A DIRECTORY FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD WEEKS

Contemplating Christ's earthly life

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THE CALL OF CHRIST (91-100)

ITS PURPOSE: LINKING THE FIRST AND SECOND WEEKS

BEFORE we begin our contemplations on the life of Christ, Ignatius inserts this link meditation between the First and Second Week of the Exercises. It is meant to help us 'to contemplate the life of the Eternal King' (91).[1] Original sin disrupted God's original plan in creating. The 'I will not serve' of Lucifer became, with the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the universal cry of the human race. Disorder lies in man's heart and therefore in the society in which he lives; he has imprinted his own greed upon creation, making it subject to vanity, and thus perpetuating disorder until the end of time. However, God was faithful to faithless man; in his eternal design he decreed that the Virgin Mary should bear his Son and name him Jesus, who would crush the serpent's head and reign for ever. In the First Week, in the colloquy of mercy (53), the exercitant had asked himself what he ought to do for Christ. This meditation on the Kingdom prepares the way for an answer. The disorder of the fallen world will give way to the order of the new creation, centred and aligned on Christ who holds all things in unity (Col 1,17). The redemption of Christ had thrown its effect back to the beginning of our human history (Gen 3,15; Exx 71).

In participating in the contemplations on the life of Christ we are to learn for ourselves what this new life is (cf 1 Jn 1,1-2). Each of us is to receive from Christ a knowledge of the work that he has assigned the individual in the restoration of the kingdom to his Father. Christ and his mission must be born again in each one of us uniquely: 'What I do is me: for that I came'. We are called by Christ to assist him in his redeeming conquest. Our contemplations will be intimate but not just cosy. This is not a schoolboy's extravaganza but a contemplation, based on the Scriptures: 'Thy kingdom come'.

The paschal mystery. This consideration is Ignatius's way of introducing us to what today we call the paschal mystery. In its shortest form it is death/resurrection. 'Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' (Lk 24,24; 2 Tim 2,11; Heb 2,9; 1 Pet 1,11). In the King's call to his subjects this becomes *labor/gloria* (93,95).

Just as the First Principle and Foundation was put before the

beginning of the Exercises, so as to ensure that no one should be in any doubt of the end and purpose of the Exercises, so the meditation of the Call or the Kingdom of Christ is given us before we embark on the contemplations on the life of Christ so that we may know what is relevant and significant in all the scenes contemplated.

It should not be thought that we are introduced into the paschal mystery only with the Passion and death of Christ (Third Week). We are to enter into it from the start. Ignatius draws attention to this in the nativity scene. He bids us watch and consider 'the journey and the labour they undergo in order that our Lord may be born in extreme poverty; and in order that after such toils, after hunger, thirst, heat, cold, insults and affronts, he may die on the cross, and all this for me' (116). Luke draws out attention to it in his story of the three days loss (itself prophetic of the death and resurrection of Christ) in which he makes our Lord answer his mother: 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' (Lk 2,49). Christ's public ministry begins with rejection at Nazareth (Lk 4,16-30); and after the initial enthusiasm the tide turned increasingly against him: 'many of his disciples left him, and stopped going with him' (6,66).

It is not suggested that we should continually be trying to draw what might be called paschal morals from the life of Christ; but we must never forget that he is making his way towards Jerusalem. Our contemplations are not holidays with Christ but a journey with him. We must know what his mission is and pray for an ever-growing attraction towards sharing it with him as one of his chosen companions. We want to hear the call he makes to us, to experience it.

The Petition — 'That I may not be deaf to his call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish his most holy will' (92). With the start of the Second Week we are approaching a decision. Either we knew from the outset what particular decision we wished to make: for instance, the choice of a state of life; or we approach the Exercises to discover what the 'more' is that our Lord is asking of us, what further degree of renunciation he wants from us. Either way, we need to have the desire to hear, the desire that he would make plain to me his unique will for me, and the desire to embrace it, cost what it may. It is useless to expect to hear from God if our lips are merely going through the motions while our hearts are hiding (Mt 15, 8). I pray for the grace of sincerity of heart, of a heart open to and, much more, thirsting for God. I pray also for the grace to be sensitive to the approach of God and for the wisdom to be able to discern and

interpret his will as he communicates it to me. I need also to pray for the courage to accept what I discern and to fulfil his will on which so much depends for myself and others. The actual graces we ask for are light for the mind and strength for the will.

TWO RESPONSES: JUDGMENT AND REASON (96); GREATER AFFECTION (97)

Judgment and reason (96). The first response is the proffer to do things for Christ; 'to offer their whole selves for labour'. This makes apostolic helpers of those who respond in this way. Already generosity is manifested; for those who offer are involved in sacrificing their own comfort, as they put the needs of others ahead of their own tastes and inclinations.

Greater affection (97). Those who wish to show greater affection will take the initiative against themselves and will 'make offerings of greater worth and moment' than they have done before (the comparison is not with others; it is with our own hearts). This deeper degree of renunciation does demand some explanation. The first response is christian common sense. The second is love at its highest. The first corresponds to taking a job: the second corresponds to taking a wife: and while a man may propose, he is not always accepted, at least not always at first! St Ignatius did not regard his own request to have been fully answered till fifteen years later at La Storta. The offering is made, 'if thy Divine Majesty be pleased to choose and receive me to this life and state' (98). The first response could be cupidity in disguise, the response of an activist who likes doing or running things. It largely concerns things, work. The second concerns a person and that person myself. I have to get to work on myself. Our Lord condemned the missionary zeal of the Pharisees (Mt 23,15) because they sought to convert others without first being converted themselves; the blind eventually leading the blind (Lk 6,39-42).

A telling way of explaining this response is the way Père Lacordaire put it to a young man about to enter a seminary. 'It is joining the priesthood with ideas other than that of sacrificing oneself to the mystery of the redemption that makes bad or indifferent priests: everything else may be mended or made whole but this original sin' (28 July 1853). How deeply do I want to be involved in the mystery of the redemption, the paschal mystery? To be fully redemptive, Christ's work must be done with the heart of Christ.

THE OFFERING (98)

The formula presented by Ignatius for the offering is wholly uncompromising. It is as well that it should be so, in order that our acceptance of the call should be a considered and mature one. Love should be a calculated risk, not folly. Do I know enough about myself and about Christ to be able to make such an offering? All love is a risk — no risk, no love — but it is a calculated risk. Ignatius himself recognizes this natural reluctance, when he dwells on the 'choice to actual poverty' (157, 168). A person who does not know himself or is not yet accustomed to making decisions is not mature enough to make this offering. The person who does not realize that his ability to keep his promise depends on Christ should not make such an offering (14); as it is made with God's 'favour and help' (98) so is it kept only with God's favour and help. As long as I fear to make it, clearly I am thinking more about myself than Christ. How close do I really want to come to him? Who is my Christ? If he is without his cross, if he does not invite me to share it with him, it is a case of mistaken identity. 'During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ' (1 Cor 2,2). It is only the love of Christ that can attract me to make this offering. The contemplations of this and the succeeding weeks are to allow Christ to imprint the love of himself upon my heart. 'Jesus, teach us your way. Form within us your own profound attitudes, so that these will govern all our actions and reactions, our thoughts, our feelings and our words today'.

Why seek for humiliation? It must be accepted that in virtue of belonging to humanity, each of us (quite apart from heredity, bad example, worldly views and structures imprisoning me) is in rebellion against God; that is to say, each of us has the desire to be independent, to make good and evil for ourselves (Gen 3,5). So Ignatius ends this second week: 'Let each be convinced then that he will make progress in all spiritual matters in proportion as he shall have divested himself of his own self-love, his own will, and self-interest' (189). Each of us has a petty divinity that in the secrecy of our hearts, of our personalities, we keep well polished. Our reputation means everything to us and we leap to its defence at least in our feelings if it is attacked or threatened in any way. We suffer acutely if we are overlooked or slighted. We are the reflection of others' opinions of us. What is the best medicine for this? Surely it is the willing acceptance of anything that thwarts my self-will or

reduces the pseudo-splendour of my artificial crown. The consideration of my sins and sinfulness during the first week began this work; but it was done mainly in the secret of my heart or protected by the secrecy of the seal of confession. It is my life in society that provides me with the tools to hone down my pride.

Let us note, however, that humiliation in itself is bad for me. It is only when I turn humiliation into humility by a grateful acceptance that my peace of mind is restored and I am purified. There is no way to humility except through humiliation. Without humility we shall always be either deaf to our Lord's call or have no stomach to be prompt and diligent to fulfil his call.

Actual poverty is by no means to be despised, but it has no value apart from poverty of spirit. Actual poverty, willingly accepted and embraced, shows God that it is he whom we love and want, and he in whom we place our trust. It also teaches us not to judge our worth by what we own, and not to lead others astray who might be inclined to judge us by what we own and show us meretricious honour. It strips us not only of prestige but of power. We may also reflect that comfort isolates us from the majority of mankind.

