

CONTINUAL MORTIFICATION

By JAMES WALSH

DURING THE 'boom-time' for vocations to the apostolic religious life at the end of the second world war and during the early fifties, one of the eastern jesuit provinces in the United States made and distributed a film on the life of the young jesuit, for information purposes. One of its more telling shots showed a scholastic, sitting alone at his desk in a small austere-looking room, gazing across open books at his crucifix. The commentator made sure that we did not miss the point: the hard and daily grind entailed in priestly studies, the solitude and the silence, was the way of the cross for the jesuit scholastic. Here was the 'acting against one's own sensuality', the 'giving oneself entirely to labour', and 'doing violence', as well, 'to love of the world'.¹ This was the identical stance taken by the ignatian scholar, Joseph Rickaby, at the turn of the century, writing in the scholastic fastness of an english jesuit theologate amongst the mountains of North Wales:

For a religious, the highest teaching of the Kingdom of Christ is summed up in these three particulars:

- a) A love of religious rule, and of the privations that the rule entails: this is 'doing violence to sensuality'.
- b) A spirit of hard work according to one's vocation: this is 'giving oneself entirely to labour'.
- c) A desire of self-effacement, a horror of advertising, a readiness to attempt great things, if called upon, or even to dare them of oneself, but wishing to be unobserved the while, to have one's preferences discounted, and the credit given to others – altogether a desire to serve our Lord in lowliness and obscurity and obloquy, not in rank and reputation: this is 'doing violence to the love of the world'.²

Apart from the qualification 'a readiness to attempt great things'

¹ Exx 97.

² Rickaby, Joseph: *Waters that go softly*, 3rd ed., London (1934), pp 52-3.

(itself emphatically qualified – ‘if called upon’: perhaps Fr Rickaby had in mind the Zambesi mission, which in those days demanded pioneering ‘frontier’ qualities), this explanation of continual mortification has a withdrawn quality about it which hardly fits the apostolic scene of the ‘seventies’. ‘The rule’ no longer demands of the young jesuit (or the middle-aged, for that matter) privations that are not equally demanded of his fellows ‘in the world’, with whom he rubs shoulders on university campus, street-car or subway; not many in our democratic classless society can be anything but a drop-out without a spirit of hard work according to one’s vocation. This adaptation of the self-denial asserted in the ignatian exercise on the Kingdom was perhaps too rooted in the peculiarities of a religious life all too well-suited to the local place and time: victorian England, in which the Church was still half-hidden; where all jesuit houses of formation were in remote country places, and their leading apostolate was still the boarding school for the sons of catholic gentlemen. Rickaby’s observation on Two Standards reinforces this impression: ‘A great feature of our age is the worship of pleasure and enjoyment . . . sixteenth-century Spain was free from it . . . Most *Englishmen* care for comfort and enjoyment rather than for honours’.³

The revolution that has taken place in apostolic religious life during the past ten years, is forcing us now to look at the original quality of jesuit apostolic commitment – to find out what sort of shape it has when it is detached from the particularities and limited securities of our own past, in order that we might deliver it from the blind pessimism – or optimism – of the present, and give it a truly evangelical future.

The Kingdom and Two Standards: the call to be with Christ

The sudden and quite passionate interest which has emerged during the last few years among apostolic religious, particularly women, in the Spiritual Exercises, has brought investigation into the origins of jesuit spirituality from the remote seclusion of our novitiates and tertianships into open retreat-centres, and from the relative scholarly, obscurity of the *Monumenta Historica* or the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* into what is almost a paperback market.⁴

³ *Op. cit.*, p 71. Italics mine.

⁴ One must note here with gratitude the extraordinary influence for good of the programmes initiated by the canadian jesuits of Guelph, Ontario, of Fr Tom Burke’s

Contemporaneous with this movement has been the rapid disappearance of much that was until yesterday considered as the authentic manifestation of the mortified jesuit or apostolic religious – the ‘livery of Christ our Lord’, one might even say: submission to a very firm, where it was not positively rigid, external discipline, subscription to a moderate level of austerity in common life, and the acceptance of an unqualified hierarchical pattern of obedience down to many details of daily living. The consequence is that many religious are in the process of discovering that the personal renewal so stressed by the Council⁵ means, in fact, beginning the interior life anew: the word ‘do this and you will live’⁶ must be heard personally, directly and continually in order that it might be caught and meaningfully expressed in formula or rule. We are called and ‘qualified to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life’.⁷

