a minimal presence in this area, with minimal human and economic resources allocated to the Project, meant that we had to rely to a large degree on outside volunteerism, and we were very blessed in that sense. In our community we strove for a sense of solidarity, a place without bosses or proprietors, where we all helped to sustain each other, where there was mutual reciprocity, and where our identity would be defined according to the deeds of the group as a whole. This was the first time since I had become a Jesuit that I had ever experienced being in an environment where the Jesuits were not solely in charge of the community in which I lived.

Throughout the four “inter-institutional” meetings that we have held during the eight years since the initiation of our mission, the group of

participating institutions has grown from four to fifteen. In the beginning, no one could have imagined that this little experience would have awakened so much interest. This has startled us a little and we are forced to ask ourselves the question: "What is it that this proposal has that makes it so attractive?"

We have all learned so much in the midst of this diversity of human, spiritual and economic resources. Life and work in an inter-institutional setting was not part of our training as Jesuits, and I had to adapt to the new circumstances. So often one feels the need to shape the other according to his own likeness and image, wanting the other to be like him, and because of this the other person may not be able to contribute with his or her own richness and difference. Our community of the Holy Trinity has been a source of inspiration for me, in that it is an authentic attempt at finding unity in diversity.

As we went along we defined the general objectives of the project: "To listen, awaken, motivate and support the people, projects and initiatives along the riverbanks, among the indigenous villages and marginalized urban

*The pace should be
that of a canoe,
with praxis and
theory being the oars
sending us forward*

communities, through travelling missionary work and in collaboration with sympathetic people and units, so that ultimately, we all become agents of our own liberation, agents of our own histories and agents of the Lord; the objective being, therefore, to evangelize, humanizing even the most violent and aggressive environments, where there are great injustices and terrible sources of oppression, where human life is threatened, cultures disrespected and human rights

ignored."

Our specific objectives are as follows: "1. To learn about the daily lives of these people and how to serve them best. 2. To contribute with tailor-made assistance. 3. To progress in the formation of insertion communities, aiming at the propagation of the Faith through pastoral service in conjunction with popular movements, social organizations and indigenous groups. 4. To facilitate the exchange between the numerous social institutions already in existence with the aim of increasing solidarity and cooperation among them. 5. To systematically assess and evaluate the conditions of work and life in the places in which we live in order to best serve the people and social institutions there."

Little by little, we began to define some methodological principles as well: "Stay right beside the people, not a step ahead, not a step behind. The pace should be that of a canoe, with praxis and theory being the oars sending us forward. Moreover, we should ground ourselves in the logic and the worldview of the indigenous peoples, the marginalized urban residents, and the villagers of the riverbanks: deflating our egos, becoming smaller so that they might become larger; reciprocity and interdependence; listening and dialogue; insertion and acculturation; to register, systematize and assimilate our experiences; to exchange ideas and form networks."

Another important step was starting the project we call "contemplating" the Amazonian reality and discerning the "unique faces" of its inhabitants, a process through which we would satisfy our calling from God to "implicate" them in our lives. We first had to respond to the question of agency: "With whom will we align ourselves?" - rather than "What are we going to do?" Our inspiration comes from the "Contemplation of the Incarnation" (SpEx 101-109) and Loyola's emphasis on "times, places and peoples." So we asked ourselves: "Who are the most marginalized in the Amazon today?" The faces of the people in the urban ghettos, the indigenous peoples, and the villagers of the riverbanks were the ones that came to mind. In the Amazon there are profound inter-relations among all three of these historical agents. That is why the Travelling Team is divided into three subgroups, one for each of the types mentioned. Together we try to study, understand and evaluate these three social groups, in order to serve them better.

It was a wonderfully new experience for me as a Jesuit to be active in a place where there were few preconceived notions clouding our discernment and our choices. Everything there had to be constructed from scratch and that is why we could "waste time" searching for unique solutions to the unique challenges facing us. I recalled the words of Arrupe: "I'm not worried about the Jesuit who makes a mistake, I'm worried about the Jesuit who tries to solve today's problem with yesterday's solution."

In between our missionary travels, , all the members of the Project meet three times a year for ten days to rest, evaluate, study, plan, pray, converse and live the communal life. Every two years we go on retreat as a group, and each intermediate year we do the same with our respective mother institutions.

Having spent eight months out of the year with a backpack over our shoulders, we enjoy the opportunity at these meetings and retreats to

evaluate our “itinerant spirituality,” as we lived it and found sustenance in it. “We had been traveling both internally and geographically, letting ourselves be carried along by the winds of God, discerning his Will among the common lives of the poor, the estranged and the marginalized.” This form of spirituality is one which follows the cycle of Incarnation-Death-Resurrection, and one which requires a constant “stepping outside of oneself in order to walk out and join the other or serve the other: it requires mobility and lightness, connectedness and reciprocity, acculturation, intercultural and ecumenical dialogue, friendship, solidarity and fraternity, as well as good humor for laughing at our own limitations and those of others.” We try to live a “spirituality defined by a sense of ‘being with.’” Being with others, the beloved of our Lord, where the ultimate Other is most assuredly present... “Being with those whom nobody wants to be with, being where nobody wants to be and being as nobody wants to be (Father H. Pepe S.J.).”

The Travelling Team sees itself as a catalyst for inter-institutional cooperation and services, something of a small catalyst in the midst of a larger and more complex social system. The Team is more like a thread than a spool in the network, like a group of bees pollinating the forest of fruit trees, more like a needle and thread for sewing than a woven cloth, more like a seed than a plant, more like light cavalry than heavy artillery or snipers, more yeast than dough, more salt than food.

The Itinerant Project is open to laypersons and religious persons from diverse congregations, to priests and to others who want to join forces with the marginalized urban working-class, the indigenous and the riverbanks dwellers all over the immense Amazon region. Their respective institutions send each of the participants in our programme to us and fund their participation.

At present, our Team consists of fourteen brethren, a mixture of lay and religious, from eight institutions (Sisters of St. Agustin, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sisters of the Holy Trinity, the World Pastoral Commission, the Indigenous Missionary Council, the German Jesuit Society of Volunteers, Marianists and Jesuits). And there are various other organizations and individuals that would like to join in our proposal (first in line being the Missionaries of Consolation and a diocesan priest from Perú). The Travelling Team has in two nuclei: the “Holy Trinity,” with its base in Manaus (Brazil), and with seven members; and the “Three Borders,” with its triple base in Tabatinga (Brazil), Leticia (Colombia) and Santa Rosa (Perú),

also with seven members. Additionally, there are some other members who collaborate on a part-time basis.

Soon we hope to go about creating small “travelling cells” on the borders of the Amazonian countries because these are the most strategic places, where the wounds run deepest, and where new and creative possibilities of service lie before us. Besides the bases at Manaus and at the triple border Brazil-Perú-Columbia in Alto Río Solimões, we are also collaborating at the triple border Venezuela-Guyana-Brazil, and beginning to visit yet another triple border, Bolivia-Perú-Brazil, in order to look at possibilities of starting up another Team base there in the near future, depending on the interest generated among the pre-existing pastoral organizations in the region. Of course, our perspective will remain the same, always striving to serve and support the needs of the local churches, pastoral organizations, poor urban communities, riverbank dwellers and indigenous peoples. And this we will do by exchanging ideas, creating networks of solidarity, and enriching our lives together.

As the local troubadour sings: “The dream that is dreamed by one man doesn’t amount to much, while the dream that is dreamed by all comes true.” Or, paraphrasing the great poet, Antonio Machado: “Pilgrim, there is no fixed road laid out before you; you will create your own road as you make your pilgrimage.” So let us start off now on our pilgrimage, pulling oars alongside the peoples of the Amazon.

SEEKING RELEVANCE

Godfrey D'Lima

Biostory

I began life in a village of Mumbai City where piety and impiety were hardly distinctive, and where Catholic society willfully suffered cultural alienation in order to assert identity. I belong to the native (“tribal”) East Indian Community of Mumbai whose century-old wooden houses, unsustainable to their residents, are heritage sites in a now bloated City. My schooling was with the Jesuits of St.Xavier’s, Dhobi Talao, where, thanks to the government grant, the rich and poor of divers communities studied alongside each other. I specially loved the school’s lofty building and tower; and its natural history section with thousands of unfortunate birds and beasts. Association with Jesuits through childhood and youth brought opportunities to question self, the universe and God. I disliked school conformism but was too timid to rebel, being dependent financially on the system for survival. I graduated in commerce from a government college where humane values were experienced no less than in my Christian milieu. My attraction to Jesus Christ grew over years of family orientations, parish liturgy and Church association, experiments with ideologies, small efforts to teach poorer learners, prayer and scripture reading.

Life in the Society

My decision to join the Jesuits came from an inspiration to follow Jesus. As a layperson I thought it would be more difficult to do that singly, on my own. With organizational support I might make it. I found the vow of poverty most relevant in the Indian context, where forms of chastity are the general expectation and obedience has been liberatively interpreted. Poverty has helped towards gaining

some solidarity with the world around. My family had to live economically if not frugally, while religious life offered a higher standard of living; thus through poverty I could preserve my family roots and link with masses of deprived peoples. I did not want long years of free board, lodge and tuition in religious life. To serve India's poor the minimum of academic study was enough. Higher education endangers one's service of the poor since it buckles under to the Society's commitments to elitist ministries. That is why I decided against so-called higher education. My pedagogy of self-development would be through personal observations, reading, reflecting, communicating, and concretely involving myself in service to the poor right through formation.

In philosophy I tried to set up a study and play hour for a slum some distance away from De Nobili College. And in De Nobili itself I worked at a tutorial school for poor neighbours. During Theology a group of us lived in a rather shabby chawl under tough conditions. Finding the general run of subjects superfluous, some of us opted to focus on core subjects, forfeiting the degree. One thing I learned—that I was not the type that could do without the Society or Church to maintain my idealism. At the same time, I couldn't risk being totally dependent on the system to nurture my commitment.

I found GC 32 frighteningly challenging. I wanted my spirituality to measure up to its radical demands. Associating with Jesuits who were trying to make GC 32 a reality helped me persevere. I loved the field of education and often relished the thought of teaching in our English Medium schools in Mumbai City. But then I received clarity and the courage to write to the Provincial that my option would be for rural India. And if I could be involved in educating the rural poor my idealism would in some way be fulfilled. All my readings on the state of education for the masses confirmed my choice of working for the rural poor.

Confrontation Versus Service

During my Jesuit formation I struggled with my inability to engage in confrontational action for justice or rights. I could see the rationale of direct action for justice. The closest I got to such action was joining a protest march with great trepidation in a tribal area of Thane District. I even managed to visit an ex-Jesuit activist in jail. But that was the end of my "career" as a

classical social activist. I realized that if I had to do anything useful for the poor it would be some limited service that would never claim— except in a faith vision - to change social structures. Later, I had one more experience of accompanying a march of the renowned activist Ms Medha Patkar. My timidity about social protest wouldn't allow for more action on that score. Also, in the Talasari Mission, I witnessed the brutal beatings of two Diocesan priests by a leftist outfit with hardly any protest from the local tribals whom we claimed we were serving. I faced the absurdity of the Jesuit Mission being in conflict with others championing the same cause. These complexities of mission service and social involvement needed the development of skillful strategies for meaningful commitment.

Concrete Involvement

Thus began my involvement with tribal education as my specific field of insertion in the social apostolate. I was quite resigned to the fact that I would never be considered a classical activist since my field of primary and nonformal education would hardly change structures. Nor would I fit in with the major thrust of formal education, which the Society has solidly supported and structured. I began with supervision of tribal schools in the Talasari Mission. It soon became apparent that the Mission was struggling to emerge from the Christian-patronising era into a more universal or catholic commitment to the people. I found myself facing the tension between so-called religious services as against human 'upbuilding' service. I observed that while religious services had restricted participation, the secular services attracted more people. I found the reflections of my formation years helpful in accepting that the secular and the sacred are interwoven. And that secular humanistic values invite a greater convergence of positive human agencies than religious alignments.

Yet the tension between mission options and my own perspectives did not end with my involvement in rural education. While some felt that education is nothing more than conscientisation, I saw that raising awareness did not always bring relief to the people conscientised. And if relief is indefinitely postponed, social movements cannot be sustained. Hence some concrete educational advantage must be made accessible to learners. Literacy and numeracy are seen as desirables even if in practice many of the poor hardly achieved barely functional literacy in some of the programmes I have

worked at. Some said, 'If the achievement is so limited of what use is the programme?' But when I visited the tribal communities who had agreed with us to host the learning centres, I heard them say this: 'At least our children go to a running school where your teacher comes, and they try to learn, and some of our children have indeed learnt!' I got the poor parents to pay a small fee in cash or kind. The villagers gave us a hut for us to run the programme. They bought learning tools. Later, with help from fellow Jesuits and the Sisters, we began savings and credit societies and micro-watersheds. We initiated organic farming experiments.

At each stage of programme development there was much discussion with tribals, both individually and collectively. Much observation, reading, reflecting and, I daresay, theologizing and prayer.

