

LOVE

J. Antonio García Rodríguez

Published in 2007, the Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana (Dictionary of Ignatian Spirituality) drew on the best contemporary scholarship to describe the theory and practice of the spirituality that grows from the Spiritual Exercises. Attempts to produce an English version of the whole work have so far been hindered by the scale of the undertaking. A few of the key articles have, however, been translated, and The Way is grateful to the author, J. Antonio García Rodríguez—and to the publishing houses Mensajero and Sal Terrae—for permission to reproduce his article on 'Love'. The translation has been prepared by Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ.

A WORLDLY KNIGHT'S EXPERIENCE, before he dedicated himself to the Lord and to the spiritual journey following his conversion, gave Ignatius a precise and deep knowledge of how central human love was to the spiritual life, but also of its frightening ambiguity. Love is the 'weight of the soul'; we will embrace this weight wherever it takes us. For St Ignatius, to love God means 'to him alone is directed the whole force of our love'.¹ Any disordered affection will be 'a serious obstacle' that prevents us receiving God's love or returning our own to God.

St Ignatius is not frightened to enter deeply into the dynamics of human love. Not to do so would be equivalent to loitering at the superficial level with a retreatant or Jesuit without touching that person's true centre. He knows, however, where he stands, and therefore his discussion of love—mainly human love for God, for others and for things—is full of realism and wisdom, of unveiling its possible falseness and traps. Thus there is no question of blocking the exercise of love through fear; but neither is there an ingenuousness

¹ MHSJ EI 1, 514.

that blinds us to love's radical ambiguity. The only aim is to 'order' human love according to the model of God's love.

What is the difference for Ignatius between love and charity?

Charity seems to refer more to the 'virtue' of love, whereas 'love' denotes the 'act' of loving. Thus when a motivation or movement is involved, St Ignatius uses the word 'love'. And also when love is lacking, charity doesn't always disappear with it.²

Love in the Spiritual Exercises

Since it is in the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230–237) that St Ignatius tackles the theme of love in the *Spiritual Exercises* most directly, it would seem logical at the outset to concentrate our commentary on it. What is the specific purpose of this contemplation within the general framework of the Exercises and, if it is a contemplation 'to attain love', what sort of love is involved?

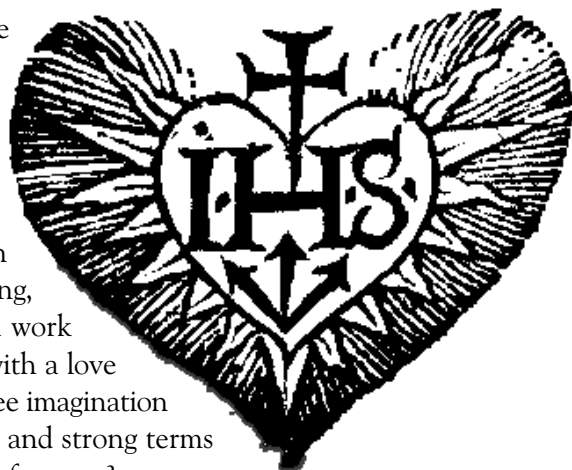
It seems clear that St Ignatius' intention in this contemplation is to send the retreatant back to the world with a specific and continuing spiritual option: that of finding God in everything so as to be able to love and serve God in everything. In this sense, though the composition of the contemplation is clearly influenced by Paris, the experience that underlies it is probably from Manresa. There the whole of creation became really alive to St Ignatius as a translucent manifestation of God; a 'divine medium'; a place of meeting, adoring, loving and serving God—a 'devotion' in which he would not cease to grow until his death.³ So that, if the Contemplation aimed to give the retreatant an experience similar to his, we would not have just another meditation in the process of the Exercises, but a permanent way of being and acting in the world, a human experiment, in 'synergy' with a requested grace, to make it part of our nature to love and serve God in everything. Its aim is the same as that of the prayer that runs through the Exercises (Exx 46), only more warmly expressed and more orchestrated.

