

AN IGNATIAN PATH TO GRATITUDE

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IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA FELT STRONGLY that gratitude should be the basic response to God's abounding love. Ingratitude, he once wrote, 'is the most abominable of all sins, and it is to be detested in the sight of the Creator and Lord by all of God's creatures for it is the forgetting of the graces, benefits and blessings received'.¹ I would like to illustrate here how Ignatius' sixteenth-century classic, the *Spiritual Exercises*, can deepen our gratitude and our love of a good and giving God by expanding our awareness of how richly we have been blessed. I will use the story of a contemporary follower of Ignatian spirituality, the late William C. Spohn, to show concretely how the Exercises can create an attitude of gratitude in us as we face the challenges of living with faith and dying with hope.

Ignatian spirituality understands gratitude as more than a transient feeling; it is an abiding vision that recognises the gift-nature of everything. Bill Spohn, who was a moral theologian and a good friend, captured this understanding when he spoke of gratitude as 'the echo of grace'.² Like an echo, gratitude reverberates in our hearts when the gratuity of everything dawns on us. Bill's articulation of this insight into gratitude is particularly poignant in its timing. In Holy Week of 2004, while consulting for the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis, he suffered seizures that scrambled his speech and landed him in hospital. This sudden intrusion of illness led to a diagnosis of brain cancer and then death at the age of 61, after a relatively short period of treatment. During this time, those of us who received his e-mail updates were

¹ *Letters of St Ignatius of Loyola*, translated and edited by William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola UP, 1959), 55, as cited in Peter Schineller, 'St Ignatius and Creation-Centered Spirituality', *The Way*, 29/1 (January 1989), 50.

² Cited in Martha E. Stortz, 'The School of Hope', *Santa Clara Magazine* (Winter 2006), 15.

given a final gift from this brilliant and faith-filled scholar.³ In his last days, Bill shared with us his experience of God's graciousness and the gratitude that issues from deep faith.

The Spiritual Exercises: Shaping Grateful Hearts

While Bill's Christian faith took root when he was a child, growing up in a religious Irish–German family, the single most significant influence on his faith formation as an adult came from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. As a Jesuit for 32 years, Bill made the full thirty-day Spiritual Exercises twice, once when he first entered the Jesuits in 1962 and again, years later, after his ordination as a priest. Besides these two

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Bill Spohn

experiences, he followed the Jesuit practice of making an annual eight-day retreat based on the Ignatian Exercises. The long years of Jesuit formation 'had done more to shape my life as a Christian than any peak experience', he once wrote, for 'the values and mindset of Jesus only gradually enter into character over a lifetime'.⁴ His vigorous spiritual life, like the lives of countless others over the centuries, testifies to the tremendous power of the Spiritual Exercises to cultivate a lively Christian faith. In Bill's first post-surgery e-mail, he expressed gratitude for the experience of God's healing love through his circle of friends. 'We have

³ William C. Spohn (1944–2005) was a Roman Catholic moral theologian and Augustine Cardinal Bea SJ Distinguished Professor of Theological Ethics and Director of the Bannan Center for Jesuit Education at Santa Clara University.

⁴ Cited in Martha E. Stortz, 'Follow the Friendships: The Work of William Spohn', *Explore: An Examination of Catholic Identity and Ignatian Character in Jesuit Higher Education* (Spring 2007), 8.

found that God's love and healing are not add-ons: your support has been not only the sign of God's grace, but the principal way it has come to us.⁵ Later, during the course of treatment, he wrote:

We experience much gratitude, which is the echo of grace. Illness can bog one down in self-absorption. Your support helps open the windows for grace, which comes through many channels, the major one being friends, but also wonderful spouses, talented surgeons, radiologists with good aim, and insightful therapists. I don't believe that God sends tumors to anyone, but we have found that on our brief walk through the valley of darkness, God has certainly been with us.⁶

Bill's faith enabled him to sense the loving approach of God in the people who surrounded him. Using the language of faith, Bill gave us a precious lesson about how faith fosters gratitude. 'We use the language available to us from our tradition', he wrote. 'However, it does not seem an artificial imposition but the articulation of the core of what is going on.'⁷ In a poignant account of his experience of imminent death, Bill shared this final testimony of faith:

The last six months have been nothing like I feared the encounter with death would be. We are not called to summon up a great act of hope, but rather to turn our attention to the One who is faithful. As a professional student, I guess I imagined that this would be the ultimate final exam, and I'd better get it right.