It would appear, then, that the Exercises are currently beginning to have the full effect intended by their author – in terms of personal experience of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. These experiences illuminate the text of the Exercises themselves, thus offering new perspectives in understanding the old paradoxes of religious life: flesh/spirit, detachment/attachment, indifference/enthusiasm, positive/negative, active/passive, contemplation/action. This *sensus Christi* feeling for Christ, it is progressively understood, is the true point of departure for the return to the gospels and the fresh discovery of the ‘founder’s spirit and special aims’.⁸

The heart of the jesuit vocation, the spirit of Ignatius as founder of the Society, is, we are told repeatedly, to be found in the Exercises on the Kingdom and Two Standards:

To anyone who has studied the question, it seems eminently clear that the Kingdom . . . and the Two Standards are the heart of the

Program to adapt the Spiritual Exercises and of the north american Assistancy’s *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*. Cf the documented information in Fr Malatesta’s paper, *infra*, II pp 124–35.

⁵ ‘What calls for the most serious consideration is this: the main purpose of religious life is that religious should follow Christ and find union with God through the profession of the evangelical counsels; and hence no manner of adaptation, no matter how well suited to the needs of the times, can achieve its purpose unless it is animated by a spiritual renewal. This must be given the principal role, even in promoting apostolic works’. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2(e).

⁶ Lk 10, 28.

⁷ 2 Cor 3, 6–7.

⁸ *Perfectae Caritatis*, *loc. cit.*

Exercises: that in the mind of Ignatius the whole economy of salvation is bound up with the spectacular symbol of the two camps, and most especially with the call of the eternal Lord who invites men to *be* at his side, to be *with* him and to share all that is his.⁹

The offering made (and the grace asked) both in the Kingdom oblation and in the triple colloquy at the end of Two Standards, as well as in the corollary, the Three Couples,¹⁰ is in fact the favour granted to Ignatius at La Storta, where 'he felt such a change in his soul and saw so clearly that God the Father was placing him with his Son'.¹¹ It was from this experience, shared in such depth with his first companions, that Ignatius learned to understand in love his own apostolic union with Christ and that of all the members of the body of the Society. As Nadal was to insist, in his attempt to explain Ignatius's own understanding of his Company as incorporated into the visible, hierarchical Church, dedicated to one end, 'to help souls', and thus as reflecting the mystical body of Christ: 'God chooses us to be companions of Jesus . . . It is to be noted that Christ, who has risen from the dead, and will never die again, still suffers in his members and carries his cross (Rom 6, 9) . . . Therefore God calls us to this, that in this warfare we should follow Christ'.¹² There is no understanding 'the rigorous logic of the ignatian *magis* which sweeps the Exercises along from the first words of the Foundation, leading us inevitably to the cross', without the ignatian *experience* of the crucified Lord, without that intimate love-knowledge (the petition of every ignatian contemplation of the evangelical Christ) of him who is the only way to the Father: 'Of all the creatures which *better* lead us to the end, which is the eternal Father, the first is the cross'.¹³

When Ignatius addressed himself, in the General Examen, to those 'who request admission to the Society of Jesus', he was at a

⁹ Molinari, Paul: 'The Place of the Kingdom in Apostolic Spirituality', in *Supplement to the Way*, 18 (Spring, 1973), p 54. He cites in support of his view, Oliver Manares and especially Jerome Nadal, as does Fr de Dalmases - 'Las meditaciones del reino y de dos banderas y la vocación a la Compañía de Jesús, según el P Nadal', in *Manresa* 20 (1948), pp 311-20.

¹⁰ Cf Exx 97-8, 146-7, 156-7.

¹¹ *Autobiography*, 96.

¹² The magisterial treatment of the La Storta vision is Hugo Rahner's, in four articles, published in 1935, in *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik*, an excellent digest of which is given in *Christus*, no 1 (Jan 1954), pp 43-64. See also Fr Ganss's treatment in his edition of the *Constitutions*, pp 346-7.

