

SERVING THE SAME LORD¹

By PEDRO ARRUPÉ

*To serve the Lord alone and the Church his bride
under the Roman Pontiff, Vicar of Christ on earth.²*

THESE WORDS from the *Formula of the Institute* of the Society of Jesus, approved by Pope Julius III in 1550, are indeed inspired. They represent, in written form, the consecration of Ignatius Loyola and his companions, in the final stage of the long search for their apostolic identity. They epitomize the special charism of the Society, and delineate the programme of life and action for all those who across the centuries were to be accepted into its ranks. They are words which explain the 'wherefore' — the final cause — of the Society's existence; but they also give expression to the ideal which must enliven the heart and mind of each and every one of the Society's sons.

We are dealing, then, with a phrase that permits of, or rather demands, analysis in depth, the purpose and the result of which will be a fuller understanding of the Society's charism. And more than this: it will clarify the fundamental vision which must be the source of all genuinely apostolic activity. The statement contains three distinct notions: the service of God; service of the Roman Pontiff, Vicar of Christ on earth; service of the Church, the bride of Christ.

THE SERVICE OF GOD

Service is a key idea in the charism of Ignatius. It has a driving force which attains its furthest goal in his life and spirituality, including the mystical dimension: a service which is at once unconditional, unlimited, magnanimous and lowly. The very illuminations of the holy Trinity which so enriched his mystical life, far from leading to a contemplative and passive quiet, merely drove him on to an ever greater service of the God whom he gazed upon

¹ Cf 1 Cor 12, 5.

² Cf G. Ganss, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis, 1970), [3] [1], p 66.

with such reverential love. It was inevitable that an idea with such deep roots in his spiritual consciousness should reveal itself to his most intimate friends in all that he did. His first companions caught from him this mysticism of service. One of them, Jerome Nadal, would remark later: 'The Society walks the way of the Spirit. It fights for God's cause under the banner of the cross. It serves the Lord alone and the Church his bride under the Roman Pontiff, Christ's Vicar on earth'.³

It is fascinating to watch how this service gradually takes concrete shape across his life, from the time of his conversion until the charism is given its full definition in those formative moments of the Society itself, as expressed in the Formula of the Institute. Indeed the whole life of the Society, as it develops the ignatian intuition, will never find a better word by which to explain itself than 'service'. One of the specialists in the field, Père de Guibert, defines the spirituality of the Society in terms of service: 'service through love, apostolic service for the greatest possible glory of God, a service given in generous conformity to the will of God, in the denial of all self-love and self-interest, in following Christ the Leader, the well-beloved'.⁴

From Loyola to Rome

This comprehension of divine service — of an all-embracing service of God — shines out in the life of Ignatius 'the pilgrim' like the pole star, leading him along ways yet hidden from him, but guiding him step by step towards the goal: the unique mission for which he had been divinely chosen. At the beginning of his conversion, Ignatius interpreted the idea in much the same way as the medieval knight might have conceived the service of his king or liege-lord; or as he himself understood it during the time in which he belonged to the household of the Viceroy of Navarre — with his pleasant dreams of serving his 'ideal' lady with jousts of arms performed for her favours. His whole ambition was to accomplish acts of penance, to do great things after the manner of the saints whose lives he had read in the *Flos Sanctorum*. The first thing that came to mind was to walk barefoot to Jerusalem, 'practising all the bodily penances and abstinences which any generous soul, on fire with God's love, would feel moved to do'.⁵

³ Nadal Monumenta IV, p 618.

⁴ *The Jesuits: their spiritual doctrine and practice* (Chicago, 1964), p 181.

⁵ *Le Récit du Pèlerin: Autobiographie de S. Ignace de Loyola* (Brussels, 1924), 9, pp 41-42.

After making his vigil as God's knight before the altar of our Lady at Montserrat, he went down to Manresa to fulfil his promises. But God was waiting there; it was he who would draw the map of Ignatius's life's journey. Here he experienced his first and radical conversion. Through a divine illumination, he learnt that there was a yet more perfect, more loving way of serving God: which was to travel the entire world as Christ's apostles did, under the standard of Christ; its legend, poverty and humility; its meaning, to proclaim Christ's precious teaching among men of all kinds and conditions. He began to realize what it meant to distinguish oneself in the whole-hearted service of the eternal King and Lord: that is, to follow him just as the Apostles had done; to choose poverty with the poor Christ, to share his humiliations, to desire to be reckoned as a fool for the love of Christ, who was the first to be stigmatized this way. This was why he prayed insistently to Mary, to the Lord Jesus himself and to God the Father, for the gift of being called to the colours of 'the true and sovereign Leader'.

