

GUIDES

EIDES

7

Re-Reading Our Own Lives

In the Steps of St Ignatius's Autobiography

Carles Marcet

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IN THE STEPS OF ST IGNATIUS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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1 INTRODUCTION

St Ignatius dictated his autobiographical reminiscences to Fr Gonçalves da Câmara shortly before his death. In the course of the interviews the saint gave him, Fr Câmara made brief notes and then wrote them up afterwards. Perhaps from modesty, perhaps fearing that he might be taken as a model by those joining the Society, Ignatius was unwilling to relate all that much about his life.

He had no intention of offering a neutral, objective account. He recounts historical facts with the sole aim of reinforcing what is primarily the account of a spiritual journey, showing what God has done in his life, how God has led him step by step, and how he has experienced God's actions.

Thus, 'The Pilgrim', the title that is sometimes given to this autobiography, is significant, and more so still if one takes into account that when he begins to open up his inner life, Ignatius has by then spent a number of years without moving from Rome. Even so, his self-understanding is still couched in terms of pilgrimage, the pilgrimage he seeks to relate to us concerning not only of external events but fundamentally an inner journey. It reveals something of 'what the heart remembers', the record of how God has gradually taken charge of his life and led him to what very near the end of his account he calls the 'facility in finding God' that had been the goal of his pilgrimage [Au 99].

We should not approach this account as if leafing through a grandparent's photograph album, but rather, involve ourselves in Ignatius's spiritual journey so that he may help us better understand our own spiritual path, and God's activity in our lives. Ignatius may thus become a travelling companion as we seek and follow a God who has already come to meet us.

The booklet you have in your hands aims to help us re-examine our own biographies in the light of Ignatius's, not something purely anecdotal or chronological but one attending to force lines that are at work within. We may grow through the discovery that God has led our own lives too, 'dealing with us in the same way as a schoolmaster deals with a child, teaching him' [Au 27].

At each stage we will plot:

- The historical context in which Ignatius's life is set,
- His inner life, or what is happening to him inwardly as his external pilgrimage unfolds,
- And ways in which our own life journeys may unfold, providing an invitation to re-examine what the Spirit has been working in us.

2 THE EARLY STAGES: CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH [AU 1]

The *Autobiography* tells us very little about the first thirty years of Ignatius's life (1491-1521), devoting no more than its three opening lines to them. Even so, we should not overlook this 'hidden life' of his, since it was then that the character with which God would have to work was taking shape.

2.1 History

The history of this period is virtually unknown, but it is important to trace what we can of it none the less. These are the years in which a personality was being formed, and so, even if sketchily, there are one or two things to attention should be drawn.

Ignatius was the youngest of thirteen children born to a noble family with links to important power centres of the period, a family with a traditional Christian allegiance, based on practices and traditions not, even so, at odds with a degree of moral laxity. His mother having died when he was very small, his education was taken in hand by his brother Martin's wife, Magdalena de Araoz, and by María Garín, the wife of a blacksmith attached to the Loyolas' fortress who lived in the nearby village of Eguibar. Thus nobles and ordinary people both had a hand in his earliest formation.

Apart from the eldest son and heir, Ignatius's other siblings had to make their own way in life, either serving the king as soldiers, sailing to the Americas as adventurers, or becoming courtiers or members of the clergy. Although the Basque

Country was isolated and inward-looking, news reached him through various elder brothers of his of an outside world in ferment. We might in this see some analogy with our own day, since that period was experiencing its first expansion or globalisation, with the discovery of America, scientific and technological progress, humanism, protestant schism...

When the time came for the youngest son, Ignatius, to choose a path in life, his father found a position for him in the Castle of Arévalo, belonging to Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, the Keeper of the Privy Purse (as it were). This was an unequivocally courtly and chivalric environment, and Ignatius inhabited it from the age of sixteen to twenty-five. After this, from 1517 until 1521, he served the Duke of Nájera, Viceroy of Navarre.

2.2 Inner Life

We are all born into a particular cultural context, whose values affect us by osmosis, shaping us without our even being aware of the fact. That is why even as people that make our own decisions we are to an important extent, first and foremost products of decisions made about us. In other words, many decisions affecting us are not made by us but given to us by the environment that has shaped us. Ignatius was no different. The environment in which he was formed had a considerable influence on him, an environment we might call 'chivalric', one devoted to the pursuit of fame, honour, glory, and self-affirmation, being important, and recognised as such. Such an environment affects all personal decision-making. To be a nobleman is more than just to be a soldier, it is a way of life rooted in a sense of honour, an ideal vision of the good towards which are directed all decisions willingly and freely made.

Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadis de Gaula* was the epitome of this ethos, and when Ignatius was a young man that book had achieved extraordinary popularity. It served as a guide to chivalric and polite behaviour, and in it, we meet a prototypical knight errant wandering from land to land in search of adventure, honour, and fame, seeking to make his mark and deserve the notice of the lady of his dreams.

This chivalric, noble, valorous ideal in permanent pursuit of self-affirmation could, however, lead to pride and limitless ambition. That is the dark side of the honour code in which Ignatius, too, was immersed during his youth and adolescence. This is how he put it in his own account: 'Until the age of twenty-six he was a man given up to the vanities of the world, and his chief delight used to be in the exercise of arms, with a great and vain desire to gain honour' [Au 1].

This brief sentence indicates the orientation of a whole life, one devoted to the pursuit of worldly success in order to gain the greatest fame by one's own efforts, and to become ever more highly esteemed, something in which is found both

pleasure and great satisfaction. Here we find a clear expression of the Pilgrim's inner state at this stage, of the things that moved and motivated him.

2.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

When we, like the Pilgrim, come to be aware of how God has been directing our lives, we ought not to overlook the first stages of our journey. We might usefully reflect upon the following:

a) There is a culture we have inherited and a context in which we have lived (our upbringing, our family, other people, our general surroundings, and specific places). These have shaped us and constituted what might be called our roots. It might be helpful to recall and give a name to the combination of factors that have made us the people that we are. What, in other words, are our roots?

b) We have noticed the ambiguous nature of the honour system that formed the young Ignatius. But at the end of day, such is the material with which God must work. So let us in our own cases try to put some names to the material (our natural ability, experience, values) that God has worked with and seeks to continue working with.

3 1521-1522: AN IMPORTANT YEAR IN IGNATIUS'S LIFE [AU 1-12]

The Autobiography immediately moves on to the crucial moment in Ignatius's life when he is wounded by a cannon ball as he leads the defence of the fortress in Pamplona.

3.1 History

Ignatius was in the service of the king of Navarre. In addition to being home to powerful nationalist movements, Navarre was contested between the crowns of Spain (Charles I, Holy Roman Emperor from 1519) and of France (Francis I). Francis did not hesitate to ally himself with the Navarrese forces that sought the return of Prince Henry and the recovery of their independence. This was the context for the battle of Pamplona during which Ignatius was wounded by a cannon ball (in May 1521). It was a battle between unequal forces, and the defence of Pamplona proved impossible. Although Ignatius judged retreat to be ignominious, the fortress finally fell to the enemy. The French soldiers, perhaps surprised by Ignatius's bravery, treated him decently, patched up his wounds in Pamplona, and two weeks later he was transferred to Loyola, the place of his birth, where he was obliged to spend a lengthy period of convalescence. Alone, sick, and unable to move around, he remained there from the end of May 1521 to the end of February 1522.