Instead, with marvelling and gratitude, he discovered 'that there is more gift than accomplishment in all this. If gratitude is the echo of grace, then hope is the echo of God's paying attention to us.'⁸

Bill's faith led him to distinguish between resignation and surrender. 'Resignation feels like, "This is just the way it is. Tough it out." Surrender is not giving up, but, to borrow a biblical expression, it says "Into Your hands I commend my spirit, O Lord".'⁹ Surrender was not always easy, he admits: 'There are times when there isn't much

⁵ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 14.

⁶ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 14.

⁷ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 14.

⁸ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 14.

⁹ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 14.

energy for surrender and then it seems more like resignation. But fortunately those times are rare'¹⁰ In the end, Bill summed up beautifully what enabled him to surrender in trust. While he realised that some people could chalk up his attitude of faith to 'deep reservoirs of denial', he adamantly differed:

Our thoughts are somewhat different. Who knows, 'God's ways' may be surprisingly better than the scripture of Kübler-Ross and all the other gurus of grief. Yes, there are undeniable losses, but they don't compare with the advent of God's approach. In the original context of Isaiah, 'God's ways' refers to a goodness that takes our breath away. Most of this is not mystical or abstract. It comes in very concrete ways, primarily through other people.¹¹

An Ignatian Path to Gratitude

The Spiritual Exercises represent Ignatius' attempt to objectivise his own experience in order to share the graces that he himself received.¹² They are structured according to four 'Weeks'. Like the seven 'days' of creation, the Ignatian Weeks are not to be taken literally, as seven calendar days, but rather as a way of structuring the various matter for prayer throughout the process. The First Week focuses on how our human sinfulness and struggles are met with the gift of God's merciful and forgiving love. The following three Weeks focus on the love of God made manifest in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The four Weeks are placed between two meditations that serve as bookends: the First Principle and Foundation at the beginning of the Exercises and the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the four-week experience. Moving from one Week to the next depends on whether the retreatant has received the grace sought in that particular Week. These graces will be delineated below.

Throughout the four Weeks of the Exercises, Ignatius traces out for us how the love of God has unfolded in salvation history and, in so doing, moves us to a deeper and deeper insight into the love of God. Step by step, Ignatius illustrates the progressive manifestation of divine love,

¹⁰ Personal e-mail to the author.

¹¹ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 16–17.

¹² John C. Olin, 'Introduction and Notes', in *The Autobiography of St Ignatius with Related Documents*, translated by Joseph F. O'Callaghan (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 12.

starting with creation and ending with God's restoration of abundant life in the resurrection of Jesus. At a time when ecological spiritualities are responding to our environmental crisis by placing a much needed focus on God's love shown in creating and sustaining the cosmos, the Ignatian vision provides balance. It reminds us that 'while the loving presence of God in creation remains a constant, [creation] ... is not God's full or final word of love'.¹³ Those making the Exercises contemplate the love of God expressed in multiple ways: in the creation of the world, in the continuing preservation of our life, in the incarnation of the divine Word, and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Gratitude: The Central Motif of the Spiritual Exercises

Gratitude is central to the Spiritual Exercises.¹⁴ This is most clearly seen when we look at the structure of the final mediation, the Contemplation to Attain Love, through which Ignatius attempts to deepen our love of God by expanding our sense of God's generosity to us. When we review the four points of the Contemplation to Attain Love, it is evident how Ignatius meant them to be avenues to gratitude.

- *Everything is gift.* This first consideration invites us to contemplate the gifts of creation and redemption, and the special blessings and favours we have personally received. We note here that the scope suggested for our consideration includes gratitude for God's love manifested in the marvels of creation as well as God's love made known in the sacrificial love of Jesus. We are also asked to dwell on how we have been concretely and personally blessed.
- *God dwells intimately in all God's gifts.* This second reflection reminds us that God is not only the creator of life and the giver of gifts, but also dwells in all created things, especially in the human person, the *imago Dei*. In other words, God not only gives us gifts, but offers the gift of God's self.