From that time on, Jerusalem would be the focus of all his thoughts and desires, emphasized by his plan to be a Holy Land pilgrim. However, his pilgrimage was neither plain-sailing, nor limited to a particular time, nor marked exclusively by acts of penance and devotion. His decision was to remain in the Lord's land all his life, and to preach the christian faith and doctrine in the same towns and villages where Christ had once preached and suffered.⁶ Thus he hoped to satisfy his thirst for the salvation of souls, and his desire to suffer for Jesus Christ. Hence his bewilderment when the local church authorities — the voice of God as far as he was concerned — made it clear that he was not welcome to stay in Palestine. Did this mean that the Lord was unwilling to accept his service, to receive him under his standard?

With a 'prudent temerity' — to use a phrase of Nadal — he responded to the immediate movements of the Holy Spirit, who was leading him gently, one step at a time, towards a God as yet unrevealed. He was beginning to discover new details in the blueprint of God's design for him. He reasoned with himself that apostolic service meant learning, and learning meant study. He saw, too, that to evangelize, to preach the word in its fulness, must involve sanctification; and this in turn meant sacramental ministry, holy orders and the priesthood.

⁶ Cf Exx 91, 93.

At the same time, the longing for Jerusalem never left him. With those friends who had come to share his desires for the apostolic service of Christ, he made a vow 'to go to Jerusalem and there to devote his life to the good of souls'.⁷ To this promise at Montmartre in Paris, Ignatius and his companions added the well-known 'papal clause': 'to present themselves to Christ's Vicar, so as to be entirely at his service, to be sent wherever he might judge profitable for the greater glory of God and the greater good of souls'.⁸ At the time, however, this was no more than a last resource, in case it should not prove possible for them, within the space of a year, to make the voyage to the Holy Land, or if they did arrive, to stay there. This, in fact, was how matters turned out. Not a single ship left Venice for the East in 1537 or in 1538. Ignatius saw his hopes of apostolic service of Christ in Christ's own country crumbling away.

In the meantime, with Peter Favre and Diego Laynez, he set out for Rome. Nor was this of their own choice, as Favre attests. They were following a call which is expressed in Ignatius's mysterious, insistent and anguished prayer to the Blessed Virgin throughout the journey: 'to place him with her son'.⁹ Once, again, he found himself wholly lost along the hidden ways of Providence. Was the call he had heard at Manresa a mere illusion? There he had prayed to be received under Christ's standard. Now he repeatedly asked for the grace to have his 'place' with Christ, to be received into his service. His prayer was indeed answered — but by no means as he had expected. Again God intervened to change the course of his life. God the Father 'gave him his place with his Son': 'I wish you to take this man as your servant'. And the Son, who showed himself in the act of carrying his cross, took Ignatius into his service: 'I wish you to serve us'.¹⁰ It was at this moment that the unforeseen change of perspective took place: the service of Christ was to be accomplished not in Jerusalem but in Rome. God the Father imprinted on his heart the words, 'I will be favourable to you in Rome'. At first, Ignatius did not know how to interpret them. His own idea of serving Christ was to share his life of sacrifice: his first thought was of the sufferings he and his friends would have to experience. 'I do not know', he told them, 'what is to become of us. Perhaps we shall be crucified in Rome'.¹¹ In the following year, however, in fulfilment of the papal clause of their vow at Montmartre, Ignatius and his companions sought audience. It was then that Paul III reserved

⁷ *Autobiographie*, 85, p 139.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 96, p 156 and note.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

to himself the right of sending them wherever he judged it most profitable for the greater glory of God; and Ignatius understood at last the shining marvel of Christ's service to which the infant Society was being divinely called. The Lord had sent his apostles to preach the gospel. It was the same Lord, visible now in his Vicar (Ignatius's favourite title for the Pope — like Catherine of Sienna's *il dolce Cristo in terra*, 'the sweet Christ on earth') who was to send these new servants 'to sow the seed in the Lord's fields, and to proclaim the good news of his divine word'.

The papal clause, which at Montmartre was seen as no more than a last resort, now became central. This is the reason why, after their decision to establish the Society as a religious order, the first resolution of the companions was to renew, confirm and define their promise, which was to be binding on all future members, in a special vow of obedience to the Pope. Its scope was that he would be free to send them anywhere at all, among believers or unbelievers. So they gave a sober and generous welcome to the new element fashioned by God for their vocation, their charism of *service*, which the providential intervention of Paul III had clarified for them.