At this period, he underwent a painful operation since in Pamplona his right knee had not been set satisfactorily. Following that operation, Ignatius was on the point of death for several days, but once recovered, he saw a piece of bone sticking

out of his knee where the bone had not been properly aligned; one of his legs was now shorter than the other, and looked ugly to a degree that neither his honour, pride in his appearance or his rank could suffer, and so he decided to submit to further unbearably painful butchery. This further demonstrates a natural strength of will bordering on stubbornness, and unflinching in the face of difficulties. On the contrary, we see in him a pride and an almost overwhelming need to distinguish himself, to do something ever greater, a capacity for leadership and to inspire others by his example.

In order to while away the time during convalescence, he would have liked to read the chivalric romances that he loved, but they did not have any, only pious volumes. And so it was the chance reading of the *Life of Christ* by the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony (1314-78) and Jacobo de Varezze's *Flos sanctorum*, saints' lives in the vernacular, that prompted changes in his inner life. A new ideal, one of serving a yet greater Lord, was gradually kindled in his heart, to such a degree that by the time that he had recovered, he decided to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. With that intention, he once more left home.

3.2 Inner Life

It is clear that Ignatius's plans for his own life remained unchanged still: 'he was set on following the world' [Au 4]. And so he submitted to the butchery of a second operation, to improve his physical appearance, since to do otherwise would be dishonourable in the career that he was following. But the post-operative period was crucial, a lengthy nine month period of solitude and silence that made possible an unexpected change gradually unfolding within him as a delightfully new form of wisdom. What was new about all this was a progressive moving away from a marginal, culturally-identified identity towards an inner self, one previously unexplored but turning out to be both rich and productive.

What, in addition to solitude, silence, and enforced inactivity, helped this process along was reading Ludolph and the lives of saints. Ignatius immediately became attached to them [Au 6], and noticed 'other thoughts' within himself [Au 7], giving rise to fresh and different images, different possible ways of looking at life, something that was new for a man who previously had lived only with an eye to the external world. Even newer to him was noticing how these other thoughts and images also prompted different inner feelings or emotional reactions: thinking about and imagining the worldly things to which he sought to return delighted him at first, but then left him feeling dry within. And the exact opposite occurred when he started to reflect on and imagine a life in the service of the new Lord (Jesus Christ) and new battle-companions (the saints), encountered in his reading [Au 8].

He also began to ponder the meaning of it all: 'he began to marvel at this difference in kind and to reflect on it... little by little coming to know the difference

in kind of spirits that were stirring' [Au 8]. Any return to his previous life plans (a culturally defined self, honour, fame, eminence...) seemed to him more a regression than a return; it left him feeling inwardly desolate. The new life plan opening up to him (pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the service of a new Lord, in humility and poverty like Him) struck him as both progress and transgression, taking him beyond existing cultural paradigms and leaving him inwardly consoled.

And so he makes room for new desires [Au 9], and puts this very clearly, saying that 'he had to do penance for his past life' and that he desired to imitate the saints. This is the first time we see him registering how wrong his previous course had been. New desires are gradually clarified and fixed upon. In Au 10-11, we see signs of a fresh certainty: he is visited by our Lady; his family notice changes made inwardly in his soul; he speaks about the things of God; he prays more, makes notes on the life of Christ, and desires to serve his new Lord.

Even so, on placing this inner life in perspective, the Ignatius of the Autobiography tells us that although he at that time 'had a generous spirit fired with God' [Au 9], his soul was blind still. This is a passionate personality, but one still lacking insight. Although a new long-term direction to his life is appearing on the horizon, he still needs to be specific about it, and above all, get things into sharper focus, since it is still he who occupies the centre stage. At root, his thoughts and feelings are chivalric: he still wants to stand out, become famous, and win honour in the service of a new Lord. There remains an underlying narcissistic need to break with a broken self – the past life that now disgusts him—by taking on a penitential pilgrimage, breaking with his past life by distancing himself from the world.

3.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

a) As happened to Ignatius too, perhaps in the course of our own lives we have found ourselves in situations that have facilitated an inner transformation, or have experienced painful breaks that have been favourable to rebirth. We all meet our own cannon balls. Can we identify these in our own lives? How do we interpret their significance now?

b) These cannon balls maybe have the potential to change our inner state and make fresh discoveries possible, leading us to corners of our hearts previously unexplored or taken on board. Such discoveries gradually convert us. Have we had any such experiences?

c) Might our own first encounter with the Lord Jesus when we were young also have been a passionate affair, even a bit over the top, at an age given to youthful idealism, when we were crazy as when one's first in love? It might be helpful to remember and relive those periods in our lives, however transitory, because having lived through them we have gained us a wealth of fresh experience.

4 ANOTHER FUNDAMENTAL EXPERIENCE: MONTSERRAT AND MANRESA [AU 13-34]

However much Ignatius might have thought the fundamental work was done, he came to realise that ‘God was dealing with him in the same way as a school-teacher deals with a child, teaching him’ [Au 27]. That’s to say, he still had much to learn –no more nor less than the basics learnt in the primary school of the Spirit.

4.1 History

Ignatius reached Montserrat on 21 March 1522. There were some ninety monks there, and the monastery was experiencing a period of spiritual greatness, due in part to its abbot García de Cisneros who had introduced aspects of *devotio moderna* spirituality and written his *Exercitatorio de la vida spiritual*. The monks may have provided the pilgrim with their *Compendio breve del Exercitatorio*, in which one reads that ‘the first thing one needs to do when seeking progress in the spiritual life is to cleanse one’s heart of mortal sin, by confessing it’.

This is what Ignatius did, preparing his general confession in the space of three days. He also resolved to abandon his courtly dress and weapons, and clothe himself in the armour of Christ, in preparation for a vigil before our Lady’s statue on the night of the 24th to the 25th of March. This in both outward and sacramental form symbolised his determination to break with his past life. He began to grasp that just as with the exercise of arms or riding a horse one had to practise, so it was in the spiritual sphere as well.

He couldn’t stay too long in Montserrat because he wanted to reach Jerusalem, and Rome gave permission to travel there only on the Monday of Easter week each year. That year this fell on 20 April. And there was an additional difficulty:

hot on the Pilgrim's heels as it were, the new pope, Adrian VI (elected 10 February 1522), was staying with Ignatius's former master the duke of Nájera on 15 March, in Catalonia on his way to Rome. Ignatius did not wish to encounter the papal retinue in Barcelona, among other reasons because travelling with the pope were important people whom he knew whereas he had already made up his mind to leave that sort of life behind. And so, even though it entailed delaying his visit to the Holy Land for a further year, Ignatius decided to wait. It seemed logical to spend the intervening time in Manresa, close to Montserrat where his confessor lived, a monk named Chanon.

He spent eleven months in Manresa. He arrived there with the intention of implementing a plan he had devised in Loyola and further fixed upon in Montserrat, which was to live a life of retirement from the world, with long hours spent in penance and prayer, with prolonged periods of fasting, attendance at mass and vespers, neglect of physical comforts, begging alms, serving and helping in the hospice¹ where he lived the greater part of the time. But the Lord had other plans, and these concerned his inner life.