What kind of love do we find in the Contemplation? We start by noting that the verb *alcanzar*, 'to attain', has two possible meanings:

² William A. M. Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation* (Jersey City: Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, 1967), 154–155.

³ *Autobiography*, 99.

that of 'obtaining', which places the emphasis on the giver, and that of 'achieving', which emphasizes the retreatant and the human effort that the gift requires. It seems clear that the expression 'to attain love' must, in the first instance, be understood in accordance with this second meaning, however much human effort is itself a work of grace.⁴ On the other hand, it deals with a love that St Ignatius does not leave to the free imagination of each, but describes in clear, realistic and strong terms leaving no room for error. What are its features?



First, all the commentators underline St Ignatius' seriousness in using the word *amor*, 'love', in the *Spiritual Exercises*, especially when talking about the love of humanity for God. It is as if Ignatius was too weighed down by his own past to treat it lightly. After his conversion, love is for him a sacred term admitting no element of trivialisation.

His is a calculated seriousness serving a mysticism whose unitive dimension takes the form of an election, that is, of collaboration with God in the world, in the manner of Jesus. This is why, of the approximately 25 times the words *amor* and *amar* ('to love') appear in the *Spiritual Exercises* (excluding the Contemplation already mentioned and the obligatory New Testament references), only two refer to an act of the retreatant towards God: in the meditation on hell and in the petition of the Second Week (Exx 65, 104). This absence is all the more notable if one takes into account that the Exercises are full of decisions by the retreatant that only his or her love for Jesus Christ is capable of setting in motion. This happens, for example, in 'demanding' passages such as the offering of the Kingdom, the colloquies of the Two Standards or the Three Classes, etc. It also happens in contemplations which, because they are 'less demanding', seem to call for use of the word itself, such as the Nativity (Exx 114), the conversion of Mary Magdalene (Exx 282), the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord, etc.⁵

⁴ Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 154.

⁵ See Ignacio Casanovas, *Ejercicios de S. Ignacio V-VI* (Barcelona: Balmes, 1948), 205–207.

The explanation of this caution can be found in the first of the two notes with which St Ignatius introduces the Contemplation: 'love ought to find its expression in deeds rather than in words' (Exx 230), a statement given to false interpretations which are worth clarifying. The fact that love should express itself 'more' in deeds than in words does not serve to rule out the 'words of love' so meaningful and necessary in every human and divine relation. What is ruled out is the love made up of mere words—vain, lying, uncommitted, inconsequential—to which we humans are so prone. This is the first clarification to note. A second misunderstanding of Ignatius' affirmation consists in distinguishing between *affective* and *effective* love in such a way as to give automatic priority to the second. This is not the intention of St Ignatius:

It is not a question of choosing between affective love and effective love since all love by its nature is affective. It is more putting the expression effective in affective love less in words than in deeds.⁶

This is why St Ignatius so often links the words 'love and serve' and 'love and follow'—'to love and serve his divine majesty in everything' (Exx 233), 'so that I might the better love and follow him' (Exx 104)—so as to make of them a real hendiadys⁷ whose overall meaning would be serving love or loving service, love of following or the loving following of Jesus.

This observation—that love should express itself more in deeds than in words—is very opportune for anyone who wants to be contemplative in action, for their contemplative love has not to express itself through words or thoughts which would make the attention required for action difficult; but rather in deeds, that is, in action and work. In the service of God and collaborating in his work, thus fulfilling his divine will.⁸

The second note of the Contemplation reminds us that,

⁶ Hermés Coathalem, *Comentario del libro de los Ejercicios* (Buenos Aires: Apostolado de la Oración, 1987), 235.

⁷ OED: 'A figure of speech in which a single complex idea is expressed by two words connected by a conjunction; e.g. by two substantives with "and" instead of an adjective and substantive.'

⁸ Luis Gonzalez, 'Contemplativos en la acción. En la escuela de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio', *Manresa*, 59 (1987) 389–403, here 397; and see Casanovas, *Ejercicios de S. Ignacio*, 209, who adds to words and thoughts even affections: 'love should express itself more in deeds than in affections'.

... love consists in mutual communication. That is to say, the lover gives and communicates to the loved one what they have, or something of what they have, or are able to give; and in turn the one loved does the same for the lover. (Exx 231)

This note shows us that for Ignatius all love—divine and human—consists in a mutual ‘giving and communicating’. It is an act of ‘self-transcendence’, in which the subject leaves self and offers his or her ‘I’—with all that it is, contains and is able to do—to the person loved, and an act of ‘receptivity’ towards a ‘you’ which, in turn, offers itself to us with all it has.

The two notes, nevertheless, do not tell us everything. In spite of being so cautious in using the word ‘love’, Ignatius has no objection to defining the contemplation that sends the retreatant back into the world precisely as ‘a contemplation to attain love’. This is because he is confident that, after the whole process of the four Weeks, the retreatant could no longer be mistaken as to what sort of love was involved. The retreatant has lived and discerned it during thirty long days as a definite and concrete love received from God and as a love offered to God. No misunderstanding is possible. Thus, in addition to the light we get from these two notes of the Contemplation, we know more about the quality of the love of God that the retreatant hopes to ‘attain’. For example, we know that:

- The source of this love is in the love with which the Creator and Lord embraces (and inflames) the faithful soul (Exx 15). But it is a love which, in completing the First Week, knows itself as fallen and forgiven, incapable of sustaining itself without continually receiving God’s love and pardon (Exx 45–64). It is a weak and inconsistent love which not only sin but also faults can lead to forgetfulness (Exx 65).
- This love one wants to attain is that of surrender to Christ, the desire to follow and identify with him, in gratitude for what Christ has done for us (Exx 98). Thus it is a love directed towards service and at the same time decidedly one-way, since its inner drive leads to identification with Christ as poor, humble and humiliated ‘for no reason’, only through love for our Lord and Saviour (Exx 167).

- Finally, it is the love which, on meeting God because God has first met it, leads us to enter the world with God, in Christ and through the Church, to discover God in everything and in everything to love and serve God (Exx 233), aware that,

Finding God in all things and experiencing the transparency of things towards God is accomplished only by the person who meets this God at that point where He descended into utter darkness and abandonment: on the cross of Jesus Christ!⁹

This is the love that retreatants beg and hope to attain as a permanent way of being and acting in the world. But what is the spiritual process that will give it to them? What must they put at stake in collaborating with God's love so that it will be given to them? The petition of the Contemplation (Exx 233) and its four points indicate the spiritual route of this process and the price of this grace. Three details in this petition are worth keeping in mind:

- The first concerns the verb *reconocer*, 'to acknowledge', the key point of the petition. To acknowledge is more than to know. It means being aware that the giver of the gifts is God and that Godself is given through them. To acknowledge also means to be grateful, with a gratitude that supposes the human capacity to give thanks but is not reduced to it. To contemplate and acknowledge the giving of Godself in God's gifts transforms human gratitude into a theological virtue which engages our whole being and directs our freedom towards God and the Kingdom.
- The second observation is concerned with the act of 'reflecting' (*reflectir*), an essential condition for this grace. St Ignatius hopes that, pondering in our hearts the loving and grateful realisation of 'how much God our Lord has done for me, how much he has given me of what he possesses, and further, how according to his divine plan, it is the Lord's wish, as far as he is able, to give me himself' (Exx 234), God's way of being, existing and acting with us would become part of our

⁹ Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, translated by K. Baker (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 271–272.

own nature, a 'state of the heart'. For this he invites the retreatant,

... to reflect ... and consider what, in all reason and justice (as if one offers with great affection), I ought for my part to offer and give ... that is to say, all I possess and myself as well (Exx 234).

The crucial requirement for this to take place is that we be 'all one with divine love' (Exx 370), words with which Ignatius—typically—closes the *Spiritual Exercises*.

- Finally, it is also noteworthy how, in the prayer 'Take O Lord and receive', which ends each of the four points of the Contemplation, what the retreatant offers to God, in line with Ignatian seriousness, is not, formally, love, but all his or her liberty, memory, understanding and will. Once again this is a question of offering God the decisions of love and its deeds rather than love itself, as feeling or words from the soul. More important than offering our love to God is to beg for God's love—a Love that would set in motion the deeds of our own love and, of course, our love included with them.

A Look Backwards from the Exercises: The Autobiography

We should not forget that the Exercises were basically born out of Ignatius' previous experience. What role do the words 'love' and 'charity' have in this?

The serious use of the word 'love' that we have noted in the *Spiritual Exercises* is also typical of the *Autobiography*. The noun *amor*, relating to the love of Ignatius for God, occurs six times (*Autobiography*, 14, 17, 32, 60, 69 [twice]), and the verb *amar* not at all. As for the word *caridad*, 'charity', it only appears twice in the *Autobiography*: the first time affirming that the pilgrim knew nothing at the time about discretion in practising the virtues, especially charity; and the second time to justify his refusal to accept a companion on his journey to Jerusalem 'for he wanted to have three virtues: charity and faith and hope' (*Autobiography*, 35).

In the *Autobiography* Ignatius looks on himself not only as a geographical pilgrim, but also as a pilgrim in the interior life. His



journey begins with 'so lively a desire to do great things for the love of God' (*Autobiography*, 14), 'thinking, as was always his habit, of the exploits he was to do for the love of God' (*Autobiography*, 17), and his decision to live solely in the love of God without human support (*Autobiography*, 35), and moves towards the gradual discovery that his love for God is full of personal decision but lacking in 'humility, or charity, or patience, or discernment in regulating and balancing these virtues' (*Autobiography*, 14).

In the dialogue between God and Ignatius, it is Ignatius who is in control, not the divine

speaker. Little by little God teaches him 'as a schoolteacher deals with a child' (*Autobiography*, 27), that things are not like that. And little by little Ignatius enters into this 'divine passivity' of God's love which arouses in us the desire to be identified with Jesus. 'Putting him with his Son' (*Autobiography*, 96), as a response to this teaching of God, will become Ignatius' greatest desire, the pretext for all his extensive initiatives undertaken for the love of God. It is not a matter of suppressing the impulses of love but of putting them in order in accordance with the model of Love that has been given us, Jesus Christ.

In the *Spiritual Diary* St Ignatius's seriousness, already mentioned, in his use of the world 'love' to describe humanity's movement of affection towards God breaks out in a spectacular manner. The verb *amar* only occurs twice, once referring to the love of Ignatius for the Trinity and once to the love of God for Ignatius, but the noun *amor* appears on 39 occasions, all of them (with one possible exception, *Diary*, 4 March 1544) referring to Ignatius' love for Jesus, for God Our Lord, for the Trinity, etc. Ignatius himself describes this love as 'intense, reverential, huge, total, lucid, excessive, internal, etc.'

When speaking or writing for others—especially in the *Autobiography* and the *Spiritual Exercises*—St Ignatius behaves like a wise catechist. His vocabulary is carefully chosen and always at the service of the mystery he wishes to transmit. But when writing only for himself, he does not hesitate to express time and again the movements the love of God produces in him and his own love in response. However one thing remains true and it is important to emphasize it. All this outpouring of love in Ignatius is geared towards an apostolic discernment that is crucial for him: that of poverty. There is no self-complacency in the expression of his love for God. What he is looking for in it is a sign, the confirmation of what God wants from the Society of Jesus in this crucial matter of apostolic poverty.

Another Look Forwards: The Constitutions and the Letters

If we add the number of times the noun *amor* appears in the *Constitutions* (58) with the various forms of the verb *amar* (14) and the noun *caridad* (56), we find no fewer than 128 references to our topic. The invitations to ‘love’ and ‘charity’ in the letters are equally numerous. Is any synthesis of this mass of material possible? We believe it is. Such a synthesis has already been made, for example, by Fr Ignacio Iparraguirre, on whose work we base this section of our commentary.

The Love of God Goes before Us and Accompanies Us Always

God is at the beginning of our love for God and is the model of our love for creatures. God’s goodness, in which we must plunge ourselves, is the beginning, middle and end of all the good that exists and that we ourselves can do.

At the core of Christianity is this twofold affirmation: that ‘he first loved us’ (1 John 4:19) and that we must love one another ‘as I have loved you’ (John 15:12). From the preamble to the *Constitutions* to their Part X, Ignatius leads from this conviction: it is the wise and good God who originated, preserves and increases the Society; as for us, ‘the law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts’ is what will help this preservation and increase (*Constitutions*, Preamble, 1. [134]). ‘Therefore in Him alone must be placed the hope’ (*Constitutions*, X.1. [812]) and it also follows from this that,

... the means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded well by his divine hand are more effective than those which equip it in relation to human beings. Such means are, for example, goodness and virtue, and especially charity, and a pure intention of the divine service, and familiarity with God our Lord. (*Constitutions*, X.2.[813])

The source from which this apostolic charity flows and the mirror in which it must be seen and ordered, is none other than the love of God. Thus in many of his letters Ignatius points to the way in which God loves us to inspire our love for God. As Fr Iparraguirre writes:

The least of it is that he likes to call God 'Divine and highest Goodness' (MHSJ EI 9, 297, 55, 668, 728, etc.), 'Infinite and highest Goodness' (MHSJ EI 1, 302; 4, 85; 9, 274, 553, 627; 12, 34, etc.). The important thing is to grasp the way in which God shows his love He 'loves always, continually'. He is, we can say, like a mother with her small son 'looking with infinite love like the Creator for his creature' (MHSJ EI 1, 193). He is not afraid to affirm that God imprisons man, because that prison is the source of true freedom. He begs that one should be 'imprisoned by his love and grace (so to) become free of all creatures in the world (MHSJ EI 1, 92). God loves even 'when he punishes'. On such occasions, he does it 'as to a son he loves' and punishes him 'for what is disordered' (MHSJ EI 3, 10) As a result, we should recognise in these moments 'his gift, as if we were cherished' (MHSJ EI 9, 429). St Ignatius likes to note the special manifestations of love to those whom 'he loves especially', those whom he calls collaborators in his kingdom These 'he never ceases to visit, instruct and console, especially ... in times of such urgent need and great importance' (MHSJ EI 1, 300). These signs of love 'he usually gives to those souls who rest [in his infinite goodness], as the beginning, middle and end of all our good' (MHSJ EI 1, 339).¹⁰

Do Everything for Love

Since, therefore, it is the love of God which generates in us the love of God and God's dream for us and the world, to do everything 'for love of God' will be for Ignatius the inspiring principle and rule for

¹⁰ Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Vocabulario de los ejercicios espirituales. Ensayo de hermenéutica ignaciana* (Rome: CIS, 1978), 19–20.

Christian life, as well as for the life of a Jesuit. This he proposes insistently in his letters and in the *Constitutions*.

Speaking of the Exercises, we saw how the love the retreatant returns to God is in everything a 'descending' love. For an election to be 'sound and good', Ignatius expresses the prior need that 'the love which moves me and makes me chose something has to descend from above, from the love of God' (Exx 184). A powerful and effective bond between the love received and the love offered runs through the whole mystique of the Exercises. Ignatius does not accept a grace that is 'easy': if trust in God and the love received does not arouse a specific love in reply, it is because the love has not been accepted as such.¹¹

It is therefore no surprise that, viewing the Society of Jesus as 'a path towards God', as a body for the Spirit (the same Spirit of the *Spiritual Exercises*), Ignatius constantly calls on this love in reply, both when drawing together relationships within that body and in its mission to the world without.