'The principle and foundation-stone' of the Society

It was with good reason that Bl Peter Favre saw in this papal intervention 'a clear call and the founding of the Society'. Ignatius himself says, even more explicitly, that the vow or the promise made to God to obey Christ's Vicar is our 'principle and foundation-stone'. Historically speaking, there is no question that this vow is the *principle* of the Society — the origin of its existence as a religious order. The decision of Paul III to send each of the companions on mission under a personal title was a threat to the unity hitherto existing amongst them. It prompted their decision to reinforce their unity still further: after due deliberation they determined 'to form themselves into a body' which would be in effect a religious order with a Superior of its own to whom they would offer their obedience.

The vow of obedience to the Pope is equally our *foundation-stone*: first because it constitutes, as we have said, the *raison d'être* of the Society's existence as a religious order; but also because it gives reality and substance to that service of Christ which is proper to the Society — its having its place with Christ, according to the intense desire and insistent prayer of Ignatius. It is also our foundation-stone because it imparts to the Society its own special structure, as we can see from the following elements:

(a) *Universality, mobility, availability.* These are essential characteristics of our Institute; and all are necessary consequences of the special obedience to the Pope 'in what concerns missions'. From the beginning of their vocation, the members of the Society have 'experienced this spirit, this grace of God' which has compelled them, with the approval of the Pope, 'to labour manfully in the Lord's harvest-field for the salvation of souls by means of public preaching, doctrinal lectures, spiritual exercises and other works of love, always ready and able to prepare the way of the gospel of peace, in conformity with the orders of and in obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff, in any part of the world to which he sends them'.¹² It is a universality, mobility and availability which excludes all that might tie the members to a fixed place: the recitation of the divine office in choir, the pastoral cure of souls, the responsibility for religious communities, chaplaincies, and so on.

(b) *Obedience*, for Ignatius, is the principal virtue — a well-known fact. But obedience to the Superior within the Society is intrinsically linked to the special obedience offered to the Pope. It constitutes a kind of union and cohesion which is a counter-balance to the disruptive forces which sometimes afflict the missions of the Holy Father. It serves as a link (by means of the Superior General) between the body of the Society and the Roman Pontiff: one which facilitates the execution of missions, as Gregory XIV stated.

(c) *The account of conscience* is an equally necessary consequence. Indeed, 'we must be ready, in conformity with our profession and manner of life, to travel about in all parts of the world whenever we receive an order from the Sovereign Pontiff or our immediate Superior. If we are to carry out these missions effectively, in the sending of some rather than others, in choosing some for one task and others for another, it is not only highly important but crucial for the Superior to have a complete knowledge of the tendencies and spiritual movements in those who are in his charge, as well as of the defects or sins into which they have fallen or are still likely to fall'.¹³

(d) *The poverty* proper to the Society must be 'evangelical' and 'missionary': the poverty which Jesus, our common Lord, 'followed himself and taught to his apostles when he sent them out to preach, as Matthew relates in his tenth chapter'.

¹² From *Prima Societatis Iesu Instituti Summa* (The First Outline of the Institute of the Society of Jesus), August 1539. Cf Ganss, *loc. cit.*, p 66, and note 8.

¹³ *Constitutions* (General Examen) [92], 35. Cf Ganss, p 104.

(e) *A long period of probation and a solid formation* is a presupposition for complete availability to the Holy Father. Only men who are prudent in Christ and outstanding for the integrity of their lives and their intellectual formation can be offered to the Pope with assurance, if he is to charge them with every kind of mission, in any and every part of the world, whatever the conditions or circumstances. The 'experiments' of the novitiate are tailored to fit this purpose: to prepare them 'to eat badly and to sleep rough', to beg for alms 'whenever it should prove profitable or necessary, in order that they be ready to travel anywhere at the order of the Supreme Vicar of Christ our Lord, or at the least sign of his will, or, in his place, of the one who is the Superior of the Society'.¹⁴

(f) *Common Life*, too, is another characteristic of the Institute of the Society (there are others which must be left unmentioned). We find the motive for this external style of life in the first 'Formula of the Institute' (*The Five Chapters*¹⁵): it is the hardship of a life 'on mission'. If an austere rule were to be superimposed on it, human nature would be unable to stand it, and individuals would be inclined to point to such austerity as an excuse for being less than diligent in their apostolic activity.