4.2 Inner Life

It is usual to distinguish three phases in the period Ignatius spent in Montserrat and Manresa. The first can be described by two words he typically used, although at this time, they are used in a very unfocused way: one is 'doing' (great penance, great things...), and the other, 'more' (more than the saints...). These two words denote a deep, generous, and exuberant commitment expressed with great fervour and stubborn determination. This wild pursuit of action, ever greater action, reveals a generosity of spirit on the Pilgrim's part that is both intense and sincere, a desire to be faithful to Christ his Lord, but reveals as well a superficial, rather confused sensibility, centred and dependent on the imitation of external models, one that is, therefore, immature and short on personal authenticity. It is a stage like that of one who has fallen in love for the first time, a stage that has to be overcome but experienced none the less, and from which it is important to retain what is positive, a child like simplicity in matters spiritual.

When some time later Ignatius recalls how things stood with him at this time, he describes it as 'one identical inner state, with largely unvarying happiness, without having any acquaintance with spiritual things within the self' [Au 20]. At bottom, in fact, what he was doing was to give a spiritual twist to knightly vanity. He generously devotes himself to God in the most heroic way possible, with penances and austerity, but so as the more to distinguish himself from other

1. *Hospital* is a difficult word to translate. Generally speaking, *hospitales* were charitable institutions devoted to several of the corporal works of mercy, such as tending the sick, giving aid to the poor, or food and shelter to pilgrims.

people. He seeks to reconcile himself to God on account of his numerous past sins, to win God over to his cause, and to reconcile himself to himself as well, on account of wounded pride. What he seeks, in short, is to win the favour of his new Master through external deeds, without perceiving that what his Lord asks of him is spiritual, a relationship of mutual love. Ignatius still confuses the Loving God with One who's Master.

But this was not destined to last for long. The Pilgrim enters a second phase, preceded by a repeated image: 'something happened to him many times... he would see clearly something... which would give him much consolation because it was very beautiful... it seemed to him that it had the shape of a serpent, and it had many things which shone like eyes... He used to take much delight and be consoled by seeing this thing... and when that thing used to disappear from his sight he would feel sad about it' [Au 19]. What we see here is the all-embracing image of an inner life in search of self-satisfaction, of one wanting others to speak well of him, a narcissistic conqueror pursuing his own pleasure and delight... It is evident that the consolation he experiences has a serpent's tail, full of subtle deceit: 'What a good person you are! What a good choice you have made! You really are a fine fellow!' This is evident also because consolation does not last for long, and quickly passes from delight to feelings of disgust.

And the serpent bites, generating a disgust that breaks out in an urgent inner question: 'And how are *you* going to be able to stand this life the seventy years or more you're meant to live?' [Au 20]. It is an 'experience of unevenness in his soul and being afraid'. He was not expecting this. He had believed everything to be finally on track. And so in his own flesh he feels the mutability of varying spiritual states. These are not always stable, pleasurable or pleasant. He experiences the desolation that characterises his inner state during this second phase, a desolation that directly questions the path his life is taking: 'What new life is this that we're beginning now?' [Au 21]. What had seemed well on track has swerved off course, leaving him disoriented and perplexed.

The serpent continues to go for Ignatius's weakest points. 'He came to have many problems from scruples... although he would confess, he didn't end up satisfied... and although he was almost aware that those scruples were doing him a great deal of harm and that it would be good to get rid of them still he couldn't accomplish this on his own' [Au 22]. Scruples were indeed Ignatius's weak point, springing from his pursuit of perfection, from a self-imposed sense of obligation, of not having measured up, of having offended our Lord a great deal in the course of his life, of not deserving God's forgiveness. In short, Narcissus's self-image was being dashed.

Trapped by morbid memories of the past he'd thought were buried but which sprung up again like weeds, he tries to find remedies for his desolation but cannot entirely do so: 'although he confessed, he didn't end up satisfied [...] he began to seek out some spiritual men [...]. But nothing was of any help to him.. [...] he was

persisting in his seven hours of prayer [...] together with all the other practices already mentioned, but in none of these was he finding any cure [...] there often used to come over him, with great impetus, temptations to throw himself out of a large opening which the room he was in had' [Au 22-24].

However, the desolation that led Ignatius to the door of suicide paradoxically turned out to be the prelude to surrender, not now surrender of the fortress of Pamplona but of his inner fortress. It is no longer question of surrendering his 'external weapons' (great deeds) but of him surrendering to the inner ones, of his having the confidence to allow the Other to lead him, to places unforeseen. He has radically, painfully, experienced in his own flesh a loss of foothold, of hitting rock bottom. His plan of winning over God by his own efforts has crumbled. He comes face to face with his own fundamental limitations and lack of resources. We see him here at the start of being able to acknowledge vulnerability: 'it is not enough to count on my own resources', 'I cannot liberate myself'. If, up to this point, when faced with intensely difficult situations, Ignatius had believed that he was strong enough to extricate himself from self, if he had believed himself capable of sanctity by his own efforts or by acts of will, he can believe it now no longer. Now he recognises that he's not just physically wounded; more than that, he is vulnerable. He knows he needs stronger arms than his own if he's really to be healed. Lucidity about this is indispensable for any true following of Christ. God has been showing him that in order to reach Him, there is no other path than dispossession.

The feel of this period is well caught in Ignatius's cry of surrender: 'Help me, Lord: I can find no cure in human beings nor in any creature. If I thought I could find it, no struggle would be hard for me. You, Lord, show me where I am to find it. Even if I have to follow a little dog so that it can give me the cure, I'll do it' [Au 23].

A dark night, a descent to the depths of his humanity, becomes the way that something new is born. This is the time that immediately precedes surrender and salvation: salvation is God's work alone; my task is to be ready, to allow myself to be led and shaped, to trust Him... It is a slow and painful birthing process, but one through which consoling grace may enter. With this begins the third phase of Ignatius's inner journey at Manresa.

His account provides several indications of the inner state that is forming in him now: he starts helping other souls, remains faithful in prayer, embarks upon a healthier, less austere, less effortful way of life involving proper sleep and eating more [Au 26-27]. There are signs of greater openness, less self-sufficiency, the progressive allowing himself to be acted on, a more lucid, less nervous, awareness of his own limitations, from which emerges a state of profound consolation. He is consoled by a Trinitarian music in three keys, an awareness of the God who creates through love, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the divine humanity... these experiences captivate him utterly: his understanding is heightened, his imagination aids the process ('he sees with his inner sight', no longer with his

outer eyes), he is able to be moved to tears, his spirit grows and takes delight in devotion. His faith becomes clearer, his choice of life is confirmed, to such a degree that ‘if there weren’t Scripture to teach us these matters of the faith, he would be resolved to die for them solely on the basis of what he has seen’ [Au 29]. And he feels ever more moved to tell others about it all [Au 28-29].

These discoveries gradually prepare the way for the final revelation known as his ‘Enlightenment by the River Cardener’ [Au 30]. For the rest of his life, Ignatius will express his conviction that God can ‘enter the human soul and move it’, that He seeks to deal directly with his creatures, such that they may meet Him face to face. Ignatius is convinced of this because it is what had happened to him by the river. It is an experience of grace, a grace that is enlightenment, light, in contrast to the blindness of before. It is a clarity that does stop his passionate searching of before, but illuminates it. This grace will be a touchstone for the rest of his life, making it possible for him to see life entirely differently, though eyes enlightened by the Spirit. The world can now be understood as not opaque but as a place where God is visible, where he can be contemplated and adored.