Spiritual poverty. The beatitudes (Mt 5,3; Lk 6,20) begin: 'How happy are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven/God'. Poverty of spirit is to lay aside all other loves except the love of God; it is the desire to possess God totally and to be possessed totally by him; it is to make God all my riches. 'My beloved to me and I to him' (Cant 2,16); 'the Lord is my portion and cup' (Ps 16,5): 'You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone' (Ps 16,1); 'Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God' (Ps 41,1.2, etc.). In so far as I possess and love anything created, it is because it is in God. It is with one and the same love that I love him and the creation he sustains (cf 316). This dispossession of creation in favour of the creator makes us one of the *anawim*, the term used in the Old Testament for those who might be said to have no possession except God. Of the *anawim* our Lady would be the most conspicuous example. It has been said that when our Lord described the *anawim* in the beatitudes, he was thinking of Mary the lowliest and loveliest of the *anawim*.

In so far as decision-making is concerned, both poverty and humility prevent us from following the impulses of mere nature and make us instead responsive to the movements of the Spirit (Rom 7,14-25; Gal 5,16-24). Is there any difference between humility and poverty of spirit? At depth there would seem to be none. If a

distinction can be suggested, humility is more the active virtue that seeks God's will; poverty is more the passive virtue that accepts God's will.

The reality of sharing with Christ. Our imagination can easily run away with us. If this offering to share with Christ is to take shape in my life, then I must see where Christ has already been offering me the opportunities. The great principles have to operate within the confines of my life.

> Jesus meek and humble of heart make my heart like unto thy heart.
> From the desire of being esteemed deliver me, O Lord.
> honoured
> loved
> sought after
> praised
> preferred to others
> consulted
> approved
> over-estimated
> From the fear of being humbled deliver me, O Lord.
> despised
> suffering rebuffs
> being calumniated
> forgotten
> ridiculed
> injured
> suspected[2]

Not all may like everything in this litany, but it is a pointer to the kind of everyday things that occur. A good way to start making our offering practical is to go back over the recent past and accept the actualities I have been pained over, or renounce the dispositions that have been mine. The past can be changed by our new present judgment.

Following not leading. Our Lord asks us to follow him, not to go ahead of him. It would be presumption on our part to dictate to him what precise humiliations would be good for us, and more rash still to work to bring them about. We must also clearly understand that humiliations are not sought for their own sake; everything must be judged in relation to the end, namely, the greater glory of God. That is why, when Ignatius or his Society were calumniated and reviled, he would always insist on a public and legal investigation being

made and the judgment that followed being made public. To have allowed his good name or his orthodoxy to be impugned and to go unchallenged would have harmed the good work being done for the greater glory of God.

It is necessary if we want to live under the guidance of the Spirit to live where the Spirit is, in the present, and not in a fanciful future. No wonder a person becomes apprehensive about future trials if they are dreamt up in his imagination. If there are no real grounds for imagining that some happening will come to pass, the Spirit will not be there to strengthen us to meet it. Thinking up possibilities is a distraction from the present.

An exception to facing the future in imagination is when the future is a real future and imminent, and then it is very sensible to meet it in advance. Here our imagination will help us to be real and decisive people. In such a case we imagine that what we fear has happened. We place ourselves on the other side of what we fear. All we have to do now is to ask ourselves how we conduct ourselves in the new situation which we imagine to have arisen. Our energy is spent not in nerving ourselves to meet the challenge but in dealing with it now that it has been accepted.

Pain and suffering. Ignatius does use the word 'pain' or 'suffering' in the address the king makes (95) to those whom he calls; but this seems to be a generic or portmanteau word for labour and hardships of all and any kind: not specifically of physical or mental pain. It is difficult to see what apostolic effectiveness this would achieve; on the contrary it might seriously impair such effectiveness, preventing a person from fulfilling his vocation. If pain and suffering come our way we accept them and make them redemptive.

For some, suffering is their apostolate: God invites them to it and attracts them to ask for it. St Thérèse of the Child Jesus wrote after one of her communions at the age of eleven in 1884: 'My heart was inflamed with a burning desire of suffering. . . . At the same time my soul was flooded with consolation so great that all through my life I have never experienced any to equal it. Suffering became attractive to me and I began to find in it increasing joys'. Later, she tells us that 'up to that time I had suffered without loving suffering. Since then I have felt real love for it'. It is interesting to note that eleven years later still in 1895, two years before her death in 1897, she felt she had matured further in the way of the Spirit and wrote: 'Now I no longer have any desire in my soul, save to love Jesus even unto folly. . . . I no longer desire pain or death, and yet I love them both.

Long did I call on them as messengers of joy. . . . Today I leave myself entirely in his hands. He is my God and I need no other compass. Now the only petition I can make with any fervour is the perfect accomplishment of the will of God in my soul'.

God's calls and invitations are in his own keeping. Ignatius will direct us in the Third Week to wish to experience in ourselves something of the Passion which Christ underwent for me (203); but this is not the specific call Christ makes to his followers in his address (95), nor the offerings of greater worth and moment Ignatius suggests as their reply in the oblation (98). Pain and suffering are included in the hardships which those who follow Christ will have to endure as the common lot of humanity; but other men do not ask to be chosen to imitate Christ 'in bearing all insults and reproaches, and all poverty; actual poverty as well as poverty of spirit' (98).

The condition. The words quoted above continue, 'if your Divine Majesty is pleased to choose and receive me'; everything must be according to the will of God. There is no higher criterion than this. There is a will of God for each of us (cf Mk 15,20). It is for us to discover, not to invent. Some may discover that it is to a willing acceptance of pain and suffering that Christ is calling them, asking them to enter into the paschal mystery through the redemptive value of their sufferings.

Ignatius himself was kept waiting fifteen years till he was satisfied that he had received the grace he asked for in all its fulness. In his autobiography he relates it tersely like this:

> After he became a priest he had decided to spend a year without saying mass, preparing himself and begging our Lady to deign to place him with her son. One day, while still a few miles from Rome, he was praying in a church, and experienced such a change in his soul, and saw so clearly that God the Father had placed him with his Son Christ, that his mind could not doubt that God the Father had indeed placed him with his Son.

CHRIST THE ETERNAL KING (1 Cor 15,24-28)

Some have suggested that at the end of the world Christ will hand over his kingship to the Father. This would be a denial of the Father's plan for the new creation; for Christ is the corner or keystone (Eph 2, 19-22; 1 Pet 2,6, etc.). At the day 'of his appearing and of his kingdom' Christ's period of conquest will come to an end,

because completed. All will return to the Father because all has returned to Christ, and the kingdom of Christ is the Father's (Apoc 22). We are to reign with him: 'Here is a saying you can rely on. If we hold firm, then we shall reign with him . . .' (2 Tim 2,11-13). 'Surely you cannot think', says St Jerome, 'that he will cease to rule once all things have been placed under his feet, for that is when he will begin to rule more powerfully than ever'.[3] 'Let us beware of thinking', says St Augustine, 'that Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, by dispossessing himself of it. No, the man Jesus Christ will lead all the just, in whom the mediator of God and of all men already reigns by their life of faith, to the contemplation which the apostle calls the face-to-face vision'.[4]

Note. St Ignatius suggests (100) that during this second week onwards 'it greatly helps' to read 'occasionally' something from the *Imitation of Christ* or the lives of the saints. Neither is meant to be a substitute for the periods of prayer or for the review which follows them. The life of a saint is proposed not as one might propose some light reading by way of relaxation, but that one may be encouraged and instructed how the following of Christ works out in one's own life. The life should therefore be chosen with care as one that will be of help to me. Nor is there any reason why one should finish the life before the retreat ends.

The *Imitation of Christ* was Ignatius's favourite book of devotion. As the title indicates, it can be of universal help; but at this point in one's retreat, the following chapters from book II could be especially useful; as their titles indicate:

On loving Jesus more than everything
On having Jesus as a close friend
On the fewness of those who love the cross of Jesus
On the royal road of the cross.

Scripture. General reading on the Kingdom: Isai chapters 40-50; Heb 11,8ff; Gen 12,1.2: the call of Abraham — invitation to risk; Mk 10,35-40 can you drink my chalice?; Lk 4,16-30 rejection at Nazareth; the mission of Christ 1 Cor 1,17-25. The foolishness of the cross 1 Cor 2,2-9; Phil 2,6ff having the mind of Christ; Phil 3,7-14 'What I formerly thought advantageous . . .'

THE SECOND WEEK

INTRODUCTION

> If I have spoken all things to you in my Word, which is my Son, and I have no other word, what answer can I now make to you, or what can I reveal to you which is greater than this? Set your eyes on him alone, for in him I have spoken and revealed to you all things, and in him you shall find yet more than that which you ask or desire. For you ask locutions and revelations, which are the part; but if you set your eyes on him, you shall find the whole; for he is my complete locution and answer, and he is all my vision, and all my revelation. . . . If I spoke aforetime, it was to promise Christ; and if they enquired of me, their enquiries were directed to petitions for Christ and expectancy concerning him, in whom they should find every good thing (as is now set forth in all the teaching of the Evangelists and the Apostles). . . .[5]

In the First Week we meet the reality which is Christ; in the Second Week we meet the life of Christ. In the First Week we see Christ as Redeemer; in the Second Week we see the full personality of Christ, his heart. In the First Week we seek healing; in the Second Week we ask to share in his mission of healing.