(g) Lastly, the vow of obedience to the Pope is the foundation-stone of the Society for a reason different from the factors which determine its structure. This is the direction the vow gives the Society. Apart from the obligation which it imposes in the strict sense, there can be no doubt that it breathes into the whole body of the Society *a spirit of dedication and special fidelity to the Holy See* which other religious Institutes do not necessarily possess. This is why Pope Paul VI, adding his voice to that of his predecessors, mentioned among the four characteristics of the Society that of being 'joined to the Roman Pontiff by a special bond of love and service'.¹⁶ History shows that the Society has in fact lived in this spirit of love. Friend and foe alike have recognized it, whether to defend the Society or to condemn it.

THE SERVICE OF CHRIST AND OF HIS VICAR

We have emphasized certain aspects of the life of St Ignatius and of the beginnings of the Society, because the features of our

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, [82], 27. Ganss, p 101.

¹⁵ So called because it has five sections. Cf Ganss, pp 48-49.

¹⁶ Cf 'The Allocution of Pope Paul VI to the Fathers of the 32nd General Congregation', in *Supplement to the Way* 29/30 (Spring, 1977), pp 91-93.

vocation stand out more clearly against this historical background, picked out as they are by the first phrases of the 'Formula of the Institute'. Its first paragraph consists of one sentence, of which the first part (protasis) sketches out the Society's vocation in a few short and general statements; whilst the second (the apodosis) defines it in a more concrete way, underlining its special aims and the means of attaining them. So the text of the first Formula reads: 'whoever desires to serve as God's soldier under the banner of the cross in this Society to which we wish to give the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and his Vicar on earth . . .'. These phrases comprise elements common to all religious, and others which are specific to the Society. The pauline expression 'to put on the armour of God' was used often enough in medieval times to describe religious life. It is the same with the expression 'to serve the Lord alone', understood in a general sense. Ignatius himself defined the religious vocation in the following terms: 'to abandon the world totally and to give oneself entirely to a greater service and the greater glory of his Creator and Lord'. In the Society, however, this exclusive service of God has its special characteristics. It is 'God's armed band' with a very special attachment to the person of the Incarnate Word; it is Christ's own company — the Christ who appeared to Ignatius, in the vision at La Storta, carrying his cross; the Christ who recruited him to his service and his colours — the banner of the cross. Jesus Christ is Lord and God of all creation: but he is also, in a very special way, the head of the Society, which in consequence desires to be called by his name 'just as a company or squadron normally adopts the name of its leader'.

To this element is added another which is totally new, the reference to the Pope: 'to serve the Lord alone and his Vicar on earth'. 'Christ and his Vicar' are to be taken together; it is not a question of two different kinds of service, but of one. 'Vicar' means a person who stands in the place of another. The Pope acts in the name of Christ; he communicates to the Society the will of Christ. 'In his voice', wrote Ignatius to the Bishop of Calahorra, 'is echoed not earth but heaven'. Service of the Lord alone and of his Vicar is one and the same, as the Formula itself has it, 'to put on God's armour in loyal obedience to the Roman Pontiff'.

At the same time, it is obvious enough that obedience in the Society is in a sense two-dimensional. There is the obedience which looks towards 'mission', and another which concerns the internal organization of the body of the Company, its preservation

and its growth. In other words, there is an obedience whose obligation derives from the fourth vow, and another which binds in virtue of the third vow. (The seventh part of the Constitutions deal with the first; the sixth part — first chapter — deals with the second.) To which kind of obedience does the phrase 'to serve the Lord alone and his Vicar . . .' belong? I believe that it refers to both kinds. The service of Christ to which the Society is dedicated is total and unconditioned; and this service is identified with the service of his Vicar. Moreover, in the Constitutions the Pope is presented as the main source of both kinds of obedience. In what concerns 'mission', the Superior General, it is true, has 'complete authority': but 'only in accord with the power granted him by the Sovereign Pontiff' and 'in his name': that is, as his delegate. It is this that gives prestige and dignity to every and any mission on which the General can send a man, 'either personally or through his subjects'. All of which is easy enough to understand. What is surprising is that, at a time when it was not commonly accepted that religious are bound to obey the Pope by virtue of the normal vow of obedience, Ignatius was exhorting us, in the sixth part of the Constitutions, to apply 'all our powers to the virtue of obedience, first of all to the Sovereign Pontiff and then to the superior of the Society'. The ignatian teaching on obedience is a consequence of this: an obedience which belongs to all situations in which it can be applied with love; an obedience which listens to the voice of the Superior 'as though it came from Christ our Lord'; an obedience perfected in action, in the will and in the understanding; 'with a deal of patience, spiritual joy and perseverance'; one which 'is blind, in that it repudiates all personal opinions and judgements which stand in opposition to it'; in fine, an obedience which means total availability, an instrument in the hands of the Superior, which bears some resemblance to that of a dead man, or of an old man's stick. It is clear that, in the mind of Ignatius, all this applies first of all and in a special way to obedience to the Pope. This attitude of loving obedience is on a footing with Ignatius's alacrity in repudiating all that smacked of the least opposition to or criticism of the Vicar of Christ.

SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

In the two ignatian churches in Rome, the *Gesù* and *St Ignatius*, are two incomparable masterpieces which succeed in communicating, in the medium of the plastic arts, two aspects of our founder's

spirituality. In the *Gesù*, the statue of the Saint, above his tomb, shows us Ignatius the priest, radiating forth all the energy of the Society across time and space. In another dimension, the image of Ignatius which presides over the marvellous vistas of Brother Pozzo,¹⁷ is that of Loyola the mystic of the river Cardoner and of La Storta.¹⁸ We have need of both, since each complements the other, if we are to have 'the sense of the Church' which our Founder wanted for us.

Ignatius knew himself for a child of Mother Church from his time at Manresa; but the development of his 'sense of the Church' is parallel to the growth in his priestly formation. The one is conditioned by the other and is expanded to its furthest reaches by his mystical experience. At Manresa, he was overwhelmed by an extraordinary grace 'from on high', which made of him 'a new soldier of Christ and a man of the Church'.¹⁹ Nadal writes: 'at this time (sc. of the vision of the Cardoner, at Manresa), the Lord gave him an intimate knowledge of and a profound feeling for the divine mysteries and the Church'.²⁰ Hugo Rahner expresses it succinctly: 'the mystical graces of Manresa made Inigo the pilgrim and penitent into Ignatius the man of the Church'.²¹

Prior to this experience, Ignatius had never thought to put any limit to his penitential practices. One result of it, was that he toned down his austerities. Once he had become a man of the Church, he never allowed himself to go beyond what he considered reasonable. He writes on this point to Teresa Rejadell in 1536: 'It often happens that our Lord influences our spirit and compels it to action . . . but our consciousness of this leads us inevitably into a conformity with the commandments and precepts of the Church'.²² We find the reason for this stated in the Exercises: 'between Christ our Lord the Bridegroom, and the Church his bride, there is one and the same Spirit who guides and directs us for the good of our souls. In fact, it is the same Spirit, the Lord who gave us the ten commandments, who also directs and guides our holy Mother the Church'.²³ The

¹⁷ Brother Antonio Pozzo, who is acknowledged as a master of baroque fresco and perspective, became a Jesuit brother in 1665. There is a biographical note and a photographic reproduction of his painted ceiling in the Church of St Ignatius in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 11, pp 657-58.

¹⁸ For the vision at the Cardoner, see *Autobiographie*, 30-31, pp 70-72.

¹⁹ Rahner, Hugo: *St Ignace de Loyola et la genèse des Exercices* (Toulouse, 1948), p 64.

²⁰ From a sermon of Nadal at Salamanca in 1554, cited by Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp 70-71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 73.

²² Letter of 18 June. Cf *Obras completas de San Ignacio Loyola* (Madrid, 1963), p 627.

²³ Exx 365.

distance between a fully mature thinking and action was always very short for Ignatius; so that his 'thinking with the Church' would soon translate itself into a practical and apostolic reality — his celebrated rules for 'having the right feeling for the Church': or, still more exactly, for 'living in the authentic spirit of the Church'.²⁴

'To serve the Lord alone and his Vicar on earth': we have said that the phrase expresses not two different kinds of service, but rather the single service of Christ whose will is communicated through his Vicar. The expression may not be sufficiently clear. Polanco had noticed that it could be understood in a narrow sense: namely, that only the Pope is served by the Society, which might be interpreted as a form of flattery.²⁵ So it came about that a more perfect form was discovered, one which would avoid all ambiguity: 'to serve the Lord alone and his bride the Church, under the Roman Pontiff, Christ's Vicar on earth'. The service of the Church finds explicit mention here: but it is the service which belongs to her in her existence as Christ's bride. Thus the idea of the single service of Christ is always retained; for the union of love between Christ and his bride is so intimate that patristic tradition does not hesitate to speak of a single mystical person, the 'whole Christ' of St Augustine. 'The bridegroom is the head of his bride', says St Paul, 'as Christ is the head of the Church'.²⁶ It is Christ, who, as head of his bride the Church, lives and acts in her: he makes her action visible by the supreme and universal ministry of his Vicar the Pope, and by the subordinate ministry of bishops and priests. It is Christ's Vicar to whom the care of the universal Church has been confided: 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep'.²⁷ So it was that Ignatius and his companions decided to put themselves at the disposition of the Sovereign Pontiff, since he is the universal Lord of Christ's harvest, and, as such, 'has a most extensive knowledge of what will benefit christianity as a whole'. At the same time, the explicit mention of service of the Church, the bride of Christ, is a reminder that the universal Church is incarnated in the particular Churches, in many different exterior forms and appearances. So the Society serves Christ in particular Churches as well, by being at the disposition of the universal Pastor.