¹³ Schineller, 'St Ignatius and Creation-Centered Spirituality', 50.

¹⁴ For a full textual argument in support of gratitude as a leitmotiv of the entire *Spiritual Exercises*, see my 'Ignatian Service: Gratitude and Love in Action', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 40/2 (Summer 2008).

- *God's love is actively at work on our behalf.* This third consideration asserts that God's presence in the world is not inert, but dynamic: God labours for us in all of creation.
- *God is the loving source, from whom all blessings flow.* Finally, the fourth point of the Contemplation portrays all of God's blessings as descending from above—like water from a fountain or rays from the sun.

Gratitude is clearly the heart of this final meditation. Furthermore, Ignatian scholars have argued that it is a summarising meditation that recapitulates the whole experience, because the four considerations closely correspond to the four Weeks of the Exercises. Thus, gratitude can be said to permeate the entire Spiritual Exercises.¹⁵

Graces as Gateways to Gratitude

Another way of highlighting the centrality of gratitude in the Spiritual Exercises is to look at the graces sought at each phase of the experience. So that we might grow in gratitude, each part of the Exercises points to a God who is both good and giving, and invites us to a greater mindfulness of the abundant graces of God. A brief elaboration of the graces sought in each phase of the experience makes clear that Ignatius viewed felt gratitude as pivotal to spiritual transformation.

Grace of the First Principle and Foundation

We are desired into being and wondrously made. This first consideration of the Spiritual Exercises fosters gratitude for the gifts of creation and one's personal life. Each of us has been created in 'lone nativities',¹⁶ not in twos or thousands. The existence we enjoy results from God's conscious love, choosing us to be. Because we are 'desired into being',¹⁷ our basic attitude towards God should be one of gratitude and praise (Romans 1:21). Furthermore, the gift of life is embellished with the gift of a loving relationship with God that is meant to be enjoyed in the here-and-now and in the hereafter.

¹⁵ Exx 230–237.

¹⁶ Jessica Powers, 'The Masses', cited in Robert F. Morneau *Ashes to Easter: Lenten Meditations* (New York: Crossroads, 1997), 18.

¹⁷ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Woman* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2001), 100.

The First Principle and Foundation meditation invites us to view life as a journey or pilgrimage. We come from God and are meant to return to God, the source and fulfilment of our existence. Inspired by an image suggested by Julian of Norwich, a contemporary theologian captures poetically this faith vision embedded in the First Principle and Foundation, when she says: 'Desire is the great seal on our souls, marking where we have been "oned" with God in the instant of our creation'. And even when our earthly sojourn has caused us to wander far from this 'precious oneing', 'desire is the beautiful, scathing brand that reminds us who we are and to whom we belong'.¹⁸ These sentiments echo Augustine's cry: 'You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts will remain restless, until they rest in you'.¹⁹ Our hearts long for a love that will abide beyond death.

Bill Spohn's peaceful acceptance of death marked him as a person who had embraced the truth of Ignatius' view of life. In his last e-mail update, in May 2005, he shared the sad news that the doctors had confirmed that the tumour had once again grown back, or, in one doctor's words, 'Clearly, you failed the trial drug'. His wife, Marty, describes the immediate events that led to Bill's final 'Yes' to God's call to return to the loving source from which he came.

We had the scan Thursday a week ago, then met with the surgeon the following day at 9 a.m. He would give us the first read on the scan. We had to drive into the city during rush hour, so we read the lessons for the day before tackling the traffic. The text was John 21:15–19, the passage where Jesus questions Peter again and again: 'Do you love me?' After Peter's repeated professions of love, Jesus says to him: 'When you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go. Follow me.'

It was hard driving across the Bay Bridge with that text in our hearts. But we got to the city early and went up to St Ignatius Church on the USF campus. Always we were drawn to the side chapel and to St Ignatius' *Suscipe* on the wall. The first part of that prayer is a pretty accurate description of brain cancer, and that terrified us both, but the second part offered the consolation we craved:

¹⁸ Wendy Farley, *The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 2.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.

'Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I am and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours, do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me.'²⁰

In the end, this prayerful surrender to a beckoning and loving God reflected the faith that shaped Bill's lifelong disposition of gratitude. Because of that *Suscipe* prayer, he wrote to his friends:

We were ready when the surgeon told us the tumor had grown back. And we were ready when he said the chemo had not been working. We are living inside that prayer. All things considered, it is not a bad place to be. You are a part of this journey more than you know. The love we experience through you not only helps us along the way, but is already the beginning of the abundant life to come.²¹

Clearly, Ignatius' First Principle and Foundation left a lasting imprint on Bill's soul.

Grace of the First Week

Though sinful, we are loved unconditionally. In the First Week we seek a felt knowledge both of our own sinfulness and of God's merciful love that keeps us in an accepting embrace—no matter how we have faltered and sinned. Ignatius hoped that the experience of the First Week would sear into our consciousness that,

The once-and-for-all forgiveness that Christians celebrate ... [is] not something that happens within God but something that happens within us when we become aware of the impossibility of turning God away from us, so precious are we to God. We are united with the erotic power that is God. This is our nature and nothing can change or undo that unity.²²

The grace of the First Week has taken firm root when we can acknowledge our failings with unshakable confidence in the constancy of God. Deep within, we know that we are loved sinners.

²⁰ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 19.

²¹ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 19.

²² Farley, *The Wounding and Healing of Desire*, 29.

Luke's three parables in chapter 15 of his Gospel, his 'lost and found department', capture the spirit of the First Week, which celebrates the unconditional love of God. The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son drive home the point that God's love for us endures—no matter how we have sinned and lost our way. According to Jesus, God can be likened to a shepherd who, having 100 sheep and losing one, leaves the 99 in search of the one lost sheep. The shepherd's decision defies normal business sense. In the second parable in chapter 15, Jesus compares God to a woman who has lost a coin that she greatly values. She turns her whole house upside down in search of this coin. And when she finds it, she throws a party to celebrate. When we identify with the lost coin and imagine God's loving attachment to us, like that of the woman for her coin, we get the point of Jesus' message—we are precious in God's eyes and recipients of God's lavish love. The final parable in this trio is the story of the prodigal son. This richly textured story weaves together so many strands of the good news proclaimed by Jesus: that we can always go home, no matter how badly we have failed to achieve our goals; that we live in a multiple-chance universe and are never doomed by past mistakes; that God allows for trial-and-error learning; and finally that our sometimes tortuous return will always be met by a loving God who, like the prodigal's father, celebrates with exuberant joy, because 'this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found' (15:32). Each of the three parables ends with a joyful celebration. Similarly, the First Week's consideration of sin is meant to end with joy and consolation. These parables contain the heart of Jesus' message: God's love for us is not only extravagant, but also constant. It is a love that



The Lost Sheep, from *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fifteenth century

far exceeds human norms of fairness and contradicts the rules of common sense.

As a theologian, Bill Spohn appreciated the importance of Jesus' parables. Parables were used by Jesus to shape our consciousness—so that we might perceive reality more and more as Jesus did and react to events and people as he did. 'Jesus used parables', Bill once wrote, 'to shock his audience into recognising that their ways were not God's ways'.²³ Through his life of prayer and his experience of the Spiritual Exercises over the years, Bill clearly internalised the grace of the First Week.

Besides personal sin, the First Week also includes reflection on our collective sinfulness and the harm that it has caused in the world. By reflecting on humankind's sinful past—'man's inhumanity to man'—we humbly admit that our sinfulness has caused things to happen in the world that are stunning reversals of God's intent for creation. The world as we have it is not the best we can hope for, nor the world God intends, but a badly broken and disordered one. Our prayer during this First Week of the retreat also entails asking for the desire, motivated by gratitude for the gift of God's forgiving love, to work with Christ to restore order and harmony to the created universe. The Kingdom mediation that follows extends Christ's invitation to intimate collaboration.