Participation not description. No more than the evangelists in writing their gospels do we consider the life of Christ as a mere documentary or even biography. Just as they placed the life of Christ at the service of the Church in their own age, so do we make ourselves present to the life of Christ in our present needs. We come to each scene in the gospel, each mystery, to receive from it the grace it contains 'for me'. 'The kingdom of God is not just words, it is power' (1 Cor 4,20). The Spirit who inspired the scriptures is present in them and in me. In each scene our Lord is revealing himself to me, and the revelation of himself to me is not exactly the same revelation he makes of himself to others. This is because the revelation is also a relation. True, a person can be known only in so far as he reveals himself; but this revelation of himself he makes to me is not just more or less than he reveals to others. Christ reveals himself to me according to the way in which the uniqueness of my personality will affect and condition our friendship. *Cor ad cor loquitur* — heart speaks to heart. It is not mere knowledge I seek of Christ so that I could discourse about him, but an 'interior knowledge', the knowledge of friendship, of love. Contemplation is loving knowledge (104).

Friendship is a gift on both sides, freely given. It is complete only when each finds himself totally invaded, receiving, and in the same act, giving himself, without suspicion and without reserve. Conditional friendship is no friendship; it is too calculated. Genuine friendship is supreme delight. Each is captive to the other; and yet it is a freeing captivity, enabling each to be fully himself. Friendship remains in a perpetual state of giving, and of discovering new depths. Neither is enslaved, subjugated, or used: they remain two but their union is complete. We seek friendship with Christ.

What prevents the friendship of Christ and me from being complete? Myself. First let us rid ourselves of misapprehensions. Christ and I are not on an equal footing. It is not only he who must consent to reveal himself: we recall (Jn 2,28) that, in spite of the fact that many believed in him, 'Jesus did not trust himself to them'. But when he consents to reveal himself he will do so 'according to his divine ordinance' (234). Moreover, even on the level of human nature there is a whole world of difference between us. He shares my nature but not my 'sins' as St Paul speaks of it in Romans (6,12-14): 'sin living in you' — that is the concupiscence, that which gives rise to actual sins. *Virtus peccati lex.* This is why in the same context, sometimes in the same phrase, one slides so easily from one meaning of sin to another, as sometimes the privation of original justice, sometimes the concupiscence deriving from it, sometimes actual sin which is its effect. Again, I ask myself how fit and ready am I for the friendship of Christ? Do I really want it? Do I know what it means and what it will entail? (Mt 20,22). Do I realize that it is with the 'man of sorrows and familiar with suffering' (Isai 53,3) that I am asking to share? Our Lord will not break the crushed reed nor put out the smouldering wick (Mt 12,20); but do I realize how much the Lord will have to prepare me for himself? This is what he wishes to do, for he has come seeking me; only let us have some awareness of the situation. It is real friendship we seek and with Christ as he is. We are not in love with friendship but with Christ. If this dampens my spirits and deters me I may ask myself, how much did I really want him in the first place? (Lk 11,5-13).

The Spirit. It was not only Christ who was sent on mission by the Father. So, too, was the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit receives from Christ and manifests Christ (cf Jn 13-15).

The difference between the two missions may be put like this: Christ comes to us from the outside. We can see him, hear him, touch him (1 Jn 1,1-3). The Spirit comes to us from the inside,

revealing Christ to us, making his words effective within us. Were it not for the work of the Spirit we would never be able to penetrate beneath the humanity of Christ, and Christ would not be able to live by faith in our hearts (Eph 3,17). Our Lord told us it was expedient for us that he should go (Jn 16,4).

On Easter Sunday our Lord fulfilled his promise (Jn 20,22). He sent his Spirit as his first gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fulness of grace.

The will of the Father. As we contemplate Christ in his various mysteries, we see him with his face turned always towards the Father. The Son not only receives all from the Father, and in that sense is pure receptivity, but he is wholly drawn to the Father in love. This is an eternal movement. In Christ, we are caught up in this movement. As man, Christ uninterruptedly seeks to discern and to fulfil the Father's will (Jn 4,34; 8,29; 5,30; 15,19-20). Dwelling in Christ in our contemplations, we are all the time imbibing this devotion to the will of the Father. We are in Christ. We live a shared life with him. By being with him in this vital and not merely psychological way, our faces also are turned to the Father and to his will. We are growing in sensitivity and discernment and rendering ourselves more and more fit to hear the call of Christ to me: I am becoming freer to be able to heed it and fulfil it (Jn 8,31.32). We are all the time implicitly seeking from Christ a loving appreciation of the will of the Father for me; what part he has assigned to me in the building up of his Body (Eph 4,13).

To derive profit (106, 107, 108). I do not twist the contemplation to suit my search. I have need in so many ways of all that Christ shows me. I want in all I contemplate to 'derive profit' according to my needs and my attractions: that Christ may be formed in me; that I may discern with his mind.

To reflect on myself (114, 115). We began this work of reflecting on ourselves when we reviewed our sins. We did not want simply to draw up as complete a list as possible of our sins; we wanted to discern our lives. Here again, in the face of the life of the man for others, I ask myself about my whole life: what is the value of it, and particularly what is its value for others? In my daily contemplations I may indeed 'derive profit'; but here in the Exercises I have more than this general aim. I am seeking to discover God's will for me in one special respect. Increasingly, as this second week goes on, I turn to our Lord in my colloquies and ask his help to discern (54, 199): 'informing him of my affairs and seeking counsel in them' (54),

much as David 'went in, and seated before Yahweh, said . . .' (2 Sam 7,18ff).

The divisions of the Second Week. There are two divisions to this Second Week. The first one (which Ignatius imagines will last for about three days) has as the subject matter of the contemplations the infancy and hidden life of Christ (101-34 and 262-72). This first period terminates when the one who gives the Exercises judges that the retreatant has learnt how to contemplate the life of Christ and when he has begun to learn how to discern (162, 114).

Once Christ has begun to take decisions for himself, as in the temple and in the hidden life, it is time to consider decision-making in my own life. This starts with Christ leaving Nazareth for the Jordan and his public life (158, 163, 161, 273-88).

Between these two divisions (likely to be the fourth day), Ignatius introduces the two meditations of the Two Standards, and the Three Classes, and also the consideration of the Three Degrees of Humility (164, 165-68).

IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation, as we have already said, is loving knowledge or knowledge with love, and ignatian contemplation is no exception to this. It seeks for 'an interior knowledge of our Lord, who for me is made man, that I may the more love him and follow him' (104, etc.). It is knowledge of 'the eternal Lord incarnate' (109), of the Son made man, that I seek in order to love him and follow him the more. The knowledge of him that I seek will vary according to the specific mystery which I am contemplating. I seek for intimacy and familiarity, and as time goes on I discover ever new depths. However, in the Spiritual Exercises, while each of us has need of all that our Lord teaches us, and each of us has his personal needs, there is an overriding need: to discover the will of the Father for me. The will of the Father is mediated to me through the Son. I am in Christ through my baptism; the sharing of the divinity that I receive is of the divinity as it is held by the Son (not as it is held by the Father or the Holy Spirit). The Son receives all from the Father; all that the Father is, he is — except the way in which he holds the divine nature, that is, as received from the Father. But he does not simply receive; he returns himself in love to the Father, in perfect unconditional love. In Christ I am drawn to the Father in this return of love. As man, Christ discerns the will of the Father for himself

and for me. In the Son and through the mysteries of his life that I contemplate I want and I expect to receive from him a knowledge of the Father's will for me. St John Chrysostom, commenting on those words of Peter (Acts 1,24), 'Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore which of these (Barsabbas or Matthias) two you have chosen' writes: 'They did not say, choose, but show, show which you have chosen; since they knew that all things had been pre-ordained by God'. We, too, ask God to show us his will, believing that the Father does indeed have a will, a choice. In a retreat of election, therefore, we seek constantly to follow Christ in his discernment of the Father's will (Jn 5,30; 4,34; Lk 10,22).

Imagination. Ignatian contemplation is distinguished from other forms of contemplation by the great use it makes of the imagination. Its prime purpose is to enable us to be present at and in the scene and to receive from it grace according to our needs. 'The arm of the Lord is not shortened' (Isai 59,1); time has not diluted the Lord's power to save: 'Jesus Christ is the same as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever' (Heb 13,8).