²⁴ Exx 352-70.

²⁵ Fr Polanco became Ignatius's secretary in 1547 and assisted him in the writing of the Constitutions. Cf de Guibert, *op. cit.*, pp 144-45.

²⁶ Eph 5, 23.

²⁷ Jn 21, 15-17.

Having the true sense of the Church

Ignatius reveals to us his vision of the Church in his celebrated rules 'for acquiring the right feeling which we ought to have in the Church militant'. He himself added them as an appendix to the book of the Exercises. Clearly, he had no intention of offering a speculative treatise or theoretical treatment of this subject. His purpose was, as always, practical and apostolic. He wished to give clear directives to those who have made the Exercises, to help them in discovering the right path among a welter of ideas which might bring disquiet to their spirit. At the same time, he reveals his personal experience, what he had felt in himself under the influence of extraordinary graces, as well as his ordinary experience, on the subject of the Church, and the true christian attitude towards her. This is why the rules have a permanent value: they reflect his mystical experience, which transcends the differences of time and circumstances. But this is not the sole reason for their topicality. It is true that the historical context in which Ignatius composed them differs very considerably from our own. The ideas and ideologies which were current in the sixteenth century and made themselves present to the spirit of Ignatius are not exactly the deviations and currents of thought of the last decades of the twentieth century. However, there are many ways — revolutionary changes, reactions, analyses, reconstructions, yearnings, aspirations — in which his world was not all that different from our own. In any case, the method followed by Ignatius did not lend itself to polemics. It was not his intention to refute error. He was addressing himself simply to Catholics, to show them a way of thinking and acting with rectitude, without leaving themselves at the mercy of influences in which errors are rooted. The tendencies are themselves in turn rooted in human nature. They are the same in every generation, though they may have different guises.

Ignatius's vision of the Church is supernatural. During his mystical experiences he succeeded in discerning the mystery of the Church, which would become, centuries later, one of the principal teachings of the Second Vatican Council. He presents the Church first of all as the bride of Christ, which has her life and direction from the Spirit of Christ. The fundamental disposition of the Christian is derived from this understanding. He sees her also as virgin and mother, who 'brings forth to new and immortal life the children she has conceived by the Holy Spirit and who are born of God'.²⁸ The

²⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 64. Cf H. de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Eglise* (3^e éd. Paris, 1954), pp 279ff.

expression 'our holy Mother the Church' was one most often on the lips of Ignatius. Nonetheless, since his purpose is essentially practical and apostolic, the phrase, for him, refers, not to the Church in glory, the heavenly Jerusalem, but the Church militant, the Church on pilgrimage, here below; nor indeed is it restricted to the spiritual or charismatic aspect, but to the Church as a visible and institutional reality. So it is that he speaks over and again of the hierarchical Church.

Finally, the Church which Ignatius is looking at is neither the ideal, nor the primitive community at Jerusalem: it is the Church as she had developed in history, the Church of his own time, of 'the stations', of indulgences, of all those candles; and, we might add, the Church before Trent, with all the abuses, with an ignorant clergy, with bishops living outside their dioceses, the Church of worldly popes and cardinals.

It is within this Church, militant, hierarchical, actual, that we are to have, at the request of Ignatius, 'a right feeling', a right and orthodox attitude. It has been noted, and rightly, that the words *sentido* and *sentir* are, in the ignatian vocabulary, very delicately nuanced. It is not a question of a purely intellectual knowledge, but of 'sense and sensibility', which is nourished 'from within' the Church: the sensibility of the member of Christ's body who lives the divine life of the Church, and in harmony with her. This 'sense of the faith' is a gift which is breathed into the christian spirit by the Spirit of God. This is why one meets with it not infrequently, at a very deep level, in simple and unlettered folk. One might well ask, then, if this 'true sense' is indeed a divine gift, what need there is for rules or criteria. The answer is to be found in the words of Ignatius himself, in another context: 'We can learn this only through the anointing of the Holy Spirit . . . but there are counsels opening the way to it which help to put us in the right disposition for that which divine grace must produce'.²⁹

The first rule or counsel shows us the fundamental attitude of the Christian with regard to the Church, in all that concerns doctrine and one's personal attitude towards it: 'we ought to keep our minds and hearts attuned and ready to be obedient in all things to the true bride of Christ our Lord, and to leave aside our private judgment'.³⁰ Ignatius goes so far as to say that if we are to keep

²⁹ *Constitutions IV*, 8, [414]. Cf Ganss, p 204.