Avoiding Conflict

There was a time I thought the Society, the Church and the World would, in short-term eschatology, converge on human issues. Today, I do not expect such convergence to take place. If it does happen I shall be grateful. If it does not, I shall not be disappointed. For the Paschal Mystery is for me an example of salvation already here and not yet realized. I am less and less inclined to invest in conflict. Earlier I would have entered Province assemblies with great zeal to argue out convergent action for the poor. But now, in the divergent associations we find ourselves in (and this is not totally disadvantageous to the cause of the poor because there may be only slightly more convergence on *elitist* agendas), I think it more purposeful to use the considerable help Jesuits and others offer than enter debates as to the meaning of the magis for our times.

*Much observation,
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and prayer*

I have tried to keep far from the policy decision mechanisms of the Society (a move, I guess, that has been reciprocated !) and to do my job as best as I can, rather than engage in acrimonious debate as to which apostolates must be retained at the cutting edge of our option for faith and justice. I have found that conflict often saps one's creativity and commitment. I have found my way of coming to terms with what I do not agree. And if I

have had spells of bitterness I also have had moments of great gratitude for such support as the Society and the Church offer to vocations like mine that that leave familiar turf and venture into areas I would have never dared to think of working in.

Spiritual Vision

Whether my vision can be called Ignatian, or Christian-Catholic, or Humanistic, is not the core issue. But that my vision relates to God's Goodness and His Saving Action, reaching out to the most bereft of the human family is important for me today. I grant that to figure out such a theological expression would necessarily imply consulting every single source of divine communication. If Ignatius could have conceived of human reality and theological development as it is today I would have no hesitation in saying that I seek to share his vision just as it is. When it comes to perspectives that have still to be furthered and deepened, I reflect and pray and act that the pedagogy of God's praxis may find me an earnest learner.

I have come to value the contributions of a wide spectrum of persons and institutions that complement what I singly cannot achieve. Professed ideologies and spiritualities are always to be evaluated by their practical manifestations, just as my own vision often *collapses under* the weight of its own contradictions, for example, the use of expensive facilities which the poor can hardly afford.

It surprised, amused and pleased me when I was referred to as a social activist in a seminar context. For years I have been content with the identity of a small-scale experimenter with possible educational alternatives for poor tribal learners. When I fall physically sick or into psychological lows, I prepare myself for the ignominy of being called a burnt out case. But support has not yet failed. It seems Providential that there are always persons who stand by with all the help needed to strengthen one's energies and commitment. I think my spirituality takes shape in such solidarity. And solidarity with the Paschal Mystery no less.

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN POVERTY

Tony Herbert

Biographical Note

I was born in Sydney Australia and educated by the Christian Brothers and the Jesuits. On completing high school I joined the Jesuits in 1960, doing Novitiate and Philosophy in Melbourne. I was then appointed to the then Hazaribag Region, arriving in India in 1965. I completed my regency at St Xavier's School Hazaribag, and after language (Hindi) and under-graduate studies, did theology at St Mary's College Kurseong, and, when the latter was transferred, at Vidya Jyoti, Delhi. After ordination I was again appointed to St Xavier's Hazaribag, and then to Hazaribag parish, followed by tertianship at Sitagarha. I opted to work among the Dalits of Hazaribag district during Tertianship, and subsequently spent ten years living in, and working with, village Dalit communities. In 1991 we went for a sabbatical to the Jesuit-run Behavioural Science Institute in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. On my return, together with other Jesuits, I initiated Prerana Resource Centre, Hazaribag, whose aim is to strengthen the apostolate among the Dalits. I am presently co-ordinator of this Centre.

I received my appointment to India with mixed feelings: what was India like, was I suited to it, capable of coping with it? I left with youthful Jesuit idealism and a spirit of adventure. The journey (two weeks by ship) was literally a rite of passage; it seemed to stress, was symbolic of, leaving something behind – youth? family? a whole world? *my* boats? It served to make real a commitment already made. In later years I was to realize how much freedom it had given. In later years I also realized the wrench it had been for my parents. Feeling awareness was not on our agenda in those days.

After a period of settling in, I was posted to St Xavier's Hazaribag, a large English medium school with a hostel. Two years of regency there,

teaching, hostel supervision, sports, little time to think too much. It was "total institution", a hard and challenging programme, and provided much opportunity to discover my capabilities, and lack of them. Many friendships made in those days are still with me, but India remained very much another world, somewhere there outside the front gate. I could as well have been in Australia.

One day, during theology a notice appeared on the board: a parish priest some distance away wanted five theologians to give three-day retreats in different villages as preparation for Christmas. I agonized, wanting very much to go, and yet knowing I couldn't manage it. Eventually I wrote my name. The parish priest, a Belgian missionary with a long beard, drove me out to the village, handed me over to the catechist, said he would be back after three days, and drove away. I experienced for the first time the emptiness I would feel in going out to stay in villages. It strips away one's own immediate bearings and supports, but very slowly offers others that are perhaps richer. The three-day retreat was little less than pathetic, the people were patient and loving, and I had crossed, for me, an important barrier. The following summer holidays, in Bhurkunda parish, I gave a string of 5 village retreats over as many weeks.

After ordination I was again posted to St Xavier's, the same place where I had done regency, but with added work and responsibilities. The school was still an English medium enclave; the schedule, fully demanding. I longed to get out into the streams of Indian life. I also wondered why we chose this social class for our concerted attention when there were so many others in such greater and such dire need. After two years the Major Superior recognized my restlessness, and sent me to the local parish. This was a welcome opportunity for pastoral ministry, to small Christian communities around the countryside, mainly evening confessions, morning Mass, visiting families. It also meant moving into the vernacular language, getting to know village life, learning about the lives of the ordinary people.

One day, towards the end of two years, in village Jamuari, it struck me that I could carry on this ministry for a hundred years, it would make little difference to the people. While it did draw on the sources of Christian sacramental life, it was culturally foreign; it bypassed glaring social questions; the people seemed to live in two separate compartments, the Christian and

the tribal. And loving as the people were to me, the visiting priest, I was clearly an outsider. I felt I must enter one community, learn its language and culture, and go with them into their own world. In our area we touched four main communities, Oraon, Santhal, Munda and Dalits. When Tertianship came soon after, I asked the Major Superior if I could work among the Dalits, a request which he granted. Thus began, at the age of 40, what was to be my life's main work.

The next 10 years were spent in extended touring of the villages and staying in them, endeavouring to be part of the Dalit world. I initially took the role of an anthropological field worker, observing and noting festivals, rites of passage, relationship patterns and such. I had had no training at all in this, but I had long learnt that in the Society you end up doing something for which you have had no training!

The expectations of the people were for me to provide uplift or development projects that would help the people in their poverty. This particular "development approach" was the tradition of our local church; it was also the response of the government to the poverty of the people. I refused to go along with it. Eventually when people would ask, "then why are you here", my reply would be "because I like being with you." I stylise those words, but it was very true, I was very much enjoying my village stint among them! I was to learn that, whereas many are willing to do things for them from outside, few are ready, and they know it, to go into their world which is defined as "polluted". Being genuinely happy to be among them was itself an unspoken Gospel message, more than the development work for them from outside. The importance of the relationship over the activity was always to stay with me as a guideline.

Two things I learnt during those early years – while there were reasonably good standards of education among the higher caste communities (to which I had contributed at St Xavier's), among the lower communities there was near total illiteracy, of which I had not even been aware. Secondly, there was a regular undercurrent of violence against the Dalits. This was in the form of physical violence whenever they showed the slightest sign independence, or in the chronic violence of a feudal system marked by under-subsistence wages, deprivation of survival resources (land, water,

forest), and bonded labour. Most of all, the violence was in the form of the pejorative identity given to them by caste Hinduism, a stigmatized identity which they themselves have internalized.

In time I did become very active in initiating work - non-formal education centres, sending children to our mission hostels, building a team of co-workers from among the people, involved with legal cases in the courts but this initial period of extended exposure in the Dalit world had been crucial for me.

I enjoyed the outdoor life of village touring. I would catch a local bus from Hazaribag town (two hours), and walk or cycle from village to village following a programme previously given to the people in our monthly meetings. In those days, no motor cycle. The bus and walking were time-consuming, physically tiring, and done in summer heat and monsoon rain. But they were great levellers, something which, as an expatriate, I thought was very important. It was also a way to meet people face to face, on the road, in tea-shops. From such casual visits we got to know some Dalit communities that still have regular contact with us.

The world of the Dalits was (still is!) something foreign to me. To them I did not know even the basics of village life, was constantly walking over their customs, was unfamiliar with their sub-dialect, and my efforts would probably be best described by the phrase "fumbling incompetence"! Humbling for me, amusing to them. In their world, their knowledge was superior to mine, I depended entirely on them. They would put me up wherever, food came in whatever form, at whatever time, and I learned to be very grateful for it. Unwittingly, this was a happy inversion of the power equation that is normal between priest and people. Life circumstances demanded an asceticism that had a hard edge. This did not come from the religious motivation of a "spiritual person", it was simply the lived ground reality, and in time, like the people, I took it somewhat for granted. But to give it all balance, let me stress that I was often back at base at St Xavier's for periods of time.

Entering the Dalit world meant more than physical discomfort. The two- week boat trip to India had not removed my urban educated, white, middle-class programming. Now, slowly over the years, circumstances forced

me to rewrite so much of that. The taken-for-granted backdrops of my world no longer held. I now glimpsed this same world from another viewpoint; mine was no longer absolute. And the people taught me that so much of the status and the securities that I treasured were really of no value at all!

This re-scripting included my spirituality. Faith went beyond my Christian religious world-view and symbols. It became more a matter of seeing God present in the midst of apparent darkness, cruel poverty, in the bitterness of our people losing out again and again. It became the faith of Mark's centurion. In situations in which, humanly speaking, one could only say there is no God, it was the people who reaffirmed there was. Who was teaching gospel faith to whom!!

Further, the people have taken me deeper into the Gospel, have shown me its richness in a way that studies did not. I can narrate many experiences that have shown me how God is present already "out there". Those people on the edges are like a modern day Anaweam (God's humble and deserving poor) naked, without the artificial masks and pretensions that I put on, without the props that most people need. This is not to romanticise them, or to say they are better people; the poor can be as perverse as anyone. But there is among them an uncomplicated wisdom, a clarity, a simple joy that comes from having been stripped. In this way the people themselves give great energy; they are the ones who give hope, and that is why I still need to go back to them.

*Faith went beyond
my Christian religious
world-view and
symbols*

I was fascinated by their religious world. Underneath the upper layer of classical Hinduism, so well documented, was a subaltern world of folk religion. I took time off, and still do, to participate in their passage rites and festival rituals. There was the time in village Horam when I was witnessing a ritual which the crowds around me were utterly engrossed in and highly enthusiastic about , and I found myself saying "I have done three years of philosophy and four years theology, yet I haven't the faintest idea what's going on here". Such an experience had several outcomes. It drove me to read and study and seek to understand. It helped me see that here in the village there was religious dialogue (a word that we were beginning to use a lot). It seemed to me that religious dialogue must include such folk religion as well as the world's big religions. And it removed the

absoluteness of our Roman Catholic practices as being the only valid religious expressions, the only “system of symbols”, for the Gospel.

In my visits to the villages, I would explicate the Gospel story. “If we want new life, we must be ready to die. Jesus is a model of that. His Passover is nothing less than a map of our own lives”. In those days we would have gospel-prayer gatherings, with devotional singing. I couldn’t sing a note, but co-workers, trained by a fellow Jesuit, filled in. My visit usually focused on these gatherings. In time some groups asked for baptism. We would celebrate the Eucharist. On those occasions when we were in the midst of some justice struggle, it took on a special depth of meaning and feeling, it became a celebration of that struggle. Fear and assurance, helplessness and hope would be there all together. The people might not have been good on their catechism, but on those occasions, the Eucharist’s symbols of brokenness and sharing were extremely powerful. On one occasion our Mass was broken up by a landlord and his gang; a few other times stones rained down on the roof. When we celebrated in the village, the entire group, without distinction of baptised or non-baptised, would assemble; we were all in it together. Giving Communion to the baptised, and not to the others, I found was a counter-sign. The integration of these communities with the established local church also remains a complex issue.

My interaction with other priests and sisters working in social action reveals that among them there is a far too common experience of alienation from the mainstream church. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss this. Suffice it to say that I too have experienced it.

It results from a strong identification with the people they work with, and touches matters such as the tension of having to move constantly between the world of the people and the world of the religious-community (often starkly different - which is the real one?). It touches the blissful ignorance of fellow religious (one’s family!) to the harsh realities of life on the edges, and their apparent reluctance to give themselves to it, often even to acknowledge it. It touches the contrast between our comfortable lives on the one hand, and the unimaginable struggles of marginal people on the other. This is compounded by us proclaiming our poverty as a serious gospel commitment, and the people laughing off theirs with gospel-like simplicity. This creates constant tension, if not anger, and is part of my story. The temptations here are to move into self-pity and seek sympathy, or to nurse a smouldering anger. Sharing with Jesuit companions was a great support and encouragement.