We cannot easily imagine anything without also creating and phantasizing. We are encouraged to use our fantasy. In his specimen contemplation on the nativity St Ignatius advises me, poor and unworthy servant though I am, to look at and contemplate Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus 'tending them in their necessities as though I were present there' (114). Again in applying the senses, which itself implies the initial use of our creative imagination, he suggests that I not only hear what they are saying but what they 'might say' (123). This phantasizing can be both enlightening and heart-warming. God can come to us only through our own faculties, including those which enable us to dream. If what comes to us in this way is sound — and the director should be of help here — then let us be grateful and not seek to know if it comes to us by a direct intervention of God. However much the truth presented to us through our imagination may move us, let us realize that the truth is even more wonderful than we are able to imagine.

One way in which we may phantasize is to place words upon the lips of Christ in much the same way as, though less fluently than, the author of the *Imitation of Christ* imagines Christ speaking to us. We cannot put upon the lips of infinite truth anything but what we believe infinite truth would say. We cannot be glib over this and our attempt to formulate Christ's words to us may take time. The principle is that, by externalizing the response, we are trying to

circumvent the criticism that no one is a good judge in his own case. We are imagining that the speech comes to us as a judgment independent of our own inclinations.

It is called ignatian simply because his Exercises have been the means of popularizing it. He himself discovered the method in Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*, which he read first on his sick bed at Loyola (Ludolph died in 1378).

APPLICATION OF THE SENSES (121-26 and 65-70)

In the last period of prayer in the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks St Ignatius prescribes what he calls an Application of the Senses. It must be remembered that in the Second and Third Weeks, repetitions have preceded it (129, 159, 204) and also, loosely speaking, in the Fourth Week (227). We do not, therefore, come to it cold.

Secondly, we notice that it contains or can contain meditative, contemplative and reflective moments (122, 123, etc.). It is not, therefore, an ecstatic prayer, at any rate, not necessarily. In the fourth week he thus prescribes it: 'applying the five senses to the three exercises of that day, noticing and dwelling upon the principal parts in which one has experienced greater emotions and spiritual relish' (227).

There is no method we can employ to apply the senses. The word 'sense' indicates that there is a certain immediacy about this kind of prayer, and this is only to be expected if we have throughout the previous contemplations been sifting and refining, understanding and savouring the matter interiorly (2), 'dwelling on the points in which I have felt greater consolation, or desolation, or greater spiritual relish' (62). The word 'sense' does not mean that we are told to engage in a sensory re-living of what was formerly a spiritual experience.

It is a prayer which can be made at various levels. At its height it would be some form of mystical prayer. Thus St Teresa of Avila will say: 'One day while I was at prayer . . . I saw Christ at my side — or to put it better — I was conscious of him, for I saw nothing with the eyes of the body or soul'.[6] In so speaking she would be echoing St Paul (2 Cor 12,2.3). Such use of the senses is not open to man to achieve of himself; but to speak of these interior senses to describe an experience is as old as Origen.[7]

The level on which we may hope to enter is the non-ratiocinative, the gaze which we reach as a result of our previous contemplations of

the day, the gaze which is unaware of itself praying (the subject) and which is lost in the object of its gaze, the gaze which has left the exterior behind and is absorbed in the quality of the person or the incident, the fragrance of our Lady's purity, the heat of our Lord's love, the bitterness of rejection; or we may see the frown of disapproval or the welcome and joy that lights up the face of Christ. He is to be the object of each of our senses.

It is said that before human nature lost its integrity, the intellectual side of man and the sensitive side of man responded as a unity. Sin has disturbed that harmony. Peter Favre prayed: 'Have pity on me, Lord. Remove from me all those evils which prevent my seeing you, tasting you, feeling you and touching you'. The more unity is regained the greater are our theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Christened, we now have been anointed by the Holy One and have all received knowledge (1 Jn 2,20.27). There is only one way to apply the senses and that is by asking God for his help, that he would teach us, and then attempting to do so. Ignatius says as much in a letter of his: 'We have, however, been speaking of things which it is impossible to render in words as they really are, or at least not without giving a very lengthy and detailed account. And even then these would still remain matters which it is better to feel inwardly for oneself than to impart outwardly to others'.[8] Those who have attempted this prayer have found it useful. That is its test: 'deriving some fruit', as Ignatius insists with each of the senses.

There is little likelihood of our achieving any success with this method if we are not training our senses exteriorly. Even when penance is not in place (82-89), temperance is always in place (210-17); and Ignatius suggests in his first method of prayer an examination of how our Lord and our Lady used their exterior senses so that I may imitate them (247, 248).

Some find in this way of praying a similarity to the purpose of what is called the 'composition of place' which calms, concentrates, and often epitomizes the contemplation which follows. This is particularly true of biblical images in the first week, but it can also be extended to symbolic landscapes in the second week. Thus, for instance, the composition of place for the nativity is given by St Ignatius as 'to see with the eyes of the imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem; considering its length, breadth, and whether the way be level or through valleys and over hills . . .' (112). This has frequently been interpreted by the use of the pauline text in

Ephesians (3,18): 'He comes that we may know how broad, how long, how high, and how deep is his love'.

In short, we ask to experience rather than to know and this is how the *Imitation* opens: 'I would rather experience compunction than be able to define it'.

THE FOURTH DAY

Until our Lord was twelve, obedience to his parents at Nazareth was the way he fulfilled the will of his Father. When he was twelve, he gave us an example of how personal responsibility cannot be laid upon another's shoulders. We may continue to lead an ordinary life, our customary one, but this should be a decision and not the lack of one. In staying behind in the temple, Christ showed that the will of his Father was paramount; and Ignatius says that he thereby gave us an 'example . . . of evangelical perfection', since he left his family 'to apply himself exclusively to the service of the Eternal Father' (135). The Exercises, therefore, have reached the point where, continuing to contemplate Christ in his mysteries over the five periods of prayer a day, outside of our contemplations 'we begin to investigate and to ask in what kind of life or state his Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us' (135, 14). The link between the contemplations and the investigation lies in the colloquies.

No doubt there are many good elections that can be made and not only that of an election of a state or kind of life, but whatever they are they should be an offering of oneself, the choice of something that will make all the difference to the quality of our life. If we are already settled in a state of life, our new election, whatever it is, will be as good as it is close to our vocation. A good resolution is not enough unless it will make all the difference to the quality of our lives, to the whole-heartedness of our service to God. It is our life of which we are disposing and not a part of it. Our Lord did not tell the rich young man to make a contribution to a collection but to sell all that he had. Unless one has this notion of sacrifice in mind when making the Exercises one has missed the point. At no point in the life of Christ which we contemplate does he give us an example of mediocrity. We do not measure ourselves against the performance of others; we ask God to put into our minds and wills what he expects of us. Half-heartedness is a tragedy. The spirit of the Exercises, particularly at this point, is that of the fifth annotation: 'It will much benefit him who is receiving the Exercises to enter upon them with

a large heart and with liberality towards his Creator and Lord, offering all his desires and liberty to him, in order that his Divine Majesty may make use of his person and all he possesses according to his most holy will' (5).

To help us make such a commitment, Ignatius now interrupts for one day the sequence of contemplations on the life of Christ, so as to submit our minds (Two Standards), our wills (Three Classes) and our hearts (Three Degrees of Humility) to a searching scrutiny.

TWO STANDARDS (136-48)

This exercise may be made in a variety of scriptural ways (e.g. Jn 8,12.44-45), and bearing upon different aspects of it according to each one's needs. However, it is well to realize the purpose and scope of the exercise as it is given to us by St Ignatius. Hence the following points.

A radical or fundamental option. This exercise is not a naïve burst of enthusiasm in which we choose to be enrolled under the banner of Christ instead of under the banner of Satan. At this point in the Exercises we are placed before a radical or fundamental decision, a choice which will henceforward affect the whole of our lives. 'I set before you life or death, blessing or curse' (Deut 30,19). We should not be making the Exercises if we had not realized this. They are not simply thirty days spent in prayer.

To see through and to see. The petition makes the purpose of this meditation quite clear: 'The third prelude is to ask for what I want: it will be here to ask for knowledge of the deceits of the wicked chieftain, and for help to guard against them; and for knowledge of the true life which our sovereign and true leader points out, and for grace to imitate him' (139). Like all actual graces it concerns mind and will. The stress is upon knowledge. The grace needed by the will is the courage to reject what is seen to be false and misleading, and for the courage to embrace what is seen as true and leading to life. Love is not absent; but it is the work of the contemplations on the mysteries of Christ rather than of Two Standards. The First Week was concerned with sin; already we had prayed for the grace of 'a knowledge of the world, in order that, abhorring it, I may put away from myself worldly and vain things' (63). The Second Week presumes the rejection of sin and wants to prevent us being deceived under the appearance of good (10, 332ff). We 'see through' and we 'see' when we understand the intentions the two leaders have.

Satan's address: riches, honour, pride (142). It is Satan's intention that is important rather than the thing in itself. We have been told from the beginning of the Exercises that 'we should make ourselves indifferent to all created things' (23). As St John Chrysostom points out, 'It is evident that if we use riches as we ought, they have no power to hurt us; but if we go outside the rule of right, all is ruined: a throne, poverty, riches, all can bring men to destruction'.[9] We talk about Satan's intentions; but we must ask ourselves how deeply they have entered into us; what are our own desires, orientations, intentions? It is not the thing in itself which is good or bad but the use I wish to make of it.