¹³ Rahner, *Christus*, art. cit., p 64.

singular disadvantage compared with earlier religious orders, the carthusians, say. In their *Consuetudines*, the prospective candidate could be dealt with in a few short sentences:

All the hard and difficult things will be shown to the novice who asks the grace of admission: all the wretchedness and austerity of the life which he wishes to embrace. And if he is not frightened off by this, and remains unshaken in his resolve, choosing to be hanged like Job, that is, in his love for ephemeral things, choosing death with Christ, that he might live with him; if he promises with full determination to be ready to follow the harder road in response to the words of the Lord, . . . he can be given a definite date for admission.¹⁴

It was not possible, even had it been desirable, to reveal to the aspirant the life of the totally committed apostle as it was to be in the sixteenth century, or in any other century, for that matter. Instead, he would help them first to find their own identity with the Christ who 'clothed himself as he did for our growth in the Spirit'. Many of those who offered themselves to the Society in its beginnings did so as a result of a choice first made in response to illuminative and unitive graces granted in a period of contemplative living with the Christ who 'went about preaching', who 'goes to his passion and death for my sins', and who still exercises, through his Spirit, 'the office of comforter – as friends are in the habit of consoling one another'.¹⁵ They had experienced interiorly something of what it means 'to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death'.¹⁶ They had glimpsed in some of its dimensions that love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.¹⁷ Having acquired a certain facility in the discernment of their own spirits, they would recognize as true spiritual consolation 'those ardent desires in our Lord' to be like him in his suffering and death: 'the interior movement whose effect is to set the soul on fire with the love of its Creator and Lord . . . increase of hope, faith and charity . . . which attracts a man to heavenly things . . . leaving him restful and at peace in his Creator and Lord'.¹⁸ For those who had made the Exercises, 'to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces', and 'to accept and desire with all possible energy whatever Christ

¹⁴ *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, XXII, De Novicio (Edition critique, in *Domo Cartusiae*, 1962), pp 118–19.

¹⁵ Cf Exx 91, 193, 224.

¹⁶ Phil 3, 10.

¹⁷ Cf Eph 3, 16–19.

¹⁸ Exx 316.

our Lord has loved and embraced',¹⁹ was a sentiment linked inextricably with their personal response to the call of Christ 'to labour with him and to follow him in suffering'. They would recognize a grace which they had already experienced: that 'greater desire to be moved by love, and to signalize themselves in a total service of their eternal King and universal Lord'. They would know intimately that there could be only one response: 'they not only offer their own persons in the task; they will even go against their own life-in-the-flesh (*contra su propria sensualidad*) and their natural and this-worldly love', in their apostolic union with Christ.²⁰

At the same time, the man who has made the Spiritual Exercises 'with fruit' is the first to realize that, no matter how close he has been drawn *affectively* to Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, it remains to discover how *effective* this attachment will be in apostolic terms. To experience that 'movement of filial love and humble affection which raises the soul to God',²¹ through the meditations and contemplations of the Exercises, does indeed prepare a man for the apostolic life. But he will only know whether he is truly detached 'in affection',²² when that affection is tested in practice. It is of little account that the aspirant who has not made the Exercises feels,

¹⁹ The most handy form of the declaration on this jesuit imitation and following of Christ in the General Examen is now in Fr George Ganss's translation and edition of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis, 1970), ch IV, 'Observances within the Society', pp 107-9. Père Antoine Delchard's article 'La mortification continuelle', in *Christus* no 9 (Jan, 1956), presents a careful and lucid commentary, phrase by phrase, of the whole text. Older jesuit readers will tend to identify it as the 'eleventh and twelfth rules of the *Summary*'.

²⁰ Exx. 97. It is important to notice that Ignatius, in his use of the terms *sensualidad* and reason (*razón*), in this and similar contexts, is employing what may loosely be called an augustinian psychology, as is particularly clear from his observation that exterior penances are used 'to overcome oneself, to the end that the sensuality may obey the reason and all the lower parts be more subject to the higher' (Exx 87). As François Courel points out (*Exercises Spirituels*, Paris, 1960, pp 68-9), 'in the Exercises, reason is a spiritual faculty which moves us to act in the same sense as the good spirit (Exx 182, 314), whilst the sensuality is the whole complex of lower sensible forces'. One might add that, though the distinction is perfectly acceptable to the modern christian, latter-day psychological research indicates how complex is the relationship between 'reason' and 'sensuality', and how deep is the need that man has for the healing power of Christ (in his apostles), who 'took our sensuality'. See my 'Note on sexuality and sensuality', in *Supplement to the Way*, 15 (Spring, 1972), pp 86-92.

