

THE 'HISTORY' IN IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION

From the Last Supper to the Garden

Peter Edmonds

WHEN CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS suggest a gospel passage for prayer, they normally just mention it, and perhaps point up a few details. This practice follows Ignatius' own advice: the one giving the Exercises is to 'run over the salient points with only brief or summary explanations'. The hope is that the one making the Exercises will go over this history and reflect on it personally, so as to come independently 'upon things which throw further light on it or which more fully bring home its meaning' (Exx 2).

Such a practice takes the biblical passage as what Ignatius calls a 'foundation'—something just given. If, however, we are aware of what modern scholarship has discovered about the Gospels, we can develop a richer, more subtle understanding of what is happening. For the gospel narratives are not just records and chronicles. Behind each of them, rather, lies a process akin to what Ignatius hopes anyone making his Exercises will go through. As each of the evangelists wrote their account, they contributed the fruits of their own reflections, their own insights.¹ What we have, therefore, are not simply the facts about Jesus, but rather those facts as imaginatively presented by various early Christians. John's Jesus had promised that 'the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you' (John 14:26).

Many of the episodes that we take for prayer are found in two or more of the Gospels. Ignatius himself, in common with devotional tradition more generally, tends to bring together elements from the

¹ See the teaching of Vatican II in *Dei verbum*, n.19: 'the apostles, after the Lord's ascension, passed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but—having learned by experiencing the glorious events of Christ and by enlightenment from the Spirit of truth—with the fuller insight which they now possessed'.

different accounts indiscriminately. But it is neither necessary, nor even desirable, for us always to follow this practice. Instead, we can take *each* of the gospel texts individually, as models for the kind of process that Ignatius is trying to foster in the retreatant.

In this article, I shall try to illustrate this idea by taking an example: Ignatius' contemplation 'From the Last Supper to the Garden', which he proposes as the second exercise for the first day of the Third Week (Exx 201-203). Each of the gospel narratives, in its choice of details and emphases, reflects the 'light' thrown on the history as particular early Christians pondered the traditions they inherited. In what follows, we will go through the four gospel accounts in turn, and then revisit Ignatius' own presentation (Exx 201). Modern biblical awareness enables us to develop a much richer account than Ignatius' own of the fruit that people might seek today from these accounts, and of what might happen as they ask, in best Ignatian fashion, for what they want (Exx 193).

The 'History' According to Mark

Mark's version of the events from the Supper to the Garden forms the beginning of his passion story. It takes up 25 verses, which makes it about 4% of the whole Gospel.² The passage is clearly an important one.

Mark's narrative falls into three sections. Before recounting Jesus' *prayer* in Gethsemane and his subsequent *arrest*, Mark gives an account of the *journey* from the upper room:

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered". But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.'

Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not'. Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times'. But he said vehemently, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you'. And all of them said the same. (14:26-31)

² The whole amounts to 661 verses.

When reflecting on this passage, we may join the disciples in singing the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 121-134), which are short and attractive Psalms.

Before arriving at Gethsemane, Jesus speaks prophetically to Peter and his disciples about their imminent apostasy, and about his own resurrection, after which he will go before them into Galilee; he quotes the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 13:7). When later some say to Jesus, 'Prophecy!' (Mark 14:65), the reader will perceive the irony, and realise that Peter's denials were a fulfilment of his prophecy. Here already we can pray for a deeper commitment to the person of Jesus, a prophet concerned for the disciples who so markedly fail to understand him. We may also pray for deliverance from the complacency and self-trust which so deceived the disciples.

Mark's account of the *prayer* of Jesus is among the most carefully crafted passages of his Gospel:

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray'. He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake'.

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want'.

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.