A right intention. It is not sufficient simply to have a right intention (Mt 10,16) but we must *have* a right intention. In each of the two ways in which a sound and good election may be made, Ignatius writes:

> It is necessary to keep as my aim the end for which I was created, which is to praise God our Lord, and to save my soul; and at the same time to find myself indifferent, without any inordinate affection; so that I be not more inclined or disposed to take than to leave the thing proposed, nor more disposed to leave it than to take it, but I must be, as it were, in equilibrium on a balance, ready to follow that which I shall feel to be more for the glory and praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of my soul (179).
>
> The first rule is that the love which urges me to choose such or such a thing, descend from on high from the love of God; so that he who chooses feel first in himself that the love which he has more or less for the thing he chooses, is solely for the sake of his creator and Lord (184).

What are riches? It is probable that in using the word riches Ignatius was thinking of wealth in some shape or form and principally of the abuses of benefices (169, 171, 178, 181, 16). The word might more comprehensively be rendered by 'ambition', that which I vehemently desire. In this sense, 'riches' and 'honour' may coalesce. St Francis Xavier does not seem to have been particularly set on amassing a fortune, but he was very set on winning a reputation. To him, and thinking of Xavier's ambition, Ignatius proposed the gospel saying, 'What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?' (Mt 16,26). In either case, riches or honour, the aim is self-aggrandizement. It is not far from there to being a law unto myself! 'You will be like gods,

knowing good and evil' (Gen 2,5), rationalizing. Neglecting all we have, our gaze is narrowed to the one thing we do not have: 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said: you must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death' (Gen 3,3). Each of us almost certainly has some 'forbidden fruit' in his life which he is always trying to find some excuse to eat, rationalizing his desires.

'*Snares and chains*' (142). Where does Satan's power over me come from? It comes from my own imagination. If I am convinced I need something for my happiness, then while I imagine this, it remains true for me. In his unregenerate days Augustine tells us, 'I thought it would be impossible to be happy without the embraces of a woman'. While he thought that, it was impossible for him to be happy without the embraces of a woman. We are slaves to anything we are infatuated by; we have lost our freedom (Rom 6,12-23; Jn 8,31-36). We pray for the grace to see through the wiles of Satan and, having seen through them, to have the courage to free ourselves and embrace the true life which Christ our Lord shows us.

Sex. In the Two Standards, Ignatius describes the devil as urging his followers to ensnare men in riches and honour. This, says Ignatius, is what 'he is wont to do in most cases' (142). Fr Francis Suarez, in his commentary on the Exercises, asks why he does not mention sins of sex, seeing that these are so common.[10] He replies that the devil does not tempt men to sex under the appearance of good. There is a precept against such sins (the sixth and ninth commandments). Ignatius shows the devil as attempting to bring men to their destruction by things that are not right or wrong in themselves. However, there are ways round most things! For many this matter could well be their 'riches'.

Both standards are in my heart. 'Christ calls and desires all under his banner: Lucifer on the contrary under his' (137). No one can remain neutral or non-aligned. 'He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters' (Mt 12,30). Both leaders tug at my heart. Whether Bonhoeffer was right or not, we may leave to informed historians to decide; but his stricture, whether historically right or wrong, does warn those who feel safe not to be too complacent: 'The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall' (1 Cor 10,12).

> The misunderstanding on the part of medieval monasteries does not lie in its recognition of the fact that the call of Jesus Christ

> involves man in a struggle against the world, but in its attempt to find a place which is not the world and at which, therefore, this call can be answered more fitly. . . . Consequently, even in its 'No' to the world, God's call is taken less seriously in the monastic undertaking than in the secular calling.

Our sovereign leader and Lord (136). The connection between Christ and his cross is not fortuitous. One has to be convinced of this if one is to take Christ and his call and his cross seriously. They are identified, depending from which angle one is looking at the triptych. Christ's 'servants and friends' (146) must go the same way themselves. They, like him, must be the message (cf Heb 2,10-13; 12,3).

Poverty, humiliation, humility: Christ's address (146). We have not yet come to our election. When we do come to it we shall 'beg God our Lord that he may be pleased to move my will, and place in my soul that which I ought to do in regard to the matter proposed' (180). However, Christ our Lord in his address tells his friends to 'desire to help all, by guiding them first to the highest degree of poverty of spirit'. Presumably, therefore, they have already arrived at the point themselves. That is not in question. All that is in question about poverty is whether or not God would wish them to practise actual poverty. With regard to humiliations, Christ urges his followers to lead all men 'to a *desire* of reproaches and contempt'. His followers, therefore, must already have that desire themselves. They are not asked to select the particular humiliations but to desire them and to accept them. We can test ourselves out by looking back into the past, especially the recent past, and gratefully accept what has come our way. This prevents our imagination from becoming overheated, and a side effect is the healing of memories. It also enables me to distinguish between real affronts and those created by my own self-pity, so that I become more genuine.

There are, of course, sound psychological reasons why choosing poverty and humiliation would be beneficial. If they are embraced and not merely endured they lead to liberty, independence, freedom. Yet our choice is not based on philosophy but on friendship with Jesus, and the desire to share his mission. Paul was sent 'to preach the good news, and not to preach that in terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed . . .' (1 Cor 1,17-25). Precisely because what our Lord calls us to so far exceeds the power of nature we are recommended to make the triple

colloquy. This is always suggested to us when what we need is crucial and a gift.

The Triple Colloquy (147). This colloquy is a powerful and special exercise of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. It cannot be made with a full heart without the co-operation of all three virtues. Our Lord's call is also our Lord's promise. The response is contained in the invitation, or the invitation contains the response. I must see it that way. It is only prayer that can give me the faith and the courage to respond, will-power is useless. In the petition of the Two Standards I asked for 'knowledge of the true life which our Sovereign and true Leader points out, and for grace to imitate him' (139). Who but God can give me this interior and attractive knowledge that I need if I am to ask for it? I cannot pray the petitions of the Triple Colloquy as an order on the authority of St Ignatius: a command laid on me, as it were, from the outside. I must pray it from within myself, from the resources given me by God, from the mediation of our Lady and her son. I must see how poverty and humiliation can accord perfectly with interior joy. We are asking for a complete reversal of the natural man, a reversal that only God can effect. Yet it is one which we ask for in faith and through the mediation of Mary and Christ.

The reversal is well brought out in a prayer which St Andrew is reported to have made before his martyrdom. He is brought up from his dungeon and led outside to the place of his crucifixion. As he catches sight of the cross he is made to call out: 'O good cross, O wonderful cross, which has spread its glow through all the world and which has received beauty and dignity from the limbs of my Saviour, do you receive the disciple of Christ and restore me to my Master'.[11]

THE THREE CLASSES (149-57)

While Two Standards set out to discover whether we had that mind which was in Christ Jesus our Lord (Phil 2,5), Three Classes is designed to hold the mirror up to us and bring us face to face with ourselves. What manner of man am I?

The history. Each of three classes of people find themselves the owner of a large sum of money. They had done nothing dishonourable in acquiring it but neither had they acquired it from the highest motives. It was something of an embarrassment to them. They recognized their attachment to the fortune, but they were not at all sure that God was pleased, or how good it was for them in terms of

the life to come. They each decide they must do something about it.

The 'ten thousand ducats' can be anything we would like to cling to; and yet the possession of it makes us uneasy. It was to settle our mind that we probably began the Exercises. It need not be something concrete in the hand. It could be, for instance, something we do not have but vehemently desire, a permanent longing. It could be some ideology or prejudice for which we are noted, and to give it up would result in a loss of face.

The setting. We stand before God our Lord and all his saints. 'With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us' (Heb 12,1). The saints know the road; they have had to pass this same way, and it is 'on their intercession we rely for help'.

The petition. I ask 'to choose what is most for the glory of God, and for the salvation (good) of myself'.

Class 1. The *procrastinator*, the drifter, the dreamer. The decision is always postponed. The first step is never taken. It is easier to live in the imagination of a possible future than to take the first practical step towards it. They have a velleity but no will: 'they would like to shake off the affection they have for the money' (cf Lk 9,57-62).

Class 2. The *hypocrite.* He will retain what he wants but he will find peace of soul by purifying his intention. The confidence trickster.

Class 3. The *honest and sincere* man. Has Ignatius anywhere else in the Exercises so packed a paragraph with phrases that wing their way to the pith and marrow of the Exercises?

Note to the Three Classes (157). Ignatius often recommends both in the Second Week and in the Third Week that we should finish with the Triple Colloquy and/or 'according to the note which follows the Three Classes' (139, 199). This note tells us that if we are not indifferent 'it will help much to the rooting out of such an inordinate affection, to ask in our colloquies, even though it should be against the flesh, that our Lord should choose us to actual poverty, protesting that we desire, petition, and ask for it, provided it be to the service and praise of his Divine Goodness' (157). It may help to make two observations.