²¹ This is the 'general definition' of prayer offered by Ignatius. It is an unusually accurate rendering of John Damascene's definition (cf *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 3, 24: PG 94, 1090), so frequently and tenaciously garbled as 'the raising of the mind and heart to God'. Cf the letter to Francis Borgia of July 1549, in *S. Ignatii . . . Epistolae et Instructiones* XII, p 651.

²² Cf Exx 155.

through human weakness and his own state of personal impoverishment – desolation, no such ardent desires in our Lord. If he truly wants them, he shall indeed have them soon – simply by offering himself in response to each affective grace which, as his faith assures him, enables him to be ‘ready to accept and suffer with patience any such injuries, mockeries and affronts entailed by the wearing of this uniform of Christ our Lord’.²³ For it is precisely at this point that the apostle begins to assume the paschal shape of the Christ with whom he is called to identify:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.²⁵ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Spirit of God who has been given to us.²⁶

Active and passive abnegation

‘For he gave us an example that in all things possible to us we might seek, through the aid of his grace, to imitate and follow him, since he is the way which leads men to life’.²⁷ This is the ‘degree of perfection so precious in the spiritual life’, the means to which is ‘to seek in our Lord greater abnegation and continual mortification in all things possible’.²⁸ It is, however, neither things nor the renunciation of them nor of oneself which is the object of the ignatian exercise – as though the following of Christ were some kind of human endeavour, an emulation of his life. It is to *find* him, his life, his Father, in all things: to be found in him, ‘to be engrafted in God our Lord’.²⁹ The desire to be like Christ, to see in him the ‘more excellent way’ to the Father, to see him as the Father’s *agape* – ‘patient, kind, not jealous or boastful, not arrogant or rude, not insisting on his own way, not irritable or resentful . . . bearing,

²³ Ganss, *Constitutions*, p 109.

²⁴ The disposition which the first couple of men would like to have. Cf Exx 153.

²⁵ ‘My will is . . . to enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore he who will come with me will have to labour with me; so that, following me in suffering, he can likewise follow me in glory’. Exx 95.

²⁶ Rom 5, 1–5.

²⁷ Ganss, *ibid.*, p 108.

²⁸ Ganss, *ibid.*, p 109.

²⁹ Cf the letter of Ignatius to Isabel Roser of 10 Nov 1532, translated in *Saint Ignatius Loyola: letters to women* (ed Hugo Rahner, London, 1960), p 266.

believing, hoping, enduring all things',³⁰ is itself a grace. It is to be moved by the good spirit from desolation to consolation: to

... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction, with the consolation with which we are consoled by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in consolation.³¹

It is not at all a case of 'he who wants the end, wants the means'. It is simply that, in accepting Christ, we accept to be fashioned as he, in this human condition which we mutually share, was fashioned as the Father's redeeming and healing love. It is the acceptance of Christ which is positive: and, since he is the Way, of the consoling love which sharing his sufferings brings. That there will be repugnance in the sensuality to its diminution – the suffering of loss by self-control (itself a fruit of the Spirit) – is endemic to the human condition. If not, there would be no 'felt' distinction between Christ risen and the *viator*, the 'poor pilgrim' who must progressively realize that the cross, or Christ crucified, *is* the way to the Father's glory. This is to say that continual abnegation is rather the acceptance of the Father's constant proffer of Christ, given to me for the brethren, than *constant* rejection of self-seeking tendencies which avoid pain in any shape or form; even as the purified conscience, 'trained by practice to distinguish good from evil',³² can rejoice as it chooses the true good, even whilst the 'sensuality' suffers. There must be active acceptance of the Father's proffer; and it will often happen that, either in our own darkness or the divine darkness of contemplation, we can recognize him only in the suffering-experience. Yet we can choose only him, not the suffering in itself. We can suffer passively; but only when we choose so to suffer – or rather to suffer *with*, are we purified for union.

Ignatius, then, is drawing the beginner into a progressive dialectic of active and passive purification. It is Christ who is first lifted up and pierced, who 'opens his arms on the cross'; whose word, 'come to me', makes it possible for us to take his yoke upon us, to be 'co-crucified'³³ with him. Yet it is in the taking, and only in the taking, that there is the sweetness and light.³⁴

³⁰ 1 Cor 13, 4-7.

³¹ 2 Cor 1, 3-5.

³² Heb 5, 14.

³³ Cf Gal 2, 20.

³⁴ Cf Mt 11, 28-30.