Grace of the Call of the King Meditation

We are called to be participants in God's project on earth. As a transition between the First and Second Weeks, this meditation focuses on the gift of covenant partnership: that each of us has been called to share in God's work in the world today. Situated immediately after the First Week, it is intended psychologically to maximise our gratitude: feelings of gratitude are still lingering in our hearts for the grace of forgiveness received in the First Week when Ignatius has us consider that we are also chosen to collaborate with God. The grace this meditation is a heartfelt gratitude that our sinfulness does not disqualify us from serving alongside Jesus in intimate collaboration, as friends and co-workers. But, like Peter who betrayed Jesus, we are called in our weakness and our limitations. A central purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is to help each of us to discern how this call is to take particular form in the concrete reality of

²³ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 102–103.

our life. We ask, for example, ‘How am I being called—in the here and now—to contribute to God’s project on earth, given my unique personality, talents and background?’ Because of the fluidity and multiple transitions of life, as well as increased longevity, we must ask this question again and again throughout our lives.

Educated in a Jesuit high school where Ignatian retreats were regularly scheduled events, Bill Spohn made life-choices that were naturally framed by Ignatius’ Kingdom meditation. Upon graduating from St Ignatius College Preparatory in San Francisco in 1962, he followed what he discerned was God’s call—to join the Jesuits with the goal of serving as priest. In the course of his early formation, he further discerned that he was being called to contribute to the Kingdom of God as a moral theologian. This led to graduate studies at the University of Chicago and later at its divinity school. And, as his fellow moral theologian Anne E. Patrick recounts, Bill’s discernment of God’s call near the end of his life took the form of a concrete academic project. She writes:

At the time he was first stricken with symptoms of brain cancer in April 2004, Bill Spohn was working on a book that would trace American thinkers from Jonathan Edwards through H. Richard Niebuhr as a source for a distinctively American moral theology. He wanted to overcome the limitations he found in much revisionist moral theology, especially that of German Jesuits who, to Spohn’s mind, combined insights from Rahner and Kant in a way that was strong on universality but weak on Christian distinctiveness and inspirational force.²⁴

Because Bill was someone shaped by the Spiritual Exercises, it is safe to conjecture that the Kingdom meditation influenced his vocational choices throughout life.

Bill’s sense of the importance of detecting the call of God in all situations illuminates what he shared when his cancer forced lifestyle changes. Lamenting the ‘unintended asceticism’ illness brought, he made the following reflection:

It is surprising that even limitations contain a calling and invitation. Life has gotten more contemplative because there is more time and less driving energy. A number of things that seemed important before

²⁴ Anne E. Patrick, ‘Jesus and the Moral Life: Edwards, H. R. Niebuhr, and Spohn’, *Explore* (Spring 2007), 14.

don't anymore. Does the world really need any more footnote-choked articles and dense presentations at conventions? The few things that are important have been enormously more important: love in all its forms, the one we married, family, friends old and new, a fine university to work at, the community of faith in its universal reach. T. S. Eliot articulates the prayer of 'Ash Wednesday' and all of life's Lents: 'Teach us to care and not to care / Teach us to sit still'.²⁵

Grace of the Second Week

Fostering intimacy with Jesus. The Second Week consists in contemplating the hidden life and public ministry of Jesus. Our desire here is to acquire an intimate knowledge of Jesus for the sake of walking more closely with him as modern disciples. It is, in the words of the prayer attributed to St Richard of Chichester (and popularised by the musical *Godspell*), 'to see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly, to follow thee more nearly, day by day'. Ignatius hoped that familiarity with Jesus through prayer would mould us into being more Christ-like in our perceptions and dispositions. The Second Week fosters gratitude for the gift of Jesus, the compassionate love of God made flesh. We are asked to witness how Christ embodies God's compassion to all. Our essential calling as Christians, no matter what our work or career may be, is to continue Christ's mission by embodying God's compassionate love for those in our life. Ignatius hoped that Christ's love would stir up our gratitude and draw us to loving service in union with him. As Spohn states,

Ignatius ... believed that the human desire to serve echoes the divine compassion, that concern for healing the world in our small arena of job and family and community stems from God's desire to heal the world. He wanted people to find where their deepest desires would lead them to serve, because he believed that would be the place where they would find God, or rather, where God would find them.²⁶

Grace of the Third Week

God's love is manifested in pain. The purpose of contemplating the events of Jesus' passion and death during the Third Week is to strengthen our

²⁵ Cited in Stortz, 'The School of Hope', 16.