Let us look at some particular features this experience took:

- ‘The eyes of his understanding began to be opened: not that he saw some vision, but understanding and knowing many things, spiritual things just as much as matters of faith and learning’ [Au 30]. These words show it was an integrating experience. Everything becomes more harmonious and ordered, both his spiritual life (inner motions), his faith (revealed truths), and his studies (of matters that are the object of natural knowledge).
- ‘This with an enlightenment so strong that all things seemed new to him’ [Au 30]. We have here a synthetic illumination of reality as a whole. God’s action breaks through, and this allows him ‘ever to see all things as new’. It is the discovery of God at work within him and in the world, a God discovered as inviting him to seek Him and to follow Him. Such will be Ignatius’s life from this point onwards: to be gently led to places that he did not know before. The Cardener experience is not one of reaching a destination but of a new departure, a totally new departure towards all the future holds. It is making contact with the deepest desires of his innermost being.
- ‘It seemed to him as if he were a different person, and he had another mind’ [Au 30]. The old Ignatius feels himself reborn, a creature among creatures, bathed in the Mercy of a Mystery that far from seeking to overwhelm him, becomes accessible and close. Beside the Cardener he becomes capable of perceiving the Exodus of God, His loving passion for and intimate cordiality towards His creatures. Mystery ceases to be a cold, demanding distance, and becomes the warm embrace of all created things, permitting creatures to meet with Him. Ignatius, in short, finds that he is loved by a God who’s not a Master that he has to please, but a Love that seeks to be welcomed. He discovers all

reality is loved by God. He is being converted to the world. He leaves Manresa not with the intention of leaving the world behind but of being involved in it, helping souls, involved in it since his root desire is to live for Christ, a Christ himself involved with the world, as a channel of God's Mercy.

4.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

This part of the account can help us to examine those experiences of the Spirit that have marked our own journeys.

a) Let us ask ourselves if in the course of following Jesus to the Father we have had any disconcerting, possibly painful, or indeed lacerating, experiences that when seen in perspective seem to have been paths by which God has instructed and led us forward.

b) Maybe we are able to recall personal experiences that have led us finally to see that we are not self-sufficient, that our weakness needs to be strengthened by grace –experiences, that is to say, of surrendering our inner fortress.

c) Maybe we have had specific experiences of powerful encounters with God, moments in which without knowing how, He has come to meet us and redirected our steps. Let us recall these again, and be grateful for them. They are not just experiences in the past, they accompany us still today.

5 JERUSALEM [AU 35-53]

The journey to and from Jerusalem and the few days he spent there occupy quite a lot of space in Ignatius's account. It is noticeable how despite everything that happened at Manresa, he did not renounce his plan to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but unavoidable circumstances would later show him that it was not the Lord's will that he should stay there.

5.1 History

He left Manresa in February 1523, with a view to sailing from Barcelona to Gaeta, and from there to walk to Rome. He reached Rome in April 1523, and obtained papal permission to go on pilgrimage. From there he went to Venice, where he waited two months, before, in August, arriving in Cyprus, next going on to Jaffa where he joined a group of twenty-one other pilgrims with whom he travelled to Jerusalem, under Turkish escort.

5.2 Inner Life

Just three observations about the Pilgrim's inner life at this juncture:

1. Ignatius never abandoned his plan to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but the inner experience gained in Manresa lent it a whole new colouring. He no longer thinks of it in penitential terms, but as a mark of trust in God. As he puts it himself, 'his whole aim was o have God alone as a refuge' [Au 35]. He wants to depend wholly upon God, letting Him steer the ship. That is sufficient for him from now on. He has gained an understanding of himself not couched in terms of a world that belongs to him, but of one that belongs to God. He has begun to think of himself as a creature, as radically poor, but happy and regaled by God.

The outward indication of this new inner state is a pilgrimage made in poverty, with no external support of any kind. He will travel alone, without any money, living only on alms, the road his only lodging, sharing his life with the poor, vagabonds, and other pilgrims, sleeping in doorways and hospices. He has moved on from wildly seeking ‘more’ –doing more, imitating more, performing more penances– to a lessening of that ‘more’, sharing the fortunes of a Lord who is humble and poor.

2. One of the principal motives of his pilgrimage is to be close to the places where Jesus spent his earthly life. Recall his concern in the Exercises for the ‘composition of place’. It is an attempt at getting closer to Jesus through the senses, as if Jesus’s life history and Ignatius’s own shed light on one another, and became ever more similar. His desire is to be shaped by Jesus Christ [Au 44-45].

3. The Pilgrim finally realises the necessary relativisation of human ‘absolutes’. Not even Jerusalem should be an absolute goal. He cannot remain there because the goal of his pilgrimage is God alone. Poverty and Jerusalem, both sacraments beloved by him, will no longer be idealised, but be rightly placed, as means to an end, as sacraments of the path that leads beyond them, necessary but not absolute. He realises for the first time that ‘it was not the will of our Lord that he should remain in those holy places’ [Au 47,50].

It is significant that the phrase ‘the will of our Lord’ should appear for the first time in his account. This is a will that comes from outside himself, and leads him to mistrust or doubt *his* will, *his* desires, *his* this or that, however pious or virtuous it may appear. He starts to discover something that he will later talk about a lot: the need for self-denial, of allowing oneself to be pruned, in order to remove obstacles to God’s will growing more vigorously within us. One has to let oneself be mobilised by a greater purpose, one coming from beyond ourselves, one which overcomes us, known as the will of God, a will that leaves one somewhat puzzled even so, asking ‘what must I do now?’. ‘Help souls. Fine. But how do I do that?’

5.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

a) Just as Ignatius begins to see that Jerusalem, is not just a place but a dynamic (that of a progressive identification with the Lord Jesus that can be achieved anywhere), we might ask what form the dynamic takes in us, that of trustfully allowing the Lord to shape us. Is what God wants equally definitive for everyone?

b) In the process of letting ourselves be shaped by the Lord, we have sacramental experiences (of places, people, situations, events, relationships, things heard) that whilst not absolute are food for our journey as we continue to model ourselves more closely upon Christ. What have been sacramental experiences of this type in our own lives?

6 STUDY AND COMPANIONSHIP: BARCELONA, ALCALÁ, SALAMANCA, PARIS [AU 54-86]

Concerned because he cannot remain in Jerusalem, the Pilgrim starts travelling again with the firm intention of 'helping souls', sharing with others his own experience of God's nearness. In order to do this, he decides to begin formal studies. We shall examine here this long episode next, a period in which he acquires some new companions also.

6.1 History

This period opens when Ignatius takes up residence in Barcelona in January 1524. At the age of 33, he starts studying the rudiments of Latin grammar with Master Ardévol, and is joined by three other, younger, men who are ready to share his way of life. After the first two years of grammar, Ardévol encourages him to go to Alcalá to study Arts.

Ignatius arrived in Alcalá in March 1526, ready to pursue his studies in the University that Cisneros founded there. He lodged in the Hospice of Mercy there, and lived on alms. Having arrived half way through the academic year, his studies did him very little good, and in addition, he had problems with the Inquisition. His presence in the city attracted attention: a pilgrim in odd clothing, a student approaching middle age, accompanied by four young laymen, living in a hostel for the poor, talking to large crowds about spiritual matters, and all this when the *alumbrado* crisis was at its height. The Inquisition swiftly investigated his activity but found nothing to condemn in either his doctrine or his way of life, merely forbidding them to wear any sort of religious habit. It turned its attention to him again in May 1526, though, and this time imprisoned him for a month and a half, the prison becoming a centre of spiritual operations, with many people turning up to talk with him there. He was absolved, but forbidden on pain of excommunication to teach in public or in

private, because he had no formal qualifications to do so. Ignatius felt that in Alcalá ‘they were blocking the door to him against his helping souls’ [Au 63].