(1) To be able to pray like this is already the effect of prayer. It cannot be a dry effort of the will. We cannot afford to neglect the hidden realm of our instincts, impulses, self-centredness, repressions, desires. I can *will* to love God with all my heart, but a whole part of me still refuses to consent. Therefore grace must reach even

our subconscious. As grace is the same in Christ and in us, we confidently expect it to work the same effects in us and we ask with faith that it should. It was our Lord's statement, 'I tell you solemnly, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven' that drew forth from the disciples the astonished cry, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus gazed at them, 'For men this is impossible; for God everything is possible' (Mt 19,23-26). As we begin the Triple Colloquy, let us place in Mary's hands our own will that she may unite it to the will of her Son who gives us life and draws all people to himself.

(2) Inevitably we shall experience in ourselves barriers and resistances to our freedom to love truly. Ignatius would not be giving us this note had he not experienced this attraction and revulsion within himself. We must learn how to handle them. We do not overcome them by running away. Ignatius advises us (325) to show a 'dauntless front . . . acting in a manner diametrically opposed'. The manner which is diametrically opposed is desire, that is to say, actually to desire what we fear. This is well brought out in a curious temptation that Father Paul Segneri S.J. (+ 1694) tells us he once experienced. He was a great orator, and while at prayer and offering himself to God he thought how awful it would be if God tested him by allowing him to forget his sermon. He experienced a great fear which even caused him to hesitate while he was preaching; and the temptation returned several days running. At last he tells us, 'with divine grace I have conquered myself and endeavoured to convert this fear into desire. I have urgently asked God to give me this public mortification this very morning on which I am to preach an important sermon in the town. But in truth this cannot be to my prejudice, for it is no longer fear but desire; and in this lay my delusion, for fear weakens bold spirits, not so desire'.[12] This is what Ignatius is saying in his note (157): turn fear into desire and the fear will vanish.

Much the same sort of advice was given by St Robert Southwell. He recommended that if we were frightened about some future happening we should make ourselves imagine that it had happened and then ask ourselves how we intend to conduct ourselves in this new situation. By this act of imagination we place ourselves on the far side of our decision. As St Peter Damian says in his homily for the feast of St George: 'No one can fight properly and boldly for the faith if he clings to a fear of being stripped of earthly possessions'. We must never cling to our fears. St Teresa of Avila approached St

Peter of Alcantara when she was re-writing her statutes on poverty and asked him if he thought she had made them too severe. 'No', he said, 'for anyone who wants to experience the effects of poverty'. For anyone who 'wants'; 'God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control' (2 Tim 1,6.7; 1 Jn 4,4).

THE THREE DEGREES (164-68)

The Three Degrees of Humility are not an exercise of their own as were Two Standards and the Three Classes of Men. The Degrees of Humility are to be the object of reflection and prayer 'from time to time during the whole day', 'before any one enters on the election' (164). The Second Week of the Exercises ends with the words, 'Let each be convinced that he will make progress in all spiritual matters in proportion as he shall have divested himself of his own self-love, his own will, and self-interest' (189). The three degrees of humility are the three levels at which a man can decentralize himself in favour of subjecting himself to God.

Two Standards righted our mind, Three Classes challenged our will, the Three Degrees question our heart. Am I capable of sustaining true friendship? Do we so love Jesus Christ that even if the praise and glory to God were to be equal either way — poverty/riches, contempt/honour, to be judged foolish rather than wise — from the sole desire of companionship and friendship with Christ our Lord, we would choose rather to resemble him in poverty, bearing contempt and being taken for foolish than to remain without his experience. I would wish to say something similar with Paul (Gal 2,20.21). The supposition is that the glory given to God, the apostolic effectiveness, would be equal, a supposition that remains difficult to imagine in practice. The choice of poverty, contempt, and being regarded as foolish are not chosen as means to an apostolic end: as such, they would be rated as more or less apposite and chosen accordingly. Still less is it the thing in itself which is chosen as if it were an end. It is not poverty we choose but Christ poor, not contempt but Christ condemned, not foolishness but Christ judged foolish. It is the Crucified we choose, not the cross. It is the love of friendship and it can be present without its sweetness. When the apostles had been flogged for preaching Christ in the temple, they did not rejoice in or enjoy the flogging but 'they left the presence of the Sanhedrin glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name' (Acts 5,41).

As the lives of most of us are unlikely to be one long round of bearing contempt, it is the leaning of our hearts which counts. As Le Gaudier remarks:

> Keeping the cross of Christ ever in our minds, let us amid the honours and rewards that come our way always keep in our hearts a sincere and loving desire to be like Christ and, in so far as it is within our power let us refuse these honours and rewards. Let us insist with ourselves that we do not want to receive them unless it is very clear that to do so is to promote the greater glory of God. . . . Let us keep the cross of Christ always in our hearts and as occasion offers let us carry it on our shoulders.

What we are seeking for is a grace. Of this desire to live the third degree of humility, our Lord would say to us as he would of all graces, 'You did not choose me; I chose you' (Jn 15,16). Thus Ignatius ends this section by saying: 'And thus it will be very profitable for him who desires to obtain this third degree of humility, to make the above-mentioned triple colloquy of the Classes, imploring our Lord to be pleased to elect him to this third degree of greater and more perfect humility, in order the better to imitate and serve him, if it be for the equal or greater service and praise of his Divine Majesty' (168). For the fulness of this grace in his own life Ignatius had to wait for fifteen years. This occurred in the vision in the chapel at La Storta as he was on his way to Rome.

For most of us the close union of ourselves with the crucified Christ will occur as advancing years and illness offer us the opportunity. It may be then that Christ will show us, as he showed Paul, 'what great things he must suffer for my name' (Acts 9,16). In the meantime we should not fail to recognize the splinters of the true cross that come our way and accept them and even welcome them as the authentic marks of one who is a friend of Christ.

We end with the reminder that our choice of the third degree of humility is a conditional predilection, conditional on its being, in any particular case, of no less service and praise to God.

THE ELECTION (169-89)

'What we ask God is that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will . . .' (Col 1,9-12). 'Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, "What about him,

Lord?'' Jesus answered, ''If I want him to say behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me''' (Jn 21,21).

When. 'The matter of the election', (alluded to as the purpose of the Exercises in Annotation 1), 'will begin from the contemplation of Christ's departure from Nazareth to the Jordan inclusive, that is from the fifth day' (163). The election starts at this point because, by this time, Christ has given us an example of 'the first state which consists in the observance of the commandments while he was obedient to his parents'; and likewise of 'the second, which is that of evangelical perfection, when he remained in the temple, leaving his adopted father and his natural mother, to apply himself exclusively to the service of his Eternal Father' (135). We have also by the fifth day made the meditations on the Two Standards and the Three Classes, and we have considered the Three Degrees of Humility. However, although the election begins on this day, there is no day set aside by which it should be completed; and, in fact, it can happen that it is not completed in the course of the Exercises, but after them and under their influence. Should the election have been made before it has been explained, then the time which is normally devoted to the election will be given instead to seeking confirmation of it.

What. From the 'introduction to the consideration of states of life' (135), it would seem that Ignatius was presuming that the election was to be made over a state of life. However, later on (149, 157, 166, 167) it is a question of money or benefices. In the paragraph on reformation of life (189) he has in mind those 'who have not an occasion or any very prompt will to make an election' and suggests for them instead an amendment and reform of their whole life. The election is concerned with whatever is uppermost in a person's mind as the principle or the problem which they must settle if they are 'to find in peace God our Lord' (150): should a priest persevere in the priesthood? Should a religious sister remain in her active order or transfer to a contemplative order? Does a novice have a vocation? Hugo Rahner speaks of the election as the time when the retreatant comes face to face with a lifelong commitment to the poor, despised and crucified Christ,[13] and elsewhere that it is the discovery of how the Lord wants the third degree of humility to penetrate my life. It is meant to be a single vital aim that will give unity to my whole life: not, in other words, a series of resolutions. On the other hand, the election is not for everyone but for those who feel called to it. It cannot be made without the hunger for it.

How. The contemplations on the life of Christ continue without

interruption, except that although the exercitant continues to devote five hours of prayer to them daily, he takes only one mystery each day. He repeats this three times, 'always dwelling on some of the principal parts in which the person has derived some knowledge, consolation or desolation' (118) — in this way interrogating the Lord — and finally makes an application of the senses to this mystery (159).

