

EPILOGUE: ANNOTATION ONE

ONE MIGHT suppose that many come to their 'annual retreat' with a greater or less degree of enthusiasm which reflects that personal human blend of desire and reluctance to 'come away by yourselves and rest awhile' with the Lord, so that he might instruct, correct, and console by giving increase in true love and peace.

Such a consideration, trite as it is, can serve to remind us that our retreat can and indeed should, be a Sabbath which, at least in its culmination, proffers us not only a measure of the 'Spirit's sweet rest and repose', but also of his own wonderful light. But it must also emphasize that, if it has anything Ignatian about it, it is also a time of exercise. It is to be hoped that what is written in this Supplement can help us to discover afresh what these Exercises are; and, more importantly, how we are to perform them under the impulse of grace, so that they might achieve their object. With this in mind, I propose to offer a brief reflection on the first Annotation, bearing in mind that Ignatius declares that the purpose of them all is 'for acquiring some understanding in the Spiritual Exercises which follow':

This name 'Spiritual Exercises' indicates every method of examining the conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying with voice and mind, and other spiritual activities, as will be spoken of later on. For just as walking, marching and running are bodily exercises, so in the same way every method of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all ill-ordered affections, and when they are done away with, to seek and to find the divine will in the ordering of one's life for the salvation of the soul, are called Spiritual Exercises.

One can only conclude that the point of comparison is simply that the purpose of exercising the body is to take the necessary steps to allow it to function properly; and for this — at least in normal circumstances — to take a stroll, to go for a brisk walk, or to run will be sufficient. For the soul to function well, however, is a more difficult and a rather more complex matter. It is at least worth remarking that St Paul, when he is instructing Timothy in a context which embraces both the discernment of spirits and the right use of creatures (1 Tim 4,1-8), concludes: '. . . exercise yourself in piety. For while bodily exercise is beneficial only in a very limited way, piety is beneficial in every way, in that it holds out promise both for the present life and the life to come'.

It may also be significant that Ignatius uses this word *piedad* — 'piety'

(rendered in Shakespearean English as 'godliness') only twice: in the final colloquy of the last exercise of the second week (71): '. . . likewise, how up to this moment he (Christ our Lord) has shown me so much *piedad* and merciful love (*miserericordia*) . . .'; and secondly, in the fourth and last point of the Contemplation for obtaining love (237), '. . . how all good things and gifts descend from above — just as my limited power from that sovereign and infinite from above: and so justice, goodness, *piedad*, *miserericordia*, etc., like rays of light coming from the sun'.

What perhaps strikes us most forcibly in this simple excursus on the first paragraph of the Exercises is the extraordinary dimensions in which they are set: how necessary it is to weigh and discover what each word and phrase might hold in the tradition into which Ignatius gradually enters in the course of his own pilgrimage; and the precision of the balance which he is able to strike between the importance of personal effort (that is, exercising all one's faculties), and the ability to convey, both directly and obliquely, that all of it is valueless except in the context of divine gift. His choice of the word *piedad* is a useful case in point.

Additional exercises

The five exercises of the first week have to do with all those named in the first annotation. A brief examination of the additions at the end of the first week are prime examples of those other 'spiritual activities which will be spoken of later on'; 'exercises to prepare and dispose us' for the main exercises. It will be worth our while, I believe, to consider them briefly in this context, especially as they are often quoted as examples of Ignatius's fussiness, or excessive mechanistic approach to the leisured business (*otium, negotium*) of meditative and contemplative prayer.

The first we find to be a short meditation in the strictly traditional sense of that much-abused word: '. . . after going to bed, when I am settling myself down to sleep, to think, for the space of a "Hail Mary", on the time I have fixed for getting up, and for what purpose, going over the Exercise I have to make' (73). Ignatius is always anxious that choice be exercised in *minutiae* and in conjunction with the discursive reasoning.

The second addition is a brief exercise in imaginative contemplation, which, whilst it has the psychological effect of focusing the attention, contains in germ the method of the great exercise (91-98) which controls all gospel reflection and contemplation, enabling the exercitant to come to the awareness of himself and the Lord to whom he wishes to respond. Ignatius consistently proposes that the exercitant make use of imaginative comparisons, with 'accurate empathy', in order that we might better 'contemplate the life of the Eternal King' . . . so as to be 'ready and diligent for the accomplishment of his holy will' (91-92). The theme of gratitude and ingratitude is also introduced here (74), which plays a central role in the culminating Contemplation to obtain love (233).