And so, in June 1527 he left for Salamanca with his companions, where he was also submitted to questioning, investigated by the Dominicans, who were surprised by his giving teaching about the virtues and vices, once more because he had no academic qualifications. His activities might indicate Illuminist sympathies, they told him, since ‘in objective terms only graduates could speak of God, but in subjective terms, only Illuminists’. He was put in prison again, and a prison again became his spiritual operations centre. He was further examined on the subject of the Spiritual Exercises, the trickiest aspect of which was felt to be moral, the way the distinction was made between mortal and venial sin. The group was absolved, but forbidden to continue preaching.

In February 1528, Ignatius left for a Paris famous for its university with some 4,000 students, his companions staying on in Salamanca, waiting for news of him. Since he was so lacking in knowledge of Latin, he registered for a course in it at the Collège de Montaigu, and stayed there until one of his room-mates ran off with the alms he had been given to fund his studies. He had then to accept charity from the Hospital Saint-Jacques, at the door of which he begged. But the distance from there to the place where classes were held and the fact that Paris had gates that were shut at certain times meant that he had to miss the first and last lessons of the day. At this time also, he used his summers to travel to Flanders and to London, to beg support from rich Spanish merchants living there, something that saved him from having to beg during the academic year, and left him with more time to study. He took up residence at the Collège Sainte-Barbe, where he met his ‘first companions’ (those in Salamanca having ended up not following him to Paris), began studying Arts in 1530, graduated in 1533, and took a Master’s degree in 1535.

6.2 Inner Life

One is struck at this period by Ignatius’s determination to study, and by the various difficulties he encountered. He has understood the necessary means to the end he sought, which is that of ‘helping souls’, helping others share his experience of God. His studies were the words put to an inner music.

He found studying an arid affair, whereas his taste for spiritual things gave him far more pleasure, distracting him from his academic work. But the Pilgrim came to understand that this was a temptation to be resisted [Au 54]. Something similar happened in relation to his apostolic zeal and desire to help souls –something else on which he had to set a curb. In Paris, he realised that he had not made sufficient progress in his studies, and we see in this the first signs of a tension that would stay with him on the journey of Ignatian spirituality, one between charismatic inspiration and its intellectual mediation.

Still on the inner level, his decision to follow Christ in poverty, living in hospices on alms, was not readily compatible with a regime of study that required a certain minimum degree of security, in terms of time, personal space, and money. The Pilgrim had to juggle these things, and during his years in Paris at least, he would make fewer demands on himself in terms of his beloved poverty, so as to be freer to study for the good of others' souls. A second tension accompanying him on the journey of Ignatian spirituality was, then, going to be between living in poverty and making proper use of the apostolic means available to him.

We have already seen some of the external constraints he faced: inquisitorial investigations, others' failure to understand his way of life, suspicions around the orthodoxy of his teaching, and so forth. All these things involved time wasted in lengthy legal trials, disputation, imprisonment... But taken as a whole, such opprobrium, persecution, and humiliation strengthened him inwardly as he felt close to a Christ who was Himself poor, humble, and mocked [Au 69].

Another striking thing about this period is Ignatius's capacity to form a nucleus of followers who gradually formulated plans to live a common life. His two first great friends were his room mates from the Collège Sainte-Barbe, Pierre Favre and Francis Xavier. Their friendship extended beyond human, material things to embrace the most explicitly Christian of concerns, acquiring greater depth as all members of this group that slowly grew in size (Lainez, Salmerón, Bobadilla, Simón Rodrigues) made the Spiritual Exercises. At the university, a group of friends was formed, deeply united in sharing all that is most spiritual and most human, a common table, a common purse, a common teacher, common studies... The Lord, and the shared experience of the Exercises, bound them together. They grew in mutual esteem, concern for one another, the need to meet regularly and to share common projects.

Ignatius's leadership undoubtedly contributed greatly to the consolidation of the group. He was by far the most mature in terms of age. He had moved in exalted secular circles, had covered a large apart of Europe on foot, had experience of serious university milieu, had been persecuted and imprisoned by the Inquisition, had been a spiritual guide to many. He was helped by a powerful personality, a lively temperament, and ease in conversation, being one of those for whom conversation is an art. Speaking and conversing was no mere humanistic trick for putting loquacity on display. For him, conversation had an apostolic purpose; it involved dialogue and was meant to invite responses. It meant listening with one's full attention, placing oneself in another's shoes. Ignatius was repelled by people who were over the top, pontificating, and given to gossip.

His leadership was that of one who spoke from a depth of personal, mystical, experience, embodying human and spiritual values of great attractiveness to young people looking for a purpose to their lives. That is why those companions of his sought to follow Ignatius's way of life with its lofty aims of following the Lord Jesus and wanting to serve him in freedom but in ever greater commitment.

The group evolved a way of cultivating their inner lives, of poverty, study, and the apostolate, placing Jesus at the centre of a life lived together, all this with the aim of helping souls. And the idea was made explicit in the vows they made in Montmartre in August 1535 [Au 85]. They expressed their desire to live centred on Jesus Christ, which explains the vow to go to Jerusalem, or were that to turn out to be impossible, to place themselves at the disposition of the Vicar of Christ for him to use them wherever he judged necessary. They further committed themselves to resemble the Lord Jesus, in helping others, on the move, in chastity and poverty, charging nothing for what they did.

This was a plan of life that recalls that of the apostles Jesus sent on mission (Matthew 10). As one of them, Láinez, expressed it many years later, ‘our aim was not to form a Congregation but to dedicate ourselves in poverty to God’s service and the good of others, preaching and serving in hospices.’

6.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

a) The discovery that it was God’s will to do so and a vitally unifying vision when it came to helping souls led Ignatius to involve himself in two areas relatively unfamiliar to him, study and community life. And he sought to pursue this together with two other values that he valued greatly, poverty and solitude. It was not always easy to combine such different elements, however much everything that is subtle about following the Lord Jesus consists in it. One question we might ask ourselves is how we have tried to combine these things in our own lives, and what has aided us in doing it: following Christ in poverty, but with due regard to the apostolic means available to us in the form of study and the cultivation of professional skills, all to the end of helping souls.

b) We might also ask ourselves how we manage to combine space for solitude and personal intimacy with community spaces in which to share with others our ideals, hopes, and various forms of discipleship.

c) For Ignatius, all these ingredients –poverty, closeness to Christ, study, training, apostolate, community life– are articulated around this passion of his for helping souls. It is worth asking ourselves how we help souls today. How might we translate this typically Ignatian expression, helping souls, one that can also be translated in a number of different ways. What specific forms has helping souls taken in our own lives?

d) And still following the Pilgrim at this time of studying and being with others, we might usefully recall the various people with whom we have shared our faith, our own plans for following Christ, the reading we have done that has made the deepest impression on us, the spiritual conversations that have left their mark upon our souls.

7 LOYOLA AND VENICE [AU 87-98]

After the vows at Montmartre, Ignatius's doctors advised him to return to the fresh air of his native Loyola and rest for a while. This obliged him to interrupt his studies and leave the group of friends he has formed. But the whole group decides to meet up in Venice a year and a half later, when they have finished their studies, in order to put into effect there the programme of life they have agreed upon.