²⁶ William C. Spohn, 'The Chosen Path', *America* (21–28 July 2003), 12.

appreciation of how deeply we are loved by God. The hope is that our gratitude increases as we reflect on Jesus' sacrificial love, a love demonstrated in a trusting surrender to God's will, even to the point of a painful death. When he addresses God as *Abba* (an Aramaic term for 'father' that conveys the intimacy of 'papa' or 'daddy'), Jesus' faith in God's reliability enables him to overcome his fear and to pray, 'for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want' (Mark 14:36). We detect resonances of this Gethsemane prayer in an e-mail in which Bill wrote,



Christ at Gethsemane, *from Speculum humanae salvationis, fifteenth century*

Sometimes it seems like the last three months have been a combination of a retreat and a fairly major hangover. Most times there is a clarity and poignancy about much small and large, and most about the affection that our friends have shown us. There is grieving and gratitude, anxiety but more fundamentally a sense of trust in a benevolent reality 'in whom we live and move and have our being'. The words of Scripture, especially the psalms, seem less hyperbole and more the unvarnished truth of our condition. This probably won't last, but we will be changed whether it does or not.²⁷

Because Ignatius viewed the love of God as ideally what motivates Christian service, his emphasis in the Third Week contemplations of Christ's passion and death is on the love of God manifested in pain. Unlike theories of atonement and satisfaction, the Ignatian approach focuses on love and gratitude, not on repayment and redemption.

²⁷ Personal e-mail to the author.

Ignatius hoped that a deepened appreciation of God's love would confirm our discernment, made in Week Two, about how God is calling us to serve. Witnessing Jesus' faithful perseverance to his call in the midst of suffering, Ignatius hoped, would strengthen our resolve to serve, even if doing so involved hardships and struggles. Even though all that we possess has been given to us by God, nothing is required of us in return. Genuine love never demands reciprocation. We do not owe God anything, but love urges us on to an intimate mutuality with a God who loves us so abundantly.²⁸

Grace of the Fourth Week

The gift of new life to be shared by all. The Fourth Week's focus on the resurrection of Jesus fosters gratitude for God's faithfulness in raising Jesus from the dead and for the reassurance given to us that whenever we experience death, in whatever form, God promises to bring new life, just as God did for Jesus. During the Fourth Week, we ask for the grace to experience the consoling presence of the Risen Jesus, who addresses us now as he did his early disciples: 'It is I; do not be afraid' (John 6:20). Like Mary Magdalene encountering Christ at the tomb, we are encouraged to receive the consolation of Christ in the midst of our experiences of sadness and loss. Like the disillusioned and hopeless disciples on the way to Emmaus, we are encouraged to discover the Risen Jesus' support in strangers we encounter on the road and in communities where we share table-fellowship and understanding. And like the recommissioned Peter, who forfeited his call through his triple denial, we are invited to experience a Risen Christ who graciously restores our relationship with him, no matter how we may have let him down. Like these early followers of Jesus, we are invited to enjoy with gratitude the abiding, peace-filled presence of the Risen Jesus.

The Grace of the Contemplation to Attain Love

All is gift. As described above, this final exercise fosters gratitude by inviting us to recall all of God's gifts of creation and redemption and to rejoice in God's loving presence and action in all of reality for us. The graces received throughout the Spiritual Exercises call for a grateful response. As the theologian Karl Barth so aptly remarked, 'grace and

²⁸ Exx 230.

gratitude go together like heaven and Earth; grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo'.²⁹ To foster gratitude, Ignatius asks us throughout the Exercises to recall the many blessings that we have enjoyed. Recognition of the graces of each week of the Exercises is meant to evoke an ever-deepening gratitude for all that we have received. Thus, for Ignatius, graces are gateways to gratitude when they are deeply felt and acknowledged. Clearly, in Bill Spohn's story, we witness someone in whom a grateful heart was formed through a faithful experience of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius.

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²⁹ Cited in Robert A. Emmons and Teresa T. Kneezel, 'Giving Thanks: Spiritual and Religious Correlates of Gratitude', *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 24/2 (2005), 140.