³⁰ 1st Rule, Exx 353.

ourselves in the truth with all certainty, we ought to believe that what we see as white is really black, 'if the hierarchical Church should declare it to be so'.³¹ And this, not because of external arguments which could be invoked in support of the magisterium, but because 'we believe that between Christ our Lord the bridegroom, and the Church his bride, there is one and the same Spirit which guides and governs us for the salvation of our souls'.³² In fact, the same Spirit who inspires holy scripture is the one who guides and governs the Church. Besides, as Ignatius wrote to the Emperor of Ethiopia, 'it is a special grace to be united to the Mystical Body of the Catholic Church, enlivened and guided as she is by the Holy Spirit who, as the evangelist says, teaches all truth; and it is a great gift to be illumined by the light of the teaching and to be established on the firm foundation of the Church; for, as Paul tells Timothy, she is the house of God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. To her our Lord promised his personal assistance, when he said, I am with you all days even to the end of the ages'.³³

This unconditional attachment to the Church, the bride of Christ, and to her decisions, constitutes the spirit of these ignatian rules — a spirit which the 32nd General Congregation bids us 'keep intact'. It also exhorts us to apply these rules 'with conviction in the changed circumstances of our own time'.³⁴ The best way of implementing this desire of the Congregation would seem to lie in striving to be faithful to the directives suggested by or implied in the rules, whilst abstracting from the historical circumstances of Ignatius's own time.

One persistent tendency in the Church across the pages of her history, from the old Gnostics down to the 'reformers' of our own age, is to seek the perfection of true christian life whilst remaining outside or even in opposition to Christ's Church: living, that is, on the fringes of ecclesial teaching and institutions. St Ignatius frees us from that illusion. The interior movement of grace could never be contrary to the dispositions of the hierarchical, institutional Church; for the Spirit which governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls is the same Spirit which enlivens and directs the Church, Christ's bride. Ignatius had already given expression to this idea,

³¹ There is probably an allusion to Erasmus here. Cf G. Ganss, 'Thinking with the Church', in *Supplement to the Way*, 20 (Autumn, 1973), pp 74ff.

³² 13th Rule, Exx 365.

³³ To Claudio the Negus of Ethiopia, 23 February 1555. Cf *Obras completas* . . . p 906.

³⁴ Decree 11, 'On the union of minds and hearts', 33. Cf *Supplement to the Way*, 29/30 (Spring, 1977), p 67.

and more clearly perhaps, in his rules for making a choice: 'All the matters on which we wish to make a choice must . . . be on the side of our holy Mother, the hierarchical Church . . . and not in opposition to her'.³⁵ We find the same teaching in his letters. For example, in writing to Francis Borgia, he tells him that one should receive the gifts of divine consolation 'with humility and reverence for our holy Mother the Church'.³⁶

Another deviation, which is perhaps simply a variant of those we have been examining, is one which sighs for a purely inner and invisible Church, stripped of all external signs and juridical structures. In the sixteenth century, such tendencies were identified with the humanist rationalism of Erasmus. Today, this finds a new incarnation in certain secularist movements which want to abolish every outward vestige of the religious or sacred; they would spare neither the consecrated life nor the sacred Liturgy. Ignatius on the contrary teaches us to praise and to hold in great esteem what this tendency would condemn or minimize, not simply in all that has to do with ecclesiastical institutions and the fundamental manifestations of the christian life — such as the reception of the Sacraments, participation in the eucharistic sacrifice, the consecration of religious and so on,³⁷ but whatever belongs to the external forms of popular devotion, as approved and blessed by the Church.³⁸

It is characteristic of pseudo-reformers of every age to pit themselves publicly against the behaviour of superiors, 'secular or spiritual', and against their decrees or decisions, without sparing the bishops or even the Pope himself. Ignatius is well aware that, from time to time, the behaviour and the decrees of superiors are hardly worthy of praise. But he notes that to criticize and condemn them in the presence of ordinary people can only give rise to murmuring and scandal. The effective and legitimate way to avoid such evils is to speak to those who can remedy bad conduct or can correct whatever is defective in the dispositions of superiors.³⁹ St Ignatius himself was a model for this procedure. Few people have laboured as effectively as did he for the catholic reform, 'in the head and the members'. We would search in vain through his vast correspondence to find a single word of criticism about superiors.