7.1 History

Ignatius left Paris for the country of his birth in March 1535, staying there until July. It was a brief but fruitful period away, after which he went on to Pamplona, Almazán, Sigüenza, Toledo, and Valencia [Au 90], and visited the families of some of his companions to explain to them the situation of the group he had been forming. This was a hot potato, since it meant telling people that a son they had expected to return as a distinguished graduate and with a benefice of some importance had signed on with a group of spiritual adventurers and would not be coming back.

He next set sail for Genoa from Valencia, continuing on foot to Bologna and Venice where he spent the year 1536 on his own, prior to meeting up again as planned with his companions from Paris.

In Valencia, he completed his theological studies, gave the Exercises, and engaged in spiritual conversations [Au 92]. He also made contact with certain Church reformist groups, such as one centred on Jerome Emiliani, the founder of the Somaschi, a group of regular clerks, serving the poor and disadvantaged. An-

other of these was the Theatines, founded by bishop Carafa. As a simple layman, Ignatius indicated his misgivings when Carafa sought to join the former's group to his own. Ignatius was surprised by the Theatines' slow rate of growth, attributing it to its founder's own life-style of little poverty and to its being a Congregation turned in upon itself, with little apostolic activity, and little practice of charity or of begging for alms. Ignatius's vision was of a seasoned group of men, ready for great struggles, not a group of city-dwelling monastics.

As agreed, the companions reached Venice in January 1537, with time in hand before going to Rome, to sue for permission to sail for Jerusalem. This they did two months later with a view to asking permission to travel to the Holy Land and asking Paul III to ordain them. They travelled in groups of three, on foot, staying in pilgrim hospices, living in the greatest poverty. Once in Rome in March 1537, Paul III agreed to their ordination as 'poor clerks with adequate learning', that is to say, as men without particular diocesan ties and without benefice or patrimony. He also allowed them to depart on pilgrimage, and gave them 270 ducats for their journey. But Ignatius himself remained in Venice, not wishing to go to Rome with the others on account of the unfavourable impression formed of him by certain people close to the Pope, like Carafa and one Dr Ortiz.

The group were reunited again in Venice in September 1537, where those recently ordained celebrated their first masses. But no ship was leaving for Jerusalem that year, and so they decided to delay a year, as they had envisaged in Montmartre might be the case. They split up and went to various neighbouring towns, Ignatius to Vicenza with Favre and Laínez, to the ruined monastery of San Pietro in Vivarolo [Au 94]. This served him as a period of relative retreat, a kind of second Manresa, where despite the aridity of his studies, he says that he was visited with great consolation, and was able to prepare properly for the first mass he hoped to celebrate in the Holy Land. But in the end, when the allotted time had past and it was clear embarking for Jerusalem would not be possible, he did leave for Rome with some of his companions, with a view to placing himself at the Pope's disposal as foreseen earlier [Au 96].

7.2 Inner Life

It was now twenty-three years since Ignatius had left Loyola and not been back there. On his return, he is no longer Íñigo but Ignatius. Returning to places can sometimes mean regression, but this was not the case with him. He had his roots, but they had not restricted him; they had opened new horizons up to him. He was Basque through and through, but his views were universal. When he returned to his roots, therefore, he carried with him profound experiences from elsewhere. That this was a return and not a regression is visible from his stubborn determination not to take up residence in the fortress of Loyola but in the Hospice of the

Magdalen in Azpeitia. He lives by begging alms, and devotes himself to preaching, to talking to others about God, and teaching children their catechism. He also encourages the authorities to lend formal support to charitable work relieving hunger and mendicancy, eradicating long-standing vices such as concubinage, swearing, blasphemy, and gambling, and making peace among families that had been torn apart. Ignatius's activity in Azpeitia becomes a compendium of what will later be the Society's main apostolic labours: spiritual conversation, teaching the faith to children, preaching, working to change people's behaviour, encouraging piety, serving the poor.

Once in Venice and with the companions back from Paris, the group begins to live the apostolic life, seeking to help souls. They set aside the subtleties of theological dispute for the humble role of tending the sick, preaching, teaching children, and so on. The motto that will later characterise them, 'in everything to love and serve', takes visible form not just in study but in the humblest and least showy things, serving from the bottom up, from the underside of history. Fundamentally, Ignatius's companions are serving their novitiate. Having made the Exercises in Paris, it's now a matter of matching inner experience to the hard realities of life, to ensure there is consistency. By serving in hospitals and hospices they will meet the utmost vulnerability; in travelling without security of any kind, they face discomfort and the need to trust to God alone; in teaching children, they have to keep on being loving and serving despite often disagreeable settings.

In all this a focus on Jesus is the central thing, and so, when people started to ask 'who are you?', they found they best defined themselves as the Companions of Jesus.

On the way to Rome, having renounced travelling to Jerusalem and decided to place themselves at the disposition of the Pope, Ignatius had another spiritual experience of the great intensity, known as the Vision of La Storta [Au 96]. If in Manresa he had experienced enlightenment, he now experiences endorsement, together with a specific task. If he had left Manresa with a fundamental desire to help souls that are so loved by God and surrounded by His mercy, now his desire takes the specific form of letting oneself be shaped by the Son, letting oneself be 'put with the Son'. Ignatius clearly sees he must help souls, *with* Jesus and *like* Jesus, becoming ever more like Him.

The Autobiography is terse when it comes to the narration of this event. It says, simply, that 'he sensed such a change in his soul and he saw so clearly that God the Father was putting him with Christ, his Son...' [Au 96]. This is expressed in the passive voice, so as to convey that this is the work of grace, neither foreseen nor forced, the initiative of God. The text tells us that Fr Laínez, who was present at La Storta, recounted it augmented by other details, and Ignatius confirms that 'all that Laínez said was true, whereas his own memory was not so detailed' [Au 97], so it might be helpful to supply some of those details that Laínez mentioned.

First, Láinez indicates seeing that the Father put Ignatius with his Son, bearing his Cross. At La Storta, Ignatius understands that he is called to follow Christ crucified; called to be a companion of the poor and humble Christ who is carrying his cross. He understands that the Lord he wants to serve and follow is the Servant. If during his years at court, he sought to serve an earthly king, and if after his time at Loyola, he gradually discovered the existence of a far greater Lord, the eternal king, now he sees who this eternal king is in concrete terms: he is the Servant. Not a powerful Lord, but one who carries his own cross, who empties himself, who hands himself over to be crucified.

Second, Láinez tells that Ignatius heard the Father say to him, ‘I will be favourable to you in Rome’. It is more than a little curious that the specific form that following will take should be not on the margins of Christendom, but at its heart, in Rome. On the other hand, the pronoun ‘os’, ‘you’, indicates that this experience extended to all the companions.

Last, Láinez says the Father also told Ignatius, ‘I want you to serve us!’, this ‘us’ referring to the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a network of relationships from which the call and following emanate. If the experience by the Cardener was integrative (a perception of reality as a whole and of everything as a *milieu divin*), that is true this time as well. Following Jesus takes place at the heart of the relationship of mutual love between the divine persons, it being on this basis that all other relationships must be understood and lived.

Although Ignatius employs the passive voice to underscore divine initiative, this being ‘put with the Son’ is a passivity that empowers. It puts one up to serving a Lord who does not stay still, who will not be controlled, who is unpredictable, transcendent Mystery active in the fragile ambiguity of history. It is, therefore, an invitation to serve ‘the God who suffers in this world’, in a service based in mystery and inner fire, with no invitation to levitate one’s way through life, but to immerse oneself in it, a servant beside the Son who bears his cross.