Positive and negative

If the purpose of this dialectic is total abnegation or mature indifference, then this indifference must inevitably be love. 'The basic meaning of indifference', says Karl Rahner, 'is this: the only heart perfect in its loving is the heart pierced, consumed, the heart which has never flinched in face of the risk of its love'.³⁵ This total affectivity, which is punctuated by God's gift of 'intense' consolation,³⁶ is also marked by a series of responses to repeated gift (the operation of the Spirit who 'pours out his love in our hearts'): responses which are ecstatic, self-abandoning. Because the gift is one, the responses, whether spoken or 'done' – effective or – simply affective – become progressively undifferentiated; and it is at this point that contemplation becomes action and action contemplation. Ignatius is still speaking to novices when he says:

Further, they should often be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, stripping off from themselves the love of creatures to the extent that this is possible, in order to turn their love upon the Creator of them, by loving him in all creatures and all of them in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will.³⁷

'Simplicity seeks God, purity finds him and tastes him'.³⁸ The word of *The Imitation* is not lost on Ignatius. The single-mindedness which seeks and aims at nothing except God's will and the good of the neighbour³⁹ is likewise a gift. It is Christ's own food and sustenance: 'My food is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work'⁴⁰. This is the food for which we labour with him, the food which endures for eternal life, the food which he gives us.⁴¹ We may say, then, that the gift of right intention, which we must 'hold', is a eucharistic gift. It not only calls for but empowers the response, which is 'to please the divine Goodness for its own sake', and for 'the incomparable love and benefits with which God has anticipated us'.⁴² Again, if we see the movement simply in negative terms, the 'stripping off the love of all creatures', the exhortation to continual

³⁵ 'Spiritualité Ignatienne et dévotion au Sacré-Coeur', in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* (1959), p 155.

³⁶ For this terminology, see my article, 'The Discernment of Spirits', in *Supplement to the Way*, 16 (Summer, 1972), pp 62–3.

³⁷ Ganss, *Constitutions* Pt III, ch I. 'Spiritual care and progress of the novices' [288], p 165.

³⁸ *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk II, ch 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.* ⁴⁰ Jn 4, 34. ⁴¹ Cf Jn 6, 27.

⁴² Ganss, *Constitutions*, *ibid.*

mortification is impossible, because totally inhuman. Ignatius may be paradoxical, but he is never irrational. So he writes to Manuel Sanchez:

... the burden of the soul, which is love, can lighten the burden in all things, earthly and inferior as well, if one does nothing earthly or inferior, but loves them all for God our Lord in as much as they tend towards his greater love and service. This is a task which is related to our last end – the sovereign and infinite Goodness himself, who is to be loved in all other things. On him alone must hang the whole weight of our love.⁴³

Abnegation: The search for relationship

The spiritual history of the Society of Jesus could be called the beloved disciple's search for union – identification – with his crucified and risen Lord in relationships of redeeming, healing and edifying love with those with whom and those to whom he is sent. This movement is ecstatic and circular, as is Christ's: 'Thee God I come from, to thee go'.⁴⁴ For Ignatius, as for Paul, the movement demands the *sensus Christi*, and is necessarily cross-orientated:

... you should humbly reckon others better than yourselves. You must look to each other's interests, not your own. Let your mind be the mind of Christ Jesus. Though the divine nature was his from the first, he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing ... Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death – death on a cross.⁴⁵

The third point is to look at and weigh what they are doing: all their journeying and toiling is that the Lord may be born in extreme poverty, and that, after many labours, hunger, thirst, heat and cold, injuries and insults, he may die on the cross: and all this for me.⁴⁶

This radical self-abnegation, or emptying or stripping, is the central mystery of the Incarnate Christ – the 'how' of the revelation of his relationship with the Father. Ignatius expects that the companions of Jesus will make themselves nothing according to Christ's pattern: love and obedience are the same movement, expressing and mani-

⁴³ Letter to Manuel Sanchez, 18 May 1547. *Epistolae et Instructiones* I, 513–15.

⁴⁴ See Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Poems and Prose* (ed W. H. Gardner, London, 1966), p 82; cf Jn 13, 3.

⁴⁵ Phil 2, 3–9.