³⁵ Exx 170.

³⁶ 20 September 1548: *Obras completas*, p 714.

³⁷ Rules 2 and 5, Exx 354, 357.

³⁸ Rules 6 to 8, Exx 358-60.

³⁹ Rule 10, Exx 362.

Not to linger overmuch on this subject, let us mention one last deviation. When it concerns itself with the antinomies in christianity, the human spirit, out of its limitations, tends to extol in unilateral fashion one of two extremes, and to leave the other in the shadow, if it does not exclude it altogether. Certain Catholics of the sixteenth century, under the influence of Lutheranism, were pleased to exaggerate the importance of faith and grace to the detriment of works and human liberty, and to speak of predestination in such a way that all practice of virtue appeared to be of no account. The modern anthropocentric tendencies work in the opposite way. They put the emphasis exclusively on freedom, effort, psychic dispositions and human rights. They leave out of account the priority of God's action, if they do not deny it altogether, and our essential dependence on him. The teaching of Ignatius here reveals a twofold dimension. First he puts us on our guard against letting ourselves be seduced by these partial presentations of catholic doctrine. We need to bring out the whole truth, by stressing that aspect which we would rather pass over in silence. Next he recommends prudence in the way of dealing publicly with these problems. There are doctrines which can be discussed with those who are competent. If, on the other hand, we discuss them indiscreetly with ordinary folk, we can easily lead them into error.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

The second Vatican Council has given us certain landmarks which can help religious on the road to that renewal best suited to our times. They are the following of Jesus Christ, the spirit of the founder, participation in the life of the Church, attention to conditions in the world about us, interior spiritual renewal. It would appear that the phrases from the Formula of the Institute considered here furnish us in brief with an excellent means of implementing the Council's criteria.

In a sentence, our Founder has given expression to the kernel of his spirit, the 'principle and foundation-stone' of the Society. It summarizes the proper nature of our Institute: to serve Christ alone in the apostolate, to follow in his steps and under his banner, to spread his divine teaching, anywhere in the world. This apostolic service of Christ grafts us onto the life of the Church whom we also serve as the bride of Christ and as his body, his *Plerōma*. And all

⁴⁰ Rules 12 to 18, Exx 364-70.

this in loyal obedience to the Vicar of Christ who sends us in his name wherever, in his knowledge as universal Shepherd, our ministry will prove more useful for God's glory and the spiritual good of our neighbour in the circumstances of today's world. Finally, to live this spirit of our Founder with sincerity and wholeheartedness is the best means to a spiritual renewal which will, in its turn, give fresh life to the whole body of the Society and all its apostolic activity.

It is hardly possible to end these reflections without asking ourselves the following question: How are we to interpret, in this age of ours, in this fragment of eternity which is given to us to live out our lives with all its special circumstances, the words of Ignatius which we have been considering — 'to serve the Lord and the Church his bride, under the Roman Pontiff, Christ's Vicar on earth'? This was the question which the 32nd General Congregation set itself; it remains to be asked and answered for ever, as Jesuits strive to translate into action the intuition and charism of Ignatius, as it is crystallized in the Formula of the Institute and in the Constitutions. In both these texts, he speaks of certain activities and ministries from his personal experience. Ignatius draws out those criteria and principles which are needed to maintain the Society on its path to the greater glory of God and salvation of souls. He also assures his Society of a lasting dynamism — the breath of the Spirit, which drives it along in a constant search, without binding itself to any one situation or concrete form, so that it is always measuring what is being done against what might be or should be done. Nothing is more foreign to the ignatian *magis* — an idea chiefly associated with that of service — than to resign oneself to a paralysing supineness or to a freezing and routine uniformity over long years, which would make the Society a museum-piece, no matter how beautiful, or an *incunabulum* worthy of decorating an antiquarian's library. In order to maintain ourselves in this state of constant creativity which the ignatian intuition permits or rather imposes, we must return to the principle and foundation-stone, the idea of service: the source of incalculable possibilities which has not only determined our personal vocation and even now directs our apostolate, but has given rise to the very structures of the Society.⁴¹

⁴¹ The substance of a paper given to mark the end of a seminar on ignatian spirituality, organized in Rome last year by the Centre of Ignatian Spirituality. It is translated and published with permission.