7.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

a) As he moves on, Ignatius takes fresh experiences on board. One of these is ‘ecclesiality’, what it’s like to be the member of a Church. In the initial stages, the Church presented no real problems to him. It was part of his lived experience, he had had a Christian education, in Montserrat he encountered the wisdom of tradition, in Manresa he took part in prayer and sacraments, and so forth. His conflicts with the Inquisition whilst a student were a first dose of realism and of immediate encounter with the institution. In Venice, we see Ignatius interested in making contact with reforming currents within the Church, and thus gradually seeing that there is a need for such reform... All this invites us to take a good look at our own experience of the church, an experience that may also have gone through varying

moods and stages. It might be useful for us to take another look at the development of our own sense of the Church, from the point when we acquired the use of reason, observing the most significant stages in it up to the present time, asking ourselves how we now 'feel the church' and how we see our own position within its bosom.

b) The Vision of La Storta is a specific moment influencing Ignatius's pilgrimage and discipleship. With it, conforming oneself to a humble, poor, and suffering Christ acquires a greater importance. Taking up one's cross and worldly suffering will henceforth be inevitable for Ignatius. In this sense, and examining our own biographies, we might ask ourselves what our own desire has been and is like regarding living with Christ and like Christ, in a solidarity and closeness to the world of the crucified. How have we put this desire into practice in the course of our own lives, and what have we learnt, confirmed, or discovered in the course of it?

8 ROME [AU 99-101]

The *Autobiography* relates very little about Ignatius's youth and adolescence prior to conversion and says very little either about the long time that he spent in Rome, awaiting papal approval for the Society then leading it until his death. But these are eighteen years (1538-56) that should not be neglected. Although Ignatius is no longer a pilgrim in external terms, travelling from one place to another, his inner pilgrimage remains alive until he reaches his final goal of full communion with God.

8.1 History

Ignatius's initiatives in Rome were many. First among these, from March to June 1539, was consultation among the first companions to decide on the group's future once the pope began to send them on missions and they would have to separate. They decided to form a religious congregation, nominating a Superior General to whom they would owe obedience, and with the Formula of 1540 obtaining from Paul III approval for the new Society. From this point on, once Ignatius had been chosen as Father General by his companions, his work would centre on leading a Congregation, with rapidly expanding numbers, and on dictating its Constitutions, approved in 1550 by Julius II.

In addition to this, and without leaving Rome, Ignatius continued giving the Exercises to certain people, preaching, teaching children, and serving as Novice Master to the young men seeking admission. He was also unstinting with his time

when a particular person was in a tight spot. He intervened as well in weighty matters affecting companions sent on missions (protestant schisms, Moorish threats, wars between Christian princes, expansion in the Indies...), but without neglecting or not spending time on less pressing problems (such as consoling the viceroy of Sicily on the death of his wife, showing concern for the health of Fr Barceo or Fr Araoz, consoling Fr Lóbreaga when he was imprisoned by the Turks, sketching out a plan of reform for nuns, looking for a rest home for the sick or depressed companions to whom he devoted particular attention...)

He also took a number of initiatives with regard to social problems. He was concerned to deal with the problem of prostitution. It was no easy matter for prostitutes to change their way of life, and they had no other option than to join a monastery. Ignatius collected money to set up the Refuge of St Martha, founded a confraternity to protect it, and wrote a constitution for it. He soon realised that it was not enough to take prostitutes in: the evil had to be tackled in its roots, which lay in the indigence of many families. And so he founded a Confraternity of Impoverished Virgins whose task it was to give education and shelter to girls at risk from the age of ten, and also to promote the creation of shelters for orphaned children. Another sphere in which he worked was among Jews, with a view to changing things that militated against their conversion (the authorities confiscated their property as a mark of their sincerity), and opening a centre for the instruction of Jewish converts.

8.2 Inner Life

Ignatius spent the last eighteen years of his life in Rome. One might indeed say that he and his companions were pilgrims at the centre of the church, placing themselves at the Pope's disposition to best serve the church and world. That is the specific form taken by 'being put with the Son', at a time when many Christian groups sought to be creative by *distancing* themselves from Rome, as happened with the protestant reformers. Affirming an unshakeable loyalty to the Church, Ignatius fought with all his might to defend the charismatic, reforming, character of his new Institute against bureaucratic ecclesiastical interests that did not understand what he was doing and that would do their best to thwart it. He would not alter what was new about a Society he saw to be a charism working for the good of the universal church. On the contrary: he put his loyalty on the line when seeking dialogue. There was nothing about Ignatius or his Society to suggest they thought themselves to be the goodies, the pure, the best elements amidst a decadent church. There was nothing cowardly about them, either, when they came to offer to the church a new, original, and carefully considered charism.

The originality that Ignatius set out to defend was that of a religious institute at whose centre lay a mission of service to God in the world. By virtue of this,

it was important to be on one's toes, ready to be sent wherever it was necessary, whereas other things were considered less important (reciting the Divine Office in choir or the adoption of a religious habit), or eliminated entirely (the pursuit of office, benefices, and so forth). Thus the new congregation sought not to turn in on itself or confine itself to ecclesiastical matters, but to be open and concerned for humanity as a whole. Service was its watchword—in science, the humanities, in dealings with the rich and poor alike, in a college or on mission, in everything seeking to aid the encounter between men and God.

In the 'Capital of Christianity', Ignatius is aware of the church's true needs (an uninstructed clergy, absentee pastors, congregations abandoned), of the dominant trends in society and morals (depraved behaviour, concubinage, poverty, social stratification, marginalisation), and of the complex mutual and ambiguous relations between politics and religion, princes and bishops, kings and popes, all 'most Christian' but all obsessed by power, control, and influence. He is aware of the connivances, competition, and underhand dealings involving relations between the spiritual and the temporal powers, as between the different temporal powers themselves. He realises he is living in times of great innovation and openness towards new worlds and new realities (developments in communications, the exploration of new continents, new inventions, an explosion in the arts and in renaissance humanistic creativity), with their light and shade, their passions and addictions... He knows about the powerful contrasts: together with the growth of great financial and banking empires like those of the Medici or the Fuggers, Rome has a wealth of abandoned children, prostitutes, and all kinds of disinherited folk trying to subsist as best they can. In the midst of such a world, he tries to offer 'God's response'.

Here are some leading features of his life and of his religious stance:

- *An active life lived in depth.* Amidst frenetic activity, we see him immersed in the intimate Mystery of the Trinity. He lives in a state of inner silence that allows him from the depths of his own being to pay close attention to the world around him, being wholly attentive to whatever he is doing. This is how he puts it in the *Autobiography*: 'always growing in facility in finding God' [Au 99]. His is not a state of occasional mystic elevation but of an habitual communion with God, sensing and delighting in His active presence, strikingly experienced in the deepest strata of his life.
- *Inner fidelity to a new external panorama.* We have been following Ignatius's life's journey and noticing his love of anonymity, of radical poverty, of a naked trust in God, of hospices and highways... He's now in demand from monarchs, dukes, ambassadors and bishops, protected and favoured by the Pope, condemned to a sedentary life. He had hoped to live and die in some odd corner of his beloved Jerusalem, and now he finds himself in the centre of the Christian world, feeling the weary heartbeat of the church, and often powerless in re-

sponse to such great needs. Convinced that it is God himself who has led him, he remains faithful to his fundamental aspiration, to help souls, in everything to love and serve, with Christ and like Christ. It was possible to retain a pilgrim spirit without leaving Rome.