He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.' (14:32-42)

Here Jesus dominates; he is the subject of every sentence. The one who calmed storms, cast out demons, cured the sick, raised the dead (Mark 4:34-5:43) was 'greatly distressed and troubled', like the

Psalmist whose soul was cast down (Psalm 42:6). Translators struggle with these words. Vincent Taylor quotes the German scholar, Ernst Lohmeyer:

The Greek words depict the utmost degree of unbounded horror and suffering The intensity of the anguish drives him from the disciples to seek peace before the face of his Father.³

One recalls the intensity of Ignatius' own expression (Exx 203)—'shatteredness with Christ shattered' (*quebranto con Cristo quebrantado*).

Mark has already shown Jesus at prayer at times of crisis: after his day of activity in Capernaum (1:35), and after his feeding of the multitudes (6:46). Now we hear the words of his prayer. He addresses God as Father, and speaks of the hour and of the cup. He struggles between his own will and the will of God, about which he had taught with such authority: 'whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (3:35). He experiences the conflict between spirit and

flesh. He prays this prayer three times, to a God who seemingly remains deaf. We hear echoes of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13); this ordeal in Gethsemane can fill us with a new sense of its meaning.

And yet Jesus has come through. His has been the experience of the Psalmist: 'Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God' (Psalm 42:11). He has the last word, 'Rise, let us be going'. Mark's vision is akin to what we find in the Letter to the Hebrews: 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications



³ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1969 [1952]), 552.

... and he was heard for his reverent submission' (5:7). In Hebrews, there is a clear message for ourselves as well:

... we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (4:15-16)

The sleeping and silent disciples play an integral part in the narrative. Their story in Mark has been almost as long as the story of Jesus. Though they have been edifying in their response to their call (1:16-20; 3:13-19) and in their enthusiasm for mission (6:7-13,30), they have more often than not failed. Jesus has lamented their blindness, deafness and hardness of heart (8:14-21). Here in Gethsemane they sleep, ignoring Jesus' repeated pleas for watchfulness and prayer. The final words of his farewell discourse, 'What I say to you I say to all: keep awake' (13:37), have fallen on deaf ears.

Then we have Mark's narrative of the *arrest*:

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard'. So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.'

All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked. (14:43-52)

Now Jesus recedes into the background. Judas arrives and takes the initiative. For three verses it is he who is the subject of the verbs. He speaks and Jesus is silent. Shamefully, Judas kisses Jesus. Then violence takes over. Jesus is seized and the ear of the high priest's servant is cut off. Finally Jesus does speak, and his words sum up the situation: they



The Arrest of Jesus by Ugolino di Nerio (1487-1564)

were treating the one who had been their teacher day after day as a bandit.

The only explanation suggested for this shame and violence is the fulfilment of scripture. Previously Jesus had quoted the verse in Zechariah about the striking of the shepherd and the scattering of the sheep (Zechariah 13:7). But the context is one of divine promise: those who come through the trial will find God near. Similarly, after the bleakness of the crucifixion as Mark recounts it, there are suggestive, if ambiguous, hints of God's sustaining presence: the tearing of the temple veil opening up the holy of holies (15:38); the confession of the centurion (15:39); the empty tomb, with the young man proclaiming that the risen Jesus has gone on before the disciples to Galilee (16:7).

Mark does not name any of the disciples, and indeed their failure to behave like disciples leads him to deprive them even of that title. Doubtless one of them struck the ear of the high priest's slave; certainly all of them fled. The mysterious young man, who joins them naked in their flight, symbolizes the nakedness of their discipleship. They model the Ignatian 'grief, feeling and confusion' (Exx 193).

Mark's picture is a bleak one. Judas is still alive and well in our world, and so is Satan. Jesus meets with silence from God, but continues forward, in an austere isolation beyond anyone's

comprehension. And yet, for all the sense of challenge and reproach to their infidelity, the disciples are promised a meeting with Jesus in Galilee once he is raised up (14:28; 16:7). For all the enormity of our sin, God can cope with it.