In my contemplations I am with Christ and in Christ. Each mystery is part of the whole mystery of Christ. Receiving all from the Father, Christ is always turned towards the Father and his will, and returning himself fully to the Father both as God and man, in the perfection of love. That will of the Father concerns the total Christ, the purpose of creation, and Christ's appropriation of that will stretches out to me and communicates itself to me in my uniqueness. My will becomes inspired from within by Christ's will. I seek to experience the will of the Father as an embrace. His will for me is his love for me and, through me, his love for others. Gradually, through my contemplations, I develop a *sensus Christi*, an instinctive judgment of the conformity or non-conformity of some line of action, election, with the judgment of Christ.[14] As this sense grows, so does the speed and conviction with which I discern the will of the Father. Christ's indifference and freedom become my own. I am no longer delayed by uncertainty of touch, and if I am delayed, this is because the *sensus Christi* is not yet my own. I develop a preference, Christ's preference, for poverty and contempt, a love for the Man of Sorrows and the Suffering Servant, and a desire to share with him. I cannot make, in the sense of keeping, an election which concerns the imitation and the mission of Christ by a dry effort of will; it must be touched off and fuelled by the loving knowledge of Christ which is communicated to me because of my contemplation of Christ.

Separately from these contemplations, we are turning over in our minds the matter of the election. 'Let us at the same time that we contemplate his life begin to investigate and to ask in what kind of life or state his Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us' (135). The bridge between the contemplation and the investigation lies in the colloquies.

Purity of intention and love. God's glory and our good are correlatives (169). They are in no sense in opposition. The one enhances the other. This means that what fits me and suits me according to God's creative knowledge of me will also feel right. It is by this sense of

inner harmony and fulfilment that God will declare to me what is to his greater service and praise. Initially I may feel myself straight-jacketed by an alien will, but constant prayer to see God's will as it really is can bring about a transformation; and can also give me the courage to act and embrace it. This singleness of mind or intention ensures that I do not try to justify my desires, rationalize my inclinations, invert means and ends. Furthermore my discernment starts off with a petition (180). Finally I wish to be clear 'that the love which urges and causes me to choose such or such a thing descends from on high; so that he who chooses, feels first in himself that the love which he has more or less for the thing he chooses is solely for the sake of his Creator and Lord' (184).

The matter must be central to my life; my discernment must be based on primary considerations; I seek and I expect God to help me choose and eventually confirm my choice; I am aware that God and not my choice is the object of my love.

THREE TIMES OR WAYS IN WHICH GOD'S WILL IS MADE KNOWN TO ME

(a) *First time* (175). The first way is when I am entirely receptive. God declares his will to me in such a way as to leave me no room for doubt. His intervention is unmistakable. I am aware that nothing I have contributed can possibly add up to the blinding certainty, clarity, and conviction which I possess. God's invitation to me and my power to respond are given together. Many receive their vocation to the priesthood and to the religious life in this way; Ignatius instances the call of St Paul and St Matthew (175; cf 330). However, Ignatius adds the *caveat* that the person who receives such a communication directly from God should 'distinguish the exact period of the actual consolation from the period which follows it' (336), for in this latter period he often adds or has suggested to him other thoughts that were not part of the original communication from God and, therefore, not guaranteed by him.

(b) *Second time* (176). The second way in which God sometimes makes his will known to me is 'when much light and knowledge is obtained by experiencing consolations and desolations, and by the discernment of various spirits'. Over a period of time, probably days, I become clear in which direction the prevailing winds of God's consolation are blowing. This has little connection or none with visions and revelations. It is rather a calculus of affectivity, and Ignatius seems from his own practice to have regarded it as the

normal way. We need, therefore, to be clear what we mean by consolation and desolation, and what we may expect to learn and how we are to interpret them (St Ignatius describes consolation and desolation in 316 and 317).

(c) *Third time* (177). 'The third time is one of tranquillity . . . that is, when the soul is not agitated by divers spirits, but enjoys the use of its natural powers freely and quietly'. At such a time 'one considers, first, for what man is born, namely, to praise God our Lord, and to save his soul; and when, desiring this, he chooses as the means to this end a kind of state of life within the bounds of the Church, in order that he may thereby be helped to serve our Lord and to save his soul'. Ignatius provides two methods, either or both of which a man may make use of, a deliberative one (178-83) or a more intuitive one (184-88).

Where a discernment has been made in the second time, it is usual to check on it by a third time method. When the discernment has been made in the third time, one seeks for confirmation through the second time.

RULES FOR THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

Ignatius left two sets of rules for the discernment of spirits. The first set (313-27) is primarily to help those who are beginners in the life of the Spirit. They are not accustomed to divine intimacies and are concerned with right and wrong rather than good or better (8-10, 313, 328). In the rules for the First Week, the exercitant is encouraged to follow where consolation leads, and not to follow where desolation leads (cf 315, 318, 329).

The second set of rules (328-36) are most in place during the time of the election. Like Two Standards they are to prevent our being deceived under the appearance of good.

The spirits. Are we obliged to believe, if we are to be faithful to the ignatian interpretation of 'the various motions excited in the soul; the good that they may be admitted; the bad that they may be rejected' (313, 32), that they are the work of two spirits, over against ourselves, the one good, the other bad? No. To determine the immediate and exact origin is irrelevant or academic or a matter for psychology. What is wanted and needed is a discovery of their meaning, where they are leading to. It is their meaning and direction that make the thoughts or feelings good or bad. Jewish Christianity received from Judaism the doctrine of the two spirits, a

way of referring to the dual and conflicting orientations in the human psyche. This may well be the background to the thought of St Paul in Romans 7 and 8. (See also the *Epistle to Barnabas* xviii, 1-2, *The Shepherd of Hermas* [*Mandatum* vi, 2,2-5], and St Athanasius's *Life of Anthony.*)

Why return to desolation? It would be too naïve to say, as one might be tempted to do after reading only the rules for the First Week, that where I found consolation, there I found God declaring his will to me, and where I found desolation there I could be sure it was my enemy speaking to me and I should neglect what he said. Every thought is accompanied by some sort of feeling, and every feeling has some sort of intellectual accompaniment. Ignatius hints at this when he says, 'for as consolation is contrary to desolation, so the thoughts that spring from consolation are contrary to those that spring from desolation' (317). When a thought or idea makes me desolate, when I discover what it is that is causing me to feel sad, I need to examine that thought, that is to say, the intellectual component of my desolation. I ask myself why it has this effect on me. It will be for one of two reasons. Either it is presumption on my side (however sincere I am trying to be) in thinking that God is asking 'this' of me, and as God is not calling me to this, neither will he give me the grace to respond to it; or, God is indeed calling me to this, but I am looking at it through unchristened eyes, and in this case I need to ask God to help me to look at it through his own eyes, so that its real attractiveness may become apparent to me.

Clarity a prerequisite. Discretion is not fishing. It is deciding between alternatives. I must, therefore, clearly 'propose to myself the matter about which I wish to make an election' (178). I must know what I am talking about to God and not hope that something will emerge in the course of our conversation. I am not therefore dispensed, from making clear enquiries prior to the discernment process. With much the same lack of clarity we may dispense ourselves from making specific offerings to God by making one general and conditional offering to God. 'I will do anything he asks of me if he tells me what it is'. It sounds magnanimous, in the spirit of the fifth Annotation, and it may indeed be generous; on the other hand it may manifest a failure to collaborate with God, leaving everything to him. It certainly cannot be called discernment. In one of his Directories, Ignatius suggests that in presenting alternatives to our Lord we should act as a cook might act if he wanted to know which of his dishes was most favoured by the king. He would watch how he

treated them. If the king took a large or second helping of the dish, the cook would infer that he had found a favourite. Gradually by watching the king day by day he would discover the king's preferences. In the same way by one day presenting our Lord with one alternative and on the next day another we can learn our Lord's predilections. This way of behaving presupposes we are offering our Lord clear and distinct alternatives. How we proceed and our need of discernment will depend on whether the retreat is a first-time retreat or a retreat of renewal.

Spiritual motions and agitations. In his sixth annotation, Ignatius would appear to regard disturbance as the test of how earnestly a retreatant was entering into the retreat (6). Disturbance can occur at any time but obviously it is more likely to occur when a change of life style is taking place. One can call this a first-time retreat. When, however, the retreatant has been faithfully serving the Lord over many years there is in him a core of steadfastness which does not allow of turbulence. The retreatant is renewing his vocation and commitment and not changing a whole way of life. It would be a distraction to expect alternations of feeling, and it would be artificial to attempt to promote them. The director will have to distinguish carefully the needs of his two kinds of retreatants. We all of us need to aim at the *magis*, but we have to ask whether it is more of the same or something quite different. The beginner may experience peaks and troughs, but the mature will be more likely to have a plateau experience.

CONFIRMATION (183, 188)

'After having made such an election or decision, he who has made it must with great diligence betake himself to prayer, in the presence of God our Lord, and offer him that election, that his Divine Majesty may be pleased to receive it and confirm it, if it be to his greater service and praise'.

In seeking for confirmation from God we are seeking a fresh grace. We wish to feel that God has accepted it, that he is grateful, and that because it is according to his will he will guarantee it, be answerable for it, that as he has given us the grace to make this offering so he will give us the help to fulfil it.