On both sides, the chief bond to cement the union of the members among themselves and with their head is the love of God our Lord. For when the superior and the subjects are closely united to his Divine and Supreme Goodness, they will very easily be united among themselves, through that same love which will descend from the Divine Goodness and spread to all other persons, and particularly to the body of the Society. (*Constitutions* VIII. 1.8. [671])

The Father General may be lacking in some of the qualities he himself requests, but he should never be lacking 'great probity and love for the Society' (*Constitutions* IX.2.10. [735]). There are also other ways to create this bond, *the union of souls*, referred to in part VIII of the *Constitutions*, but the principal one, Ignatius affirms, is this.

The whole intention of Ignatius is for the Jesuit to become totally centred in this love so that he can order his life by it—so that he can be, in Ignatius' own words, one who proceeds in everything 'for love of God our Lord', 'for his divine love and reverence'.¹²

¹¹ See Gaston Fessard, *La dialectique des exercices spirituels de Saint Ignace de Loyola*, volume 1, *Temps liberté, grâce* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), 305 ff.

¹² *Constitutions* Examen, 4.12. [67]; Examen, 5.8. [111]; Examen, 6.7. [118]; Examen, 8.1. [130]; Examen, 8.2. [132]; II.4.D. [240]; IV.2.10. [569]; VII.1.E. [610]; VII.4.4. [640], etc.

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This centrality of love for God is a general principle for Ignatius, that is, it is valid for every Christian vocation. The witness of his letters, directed to people of every type, is massive in this respect. Expressions such as those already quoted—‘for the love of God our Lord’, ‘love and reverence’, ‘love and service’, ‘love and glory’, ‘love and most bitter death’, ‘for the love of Christ our Lord’, etc.—are innumerable in the letters. His insistence in qualifying the word ‘love’ by adding another noun (love and reverence, service, glory, etc.—again the Ignatian hendiadys) is typical. It is as if, in the spirit of the Exercises, he wishes to avoid any airy and incorrect concept of human love by qualifying it as serviceable love, reverent love, love glorifying God. Also typical is the fact that many of his letters begin with the well-known refrain ‘the highest grace and eternal love of Christ our Lord be always in our favour and assist us’ and end with ‘that we may feel his holy will and accomplish it fully’. The first is what makes the second possible.

In an overall view, it seems clear that Ignatius’s development of ‘love’ in his letters and in the *Constitutions* is as follows:

- Everything begins with the love and goodness of God our Lord towards ourselves and the world—‘God loved us first’.
- This first love from God awakens in us the love for God and God’s Kingdom, at the same time purifying and ordering it.
- The authenticity of this human love is verified in its readiness to fulfil God’s will—‘love should express itself more in deeds than in words’, including affections.

The Human Obstacles to Divine Love

What prevent the love of God resonating in human hearts and generating love for God and his creatures are, according to St Ignatius, disordered affections: love of self and extreme love for creatures. For its concentration on love and its enemies and for its expressive beauty, *Constitutions* III.1.26. [288] has been called the ‘pearl’ of the third part of the *Constitutions*.