The 'History' According to Matthew

A decade or so later, Matthew brought out a revision of Mark's Gospel. He clarified and compressed narrative material, while elevating the person of Jesus and expanding his words. He may well have been seeking to provide a resource for catechists and teachers, offering explanations for the meaning of events. He may also have been in conflict with the Pharisees of his own time, and may therefore have sought to give justifications for Jesus' words and actions in terms of Jewish law.

Matthew maintains the three-part narrative structure developed by Mark. He makes few changes to Mark's account of the *journey*, while in the *prayer* scene, he merely describes the distress of Jesus in gentler language and gives a fuller version of his prayer. It is in the account of the *arrest*, and in particular after the high priest's servant loses his ear, that we find some characteristic additions from Matthew:

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. *Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?'* (26:50b-54)

Whereas Mark presents the scandal of Jesus' arrest and suffering starkly, with only muted hints about the fulfilment of Scripture, Matthew's Jesus is more overt on that point, and gives us further explanations. 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword'—Jesus was living out what he had taught in the Sermon on the Mount about non-resistance (5:39). 'Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father?'—we recall Jesus' striking claim about his unique identity, 'No one knows the Father except the Son' (11:27).

The changes Matthew makes are relatively small, but they alter the tone of the whole episode. The Jesus who suffers remains the great

teacher. If we pray with this narrative, the stress is not, as in Mark, on the sheer inadequacy of the disciples when set against the mystery of Jesus, but rather on the moral and spiritual teaching that Jesus exemplifies. Jesus had warned in his Parable chapter, 'When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches it away' (13:19). Matthew makes this less likely. Someone praying the Third Week through his Gospel will be encouraged to see Christ's grief and anguish as the consequence of the new way of life that Christ has taught. The Third Week brings out what is meant by 'the true doctrine of Christ our Lord' (Exx 164).

The 'History' According to Luke

Though Luke too retains the structure of journey, prayer and arrest, he reduces the *journey* to a sentence: 'He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him' (22:39). His account of the *prayer*, however, is notably different from what we find in Mark and Matthew:

When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial'.

Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done'. Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' (22:40-46)

Here all the disciples are present; Jesus prays only once, and his prayer is answered. The narrative forms a kind of triptych: Jesus' own prayer comes between two occasions when he encourages the disciples to pray not 'to come into the time of trial', which in Luke means to lose faith and apostasize.⁴ The disciples' sleep is not a matter of reproach, arising

⁴ See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1441, 906-907.



The Agony in the Garden by El Greco (1541-1614)

from their not knowing what to say—it is presented as a sign of grief, a grief which Jesus consoles rather than rebukes. Jesus himself prays about the cup, about what he wants and about what the Father wants. Prayer is a major theme of Luke's Gospel. The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (11:1); his answer was not only the Lord's prayer (11:2-4), but his own habit of prayer at all the major turning points of his life. This prayer on the Mount of Olives is part of the lesson.

Though not all the manuscripts of Luke contain the relevant verses, Luke's Jesus has his prayer answered by the Father. The angel strengthens Jesus in his agony and in his subsequent sweating of blood. Just as Jesus strengthened Simon (22:31), so the angel strengthens Jesus. The word *agonia* in Greek is related to *agon*, which means a contest. Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews compare the Christian life to a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1). As Jesus enters into his passion, he is like an athlete at the beginning of a race. He is tense,

worried and excited. The angel enables him to face up to what lies ahead, as Luke's subsequent portrayal of Jesus in his passion testifies.

For Luke, it is not Judas but Jesus who is the dominating figure in the *arrest* story:

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?'

When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!' (22:47-53)

Jesus here has the initiative; the divinity does not, despite what Ignatius says, hide itself (Exx 196). It is Jesus who speaks first in the Judas scene, addressing him by name, and making a final personal appeal to him. He heals the ear of the servant, continuing the healing mission of his ministry. Finally he addresses the 'high priests and the officers of the temple and the elders', reproaching them for their actions but excusing them because it was their 'hour and the power of darkness', just as he will later ask the Father to forgive his executioners because they do not know what they are doing (23:34). Luke is also kind about the disciples; he does not refer to their flight. They do their best to protect Jesus by drawing their swords, and only desist at his word. Jesus had prayed for them (22:32).