The alienation felt by religious in social action is simply that experience which their people constantly experience. If we choose to go out to people on the margins, we cannot but also experience their alienation. So let us not lament it. In the beginning I believed ours was an exercise to bring our excluded communities into the mainstream. In practice this would mean that they find their place in wider society as equals, perhaps their acceptance into our local church (ultimately with vocations), our schools, to receive the social recognition they deserved. I saw that my "going out" was to bring "others in". I have learnt that it is not to be; the counter forces are too strong. This is not defeatism, because something does indeed happen, of which more below.

After 10 years I asked for a sabbatical. Perhaps I was beginning to burn out. A year at the Jesuit-run Behavioural Science Centre in Gujarat was a precious and rewarding break where studies focused on the psychology particular to oppressed peoples. For me, the warm hospitality of the Gujarat Jesuits was something special.

On our return, along with other Jesuits we started Prerana Centre. There we endeavoured to strengthen our Dalit work by training camps that addressed the particular Dalit psychology, with greater stress on them building their own organization. We were not into providing social services, but desperate needs were regularly at our door.

At Prerana, along with our Dalit village work, we also moved into advocacy. In our locality, a serious social issue is the impact of coal mining, on both environment and people. In many ways it is devastating. Without consciously planning it, we began to take up relevant issues on behalf of the affected people to the companies concerned and to the World Bank. Such advocacy also involved much networking with others. These were non-church groups; their high level of commitment and competence was striking. And more study, more reading.

We started with great hopes, but soon realized that in our neo-liberal world such advocacy is a case of David challenging Goliath, only here, our Goliath marches on triumphantly! Which brings us to the question of struggling against impossible odds.

We had faced the question with our Dalit community. Initially I had hoped to be able to bring them from the margins, to mainstream them. I was soon to suspect that this would be very difficult. Especially in social justice issues I soon realized how difficult it was to come out on top, even with the help of good officials in the establishment.

Therefore: - don't do it? Do something else which will give results? Realize there is no alternative and accept it? Surrender to "modern reality"? If the odds are so stacked, why do it?

Merton writes about doing something for the truth of what it is. It is there, so it has to be done, the outcome is secondary. So be it. Why give our efforts to a Dalit community in the face of a strident, all-dominating caste ideology? Why challenge the predatory neo-liberal juggernaut against impossible odds? Because it is there, and it has to be done. This is the reality of our world taken up into Christ's Passover, so we walk it.

Thus I learned more deeply that my Jesuit life was not simply the following of Christ, it was following him in poverty. There are many ways Jesuits can do this. A privileged one is solidarity with people on the margins. It is liberating and life-giving, both for the giver and the receiver. General Congregation 34 speaks of "communities of solidarity".

There is more. There are results, but in unexpected ways. Somebody wrote that the experience of loving is itself the reward of loving, not some payback in another way. There is the joy the engagement itself gives. I enjoy the work, the engagement with the people, the challenge of this priestly work. This is itself a lot.

But there are results also to be seen, the growth of individuals and communities in so many ways. Mustard seed growth.

Another result is what I have learnt from the poor about the Kingdom of God, something I have already mentioned.

And there, in finding God present among those on the edges, lies the reason for doing it. And with it the conviction that beyond our human horizon of "no hope", there is a hope and a certainty. Against all human logic.

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN POVERTY

All this served to give flesh to Ignatian understandings learned long ago. Perhaps a basis had been laid in the novitiate by regular reading of Examen 101 which had told me about putting on the same dress and uniform as Christ our Lord. This is spelt out in the Exercises, all the way through. His gift, beyond all proportion to the receiver or the response. What more to say?

OUR FAITH AND OUR QUEST FOR JUSTICE

Paul Caspersz

In 1942, with three friends I joined the Jesuit novitiate in South India. In our Colombo high school the four of us had taken part in the movement of “Catholic Action”. Its aim even then was to make the practice of our Faith relevant to our non-Christian and secular society. So I naturally looked forward to continuing and intensifying this quest in India. It was then a huge united entity of what is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Gandhi and Nehru were at the zenith of their struggle for independence. A friend wrote to me on the eve of our leaving Ceylon for India: “Remember you are going to live and love among the Indians”. I did indeed remember, and had high hopes, even as a novice, of being in some way a participatory witness of India’s striving to be free.

We were to be painfully disillusioned. We were in India, but for all that India was allowed to be for us, we may as well have been novices and juniors in Tokyo, London, New York or even on the moon. We were “formed” to a disembodied spirituality that was cut off from the concerns of the people: great poverty, the sufferings of the Dalits, the oppressive caste system, the overweening power of the *zamindars* (landowners), India’s art and culture and religiosity. The novitiate ran a soup kitchen from leftovers but it was not accompanied by social analysis as to why teenagers like the bright-eyed Veeran who coughed badly had to be in the soup kitchen queue. I remember Veeran and sometimes wonder whether he died early of TB. We had no access at all to newspapers or the radio.

In philosophy (1946-9), things began to change, but slowly. I was the first Lankan to be sent for theology in Naples. There the pace of change accelerated. We officially received only one Catholic daily newspaper, the dry-as-dust *Il*

Quotidiano, but on villa¹ and other days some of us managed to access *Il Mattino* and even *L'Unità*, the Communist daily. Some of my Italian co-students were vocal supporters of the *Democrazia Cristiana della Sinistra* (Christian Democracy of the Left). It was also in Naples that I learnt that Lercaro, the “Red Cardinal” of Bologna, lived in community with twelve *scugnizzi*.²

“If God will grant me the grace,” I prayed, “I shall also one day live in community with the poor”.

But not so soon. After theology in Italy and a Master’s degree in Social Sciences in England, I returned to Lanka in 1957 not, as I thought and had proposed to my Superiors, to begin a Jesuit Social Centre, but to be a schoolmaster in our high school in South Lanka. In 1970 the Jesuits were compelled by continuing financial shortfalls to hand over the school to the state. I retired from the post of Government School principal.

The Lercaro grace finally came in 1972 through our forward-looking Lankan Bishop Leo Nanayakkara, osb, who told me in late 1971: “I have heard that you are looking for a place where you can live with the people and engage in social research and action”. So, with him, on 11 February 1972 we boiled the traditional clay pot of milk and upon its overflowing on to the bright embers, we began *Satyodaya* (the Dawn of Truth).

That pot of milk presaged the future. It was the first great defining moment of my life after I left home to join the Jesuits. But on that morning, anxiety was writ large on some of our faces. Was there too little fire, or too little milk, or was the pot too deep? If it didn’t overflow, the omens would be bad. Finally, however, with much encouragement from the stoker, the milk boiled over the rim of the pot.

This was much like a prophecy of the next thirty three years: struggle, doubt, anxiety, pain of mind and heart – the injustices endured by the Tamil plantation people, the inter-ethnic country-wide conflict, the future of the relationship with foreign donor-partners – but also great joy and camaraderie in the *Satyodaya* inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-linguistic, inter-sex community. *Satyodaya* was an institution, but even more it was a vision, a lodestar and a hope. But we have few illusions. The task ahead will always be an uphill one. I desperately need the God of Justice to be with me on the climb.

On 11 February 1972 there was little thought of social action, but only, as the name *Satyodaya* indicates, of social research. But on 1 July 1972 came the first Law of Land Reform by which the British and locally owned

plantations were nationalized. The idea, my Marxist friends in the University and I thought, was a good one, socialist and anti-imperialist. Its implementation, however, almost from day one, was horribly racist. "The white man has gone. Now out you go too", shrieked the thugs at the defenceless Tamil plantation workers.

Satyodaya read the signs of the times. I distinctly recall the day when I went with a Tamil university undergraduate one evening at dusk to interview the Tamil men and women who, driven out of the estates often with hardly a day's notice, were roaming the streets of the big towns, searching for shelter and food. At the end of more than two hours of interviews, we met a Tamil worker about 35 years old who was very vocal. We decided that we would take him to a small teashop to talk with him. It was also a period of unprecedented food shortage in the country. As soon as the Muslim owner of the shop saw us, he said, "We don't have food for you two but we can satisfy the Tamil man". "How's that?", we asked. "We have only roti (a form of rough bread made out of flour) and some of the morning's potato curry." "That's just what we want", we replied. My undergraduate friend and I were hungry and thirsty, but we both noticed that the roti was stale and the potato curry rancid. Our Tamil guest ate his portion very fast and noticed that we were pushing our food away, sipping only the boiling hot black tea. "Why aren't you eating?" he asked us. "We are not really hungry," we told him, "we only wanted a cup of tea." "Then may I take your portions to my wife and my three children who are in the *kovil* (Hindu temple) premises for the night? They haven't had a morsel for the past two days". We of course readily consented. I can still remember the almost religious fervour with which he silently folded the four ends of the banana leaf over the food to take it away to his family. From that day to this I am haunted by the picture of that man folding the leaf over what was to be for his wife and children a festive meal. There is no going back on the struggle for justice as long as the incident remains in my memory.

In 1974 Satyodaya gave birth to the Coordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas (CSPA), a federation of organizations and groups that after the horrors of 1972 began to show concern for the Tamil plantation people. Came 1977 and its fearful all-island communal riots. Satyodaya entered the field to give what support it could to the Tamil victims. It helped 2663 Tamil estate families which lost everything, or nearly everything they possessed. In 1979 Satyodaya and CSPA led to the formation of the national Movement

for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE). Satyodaya changed from being a mainly socialist research centre to become equally an action centre for social justice.

In the course of its history Satyodaya sought to be sensitively responsive to the winds of change blowing around it in both religious and secular fields: the postwar emergence of the Third World, the youth unrest in Lanka, the dissatisfaction with the existing ways of life of the middle classes and the rich and the resulting hippy movement, the Second Vatican Council, the stirring calls to social justice of the World Council of Churches, the Jesuit General Congregation 32 and especially its path-breaking Decree 4, the powerful new understanding that the sum and scope of Jesuit spirituality was to seek to encounter God in all things. Satyodaya believed that the Divine had to be sought especially in God's favoured place of presence, which is in the poor, the disadvantaged, the marginalized.

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So, some of a Jesuit's best prayer should be in the market-place, in the hurly-burly of events which, in the modern world, succeed one another with amazing rapidity. Action against injustice and for justice in this world calls for an ideology that sets values and goals and prescribes modes of action. But ideology alone is not enough. For non-believers ideology has itself to be rooted in personal commitment to the release of the people from the structures of injustice and oppression and for believers in a living faith in the God of Justice who comes to us in Jesus. It has been my experience working with secular groups, even of non-believers, professed atheists and agnostics, that without this sincere and deep commitment, often expressed in the language of socialist humanism, action for justice weakens and one ultimately opts out. For followers of Jesus the Service of Faith finds its full and vibrant flowering in an impassioned commitment to inter-human justice. It is only when the contemplative relationship with the God of Goodness and Justice in faith is joined to transformative action for justice in inter-human relationships that

we become powerful agents of the realization of God's will to establish upon earth a community of justice, peace and love, as were the Prophets and Jesus of Nazareth.

¹ Villa is the one day of rest in the week enjoined on Jesuits by the community, a practice that has largely disappeared in the Society of Jesus but still continues in formation, especially in the Novitiate.

² Scugnizzi means "street children" a nickname that has connotations of both charming and dangerous. The scugnizzi usually worked for the mafia (Camorra) and were clever attractive delinquents.

A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE

Ando Isamu

Personal Introduction

I was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1964, at the end of Vatican Council II in Tokyo. That happened 6 years after my arrival in Japan as a young scholastic from Spain. My first assignment was at the Socio-economic Institute of Jesuit Sophia University (Tokyo). In 1966 I was appointed province delegate of the Jesuit SELA (Socio-Economic Life in Asia) Committee that coordinated and promoted social apostolate ministries in East Asia. In 1968 I was made Lecturer of Ethics of Economics at Sophia University. From 1972 to 1980 I was Head of the Asian Relations Center at the Socio-Economic Institute of the same University. In 1976 I took Japanese citizenship. In 1979 I became a member of the Executive Committee of the newly founded JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) in East Asia. In 1981, the Japanese Province opened a social center in Tokyo to which I was moved, and in late 1983, nominated Director of the centre. From 1989 to 1991, I served as Executive Secretary of SELA in the EAO Assistancy. At present I serve as director of the Jesuit Social Center in Tokyo and live in a small community of Jesuit seminarians.

After my assignment to work at Sophia University, I went to live in a poor region of Tokyo where a Jesuit had built a welfare institution for weak children with a free clinic for people in need. While there, I rented an old place in a low-income community that also served as a meeting place for the people in that vicinity and for volunteer university students. Although it was difficult to get Jesuits in our province to understand, a few showed interest in coming to live together. The place was very narrow and poor, and usually there were two or three of us living there. Since then I have experienced that is possible, even in affluent societies, to live

simply as ordinary people do in places that are not ours. It does not obstruct our apostolic work and you feel that you are living the Gospel values and getting closer to people.

Getting Acquainted with Jesuit Social Justice Ministry in East Asia

Working and teaching at the University I got deeply involved with issues of poverty, development, and gross violations of the rights of the people through the East Asian region, and started an Asian desk at the Socio-economic Institute to collect correct information on existing realities, to offer opportunities of attending challenging seminars and provide exposure for educators and university students.