In a retreat of renewal, such as the annual retreat of a religious, it is more than likely that this is what the retreatant is seeking for. He is not seeking for a different vocation but to be confirmed in the one

he has lived in and to which he has been faithful. 'If anyone has made an election duly and ordinately in matters which fall under a mutable election, having in no way clung to the flesh or the world, there is no need of his making his election anew, but let him perfect himself in that as far as possible' (173; cf 174). What we may call our vocation, if it was discerned as God's will, is that in which we should seek always to perfect ourselves. Any fresh 'resolution' of an annual retreat will be as good for us and for God as it is close to this life-aim already guaranteed by God. It is possible to lose a vocation by one's own unfaithfulness. One must be very careful in making a fresh discernment not to fall into the second of the three classes. It is well to realize that if of two alternatives one is of itself less exalted, then more consolation is required to point to it as the will of God than would be required for the harder of the two alternatives.

Ignatius has suggested that if a mutable election was not originally 'sincere nor well-ordered' it would be useful to make it again. He does not mention another possibility, namely, that without any culpability a person's aptitudes and inclinations can change. It is through a person's aptitudes and inclinations and the needs of others that a person generally discovers God's will for him. Changes that come about through the nature of things, development, experience, interests are part of God's particular guidance of that person.

There can also be an excessive desire of the confirmation of consolation. Thus Ignatius, speaking of one who was holding back from accepting a religious vocation because he thought he did not have sufficient consolation, wrote: 'The delight of the will may not anticipate the decision of our reason but it may very readily follow it. In this way God will reward the trust we have put in his Providence and the completeness of our self-effacement . . .'.[15]

Presuming our election already made, the Third Week, through the Passion of Christ, not only strengthens me but confirms my election. The Fourth Week also adds the consolation of the Risen Christ.

From our acceptance of our own particular participation in the third degree of humility we pass naturally into the Third Week of the Exercises.

SECOND WEEK CONTEMPLATIONS

This is not a preached retreat. The mysteries which an exercitant contemplates are a matter between himself and his director. The dynamics of the individual, the way God is leading and drawing

him, take precedence over the dynamics of the Exercises. Nevertheless there is only one Christ and one paschal mystery which is being enacted in any and every scene we contemplate. Without giving 'points' for contemplations, it may be helpful to show what Ignatius presumes is going on throughout the contemplations.

Christ is the mediator. Life is a warfare and there is never an armistice. The two leaders are each vying for the allegiance of all men. The two standards are planted in the hearts of all men, and raised outside in the 'world'. Christ has come and conquered the enemy and has reconciled the human race, his brethren, to the Father. However, the victory has been won in the sense in which we speak of a disease as being conquered once the remedy for it has been found (325); and so the struggle still goes on. That is why life continues to be a warfare.

The remedy, the victory, is Christ. He is the bread from heaven through the true doctrine he reveals by his word and example (Jn 6,35; 8,12; 9,5), and he is the bread from heaven in his own body and blood which is our life (6,53-58). He comes to us through his Body which is the Church. 'Daily' as St Bede says, 'the Church brings forth the Church'. Each of us is a member of that Body, and those who realize this continually seek to know what particular part God has allotted to them for the building up of this Body.

The incarnation takes us into the very heart of the mystery. God so loved the world, us, that when men fell as a race, he sent his only Son to be our Saviour. What was decreed in eternity (Eph 1,3-7), promised in time (Gen 3,15), was fulfilled at Nazareth (Lk 1,26-38) at the annunciation. From then on we follow on foot, up to Calvary and beyond, the steps of God-made-man seeking always to be conformed to him, choosing always his choices, as he gives us the light to see his mind taking shape in ourselves and in our own lives, his disciples, apostles, friends.

The hidden life of Christ shows the choices made for him by his Father. We note the initial emptying of himself which takes place in the incarnation. Emptying is even more primitive than assumption (Phil 2,6-7). Humility is the keynote of his whole life, loving subjection to the will of his Father. Poverty of spirit is accepted, for him in the hearts of Mary and Joseph, and also actual poverty at his birth. But even more important and brilliant than humility and poverty is the love that is manifest, the loving kindness (Tit 3,4) of Father and Son, and Mary and Joseph.

Christ was truly man with independence and freedom. We see

this exercised for the first time when, twelve years old, the time at which a jewish boy came of age, he elected to stay behind in the temple, this being the will of the Father which he followed even though he knew the distress it would cause his mother and St Joseph. God's will is the overriding will, whether others understand it immediately or not. However, for some nearly twenty years our Lord continued to live unknown at Nazareth at first subject to his parents and, if St Joseph died during this period, as an independent master of a household.

Eventually God called his Son to fulfil publicly the work for which he had sent him into the world. Christ made his way to the Jordan and there, baptized by his kinsman John the Baptist, he identifies himself with our sinful race and assumes responsibility for it, visibly taking up the leadership and being appointed and anointed thereto by Father and Spirit. Led or driven by the Spirit into the desert, he is there over a period of time referred to as 'forty days and forty nights'; he is tested and tried and makes his election which is to be God's will in God's way. The eighth day had come and creation was to pass into redemption. From now on his feet are set firmly on the way to Jerusalem. Whether or not he knew how his life would end we do not know but we do know that his choice in the wilderness, continually reiterated in all his choices, was to lead him inexorably to Calvary.

The public life of our Lord can be contemplated only in brief, as it is needed and as it is useful in helping the exercitant from within himself towards that mind which was in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus imbued with the sentiments of Christ he will be able to judge with Christ in his own life. In the body of the text of this Second Week Ignatius chooses eight contemplations (134, 161), for the eight days that he imagines will succeed the fourth day of the Two Standards, but he provides others (273-88). It is for the director to help the exercitant to choose from these or from other passages according to his needs as the Spirit leads. There is no syllabus to get through. In each contemplation we seek for a knowledge of the Lord (as he shows himself to us, like this) so that we may love him more (like this) and follow him more (like this). Intimacy is of the essence. 'For him' responds to 'for me'. The Second Week lasts as long as is needed to form Christ in me (Apoc 12,5) for the purpose of the election (4).

THE THIRD WEEK

'For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God' (2 Cor 5,21).

'The reason he died for all was so that living men should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them' (2 Cor 5,15). 'Let us also go and die with him' (Jn 11,16).

> Lord God, the cross reveals the mystery of your love;
> a stumbling block indeed for unbelief,
> but the sign of your power and wisdom to us who believe.
> Teach us so to contemplate your Son's glorious Passion
> that we may always believe and glory in his cross.[16]
>
> 'I will receive the cup of salvation'. What is that cup? It is the cup of suffering, bitter and yet bringing salvation, the cup which a sick man would fear to touch if his physician did not drink first. This is that cup. We recognize that cup on the lips of Christ when he says, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'.[17]
>
> O my God, Jesus all-good: unworthy though I am in nature and merits, grant that since I did not have the privilege of being present in body at these events, I may at least faithfully consider them in my mind, and feel towards you, my God, crucified and put to death for me, the very compassion your innocent mother and the penitent Magdalene experienced at the hour of your Passion.[18]
>
> Behold I am the cause of your suffering; I am the wound of which you have died.[19]

THE SECOND AND THIRD WEEKS

The general petition of the Second Week (104), 'for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who for me is made man, that I may the more love him and follow him', leads me to know Christ poor, humiliated and humble. This reaches its peak in the third degree of humility (167). From the third degree of humility we pass naturally into the Third Week of the Exercises which is devoted to the Passion of our Lord. This becomes very clear when Ignatius tells us (199) that 'if the matter or devotion urge me', I may make 'three colloquies, one to the Mother, another to the Son, and a third to the Father, in the same form as that laid down in the Second Week in the meditation on the Two Standards, and in the note which follows that on the Classes'.

It is of course possible and at times desirable to contemplate the mysteries of our Lord's Passion in the same illuminative way in

which we contemplated the mysteries of his early and his public life, but this would not correspond to the dynamics of the Exercises at this stage where it is presumed the election has already been made.

HOW CONTEMPLATE THE PASSION OF JESUS?

The Second Week was an illuminative week (10). The Third Week is a unitive week. In the Second Week we asked to know: in the Third Week we ask to share. Ignatius gives the petition for this week as 'sorrow with Christ, who is full of sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and interior pain for the great pain that Christ has suffered for me' (203). This is not something that can be weighed and measured, and it is for Christ our Lord to grant it to us 'according to his divine ordinance' (234), according to the measure he prepares us for.

We cannot, of course, make this petition unless our whole attitude is altered. We have therefore first to pray for the grace to desire the cross, to see it as glory and sweetness. We ask to have our self-centred fears removed from us, to see them as what they are, self-centred. We pray for the grace to be free.

The petition for this week tells us that we have now to learn to contemplate in a new and humbler way. We are asking for something we cannot snatch by our own industry. It is a grace we wait for, meanwhile attending. We can enter the Passion of our Lord only indirectly. It is rather like keeping a vigil at the bedside of a dying friend. There is really nothing we can do except quietly change our point of contact with the Passion from time to time, so as to preserve our attention. We may find ourselves numb or full of distractions, so that we have to 'strive' and 'labour' (195), not to experience emotion but to remain present. