

IGNACIO IGLESIAS

An Ignatian Enthusiast

Joseph A. Munitiz

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IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the Spanish Jesuit Provinces witnessed a remarkable revival of Ignatian studies. This was made possible by a number of young writers, who replaced the earlier distinguished generation of Spaniards (such as Cándido de Dalmases, Ignacio Iparraguirre, Manuel Ruiz Jurado and Pedro de Leturia), and produced the series of books known as the Colección Manresa. It was published jointly by the two Jesuit publishing houses in Spain: Mensajero, based in Bilbao, and Sal Terrae, based in Santander. Two volumes of the series made up the monumental *Diccionario de la Espiritualidad Ignaciana* (2007). Now volume 49 has appeared, bringing together 23 articles written by the founder of the series, Ignacio Iglesias. This volume is a fitting tribute to the man who was largely responsible for the formation of the new generation and for launching and directing the whole revival.

Curiously enough, Iglesias came to the publishing world at an age when most people are planning to retire. He was born in 1925 in Salamanca into a very pious family that produced several members of religious orders; Ignacio’s younger brother, Manuel, also became a Jesuit and there was at least one sister who became a nun. He entered the order when only seventeen years of age, and spent the major part of his Jesuit life (until he was over sixty) in top administrative posts: as Provincial Superior for two six-year periods (1966–1972; 1981–1987) and as Assistant in Rome to the General Superior (1972–1981). I was lucky enough to have Iglesias as my superior for a year (1965–1966) when I was completing my theological studies in Spain (at the former Universidad Pontificia de Comillas).

Although he had published a couple of articles before 1987, it was only when he took over as editor (the Spanish term is *director*) of the journal



Ignacio Iglesias

Manresa that his regular writing career took off. Unfortunately, he never completed a projected volume on the spirituality of Ignatius, though the articles collected here give a fair idea of what it would have contained. José Antonio García, who has edited this volume and is another former editor of *Manresa*, has done us a great service.

Iglesias' articles are valuable from several points of view. They are written in an elegant terse Castilian,¹ and his feel for the language reveals that he had the sensitivity of a poet (appropriately one of his final poems

is included as an epilogue).² His detailed knowledge of the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius is exceptional. His approach is less that of the erudite scholar³ than of the practical retreat-giver with a constant pastoral preoccupation. His years at the heart of the Jesuit administrative complex gave him an unrivalled inside knowledge of the Society. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, his friendship with, and knowledge of, the saintly Pedro Arrupe equipped him with the keys to solve many delicate problems in the ideals that should inspire Jesuits today.

Some examples of the latter include: chapters 10–11, covering choice of mission, in which the Order has to proceed by steps (Ignatius was constantly 'on the way'), while seeing the 'world' as God's 'mission' (p. 207); chapter 12 on the essential need to be 'ready and willing' (the Spanish term is *disponible*, but it would be wrongly translated by the English 'disposable'); chapter 13 on the pedagogy that Ignatius learnt by experience as God

¹ This aspect is noted by Urbano Valero in the Foreword (p. 14); as a chance example of his prose style: 'Ignatius possessed the singular art of knowing how to domesticate the past and the future so as to make them relevant to the present' (p. 242).

² See p. 422. An English translation of the poem is to be found in *Chosen by God: Pedro Arrupe's Retreat Notes 1965*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Oxford: Way Books, 2010). However, as a translator of Iglesias I have to acknowledge (regretfully) that he could also produce very complicated sentences which would have benefited from more revision.

³ Although Iglesias had completed his theological studies in Germany, and clearly knew the German commentators, Karl Rahner does not figure among his acknowledged sources (though his views are strikingly similar). He has a liking for Teilhard de Chardin, and uses the great José Calveras for textual questions.