In the meantime a group of Jesuits from East Asia had started a new network organization in the social apostolate called SELA (Socio-Economic Life in Asia) and the Provincial appointed me as a delegate from Japan. This Jesuit team generated common projects in the East Asian region. The fourth international seminar, the “Educators’ Social Action Workshop” held in Japan in August 1971 for about 200 educators from 11 Asian countries gave me very rich insights into Asian realities.

Jesuit Answers to the Tragedy of the Vietnamese Boat People

Together with the SELA team I had the chance of visiting Vietnam during the last phase of the American war there; it was a visit that made a definite change in my attitudes and personal life. A few years later, the flood of refugees into Thailand from Vietnam and the Cambodian and Laotian refugees—the “boat people”—prompted me to study the situation in refugee camps of East Asia with a team from Japan. A few of us Jesuits, mostly from the SELA team, realized the need to do something for the Vietnamese “boat people” and other Asian refugees staying in Thailand, and the result was that JRS was started under Fr. General Pedro Arrupe. In an atmosphere of international sympathy for the boat people, Sophia University, where I was working, began programmes of education in Thai refugee camps and created a new system of sending students to do voluntary work there under the leadership of Jesuit Bishop Joseph Pittau, then President of the University.

Our office at the University made it a priority to cooperate with the activities of JRS in East Asia. When, at the end of the seventies, hundreds of

“boat people” refugees began to reach Japanese shores seeking shelter, I discovered the coldness of Japanese society towards them. By now I had taken Japanese citizenship, and the egoistic attitudes of this affluent society hit me very deeply, but at the same time challenged me because I was in a privileged legal position to make the voices of foreign refugees heard as they begged for a safe place in which to survive. I knew well that immigration officials could not openly exert pressure against me because I was already a Japanese national and not a foreigner with a three-year visa. Nevertheless, they did put pressure on me through the authorities of the university where I was teaching. In the meantime, I was officially designated as a resource person by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Japanese Diet when politicians were discussing Japan’s ratification of the International Convention on Refugees.

Salvation with a Human Face

One day, a young Laotian in immediate danger of being expelled from Japan called urgently at my office in the University. I didn’t know what to do to help him, but I

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remember that I prayed and prayed, looking for influential persons who could be of help. His case was miraculously solved in no time, and then hundreds of young refugees and displaced persons started to flood the office for advice

and help. Ordinary citizens, some of them university professors and students, gathered together as volunteers; the mass media became sympathetic to the cause, and about 12 lawyers also assisted as members of the group, providing us with a strong image of a professional organization capable of negotiating with immigration officials. Political lobbying was a powerful tool to make desirable changes at that time. There were successes, but only after much expenditure of time and energy. The fact that people who were totally powerless in Japan were officially accepted here was a matter of great joy to all. Whatever their ideologies and beliefs and different

religious approaches, compassion and respect for the human person won the sympathy of most people. I can still now feel the joy of hundreds of young desperate refugees who found themselves wholly liberated and recognized, finally, as human persons after long years of oppression for no fault of theirs. For the first time in my life I understood what “salvation” really is.

Although the official atmosphere had changed and there was more lenient legislation to accept displaced persons, the system, and especially the officials responsible for keeping the strict status quo, remained largely unchanged. In the meantime, collaborators and volunteers were weary of continuing the fight and dropped out, telling themselves that the basic issues had been solved and that difficult cases needing strong and continuous support could be followed by a few dedicated persons. Such a situation brought disappointment and disillusion to all parties concerned.

Inauguration of Tokyo Social Center

At the beginning of the eighties the Province opened the new Social Center and I offered to work there and leave much of my work at the University. The new setup in a center that started to function in a house donated to the Society, but without much preparation. It was no easy task. As happens in other apostolic endeavours there was lack of communication and mutual prejudices. The future of our apostolic involvement, specifically, work with refugees in Japan and close cooperation with JRS, together with other new tasks, brought painful tensions among the three Jesuits working there part time and living in the same house. I was in fact the only Jesuit working full time in the new center. The first two years were difficult and critical till some changes of Jesuit personnel occurred.

On the other hand, since the University absorbed more and more Jesuit efforts, I decided to stop all my University commitments so that, together with two lay staff, I could concentrate on the development of the Social Center as a center of the province. In so doing I lost my social status in Japanese society as a person linked to the University, but I got more freedom to be by the side of those discriminated against.

A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE

Since then, the apostolic priorities of the Center have been:

- ~ To establish strong network links with the Society on issues concerning social apostolate matters, especially in the East Asian region
- ~ To become a channel for Rome's Justice Secretariat, translating into Japanese and introducing to our province the main documents of Fr. General and the Secretariat
- ~ To promote the social apostolate at the province level
- ~ To strengthen the links with Japanese NGOs that work for the transformation of society on the side of the weak and those who are victims of oppression.

Our center is deeply involved with development programs for poor rural communities in Vietnam (15 years) and in Cambodia (5 years).

The work with foreign migrant workers is one of our priorities and I dedicate part of my time to pastoral activities with them in a parish of Tokyo diocese, and together with volunteers, look for solutions to the difficult issues they face in Japan. Workers from Brazil, Peru, the Philippines, and other places comprise more than half our Catholic population in Japan.

Finally, as part of my sharing with those who will read this, I would like to mention that I feel fully satisfied with my life and my Jesuit vocation. I have, of course, experienced disappointments, misunderstandings, blackout moments, and lack of support, but I often find that my heart is at peace and full of joy. I constantly meet with new challenges. A sense of powerlessness is a very common phenomenon, but my natural prayer is: "Lord, now it is your turn. Do something about it".

Were I to enter the novitiate again, I would select the same life style, the same apostolic road.

PASSION FOR GOD AND COMMITMENT TO HUMANITY

Rigobert Minani

A young person in an unstable country

Scarcely had my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), attained its independence (1960) when it experienced several rebellions (Katangaïse, Muleliste, etc...) which have marked the majority of my people. I was born the 13th of October, 1960, four months after Independence. I have known since childhood the regime of civil wars followed by the military dictatorship of President Mobutu. A large part of my life was under this rule which for 32 years (1965-1997) governed the country with an iron hand. Until 1991 no opposition, neither military nor civil, could upset this system. Scarcely had I begun University (1981), when Mobutu decided to close the Universities to send the students into forced military service. I was among those who resisted being enlisted. I joined those at the time who were denouncing this political regime. The fighting was severe and disproportionate. On one side was a group of civilians without resources up against a super-military power with merciless secret police.

The following year, no longer able to study in an official University, I began my university formation at the Catholic Faculty of Kinshasa. At the end of my first cycle, I joined the Company of Jesus.

Passion for God

Marked by the horrors of the dictatorship, I lived with the constant preoccupation: “What to do for myself and my people to get out of this marginalization.”

Several solicitations were filed against the regime of Mobutu (1). But in reality the situation only worsened. Thus, I entered the novitiate with the conviction that one day things had to change. I asked myself if the choice that I had to make, “Passion for God” was the best way to be “committed to people” and in solidarity with my people.

To my great satisfaction I discovered among other things, at the beginning of my formation, the topic of the 4th Decree of the Thirty-second General Congregation. The study of this section was a key moment in my journey and the catalyst unifying my two aspirations. It provided me with a solid argument for a commitment to the two poles of Ignatian spirituality which I would strive, henceforth, to uphold.

At the end of my Theological Studies, 1992, I felt the need to incarnate these studies into concrete actions. With some friends, we began to create *a NGO with Christian values for the defense of human rights and for civic education named “Jeremy Group”*², which to oppose the dictatorship, would operate openly and would use the active and evangelical non-violent method (consciousness-raising, petitions, sit-ins, marches, etc....)

This period was the most fruitful of our commitment to democracy and good governance. The regime of Mobutu had weakened; more than one observer had already announced the end of the dictatorship.

In 1994, all local efforts had to be cancelled because of the war and the genocide in the neighbouring country of Rwanda.

The crisis in the Region of the African Great Lakes

On April 6, 1994, the airplane of the Rwandan President was shot down in Kigali. War then followed and a stream of more than 2 million Rwandan refugees poured into Congo territory.

As leader of the civil society in the frontier town of Bukavu (Eastern part of RDC) I found myself at the centre of this human drama. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) came to our help by opening the first project of which I was in charge. But our efforts to stabilize the situation were limited. Actually, the town of Bukavu was comprised of 250,000 inhabitants. It received in 15 days over 350,000 refugees. This phenomenon created incredible congestion for all public services. The whole social fabric was blocked. It was at this very moment that I experienced the limitations of working in a crisis situation rather than on its cause. I would spend my days organizing the refugee camps, distributing food, struggling to control epidemics, gathering together the orphans and caring for the wounded. And each day the work became more difficult than the previous day...the needs were enormous and the human and financial means so very limited.

This crisis was a challenge for our faith. How can one even imagine, let alone justify such things happening in a country whose majority were Christians! This situation reduced our charity to insignificance as our conscience became ever more profoundly affected.

It was after this painful experience of the limitations of generosity and of good faith that my province offered me the opportunity to get some formation in political sciences at the "Padre Arrupe" Institute of Policy Formation, Palermo, Italy.

In 1995, when I left Bukavu the situation was desperate. The genocide had brought the total to more than 500,000 dead in Rwanda; Burundi was in civil war. Zaire (now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo, RDC) became destabilized by the presence on its territory of more than 2,000,000 Rwandan refugees. Like a hurricane the genocide had mowed down human lives, all of whom were so dear to me. Bishop Christophe Munzihirwa SJ was assassinated on October 29th, 1996 in the aftermath of the crisis, this time in RDC.

As I was questioning within myself this chaotic situation I began to reflect more systematically and methodically on what could contribute towards a return to peace, stability, good governance and progress in my country and its neighbours to the south.

As the region is more than 90% Christian, I dedicated the first year of my research to the study of the Church's teaching on socio-political commitment.³

Having discovered that the Christian Faith was, despite everything, a powerful lever when it comes to working for a better world, I dedicated the second year of my research to exploring what could become the mission of the Church in Africa and particularly in RDC. I elaborated upon several action steps, that I have not yet finished exploring, that could be put into practice.

In 1997, I returned to my country, better prepared to face and contribute something to the multipolar crisis that had spread throughout the southern region of the Great Lakes. Then a second war broke out in August of 1998. By October 1998 with others we created the *Network of organizations with Christian aspirations for the defense of human rights and public education*. (RODHECIC Réseau d'organisations d'inspirations chrétiennes de défense des droits de l'homme et d'éducation civique).⁴ It comprises today about 75 member and 102 partner organizations working over the 2,345,000 km² of RDC. The objective was to create among the committed organizations a synergic faith-community for the transformation of society. While working in close collaboration with the Centre for Study for Social Action (CEPAS Centre d'Etude pour l'Action Sociale) I was called in 2003 to animate its socio-political dimension.

My joys and sorrows, the Kisangani Massacres

In this work I knew moments of joy and discouragement. Actually, from the 14th or 15th of May, 2002, the city of Kisangani underwent the most horrible massacres in the history of our country. A death squadron

arrived in this city which proceeded to massacre civilian populations, to execute the military and then mutilate their bodies. The decapitated and disemboweled bodies stuffed into bloody sacs were then thrown into the river by this commando from the height of the Tshopo bridge.

Thanks to the network of organizations and personnel on the spot and to the satellite telephone that I was able to use, I have become the main contact for the cries of despair of the martyrs of Kisangani. By keeping myself out of range of the executioners, I can alert national and international opinion in minutes after an outbreak of killings. Hour after hour, I publish several on-the-spot reports and press releases denouncing this situation, indicating names of the chief executioners and providing identities of victims. This action has resulted in stopping on time massacre which in less than 48 hours have already brought about some 250 deaths among the civilian population. It was possible for the first time to retrace from where the squadron had come, to know their number and the names of their squadron leaders.

As a follow-up to this information, the United Nations sent two high-ranking Missions of Inquiry which asked that the silent partners of this killing be arrested and brought before the court of justice. But up until now these persons have never been searched. On the contrary, some are, thanks to the peace, functioning today in responsible positions. Certain ones have more than once tried to harm eye-witnesses whom we helped escape and ourselves as well. Two Jesuits (Fathers Xavier Zabalo and Guy Berhaegen) heading for Kisangani, were ill-treated during these outbreaks.

Conclusion.

Today, with the setting up of the Government for National Unity and the perspective of free elections our work has been

— PASSION FOR GOD AND COMMITMENT TO HUMANITY —

developing along two lines:

~ the preparation of the people to appropriate the future by a responsible and an enlightened electoral choice,

~ the formation of a political and social leadership within the religious confessions.

Certainly, the situation remains difficult, but our passion for God and our commitment to our people is a fire that no one will ever be able to extinguish.

¹ Read: "The call to redress the wrongs of the nation", a declaration of the Bishops of Zaire, 1 July, 1978, "Our faith in mankind, image of God", a declaration of the permanent committee of the Bishops of Zaire, 2 July, 1981

² www.groupe-jeremie.org

³ Rigobert Minani, *Existe-t-il une doctrine socio-politique de l'Eglise?* Kinshasa, Cepas, 200, 208 pages

⁴ www.rodhecic.org

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

A theological re-reading of Peoples' life stories

JESUITS: BOURGEOIS OR FRIENDS OF THE POOR?

A SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FROM A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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It has been moving and inspiring for me to read the narratives of my fellow Jesuits and our collaborators. Most of them not only nourish my longing to become more and more (“*magis*”) a good companion of ‘the poor Jesus,’ but also teach me existentially how this can happen. Thanks for these testimonies! Telling these socio-spiritual biographies is the first part of what St. Ignatius calls “love”: “sharing what one has, what one is with those one loves” (SpEx. 231). Let me try to add a second corresponding part so that together we may realize this love in mutual communication.

*To be with the poor and with
“the poor and humble” Jesus Christ*

Not surprisingly, in telling their stories the European Jesuits as well as other Jesuits and friends have centred on the person of Jesus as poor and humble (Alemany), understood in the sense of the second week of the spiritual exercises (SpEx. 98, 146). The key motivation behind these narratives is to follow Him as closely and concretely as possible. This personal identification with the poor and humiliated Jesus Christ leads them to seek poor persons today and to make friends with them, because Jesus - and Ñigo! - did the same. The narratives do not stress the moral point of this consequence; on the contrary, they emphasize the grace of becoming more familiar with Jesus Christ through close contact with the poor. C. Herwartz, for instance, tells how easily he understood the Bible in the tram on his way to the day-labourers and how, in sharing the hardship and contempt

they suffered and in breaking bread with his fellow workers, he found Jesus Christ. Working and living with the poor stimulates belief in the present Lord, who teaches us, breaks bread with us, and shares with us His joy and peace.

In these testimonies three key phrases (“to be with”, “the poor”, “the poor and humble Jesus Christ”) are used to formulate the central process and experience: *To be with the poor is a sign and a means (a sacrament) of coming closer to the poor and humble Jesus Christ*. A human action - to try more and more to “be with” the poor, and eventually to “live with” or close to them (“*estar-con*”, “*vivir-con*”: Alemany)- is seen as the natural prerequisite to the grace of the Lord’s revelation of Himself as present among us. So, the contemporary language used by our fellows does not stress action for the poor, such as establishing social projects or struggling politically, but underlines as most important *being somehow with the poor*; and through this becoming, in some respect (for example, as Bingham says, in prayer) like the poor.

This human action consists in seeking the poor, making contact with them, getting close to them, being touched by and invited by them. This corresponds exactly to the lifestyle of the newly converted Iñigo who

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and humble Jesus Christ*

dissociated himself from the comfortable world of the Spanish court and his brother’s house, started to wear clothes like the poor, to beg and to live like them in hospitals and other such places. In the European narratives such an involvement with the poor is realized by being inserted in, living and working in poor parishes (Alemany, Bingham), or by

offering hospitality in an inter-religious community in a poor area of Berlin (Herwartz). Both these approaches are influenced by the worker priest tradition. Elsewhere, additional ways of involvement with the poor are reported. Ryan offers the example of social science research; Isamu combines this with inserted community life and JRS work. Again, other narratives speak of itinerant Amazonian pastoral work with indigenous peoples (López), accompaniment of victims of violence in Congo (Minani), and victims of the caste system in India (D’Lima).

As the grace and spiritual fruit of this involvement with the poor, our fellow writers report a growing familiarity with Jesus, so that we can speak of an interconnected dynamic process according to the second week of the Spiritual Exercises: the one who prays (Jesuit or collaborator) wants to follow Jesus Christ, the poor and humble person, more closely. This longing motivates involvement with the poor, and results in encounters with labourers, unemployed persons, drug addicts, youngsters in pre-care jobs, elders with a small pension and/or immigrants (to use European examples). In these Jesus Christ reveals Himself as being present, and through them familiarity with Him increases.

***Exclusion, death and the presence of the risen Lord
the triad of incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection***

Some Catholic traditions concentrate only on the **one** reality of the cross, e.g. Spanish processions of the Way of the Cross, or the religiously plausible hard work in rural Poland. Since Vatican II it has become “politically correct” in Catholic theology to bring together explicitly both aspects, crucifixion and resurrection (“pascha-mysterium”), which in practical spirituality sometimes lead to a stale, uninspired mix. A different and truly Ignatian characteristic is to be found in the narratives, which include the triad of incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection (as in Lopéz). According to the course of Ignatian meditations beginning with the second week, the explicit integration of the mystery of incarnation (SpEx. 101 ff) seems to have profound practical and spiritual meaning, especially in the process of involvement with the poor. This is to be understood:

1. First, as *analogy*. As it was for Jesus Christ a “*kenosis*”, a relinquishing of God’s perfect sphere, a “degradation and humiliation “ to enter a “strange”, corrupted, slave-like world and equality with human beings (Phil 2, 6-8), so initiation into the milieu of the poor consists of letting go of a rich, safe sphere and stepping into a culturally strange, “dirty”, broken world.

2. Second, as *process*. Keeping incarnation explicitly in mind inspires the gradual, never ending *process* of stepping more and more into the surprisingly different world of the poor - a process of gradual learning and

understanding, of being invited by and getting ever more familiar with the poor, their life conditions and the unexpected light of the present Lord. This orientation to the process of incarnation helps to avoid short-term, single-action-approaches and fosters a continuous, serious involvement with the poor, like that of Jesus and Ignatius. A difference between European narratives and, for instance, those about the work with Dalits in India or with *Indios* (indigenous people) in the Amazon area, might be that the latter seem to demand a more fundamental process of cultural and inter-religious learning (López; Herbert).

The approach to and with the poor, explicitly called an “exegesis” of Ignatius’ pilgrimage (Herwartz), is like a real “downward” process: The Jesuits and their friends who have taken seriously this kenosis, this way of becoming close to the poor, have themselves experienced, like the poor, exclusion, devaluation, scorn (Herwartz), alienation (D’Lima) and being a “persona non grata” (Bingham) - even among fellow Jesuits! Additionally, the apostles are touched by the sufferings of the poor for example, the lack of rights for immigrants, the loneliness of elderly people, accusations from the unemployed of personal guilt (Alemany) and the experience of multiple forms of “death” (Boyle; Alemany). Again and again they feel in reality as if “divinity hides” (SpEx. 196), and they can only put their confidence in Jesus Christ’s “office to console” his disciples (SpEx. 224). And this happens! Jesus, who himself transgressed social and religious barriers and was therefore treated like a criminal, walks as the Risen Lord together with the poor and His disciples, ‘prays’ in His disciples and enables the Jesuits’ mission to discover, and help others to discover, His presence (Herwartz). W. Ryan, a rare example of a social scientist, writes convincingly of having discovered how the Risen Christ is “leading all creation to its eschatological fulfilment”, how His spirit gives him “mostly peace” at his core “even in the middle of surface storms.” All this, he says, is “based on a stable attitude of gratitude, supported by prayer to the Trinity to receive the grace to be placed beside Jesus carrying his cross for the recreation of the world and (...) especially the poor,” and also by “frequent prayer to see and find God present and active in myself and every other person, and in every

*the narratives include
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resurrection*

circumstance". So the Ignatian line beginning with the second week is finally drawn not only to resurrection, but also to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

Discernment and prayer

The narratives stress the importance and fruitfulness of personal and common discernment as a means of discovering how to follow Jesus Christ more authentically in involvement with the poor. Personal discernment has helped an apostle like Bingham to take seriously not only the fight for others, but also his own personal needs, and so be nourished himself by the concrete gifts of the loving God – foundation of our life and of the spiritual exercises. Having discerned together with poor parish members and other local organizations, Alemany has learnt not be seduced by immediate efficacy and confidence in human means alone. Regularly, between the boat trips, the itinerant Amazonian pastoral team (consisting of men and women with different spiritualities) takes ten days of "contemplation time," says Lopez, in order to recover and better discover God's call by "discerning concrete faces." Not having known how to help a Laotian pending expulsion, Isamu "prayed and prayed", and this and other cases were "miraculously solved". The lesson to be drawn from these narratives is that , the more regularly the apostles take time for discernment and prayer, the more fruitful the Jesuit (social) apostolate will be. These narratives, incidentally, disprove the former biased perception that Jesuits in the social apostolate 'do not pray'. If ever there were such tendencies in the past, they have now been overcome by a clear conviction and practice, as Alemany says, "to cultivate the spiritual"

Common forms of redemption

The narratives from the social apostolate give a "counter-cultural" testimony: a meaningful life, joy and salvation are not to be found in an individualistic "one-man-" or "one-woman-show" which aims at a satisfying, and/or materially richer, life for oneself. On the contrary, to live for and with a multitude of friends, making a path together, is considered a "privilege", a "privileged presence of the Holy Spirit" (Alemany). Reflecting

on this frequently mentioned community aspect of redemption in the narratives, two points astonish me: (1) The disappearance of the notion of “justice” and, correspondingly, the changed character of eschatology, and (2) a silence about Eucharist. In the narratives I miss the **Eucharist**. Working in the social apostolate, the celebration of this holy sacrament is essential. To enter more and more into Jesus Christ’s self-giving way of love and to be united with Him, to listen to God’s word and to discern life conditions in this light, to learn from Jesus’ inclusive kind of community with the poor and sinners is explicitly expressed in the form of common meals. And this ‘form’ of the common meal is indeed a sign and anticipation of hope, of the eternal life to which the present patterns of social realities should as far as possible correspond. Frankly, the daily celebration of the Eucharist gives my commitment to the social apostolate the example, hope and strength which it needs. All, not only I, are called to be children of the One God and to be redeemed.

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Only in the context of a retrospective view of the years 1969-74 is the “struggle for a more just society” seen as a “sign and anticipation of the promised Kingdom” (Alemany). In the latest, contemporary reflections I did not find explicit references to the term “justice”. It seems to have been replaced by “being” or “living with the poor”. Correspondingly, the explicit idea of a collective eschatology related to the social conditions of this earth also seems to have vanished. I wonder whether socially committed Jesuits would express it in such pointed terms as the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger who said in an interview in 1994: “The object of our hope is not a future better world, but eternal life” (*Salz der Erde*, 126; my translation). Stated in this way, this sentence could be misunderstood in the sense of mere individualistic redemption, which is disconnected from this world. But such an understanding would fit neither the mainly societal and concrete notion of redemption in the Old Testament, nor Jesus’ healings and table fellowship, which are ‘real symbols’ of the Kingdom. To paraphrase the restrained implicit eschatology of some new spiritual movements: “We are called to love one another. As this mutual love can only be realized within the Christian community, not towards the world (which cannot adequately respond), we

cultivate (only) our community". In an individualized world where committed Christians are perceived to be dispersed minorities, such (possibly) individualized eschatologies might be considered plausible. But Christian theology, especially a Trinitarian Ignatian theology inspires its followers to hope, pray and work so that **all** and everything (including the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres) will be directed to the "greater glory of God" (*omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam*). It 'must' therefore include a collective eschatology that is somehow 'related' to socio-cultural, economic and political progress or development (*Gaudium et Spes* 34f, 38f, 45). We Jesuits long, pray and work for a personal and common redemption, and believe, consequently, in an all-embracing eschatology - contrary to the individualistic "*Zeitgeist*" whose liberal anthropology Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in 1994 so convincingly rejected (*Salz der Erde*, 178-180).

Promising impulses for the Future

From the narratives I draw five innovative ideas that have potential to re-vitalize the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus.

1. St. Ignatius described himself as a "pilgrim" and has called us to follow the example of the itinerant Jesus and his apostles. Comparing the narratives of F. López on the Itinerant Mission in the Amazon and C. Herwartz of being "itinerantly at home" with the de facto fixed and comfortable life conditions of many Jesuits, at least in Europe, I am convinced that a conversion to a more *itinerant style of mission* and, correspondingly, a *poorer, more insecure lifestyle* would result in more fruitful apostolates, credible communities and contented and authentic apostles.

2. A concrete exercise to enter this poor itinerancy can be seen in a spiritual innovation, called "*spiritual exercises on the street*" (Herwartz). This promising model of retreats in the midst of big cities takes Ignatius' mode of poor, urban life during his original spiritual exercises in Manresa seriously - a real-life precondition which also fostered the fruitfulness of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius' first companions.

3. Additionally, I consider activities in cross-denominational and multi-religious contexts as promising fields of our (social) apostolate. That

Jesuits build bridges between hostile confessions (Northern Ireland, cf. Bingham), consider Muslim fellow-lodgers also as their spiritual “teachers” (Herwartz), or see cross-religious befriending and theological learning as their task (e.g. the Jesuit community in Ankara), is to be read as a “real symbol” of the “One God and father of all” his children (Eph 4,6).