- *In the world but not of it.* Ignatius is faced with the tensions involving flight from two extremes: the worldly and the disembodiedly spiritual, being in the world but not of it. The easy way out is to suppress one of these two poles. Ignatius, however, accepts the challenge of living out of the tension, re-immersing himself and the Society in the structures of a world he had sought to break with in his years of heightened enthusiasm for pilgrimage in poverty, re-immersing himself in a world dominated by hunger for knowledge, power, and wealth.

We should recall that as he left Loyola, the newly converted Ignatius had broken with all these worldly structures. To power, he countered humiliation, to wealth, begging for alms, to knowledge an ‘uncultivated’ way of life. But on his return from the Holy Land, he decided to study, in order to help souls, and thus re-immersed himself in the structures of knowledge. While in Paris, he decided not to live on alms in order to be more free to study. Once in Rome, although his personal view was that the spirit is more important than the letter, he did not hesitate to open the Society’s door to formal learning, requiring his students to study, and establishing such bodies as the Germanicum or the Collegio Romano. He, who had only two books in his cell, Kempis and the Gospels, turns out to be the impulse behind the Gregorian, the most prestigious university in the Catholic world. In all of this, what opened these paths up was the pulse of life itself and the end in view –God’s greater glory and the service of our fellow men–, it being necessary to preach the gospel to infidels and places where Christianity was in danger of division, and to that end, to give priests and other agents of transformation a first-class academic formation in colleges and universities. In Rome he also saw that if the Society was to remain faithful to its mission, it had to have contact with the structures of power (seek to exercise influence, seek benefactors, make useful contacts), although this carried with it a risk of pride in power, in money, and in knowledge, it was a risk they simply had to take.

Since flexibility was needed in the means employed, it was all the more important to keep one’s sights on what it all was for: involved in financial matters, they must live in poverty; he will send his companions to accept honourable posts in Universities or at Trent, but tell them they must themselves live in hospices and teach children their catechism. He reminds everyone that amidst apostolic success, the apostle is merely a poor instrument in love with Jesus Christ.

He leads a low-key apostolic body that aspires to highest things. Ignatius invites his followers to live out a desire for *magis*, more, whilst remaining aware of specific forms taken by the *minus*. He seeks out the greatest universal good, where

the most fruit may be gathered, where the need or urgency is greatest, but without forgetting that the companions are a tiny band, without forgetting that God works through their littleness and fragility, and that unless they remain rooted in Him, their apostolic labours will be barren.

He invites his followers to maintain both high ideals and forms of activity that are realistic. The high ideal of Ignatius's life is his desire to ensure in all things that Christ gives shape to one's life, leading one to full communion with the Father, grounded in the vigour of the Spirit. This is what we now call the Ignatian spirituality. It has always to be lived out in full practical awareness of specific circumstances, not only those that seem the most spectacular but not least in the small details: the way we eat, dress ourselves, and talk, the way in which we care for the sick, and so on. This is a high ideal lived out in concrete terms, with a realism about the smallest things.

Trust that God is in charge of the ship. Despite all these tensions, despite a degree of nostalgia for the heroic early days with his first companions, Ignatius as an old man looks confidently to the future. The root of this confidence is his conviction that God will direct the Society as an enterprise of His own, perhaps to places it would not have chosen of itself (John 21.18), just as God had led the Pilgrim as a schoolmaster leads a child, down unsuspected paths.

As he looks back on his life, the Pilgrim realises Someone Else has steered the ship. To see this one needs to look deep within, since from a superficial point of view, life could seem a succession of unexpected outcomes, with endless personal desires that have not come to fruition. Without having meant to found an Order, he finds himself at the head of one that is rapidly expanding; having loved retirement and anonymity, he finds himself called upon to undertake a stream of projects and missions; a traveller down lonely dusty tracks, he leads in Rome a sedentary life in frequent contact with influential people; wishing to live and die in Jerusalem, he ends up discovering that God wants him to reside in Rome.

But in the non-fulfilment of his own desires, Ignatius discovers he is fulfilling a greater desire, desiring what God desires. Ignatius has agreed to be led by Another, his affections have been conquered by Another. He is a loving believer, not a stoic, belief being a matter of the passionately loving service of One who has placed His trust in us, and revealed Himself to be the only one in whom it is worth depositing one's trust.

8.3 Applying This to Our Own Inner Lives

This closing stage of the journey may help us to examine our own biographies at the present time, one like Ignatius's, not devoid of tensions and complexity.

a) We ourselves experience something of the complexity of the world in which Ignatius and his Society have openly decided to operate, a complexity that we

perceive in the world of today: the global spread of superficiality and solidarity, an ease of communication and non-communication, the transfer of capital and of persons beyond frontiers, some welcome, some unsought, a growing superficiality of knowledge and a growing diminution of the inner life, a growth in the numbers of those volunteering for both creation and destruction. We can augment this list from our own experience. We might ask ourselves, as Ignatius did, in what ways and in what spheres we can be best of use, what is needed and most necessary, what we in today's world can do to make God more 'visible'.

b) It becomes ever clearer to the Pilgrim that his involvement in the world must be with Christ and like His. It is a matter of reflecting Christ amidst the 'thick' detail of reality, an ambiguous reality in which if we are not careful we can easily find ourselves shifting imperceptibly from 'like Christ' to 'like the world'. How can we exercise due vigilance, given the present state of our lives? How do we intend to live in the world without becoming of it? What specifically do we find to be of help in this regard?

c) This 'thick' complex reality is where Ignatius encountered God. He says in the account of this closing period of his life that he grew in facility in finding God in all things. The world is where we experience the Spirit and the world is where we may experience things spiritually. This is so obvious that we can easily ignore it. It may, therefore, help to ask if now, in the present, in our ordinary, simple, tiny, repetitive everyday lives, we do find life to be a spiritual experience, an encounter with the Lord. How in our daily lives do we live out our calling to an ever closer communion with the Lord? How do we cultivate the vocation that is the source of every other vocation we may have?

d) In St John's gospel, Jesus invites us to 'remain in his love'. This is what Ignatius sought throughout his pilgrimage, something that at the end of his life he perceived to be substantial and real. When we look from the perspective of the present at our own pilgrimage maybe we can notice how certain dynamic convictions have remained in place throughout our lives. Can we give a name to them? After all, it is these modest convictions that in the end sustain the pilgrimage of each believer.

e) As we have been following Ignatius, we have perhaps noticed how at this final stage of his journey, despite and through all the tensions and conflicts, there remains uppermost in him a hopeful way of seeing life. The hope in question does not reside in the many plans, initiatives, and tasks he has in hand. On the contrary. These initiatives, plans, and tasks are undertaken in the context of hope. This is how he faces up to life: not looking to the future, but welcoming a coming, an Advent, the Advent of the Lord who meets us in our real worlds, even in their most disconcerting guises. From such a point of view, we might ask ourselves how we see our lives as they are now. Is the tenor of our lives one that is full of hope, sad, resigned, open, passionate, decadent, or is it expectant?

“**Guides**”, with this verb Ignatius Loyola modestly expresses his great desire to help others. It is under this motto connoting service and simplicity that the Ignatian School of Spirituality (*Escuela Ignaciana de Espiritualidad - EIDES*) offers these series of materials.

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