‘taught’ him at Manresa;⁴ chapters 15–18 on how obedience, freedom and rules are to be understood (once more the notion of ‘the way’, but understood as a ‘style’) (p.311);⁵ and chapter 19 on *communio* at the heart of community. This chapter also deals with the need today to expand the succinct comment by Ignatius in the *Constitutions* regarding chastity ‘as not needing explanation’:

But today, in another historical context, so different in both culture and Church, more explanation is called for, in so far as the theology behind it needs to be opened up—emphasizing its strength as a credible endorsement of the Gospel message with the commitment it supposes—and the means endorsed that are particularly necessary in our world. (p.322)

For readers of *The Way*, Iglesias has many insights into the giving of the Exercises. He insists on the secondary role of any retreat-giver (chapter 1) and the absolute priority of the retreatant’s personal experience (chapter 2), though I suspect (from what I knew of him) that the strength of his personality may have sometimes caused him problems with this. Iglesias offers illuminating glosses on a number of technical terms: in chapter 3, on the narrative or *history* (usually the opening preamble to prayer, Exx 111), which links up with narrative theology (p.77); chapter 4 on repetition and the Triple Colloquy; chapter 7 on the Three Classes of persons (Exx 149 onwards), to which Iglesias attaches great importance because of the need for detachment; chapter 8 on the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230 onwards), where he finds encapsulated the whole dynamic of the Four Weeks.

Particularly original, it seems to me, is his study (chapter 6) of the need to make decisions when one is enjoying consolation (the counterpart to the advice *not* to make them when suffering from desolation).⁶ But another *cri de coeur* comes in the article on mortification (chapter 5), where he reacts against any gloomy and voluntaristic aspects; instead, asceticism is to be seen as a ‘following’ of Christ in his passion by overcoming one’s innate concupiscence (p.105).

A major self-imposed mission for Iglesias in the second part of his life was to promote knowledge of, and support for, the person with whom he

⁴ *Autobiography*, n. 27.

⁵ ‘The *Constitutions* are, in reality, not only a path that the “first companions” [Examen 4.1 (53)]—Ignatius among them—delineated and which we commit ourselves to follow, but a style or manner of proceeding along that path, at the same time that we open it up [*roturarolo*], p.310.

⁶ See above, ‘In Time of Consolation One Should Make Change’, 97–104.

had been so close in Rome. The new Superior General, Fr Kolvenbach, allowed him to publish Arrupe's personal retreat notes, made when he was elected General in 1965. The present collection concludes (chapter 23) with Iglesias's recollection of life with Arrupe.⁷ It was typical of Iglesias that he chose to end with the following story:

Quite frequently the papal entourage would drive past the front door of the General Curia of the Jesuits, taking the Pope [Paul VI] on his Sunday visit to Roman parishes. Fr Arrupe had instructed Br Redin, the man at the door, to let him know as soon as he noticed that the Pope would be passing. Arrupe would hurry down to salute the Pope from the pavement in the street among the passers-by. The whole incident lasted only a few minutes. Quite often I and others would accompany Arrupe, but I know that sometimes he was alone or only with Br Redin. One day when I was accompanying him back in the lift I ventured to suggest, half-jokingly, that perhaps it was not necessary to go down every Sunday. He was not pleased. He looked down and went on to his room. My remark, no doubt, had hurt him. Certainly his silence did me good.⁸

Iglesias was a very modest man, despite his high offices and great gifts; Urbano Valero, who knew him well and was his colleague in Rome, admits in his excellent foreword to this collection that he had quite a temper (p.15) and his style of government did not appeal to everyone (p.22). Something of a workaholic himself, he may have lacked the sense of irony that was one of Arrupe's great gifts, but he made up for this by his compassion and forthrightness. Although he had developed cancer in his final years, he had a remission (thought by many to have been a grace granted through the intercession of his hero Arrupe) which gave him several extra years of active ministry. One day he was found dead at his desk with his pen still in his hand. Surely a blessed end!

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⁷ 'Getting to Know Fr Arrupe: Work in Progress', translated and included in the edition of Fr Arrupe's 1965 retreat notes, *Chosen by God*, xxiii–xlvi.

⁸ Iglesias, 'Getting to Know Fr Arrupe', xlviii.