4. In this respect, some narratives, for example those of Bingham and Herwartz, allude to the global dimension of our social apostolate. Without any doubt, a much more intense and institutionalized *globalisation of the Jesuit social apostolate* (e.g. JRS) would better correspond to St. Ignatius’ meditation of the incarnation (SEx. 111 ff), his favourite image of the “body of the Society as a whole” (Const. 135 et passim), and to his apostolic criteria in the Constitutions (622f). Who, or what, other than the dynamic, relatively competent and universal body of the Society of Jesus could act in the church as an effective “sign and means” of the economic, political and - in a certain sense - socio-cultural unity of all mankind?

5. Fr. Alfred Delp SJ (1907-1945), a fascinating Jesuit martyr who was killed by the Nazi regime because of his committed, cross-denominational resistance, characterized the bourgeois as “a human being vis-à-vis whom even the Holy Spirit stands, so to speak, perplexed and cannot gain entry, because everything is blocked by bourgeois securities and insurances” (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. IV, p. 299; my translation). How can Jesuits and their friends best avoid becoming bourgeois? A clear answer is given in the narratives: try to make friends with the poor! In order that this constant contact can be realized not only within the social sector itself, but as the *social dimension* of our Jesuit identity, i.e. by all Jesuits and their collaborators, I propose the institutionalisation of *St. Ignatius’ counsel to the Jesuit theologians at the Council of Trent* in 1546. In his letter to Jay, Lainez and Salmeron he asked them, in addition to their main duties as fathers of the Council, to - *inter alia* - teach children, to set a good example, and to visit the poor in hospitals (MI Epp. I, 386-389). Accompanying foreigners pending deportation in a German detention centre and in advocacy for them, I am gifted with greater apostolic credibility and a closer sense of belonging to Jesus Christ. By means of such part-time commitments we become rooted in the reality of the poor - and share the following promise: “Friendship with the poor makes friends of the Eternal King” (34th GC, D. 2, nr. 8).

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRIES

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Introduction

I understand my task in this essay is to reflect from a theological perspective on the testimonies or histories that CIS has gathered from Jesuits and lay-partners in various social ministries around the world concerning the ways in which Ignatian spirituality has informed those ministries. I understand theological reflection to be critical scrutiny of a situation or event (in this case, the testimonies gathered by CIS) in the light of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, and the various sources that his Church has used through time to understand, celebrate, be guided by his person, and live out his message.

The purpose of theological reflection as I practise it is to fathom more fully how God is at work in the world through the Spirit of Jesus. This is an exercise that involves both uncovering and basking in surprising eruptions of grace, as well as personal and structural resistances and barriers to God's efforts to enlist us under the banner of his Son, the Cross, symbol and sign of God's victory over sin and death.

To this end, and following the suggestion of the editors of this volume, I have divided my comments into different parts. I begin with a general theological vision of the histories I have read, then move on to speak about how different aspects of Jesuit spirituality are present in these same accounts, and take account of certain *lacunae* that I have noticed. Finally, my conclusion highlights what I see as contributions by the histories to the life of the Spirit and other ministries of the Society.

The General Theological Vision of the Testimonies

The ten testimonies or histories that I read are disparate narratives of ministerial and religious experiences that do not intend to present the reader with anything approximating a theological treatise on God or any kind of dogmatic or systematic theology. Be that as it may, there is a certain common theological vision of which these narratives partake. They reveal a belief and personal commitment to, in the words of Paul Caspersz S.J. “the God of Goodness and Justice [who] comes to us in Jesus.”

This God revealed by Jesus is intimately connected with creation, and through the Spirit of Jesus continues to sustain and guide it toward God’s plan for creation. In particular, the example and Spirit of Jesus inspires men and women of good faith, Christian and non-Christian, to continue the mission of Jesus, namely, the announcement and establishing of a more just and humane reign among human beings. Far from being a predetermined endeavour, the enterprise of working together in God’s project for creation is one that is personally addressed to each person in the form of an invitation to follow Jesus as his disciple, and requiring each person who hears the summons of Jesus to carefully discern the time, place, and circumstances that such a call entails.

In most of the narratives a low Christology predominates, emphasizing Jesus’ struggle for peace and justice in his time. Nonetheless, the divinity of the Lord also makes an appearance, for example, in the citation by Michael Bingham S.J. of St. Paul’s kenosis hymn from Philippians. Bingham reflects on the self-emptying of the Word to describe his own experience of working among the poor and acquiring the vision to discern all choices from the perspective of the poor. While I found explicitly affective language to describe the relationship that most of the authors of the histories enjoy with the Lord to be missing, their frequent expressions of how the poor have often been revelatory of the best of humanity, suggest to me the profound Matthean grace of identifying and encountering the Christ in the *anawim* or God’s humble and deserving poor. It is in keeping with the spirituality of Matthew 25:25ff, that the narratives see the poor and marginalized as sacraments of the Christ.

The final dimension of the general theological vision of the testimonies I would like to underscore is their eschatology. A sober awareness of the limitations of all earthly political and institutional projects

to achieve the fullness of life of the reign of God characterizes these narratives, especially the narratives of Alvaro Alemany S.J and Godfrey D'Lima S.J. This is an awareness born of the long and very difficult struggles to which these men and women have dedicated their lives. But it also springs from a spiritual vision of the reign of God as holding out a promise of mercy and compassion that is humanly impossible without the totally transforming power of grace. Indeed, this eschatological dimension was for me one of the great surprises of these narratives, for unlike early liberationist reflections, these accounts are free of reductionist jeremiads against the rich and romanticizing rhetoric about the poor.

Aspects of Jesuit Spirituality in the Testimonies

As one would expect, Jesuit spirituality appears frequently in these testimonies. First and foremost recounted is the legacy of the Spiritual Exercises, predominantly its pedagogy of reading the movements of spirits, its language of spiritual combat and spiritual freedom. The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits are invoked not only to understand the interior life, but the turbulence of a ministry committed to battling injustice, with the goal of applying these rules to become a contemplative in action. Crucial aids in the ministry of social transformation seem to be the spiritual freedom or indifference characteristic of the First Principle and Foundation, and the solidarity with the poor expressed by Christ in the Contemplation of the Call of the King. I found Alvaro Alemany S.J. and Fernando Lopez S.J. particularly eloquent in this regard.

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In addition, Christ's way of proceeding expressed in the Meditation of the Two Standards (poverty, offering no resistance to insults, and humility, in sharp contrast with the logic of the enemy of our human nature—riches, honour, pride) finds resonance in the lives of many of the contributors. Their ministry among the poor echoes the school of thought that sees the Exercises as a conversion process culminating in the election or reformation

of life. The election here is the process of choosing and being chosen by the poor, with all the dying to self and rising to a new life of commitment and companionship with the poor that this entails, a ministry similar to that of Jesus. I recommend the account of Godfrey d'Lima S.J. in particular as illustrative of these aspects of the Exercises.

The other major heuristic framework that interprets the Exercises as a school of prayer or growing union with God is also present in these testimonies, as evidenced by William Ryan, S.J.'s classic formulation of the connection between Ignatian spirituality and his social justice work: "My regular bridge between justice and union with God is built on a persevering search for spiritual freedom based on a stable attitude of gratitude, supported by prayer to the Trinity to receive the grace to be placed beside Jesus carrying his cross for the recreation of the world and all its peoples—especially the poor; and also frequent prayer to see and find God present and active in myself and every other person, and in every circumstance—and that my *Suscipe* be accepted."

While the references to the Spiritual Exercises are the clearest link in the narratives to Ignatian spirituality and the ministries of social justice mentioned, they are by no means the only ones. A number of other aspects associated with the spirituality of the Society surface in the testimonies. Most of these are associated with the renewal undertaken by GC 31 and 32 and brought to fruition when Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. was general (1965-1983). Among these, I would note the references to community life as companionship and friendship in the Lord (Suzanne Geaney), communal discernment (Fernando Lopez, S.J.), inter-religious dialogue (Tony Herbert S.J.), and inculturation (Ricardo Falla, S.J. and Tony Herbert, S.J.)

While these are not properly Ignatian themes, the contributors refer to them in an Ignatian manner. That is, they mention them in their spiritual dimension as understood in the documents of the Society, and their role in this work of battling for social justice. These terms highlight the contributors' awareness of the complexities of their ministries, of what is described by Rigobert Minani, S.J. as "the multi-polar crisis" that is the object of the social apostolate, and the varied strategies and resources that have to be employed to address it.

Lacunae in the Testimonies

Two important and thoroughly Ignatian elements of the spirituality of the poor that I have often encountered in my ministries among Latin American immigrants in the United States, are conspicuous by their absence in the testimonies provided, namely the roles of Mary and the Eucharist. In addition, there is little explicit mention of sharing Ignatian spirituality with others as a constitutive element of the majority of the ministries highlighted in the testimonies.

The place of Mary in the life of St. Ignatius and in key contemplations and many colloquies in the Exercises make devotion to this saint an integral component of the Society's spirituality throughout the centuries. In my experience, it is no less central to the piety of the poor. It is curious then, than no mention of her appears in these testimonies, not even her proclamation of the *Magnificat* in the Gospel of Luke, perceived by liberation theologians as herald of a more just social order in her. Related to this, in so far as it speaks to women's experience of God and Ignatian spirituality, is the lack of mention of the sexist language of certain well-known parts of the Exercises, i.e., the Rules for Discernment of Spirits of the Second Week, and the challenge these have posed for women interested in living out of the Ignatian charism, especially in light of GC 34's Decree on Women.

The relative absence of the Eucharist in the histories is also puzzling. The sacrament in neither its horizontal nor its vertical interpretations, that is, as eschatological banquet and sacrifice of love receive much mention. In this Year of the Eucharist, the importance of this sacrament for the Church's social justice mission has been highlighted in June, 2005 by the Pontifical Council on Peace and Justice conference in Rome. The forthcoming canonization in October, 2005 of Blessed Alberto Hurtado, S.J. of Chile, apostle of social justice, and exemplar of the Eucharistic dimension of Ignatian spirituality, also stresses the centrality of the Eucharist.

Finally, the histories include a number of testimonies about the integral part that sharing Ignatian spirituality with colleagues plays in the ministry of social justice of many, for example, the accounts of Alvaro Alemany S.J. and Lorena Cornejo and Benito Baranda. Yet it is far from an integral and programmatic dimension in the ministry of the majority of Jesuits whose testimonies are presented in this volume. Could this be because explicit mention of Ignatian spirituality is missing in a number of the histories presented? One wonders how integral these very laudable efforts at

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promoting justice are when they fail to make explicit the religious dimension of this effort.

Conclusion

Some forty years after GC 31 began the Society's *aggiornamento* in the wake of the end of the Second Vatican Council, the testimonies of those working to promote social justice within the Society bears evidence of a multi-polar approach to a complex series of challenges where Ignatian spirituality has an important role. True to the spirit of the Spiritual Exercises and distinguishing the efforts of the Society and its partners in this regard is a never-ending search for the *magis* born of an experience of God, *semper maior*. In the case of many engaged in the social apostolate, this 'more' and this 'God' who exceeds our dreams for a more just existence for the poor involves the question raised by Fernando Lopez: "How to live and construct dignified life conditions with the little ones, where the wounds of history are more open and life is more threatened?"

It is a struggle so vast and complex that it can paralyze us in many ways by leading us to fatalism, spiritualism, or secularism. But in its vastness and complexity there are tremendous gifts that the Society is being granted. We are learning in our life, with and on behalf of the struggle against injustice, what it means to be "the least Society," to be partners and friends in the crucial struggle of our time, shunning isolation, as well as the need to be the protagonists of change. We are learning from the Lord and the little ones to whom the Father chose to disclose a way of proceeding characterized by gratitude and the patience of the sower, who trusts that from the mustard seed will sprout a bush where all sorts of birds will find a home.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY IN GESTATION

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The testimonies are impressive. They tell us of incursions into the world of the dispossessed, the indigenous, about workers and organizations; and about the struggles in unions and politics; they speak of common, daily life lived with radical evangelical fervour. They recount limited Christian experiences which put us in contact with the source of the Christian faith and the extraordinary newness of the God of the poor.

Tradition and innovation

Not a single one of these experiences has come from nothing. They can be explained from within traditional Christian spirituality, but they go beyond it in order to recreate it. Without a doubt they represent an Ignatian interpretation of the Gospel. In the forefront of these reports is the extraordinary power of the Incarnation, which draws persons to an ever-greater solidarity with the poor. It is the “kenosis” of Christians who share the life of the last and least, who lose themselves among them, who run their risks, who suffer the same contempt, who mourn over their unjust deaths, and whose only sure triumph is in the promised Kingdom. Incarnation, “kenosis:” insertion in the factory, the garbage dump, the jungle, the ghettos... under the practical and wise inspiration of the “pilgrim” Ignatius who, in order to imitate the Lord, wanted to share the lot of the poor, and for that reason shaped the Spiritual Exercises so that others, with the Son, might participate in the self-emptying that would “redeem the human race.”

Ignatian spirituality proposes tools for the reading of the Gospel; the Exercises are the fundamental matrix for the

unique experiences desired. These Exercises encourage an underlying integration of contemplation and action, of faith and life, of faith and justice. The Exercises prepare the eyes of faith to “see and feel” God in events, in persons, in the little ones, and to be attuned to social sin. The Ignatian experience of La Storta makes it possible for a Jesuit to recognize the voice of God: “I will be favorable to you in the Amazon.” Or, as Arrupe also reminds us: “all for the poor, many with the poor, some as the poor.”