The theme of self-love and the disordered affection for creatures is where Ignatius repeats himself most and with most similar expressions. This is so both in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the letters, where he is

addressing people in general, and in the *Constitutions*, where he is thinking of Jesuits. Why the same conviction and teaching in all these cases? Disordered affections are active in every person whatever his or her situation in life; so all of us need to reorder them continually following spiritual means and common guides.¹³

In the case of the Jesuit, Ignatius insists again and again on all possible methods, in his conviction that without a pure intention or the denial of our most rooted desires, love of God is not possible, nor is an authentic love of creatures—‘because everyone must bear in mind that one will make progress in spiritual things in the measure in which one shall have put off self-love, self-will and self-interest’ (Exx 189). Here are some examples. In the *Constitutions*: the Jesuit has to love his parents ‘with that love which rightly ordered charity requires. He should be as one who is dead to the world and to self-love and who lives only for Christ our Lord.’ (*Constitutions Examen*, 4.7.[61]) He must weigh insistently ‘in the sight of our Creator and Lord, to how great a degree it helps and profits in the spiritual life to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces’ (*Constitutions Examen* 4.44.[101]). This requires ‘the abnegation of all self-love’ (*Constitutions* III.1.9.[258]) and ‘of all sensual love and will and judgment of their own’ (*Constitutions* V.2.1.[516]), and ‘total contempt of temporal things, in regard to which self-love, the chief enemy of this union and universal good, frequently induces disorder’ (*Constitutions* VIII.1.8.[671]).¹⁴

There is little doubt that expressions such as those quoted deeply offend our modern sensibility, especially if we lose sight of the magnetic attraction that occasions them or the finality to which they are directed. For a full understanding of both, nothing could be better than a slow reading of *Constitutions*, III.1.26.[288]. What does Ignatius say in this passage ?

- The Jesuit’s life is directed and has as its goal ‘to seek God our Lord in all things, aiming always at serving and pleasing the divine Goodness’. There are echoes here of the Principle and Foundation, of the preparatory prayer (Exx 46), of the Contemplation to Attain Love. ‘In all things’ includes not only

¹³ See Iparraguirre, *Vocabulario de los ejercicios espirituales*, 18.

¹⁴ See Iparraguirre, *Vocabulario de los ejercicios espirituales*, 18.

the election of a state of life but ‘all particular things’, that is, everything.

- The power that brings about this orientation and goal is none other than a theological gratitude to God: ‘for his own sake’—for being God as and how God is—‘and because of the incomparable love and benefits with which he has anticipated us’. St Ignatius adds that this motivation should prevail over others such as rewards or punishments, ‘although they ought to draw help from these also’.
- This orientation and goal of every Jesuit is continually threatened both from within and without—from without by the lure of creatures, and from within by the deep-rooted tendencies of self-appropriation—in a converging pull which threatens to distort and subvert the deepest calling of the human being and the Jesuit, the Principle and Foundation. Hence the need for personal effort—‘all should strive’—and for frequent exhortation—‘they should often be exhorted’.
- This personal effort and this inner exhortation—the human collaboration with God’s work—are directed towards two goals. The first is the rectitude of intention, attitude and asceticism contrary to all self-love, to any form of bending back or opportunist turning in on oneself. The second refers to the relationship with creatures, ‘removing from themselves as far as possible love of all creatures in order to place it in the Creator of them, loving him in all creatures and all creatures in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will’.

The intention of St Ignatius is not for us to withdraw from creatures or deny them our love. We have to live with them and love them. What St Ignatius puts us on guard against is absolutising this nearness to things with a love for them that converts them into idols, thus short-circuiting our relation with God and with God’s plan for them. ‘To love all and everything well, it is necessary to love a Someone above all things.’ If not, human love unavoidably becomes perverted, that is, operates against creation.

So, because all things exist in God, when we relate to them we must find and love in them their Creator and Lord, and when we find God, in God we have to find and love them. This is the synthesis of St

Ignatius which places love for creatures within the love of God, thus giving them their highest degree of reality and consistency, not the opposite. This is also the psychic and spiritual process we have to initiate in order to set out and progress on our spiritual journey. Blessed are those who open the Exercises to all, or who outline the *Constitutions*, this *via quaedam ad Deum* which is the Society.

translated by Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

J. Antonio Garcia Rodriguez SJ is editor of *Manresa*, the Spanish sister journal of *The Way*; a former Tertian Director, he is now based in Madrid and is also engaged in retreat work.