Whereas Mark's disciples are thrown into shame and confusion before a Jesus who is beyond their grasp, Luke's disciples are comforted and consoled in their grief (22:45) by a Jesus who is himself comforted by God. Jesus will die saying, 'into your hands I commend my spirit' (23:46). The grace expressed in Luke's account is a consolation that encourages us to entrust to God a situation of inevitable horror and death. A Third Week prayed in a Lukan style may start with grief, tears and pain (Exx 203). But the grief will be a grief *with Christ*. As such, it may well change into something more serene.

The 'History' According to John

John does not follow Mark's three-part narrative. The *prayer* takes place before the Last Supper. This is far more confident; there is no sense of Jesus renouncing his own will; and the prayer is publicly answered:

'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour?" No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'. (12:27-28)

As in Luke, the *journey* occupies a single verse (18:1);⁵ but here alone we are told that the destination is a garden, with obvious echoes of Paradise (Genesis 2-3). It is with the *arrest* that John rejoins the structure of the other Gospels, but his account differs notably from theirs:

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'Whom are you looking for?' They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus replied, 'I AM'. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I AM', they stepped back and fell to the ground.

Again he asked them, 'Whom are you looking for?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus answered, 'I told you that I AM he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.' This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me'.

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?' So the

⁵ 'After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.' The reference to the Kidron valley may echo the account of David's flight from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:23).



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soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. (18:2-12)

Roman soldiers take part in the events; their lanterns and torches stand in ironic contrast to the 'light of the world' (8:12) whom they are arresting. Jesus claims for himself the holy name 'I AM' (Exodus 3:14), and the whole arresting posse falls down. As a good shepherd (10:1-18), Jesus arranges for the safe departure of his disciples. He speaks of his willingness to drink of the cup which the Father had given him. Jesus has the initiative throughout; he gives permission for his own arrest.

The arrest is a theophany, the beginning of Jesus' glorification. It may seem as though Jesus is the victim of a sordid conspiracy, but the truth is different. John presents the passion as a narrative to be read on two levels. Those who are in the know see the cruel events as the exaltation of the Son of Man, who draws all people to himself.

If we pray the Third Week in a Johannine way, we will indeed be aware of the divine nature going into hiding, and of Christ allowing himself 'in his sacred human nature to suffer most cruelly' (Exx 196), but our prayer will be centred on this hidden divinity. And we may, paradoxically, experience the suffering of the passion as a source of triumphant, radiant consolation. It is in this spirit that we will 'believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God', and 'through believing ...

have life in his name' (20:31). We will identify with the disciples whom Jesus protects in the moment of danger; we too will receive the gifts that Christ had asked the Father to send them—'sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth' (17:17). If we pray the passion in this way, it will help us come to know how we are loved by Christ, just as the Father loved him (17:20-26).

The 'History' According to Ignatius

Ignatius' own 'history' of these events (Exx 201) is much shorter, and lacks the detail of the gospel accounts. He too follows Mark's structure, and begins with the *journey*:

The first prelude is the history. Here it will be how Christ our Lord with his eleven disciples came down from Mount Sion, where the supper had been taken, to the valley of Josaphat; here he left eight of them in a place in the valley and the other three in a part of the garden.

No evangelist gives Jesus the title 'Christ our Lord'. It represents Ignatius' own understanding of Jesus, already met with in the meditations of the Second Week (Exx 130). Mount Sion is not found in the Gospels, nor is the valley of Josaphat. It is only Mark and Matthew who mention that three disciples were separated from the rest; it is only John who speaks of a garden.

Ignatius' account of the *prayer* is much briefer:

And putting himself in prayer, his sweat became like drops of blood. He then prayed three times to the Father and awakened his disciples.