But even when these experiences originate and are lived within a particular spiritual tradition, they are irreducibly new, original, innovative. The Spirit, which gives life to them, is inexhaustible and inspires new forms of Christianity. All this requires a relativization of known ways and a setting

*Incarnation, “kenosis:”
insertion in the factory,
the garbage dump,
the jungle, the ghettos...*

out instead along virgin paths. In each case, ignorance or incomprehension has been a necessary point of departure. Often persons are assaulted by the question “What has happened, Lord?” Or “Why is this world the way it is, my God, so unfair...?” Or “Why don’t men and women live their faith more clearly?” The answers to these questions point to a crisis, or better said, call for a strict act of

faith on their part, initiating a pilgrimage in search of the Lord that many will label as suspect, strange, or mindless, one that will surely be dangerous, made up of trials and errors, failures and condemnations. The authentic Christian experience never exhausts the Mystery, dwells in eschatological time and does not escape its own apocalyptic episodes. The Christian goes through an experience which for the sinful world is an illusion, but which judges and irritates and haunts him nonetheless.

Faithfulness to the Gospel is played out in creativity. Those who preserve the message of Jesus in their hearts travel alone, leave their homeland behind, cross frontiers... In order to image the kingdom they have discovered, they understand the providence of God in an original way, reclaim forgotten aspects of Jesus Christ, are especially docile to the Spirit, and so reinvent the Church and proclaim the kingdom.

Theological dimensions of an evangelical adventure

The sea beneath these Christian experiences is *a basic confidence in God* and in God's providence. Few would launch out into the unknown without knowing that God will accompany them in this journey. This is how it is for those who believe that God will sustain them in an adventure, which, as they become "contaminated" with the "losers" of all time, can draw the lost out of their disgrace. They venture out, leaving behind their securities, become themselves "foreigners," because they know that He is the God of the foreigners. This God awakens in Christians "their foreign side," dulled by institutionalized faith, which anesthetizes so many. Such experiences would not be possible unless the same God had not drawn them with an irresistible force towards his preferred ones, towards the poorest of the poor, towards those who have neither roofs over their heads nor land to call their own. The Christian who has once truly come to know the God of the poor will meet Him from then on as one among the poor, becoming impoverished and enriched with them. Such immersion into the Mystery of God is a never-ending journey for those whose destination is the promised land.

The road, nonetheless, is not absolutely new. *Jesus has paved the way*. He is the road to this new land for which the disinherited of the world long. The Christian experience of God is directed inward by an itinerant Christ who goes "from village to village", preaching the kingdom and curing sicknesses and afflictions. A pilgrim Jesus "leads beyond the frontiers." An emptied Christ unceasingly travelling towards his neighbours weaves among them relationships of love. A resurrected Christ passes through all the walls that men and women have raised to secure privileges and to oppress one another. When true identification with the God of the most despised is in play, the Christian, like another Christ, transgresses the canons of religion and of customs [is sometimes even ordained a priest in the garbage dump!]. Jesus "poor and humble," in the same way that he inspires drawing near to the poor and humble, inspires the struggle for social justice, guards Christians against the temptation of power from which not even social workers can free themselves. They dream of changing the world through grand initiatives and institutions, but are not themselves truly touched by the victims. In this lies a wisdom that the Christian ought to acquire. It is the wisdom of the cross, the knowledge of the Christ who, for our sakes, made himself poor, to enrich us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9.) The collected testimonies speak to us of a fundamental evangelical inspiration, of a deep love for the poor,

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of an unsuspected apprenticeship under the consecrated wise person, of human bonds impossible to classify, but as real, nevertheless, as steel.

This configuration of Christ is not automatic, but rather *spiritual*. As in the case of Jesus, the search for the will of God is paramount for the Christian. The indifference to goods and places is the austere face of a fundamental availability to the will of God. Thus it is with the sons and daughters of the Spirit, which blows as its wills, so that we do not know or where it will lead us (cf. John 3:8.) The Christian who explores the world of the poor is required as is no one else to live, attentive to the voice of the Spirit, discerning this voice among various voices that draw him or her in other directions. Such a listener must discern the temptations of activism, of voluntarism, of perfectionism, of reflexive action, of stylish posture, of pressures coming from those who would take advantage of him for their own ends, and worst of all, of wanting to change the world in order not to have to change it. He or she must live with vigilance, attending to deeds and to persons in trying to grasp the presence of God in moments and in places least expected. The Spirit will help them to retrace their steps, to evaluate each and every choice they have dared to make. Thus, experiencing in him or herself the ultimate struggle between Christ and the devil, the Christian will learn to unmask the sins of an egotistical and unjust society.

What stands out as most typical in these cases of social Christianity is *boldness*. The Spirit impels Christians to make decisions, to take action, to enter unknown worlds, to run risks, and to suffer the consequences of following Christ in poverty. Having gone beyond the familiar, after many and intense encounters with “the others,” the Christian envisions a “cosmopolitan spirituality”—something resembling a communion among persons culturally and religiously very different among themselves who, because they are capable of loving each other and rejoicing together, anticipate a world that would be a real alternative, a world “from below”, a world in reverse. In these forms of community, whether they are stable or sporadic, as small as a family or as extensive as an entire institution on the move, everyone has something to learn from everyone else, and each one, with their own first and last name, matters. The Spirit, who compels a person to go out to the neighbour and meet him or her in their difference, rewards those who cross to the other side with a communion never before experienced.

Present at the beginning and the end of this entire process is *the Church as a reality ‘in becoming’*. The solitude that this descent and

emptying brings about in the Christian is embraced and shared in a Christian Life Community, or a Jesuit community, or an inter-confessional or inter-religious community. Whether one sends or whether one receives, the Church has been present there on the human level so that all may feel accompanied and know themselves as friends. The borders of this Church become blurred to express precisely this— that its mystery is none other than the Mystery of a God who aims at the unity of all his creatures. Christians and Muslims can read the Bible and the Koran together. They can even pray together, because the Church owes its existence to a kingdom that is still being awaited, although it is already present in these momentary experiments. It is not strange, therefore, that these communities which bring together and unite the small and distinct are places where life is full of effervescence and joy. There are places of contemplation and action, of contemplation and reflection, for the shared experience needs to be elevated to a concept that can guide and defend the life that it generates. The same faith demands intellectual activity to think over what is new. The usual traditional theological and institutional ecclesiastical channels are not enough. A standing back, a certain liberation from known moulds, is indispensable if one wishes to create new expressions of the same Church. The process can be painful for the hierarchy, and also for Jesuits when it requires of them, for example, to surrender control of a project that can work only through a collaboration with others.

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suffer the consequences of
following Christ in poverty*

The option for the poor has ultimately *a freeing and missionary motivation*. The Christian prefers the poor and becomes poor with the poor, to draw them out of the poverty that oppresses them. Solidarity with them not only rests in merely sharing their misfortune. Normally it will be necessary to fight against the injustice that produces their misery or to alleviate the innumerable sufferings of the victims. But just as important, if not more so, is to release in the poor their capacity to evangelize us. They are the natural subjects of the Gospel. The poor know more of life and of God than anyone

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else. As long as their leading role is not recognized, their liberation, as well as that of their “liberators” will remain unfulfilled.

It is in this way that a genuine encounter with the poor as a human person preferred by God has an extraordinary missionary force. The evangelical links generated among the poor announce the kingdom to which Jesus dedicated his life. They speak to us of new human relations that question some very defined roles. In their encounter with the first addressees of the Gospel, Christians “update” their deepest identity, because by being missionaries they themselves end up being ‘missioned’.

STRUGGLING & LIBERATIVE NEW SPIRITUALITY

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“I was shocked and demoralized that we allow human beings to live like this. How can the economic policies of our world allow hundreds of millions of people to go hungry every day”? This is genuine Christian agony and anger. The puzzled outburst comes from Suzane Geaney, lay co-ordinator and collaborator in the social apostolate of the Maryland Province. The anguish resonates well with the Trinitarian sentiment after the contemplation of the earth as described by Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises. There the retreatant is asked to see “how the three Divine Persons gazed on the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people”. Filled with divine compassion, God decides on the great work of the Incarnation, for the Restoration of the disturbed divinely established human and cosmic order. ‘Born in a poor stable to die on the wooden cross’ comments Ignatius, contemplating the Incarnate Word in the manger. It is in this marginalized human situation, the modern ‘manger’ that the Restorer has taken His stand and invites co-workers. Today He finds there crime, exploitation, violence, drugs, poverty, neglect, de-priced half-persons. Jails, refugee centres, ‘boat people’, slums and ‘human garbage’ colonies, refugee camps, resettlement shanties for the displaced and evicted, the landless, and the unemployed – are the underside of our history, the backyard of our civilization. In the words of Christian Herwartz, “Jesus lives among us at our working place, amidst the exertions of, and the distinct disdain for, the worker”. All the afflicted need to be reached, served and reclaimed. As the Hound of Heaven pursues the ‘escaping’ evader with passionate and steady love, so the oppressed and the oppressor, the victims of injustice as well as their perpetrators, the creators of systems and those groaning under their burden, are being pursued by God in

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Christ through the workers of Justice. The distortions have to be rectified, change has to take place, and for that Faith has to be transcribed as Justice in transforming action.

It is from this situation and perspective that Jesus reads the human situation, enters into it, and commences His great work. For this He enlists supporters, collaborators, walkers and workers with Him. It is with this company that the Jesuits are invited to walk through the re-interpretation of our Charism by GC 32.

Two striking issues stand out from the frank sharing by our Jesuit enterprisers in and through their narration.

One is about the nature and stature of Jesus Christ. Both in theology as well as in the Exercises the person of Jesus Christ is presented and treated. In the Exercises we see Jesus sending His disciples in poverty, and summoning His disciples to embrace 'even actual poverty' in order to work for the Kingdom of God. In theology Jesus Christ is treated, constructed and presented, using the materials supplied by Greek philosophy raised to eminent abstract theological heights. But some of the narrators confess that even with maximum interest in the re-construction of war-torn and later consumerist western civilization they found what was imparted in formation centres and faculties "boring". To fight the actual poverty of the masses the world over, and to struggle for their God-given rights, they had virtually little in their armory or academic knapsack. They had to "re-explore" ways and means of being a true and effective disciple of Jesus whose Father in the Old Testament had intervened in human affairs with a concrete re-construction programme for the human family.

This we find from Exodus and through the highly instructive Jubilee testaments and the extensive prophetic literature. But the cry of the prophets and the pedagogy of Jesus of Nazareth disappeared with the dawn of the imperial heyday. And so theological formation, and for that matter, available spirituality, did not supply the wherewithal with which to attempt to actualize the Kingdom of God in terms of historically empirically realizable projects. For that they had to experiment with life situations and learn afresh what the social processes and social sciences had to say. This lacuna is being increasingly discovered today by Jesuits and others in the field of Justice and Human Rights. Those who have ears, let them hear, that seems to be what these Jesuits are saying. Send us, but equipped, they tell us.

The second issue seeping through the rich and fresh sharing by our fellow Jesuits and their committed collaborators is about the reduced social

content of religion and the small and fragile God of religions. Religions' ability or willingness to set the world aright appears thin, so the history of religions tells us. After the days of their founding, religions seem to withdraw from the areas where healthy human social order is made or unmade into self-made limited chambers. Besides, till recently, each of the world religions did present their God, to the exclusion of an 'other'. Even Christianity cultivated and maintained that culture. If walls or borders were crossed it was to ransack or demolish the god of the other. But the narrators who were actually working in and with diaspora culture were, by force of the new circumstance, forced to experience actual inter-religious dialogue and to find that the colour and the fragrance of God was more or less the same in the religion of their co-workers. Consequently, the collapse of many a Berlin wall took place quite spontaneously. Those involved in issues of justice and human rights, Christians and Muslims alike, find to their astonishment that from each one's religious tradition rich materials can be drawn to apply to human problems, to try to build up a society different from the one available today. Crossing of borders and the collapse of walls seem to bring about such discoveries.

*it is not mere following of
Christ, but Christ in poverty
who wants and wills the
destruction of poverty enforced
on helpless people*

What kind of walking with Jesus is expected of Jesuits? As one narrator has it, it is not mere following of Christ, but Christ in poverty who wants and wills the destruction of poverty enforced on helpless people by fraud and violence, actual and structural... The situation of the excluded, the deprived, the marginalized, the ones with slender resources, is the new Mission field to which Jesuits are sent. This plunge implies owning all that this new world is afflicted with: scanty food of the much-despised 'Dalits' (T. Herbert), their powerlessness and consequent forced eviction from the ever-competing world of achievers and wielders of power, and being in solidarity with their anguished life of rejection. It is by making this the centre of the world that Jesus reads and interprets the world above: of possessions and wealth, power and influence, but one in which God's Presence is scarcely felt. Many a narrator feels that the spirituality and formation he was has

been trained in needs to be re-explored, re-educated, re-learned, to enter this world of the poor and the rejected, the direct victims of injustice. A new vision and new reading of the total human situation is needed.