The third (75) is, perhaps surprisingly at this stage, the momentary enjoyment of what can quite easily be a special contemplative grace. The relationship of Father and Son, of the Son and myself; and my response is to be based on the revealed response of Christ to the Father: a 'mystical moment of service', as I take up the classical stance of petitionary prayer. 'I will stand for the space of one Our Father, with my mind lifted up, realizing how God our Lord [sc. the glorified Jesus] is looking at me, etc., and make a gesture [a genuflection] of reverence or humility'. The allusion to the christological hymn (Phil 2,8-11) is not lost on us.

In the fourth, though one might say with truth that Ignatius here is delineating a physical as well as a psychological structure for the beginning and the process of formal prayer — teaching, as he says of his own relationship with the Lord, as a schoolmaster teaches a child, we can hardly miss the point and purpose of this exercise and its variations: 'We will notice two things: the first is, that if I find what I want on my knees, I will not change my posture . . . the second is that in the point [of the contemplation] in which I find what I seek, there shall I rest without being anxious about going further until I am fully satisfied' (76). Ignatian principles abound: to seek the truth in all things, to find God in all things, 'to find God our Lord in peace' (150).

The fifth is the basis of all ignatian repetition: the reflection after every exercise which constantly beckons into a renewal of affective prayer, brief though it might be. Here, too, is the principle of all self-examination, and the 'four points' of the examen of conscience — or consciousness, as the modern jargon prefers it: 'how it has gone with me'; sorrow for lack of co-operation; thanksgiving 'if things have gone well' — *non nobis, Domine*, and the renewal of purpose (77).

The next four additions (78-81) are fundamental assertions that I have a fair measure of control over my interior and exterior environment, at least negatively, if not positively: I can avoid thinking joyful thoughts when Christ's suffering and dying are occupying my attention; and I need to exercise true freedom with regard to my exterior and interior senses. One must admit that the ninth (81) presents problems for the director who is aware of the importance of 'body language' in counselling! One would not expect Ignatius to know about, or even to be concerned with this. The main point is clear: the director is not there to distract the one making the Exercises.

The final addition is an ascetical treatise in itself (82-89), with its clear distinction between temperance and penance, and the theological motives for corporal penance. It was certainly written 'after his studies [at Paris] were completed', and it manifests a clear scholastic orientation. In the monastic tradition, we have an early enough distinction between bodily and spiritual exercises, according to which the corporal refer to penitential and ascetical practices: vigils, fasting and corporal penances — self-flagellation, the wearing of haircloth and so on. Ignatius draws no such

distinction here; and he nowhere refers to the manual labour, which the monks were accustomed to distinguish from 'acts of piety'. It is clear, however, that he is aware that so often the *desideratum* is temperance, that forms of true exterior penance are largely symbolic of the desire for interior penitence — true conversion, and that the greatest discretion needs to be observed to find the true point of temperance and the motivation for undertaking voluntary penance. There is no trace of 'holy indiscretion' here.

There is another special sense of spiritual exercise which is perhaps worth noticing, and this in the context of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to St Bonaventure. He tells us that we need a form of exercise if we are to pass from the gift of knowledge to that of wisdom: the journey (*transitus*) is an exercise. This passing from the activity of knowledge to that of wisdom is the exercise of holiness, which depends on the gift of piety.¹ As we have tried to show, *piEDAD* is a very special word in the ignatian vocabulary: it expresses the loving relationship of the Lord with each one of us up to the present moment; it is one of those gifts which measure our likeness to him, and the way in which we grow in that likeness. To repeat a special word from the Council's chapter on holiness, through Christ's gift 'we can follow in his footsteps, be moulded according to his image, devote ourselves with all our might to the glory of God and the service of our neighbour' (*Lumen Gentium*, 40). An accurate summary of the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises according to Ignatius Loyola.

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¹ In *Hexameron: Opera Omnia*, tome 5 (Quarrachi, 1891), pp 420-21.