Ignatius here is closer to the Gospels, but he leaves out significant details, and smoothes over the differences between the four accounts. The account of the *arrest* is similarly unnuanced and uncritical:

Next, at his voice, his enemies fell to the ground, and Judas gave him the kiss of peace; St Peter cut off the ear of Malchus and Christ put it back in place. He was arrested as a criminal, and they led him down into the valley and up the slope to the house of Annas.

There is no mention here of the 'I AM' before the enemies of Jesus fall to the ground, or of how each synoptic Gospel begins its account with the kiss of Judas. All four Gospels mention the ear, but only John includes the names of those involved, namely Peter and Malchus, and only Luke tells us that Jesus restored it. The valley and the slope are Ignatius' own contribution, perhaps drawing on medieval tradition. It is only John who informs us that Jesus was taken to Annas.

We could be critical of Ignatius for failing to distinguish the four gospel accounts in his 'history', for mixing up details from each, and for adding matter of his own. Compared with the evangelists, he gives so little material for the retreatant to carry out his programme of considering the persons, their words and their actions. He is unappreciative of Irenaeus' teaching that the foundation of our faith is the 'fourfold gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John'.⁶ He makes no attempt to approach the Gospels along the lines illustrated above.

But a less critical, and less anachronistic, reading of Ignatius' text is also possible. Ignatius is not really committed to his history as such, and indeed he gives an alternative, expanded one in the 'Mysteries of the Life of Jesus' later (Exx 290). He is simply giving what he takes to be a conventional account, in the hope that the retreatant will build something personal on the 'foundation' that he gives. He wants to keep his own imagination out of the reckoning, and to allow full scope to the retreatant's, because this will prove much more effective than anything that he can suggest. The retreatant has to do what the evangelists did, and produce their own story of the events from the Last Supper to the Garden. Each account is special and so will that of the retreatant be, nourished by 'the inner feeling and relish of things' (Exx 2).

What, then, are we to do in practice? Perhaps we can name three possibilities.

- If we find the vision of one evangelist particularly suggestive, we can keep to just his account. With Mark we can enter into the desolation of Jesus in prayer, and pray for the quality of watchfulness which he seeks in his

**Ignatius
is simply
being
conventional**

⁶ *Dei verbum*, n. 18, quoting Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.21.3.

disciples. With Matthew we can ponder the words of explanation that Jesus gives his disciples. With Luke we can consider the human qualities of Jesus displayed in his personal relationships, and enter into a deeper sense of trust in God's providence. With John we can contemplate the hidden majesty of God's self-revelation amid the deepest pain. Perhaps indeed we can stay with one evangelist throughout the whole process of our Exercises.

- There is no reason, even given what we learn from biblical scholarship, why we cannot follow Ignatius' example and throw together details from each of the Gospels. There is abundant precedent for such an approach in Christian devotional tradition. The Stations of the Cross do this. Authors who write books on the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus continue to do it, even though these sayings come from different Gospels.
- Alternatively, we may, in the light of our knowledge, draw eclectically on the four accounts, and develop our own response, our own narrative, just as the evangelists themselves did.⁷ We may trust in the Spirit to be with us in the process. We each respond to these mysteries in our own way and according to our own circumstances and needs.

Whatever path we take, this history is to lead into prayer for a particular grace, for what we desire. Ignatius names the desire vividly:

... grief with Christ in grief, to be broken with Christ broken, tears and interior suffering on account of the great suffering that Christ endured for me. (Exx 203)

Vatican II speaks of 'the food of the Scriptures' as 'enlightening minds, strengthening wills and firing hearts with the love of God'.⁸ Perhaps the

⁷ See the opening verses of Luke: 'Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.' (Luke 1: 1-4)

⁸ *Dei verbum*, n. 23.

experiences of colloquy, reflection and repetition will lead us to formulate the desire in our own way. We really do not know where our contemplation may take us. The texts we inherit from the earliest Christians reflect their responses to the traditions about Jesus. As we continue to read, to ponder and to contemplate, there is further light still to dawn.

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