⁴⁶ Exx. 116. Contemplation on the Nativity of our Lord.

festing at once this Father-Son relationship. All that he asks for, suggests or imposes⁴⁷ in the name of obedience is in terms of seeking this unitive apostolic love, or on the understanding that it has been found. Many of those who have followed him have believed that the safer way to this union is to reject self totally, so as to accept totally the understanding and judgment of the legitimately appointed superior, who 'stands in the place of God our Lord'. Pre-eminent amongst these is the jesuit brother St Alphonsus Rodriguez, whose 'whole life is a cry for the elucidation of the notion of obedience', and who settled for the view that command is its essence.⁴⁸ But this is not to say that he did not grasp and live its *inner* essence. It was for him a being-with, so intimate and complete, that 'he *sees* this and knows it clearly, that it is God who gives the command'. So it is that

for such obedient men, imitators of Christ our Lord, he, just as he is, is the one who will look through their eyes, and hear through their hearing, and speak through their mouths, and work with their hands, so that soul and body they are nothing other than an instrument moved by the hand of God.⁴⁹

Instrumentum coniunctum . . .

That the obedience of St Alphonsus often carried with it external marks of imperfection is clear enough. One of his earliest biographers, Francisco Colin, says of him that 'in the matter of obedience he seemed to be unable to use his understanding': a human limitation. As Nadal remarks, in his explanation of the notorious images of the dead body and the old man's stick, the negative or self-denying aspect of obedience is that we should rid ourselves of everything that denies its perfection. 'It is nonetheless necessary that in this very abnegation we should exercise our own will and liberty of spirit in the grace and light of obedience which we must receive and co-operate with in Christ'.⁵⁰ As has recently been pointed out, apostolic obedience is concerned with the evaluation of the greater good, with opinion:⁵¹ where any one of us is likely

⁴⁷ For some examples of how Ignatius imposed this obediential abnegation, cf de Guibert, J.: *The Jesuits: their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (Chicago, 1964), pp 90-96.

⁴⁸ *St Alphonsus Rodriguez: Autobiography* (ed and trans W. Yeomans S.J., London, 1964), p 17.

⁴⁹ Yeomans, *op. cit.*, p 228.

⁵⁰ *Scholia in Constitutionibus*, 120.

⁵¹ *Evangelica Testificatio*, 28. Cf *Supplement to the Way*, 14 (Autumn, 1971), pp 16-17.

to be blinded by the darkness of self-deception. According to Nadal, the blindness which is the obedience of faith brings a true light and clarity: the light of the Spirit, which enables a man to unite himself to God in following him in all things, being strengthened in him. All falsehood disappears and the understanding grasps the truth with intense consolation.⁵²

Nadal compares this obedience, in its positive and negative aspects, with 'true contemplation of God our Lord, a contemplation which dissipates all that is false in order that we may abide in the truth and discover many other things to help us to love God and to serve him with all our will'.⁵³

Mortification and contemplation

To respond to this purification is already to receive a form of illumination. It is to understand that in our self-denying search we are finding the hidden good which is God. 'God is known in darkness'. Nadal is sure that at the heart of ignatian obedience, and the continual mortification it demands, is the *contemplation de la ténèbre*, which itself has been constantly understood as union with Christ suffering and crucified: a union which is dynamic in that it moves through to the consolations of Christ risen. Apostolic obedience is choice with Christ; and, for Ignatius, the sign that Christ is found is his risen peace and joy – the fruits of his Spirit. Today, when the Church, in the light of the Council, asks for the fullest co-operation of all the members of the Institute for the renewal of life,⁵⁴ it seems right that a greater emphasis should be laid on those aspects of ignatian tradition and spiritual government which involve communal deliberation. But such sharing with one another demands that love of one another 'which descends from the Divine goodness and spreads to all other men'.⁵⁵ It equally demands total warfare against self-love. Certainly to be co-responsible *for* the superior and *with* him for the community and its mission, instead of simply responsible *to* him or to the 'Rule', would seem to demand a deeper contemplative grasp of passion, cross and resurrection, and a consequent more radical self-abnegation than the privations involved in the 'regular observance' of yesterday.

⁵² Nadal, *Pláticas*, 178, 170; cited by M. Giuliani, 'Nuit et Lumière de l'obéissance', in *Christus*, 7 (July, 1955), pp 363ff.

⁵³ Giuliani, *art. cit.*

⁵⁴ Cf *Perfectae Caritatis*, 4; *Ecclesiae Sanctae* I.

⁵⁵ Cf *Constitutions* Pt VIII, ch I [671]; Ganss, p 291.