What is common to the narrations is that it is in this arid zone of a struggling and liberative new spirituality that one has to sustain our works for Justice-Faith commitments. For, the newly opted vision is for another social order. It was set in motion by Yahweh the Creator, pursued by the Prophets, and confirmed by the life and ministry of Jesus. By breaking bread with the unemployed and the drug addicts, and regularly returning to the Spiritual Exercises for re-charging, and offering the Exercises in new ways, the promoters of Justice invent and integrate a spirituality befitting a secular order where the values of the Reign of God shine. The dynamics or components of that spirituality are new. Experiments with involvement in human affairs, bearing the scorn and snarls of the looters of the goods of the world now in power, putting up with isolation, alienation and discouragement, all contribute to that spirituality. In other words, the chairs and pulpits need to be replaced in the midst of the disorganized, confused and unsettled crowds of the deprived. All these need to be supported by high academic competence in the disciplines that relate to the making or marring of a fitting human social order.

The divine insertion in the human situation at the Incarnation is preceded by the divine experience ('com-passion', suffering with) of the wretchedness of the fallen human situation. One can say that the 4th Decree of the 32nd General Congregation, which according to GC 33 is 'application for our times of the Formula of the Institute and of the Ignatian charism' (38), is a call to another level of identification with Jesus in His redemptive labour today. The narrators here begin this task with a daring and awful plunge into the world of the poor, the afflicted and rejected, victims of multiple injustices. The experiences contained in the 'Histories' (relatos) go a long way to comply with the directive in the retreat, now in actual practice by Jesuits and lay collaborators as we have above. The Narrators lead the entire Society to this incarnate plunge with Jesus to be with the victims of injustice.

Another striking feature of the rich personal narration is the mutuality and interrelatedness of the two apparently distinct and disparate ministries: Faith and Justice. Here Faith meets Justice; one nourishes the other, interprets and illumines each other, and enriches each other. The 'social' oriented exertions are completed and fulfilled by the Faith dimension, and Faith is

rendered empirical and incarnational. Disembodied spiritualism is granted a corrective and an incarnational spirituality shows itself in its integrality. There is frequent reference to the need to return to the Ignatian sources, for discernment and prayer, for reading the Bible in quiet hours as well as while in the midst of travel or work. There is the new altar for the celebration of the Breaking of the Bread, as one narrator testifies. The two, Faith and Justice, are seen here healthily interacting and integrating. In its early phase, advocacy of Justice was seen by some Jesuits as bereft of any trait of Faith – a purely secular thrust. In India not only among a few Jesuits but even among some religious activists, the 'Justice as a cause by itself' approach was seen as a way of life. And since the 'Marxist' suspicion continued to haunt all of Liberation Theology, a fair degree of alienation not only of the personnel but even of the ministries and ideology delayed the rapid growth of this authentically Biblical sprout. The CIS project can be a good contribution to this much-discussed new ministry in the Church.

For us Jesuits this emerging integration of Faith and Justice is important for two reasons. First, the 4th Decree's main stress is on the new identity of the Jesuits. When the GC 33 stated that the 4th Decree is application for our times of the Formula of the Institute approved by the then Pope, the finger points to the new Jesuit identity. It is a healthy combination of the Faith-Justice development that will define Jesuit identity today.

Secondly a current phrase in contextual theologies is the 'semi-sacramentality of the poor'. By this is meant that it is through this sector of the human family that God intervenes, challenges distorted and warped human consciences and systems that are anti-poor, and confronts unjust value systems supportive of such structures. Yahweh's intervention is in and through the oppressed people. Jesus Himself right at the outset of His ministry tells his times that He is anointed and sent to free the captives. The 'Society of Jesus' has a special vocation to mediate God's correcting and reconciling intervention through the unheard voice of the deprived so that all listen to God and accept His offer of reconciliation. The narrators are seen fulfilling this new Mission.

To me the 4th Decree of GC 32, a main source of the Justice thrust thereafter, is a most brilliant exposition of a spirituality- in- action; and through that a recovery of Yahweh's Mission, so to speak, in the Old Testament, and the Synoptic depiction of Jesus Christ in action. Both Yahweh and Jesus Christ are seen standing by and walking with victims of injustice

—societal, religious, economic, and cultural. And I find the narrators above as continuing the same pedagogy of human integral restoration.

The emerging liberative spirituality holds a vision for the human family. This inspires and propels people to organized and sustained actions aimed at changing the situation. Such actions will generate experiences in an effort to convert the vision into a way of life dictated by this vision. The same prompts a programme of action. The vision operative in these stories above is of a just and human and humane society. But in startling contrast is the pathetic situation of the have-nots, the devalued and dehumanized in a world of abundant wealth and vulgar display. Organized actions over protracted period of time are required. That calls for patience and sustaining power, as well as adequate knowledge of the dynamics of the social processes, and the skills to utilize them in order to re-orient a dis-oriented society.

Ignatius commences his Exercises with attention on God's creation as mediating humankind's return to God, and ends with the invitation to be in ever-absorbing communion with a God-filled world that reflects and contains the love and glory of God. The Jesuit as worker priest, the Jesuit in the midst of Dalits, and with those forming new communities of the migrants, the unemployed, the refugees in search of recognition and affirmation, is depicted as finding Jesus in His journey of rejection, humiliation and helplessness. The visibility of the struggling Jesus catches the eye of the Jesuits in the midst of such rejects. Jesus is found right in the midst of this anonymous crowd, this crowd of street-walkers, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, the mass of uprooted and socially displaced people of the world. The 'contemplatio ad amorem' of the Exercises is seen in 'contemplation in liberative action'. The summit of the Jesuit the co-worker with Jesus is to see Jesus ever more clearly and be with Him in increasing intimacy—in labour as well as in glory.

SOCIAL COMMITMENT AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

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In reading the “narratives” of companions

In reading the different narratives or stories of companions I am aware that it is the contact of the person with situations of inequality, of injustice, of poverty, of exclusion, which move to a reflection and an action, but one must say at once, that this reflection immediately leads the companion to look for a solution in the depth of his commitment of faith.

In what concerns Africa and Madagascar it emerges that being plunged in dramatic situations which move the Jesuit companion to ask himself concerning what he can do as a religious in the midst of his own.

The experience of the Jesuit who is exposed to situations of suffering, of injustice, of exclusion lead one to meditate on our identity as companion of Jesus. The 32nd General Congregation with its Decree 4 was, certainly, for some a challenge which opened unsuspected horizons.

This awareness leads to different commitments according to the circumstances of place and of persons.

In Africa: The dramatic situation of poverty, of wars, of conflicts, of corruption and of dictatorship leads one to question himself on our option to serve those whose rights are ignored. Our religious commitment cannot be placed outside this context, and thus, it is important for the African Jesuit to situate himself in this place and to opt for all those who are marginalized. The passion for God will manifest itself by the passion for suffering humanity in search of justice

and of recognition. The danger that has to be avoided is to choose to install oneself with the great and the privileged, and to look at the “friends of Jesus”, the poor, from a distance.

In Europe: In a Europe where there are men of every race, language, culture and religion, the Jesuit companion after becoming aware of the situations of inequality and of exclusion, feels called to go over the barriers to meet the stranger and in this way, have the same experience as Christ, who had no place where to lay his head. In Europe also, the awareness of the social inequalities can lead to a call, to a radical change and to a greater discovery of the image of Jesus as the one who is the “pioneer of our faith”, that humble leader who calls those who want to follow him and do as he does. Jesus who made the option for the poor, the excluded, for those who are more vulnerable, that Jesus who by his whole attitude, challenged those who held power. Then the desire for a radical poverty emerges or the desire to seek a greater radicalism. The companions discover the importance of the Spiritual Exercises to support and to fortify their commitment in behalf of justice and even a totally new manner of living the Exercises. A true contact with the poor is always the place for a conversion.

In Latin America: The places of conversion for the companions were frequently the encounter with the poorest, the more destitute, the indigenous of the Amazonas. (An itinerant mission in Amazonas). The Spiritual Exercises are considered as the bread which nourishes and gives strength to act daily and which permits to set the bond of union or link between faith and life, justice and contemplation and action. The community dimension in the experience of the companions is mentioned.

In India and in the rest of Asia: The work with migrants in Japan and the service to the refugees in Laos, Cambodia or in Vietnam have been places of social commitment for the Jesuit companions of this Assistency. The apostolate in the Dalit milieu in India has opened for the companions of India and Asia a

horizon of a commitment for justice and has renewed and given them a completely new way of looking at the world in which the Jesuits lived.

A new spiritual vision has come into being for the person and they have a more profound grasp or understanding of the Gospel which emerged from the encounter with these simple persons who expressed their life and their faith in a totally simple manner. Therefore, it was possible to understand that the call to follow Christ as companion of Jesus, was a call to follow Christ in poverty and that could be expressed in several manners, one of these being the sharing of life with the poor (being with...)

The contemplative dimension of the commitment for justice is strongly underlined in showing that it is truly when union with God, to that God of goodness and of justice, is joined to action for justice in the relationship with persons that the Jesuit becomes a powerful agent to carry out the will of God to establish on our earth a community of justice, of love and of peace.

In Africa where the priest or the religious enjoys a privileged social status, how are we to manifest our option for the poor and the most destitute?

Places of conversion

*In contact with the situations of suffering;
to be exposed to the dramas of the continent*

In reaching this level of my reflection I ask myself the following question. How are the African companions in the Assistancy of Africa prepared, during the time of their formation, for this commitment for justice in our context?

In the face of these dramatic situations it can happen that the Society of Jesus as a body remains foreign to the situation or at least it does not know what to do.

A serious reflection and an understanding of the African situations are indispensable for the social action of the Society and this reflection should

be based on concrete experience and this is why the presence of companions with those who suffer injustice, the sharing in their concrete situation is irreplaceable for the Society if it wants to give an authentic witness. In Africa where the priest or the religious enjoys a privileged social status, how are we to manifest our option for the poor and the most destitute?

It is relatively easy to dismiss or discard, with the back of the hand, the perspective of insertion communities in pointing out the fact that the Africans already live the experience of poverty and are inserted in situations of poverty everywhere they live and this since they were children.

Nevertheless, a religious formation has frequently taken the African Jesuit out of his milieu. The experiments during the time of the Novitiate which are recalled, many times, with emotion, belong to the heroic period of times now gone by. The studies made on other continents have frequently cut him away from the realities in which the African continent lives. The return to Africa and the insertion in certain types of apostolate is difficult for some. The life style of communities is superior to that of modest families. We are perceived or considered as being “rich”. This is why it is convenient to repeat that the preferential option for the poor which the Society has taken is not something facultative and that it will be necessary, at every moment of our history as companions, seized by this passion for God and for humanity, to express it in choosing to live with persons who are less favored and who suffer situations of injustice. A community of insertion, a commitment with the poorest, can be for the companions of a Province a place of true conversion, the discovery of a call to follow Christ, and to follow Christ in poverty.

A community of insertion could make us discover which is the face of our vow of poverty in the face of the truly poor. We could discover in ourselves when comparing with those poor in the midst of whom we have decided to live that in fact we are ‘rich’ in power, money, influence, education and other advantages, but that we are poor in generosity, availability, mutual dependence, in authentic relationships and in spontaneity, and therefore, a conversion would be possible.

There is a great need for creativity in the Society of Jesus in Africa. The young companions in the Provinces seem to me to be very timid and very little inclined to undertake an adventure into new situations, preferring a well structured apostolate to a space of creativity where their imagination could be displayed.

In the accounts of the companions it is easy to see how the sharing of life with the poor has given certain Jesuits a new vision of their vocation in the following of Christ.

Besides, it is convenient to stress that in the narratives, the companions refer to the impact that Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation had on their vocation and apostolic commitment. Nevertheless, the reflection of the lived experience in general continues to be poor.

***The Spiritual Exercises as a Source of our Passion
for God and for Humanity***

The grace asked for in the second week “to be received under the standard of the cross, in great spiritual poverty, accepting insults and humiliations so as to better imitate Christ”, already opens the retreatant to this dimension of communion with those who are excluded, despised in our society.

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises could lead to the discovery of Christ poor, a discovery of a hidden treasure. This discovery fills the person, who is seized by Christ, with joy, he/she joyfully goes to despoil himself/herself of what he/she possesses and comes back to take possession of his/her treasure and to live in union with God for the rest of his/her life.

It is important to maintain this union with God, this contemplation in the midst of a social commitment. This union with God makes one see that the God of goodness is already working in those toward whom we are sent even before we arrive to be with them.

We are convinced that what unites the instrument with God and disposes one to allow oneself to be led with docility by God’s hand is more effective than what disposes one toward men.

As a conclusion to this brief article I would like to repeat how important the contact of the Jesuits is with the situations of injustice, exclusion or social inequality. It is important for the Society of Jesus that some of the members of the Body choose to share the condition of the poor and the excluded. This “*being with*” is not a facultative option in the Society, it is itself in the very heart of its vocation.

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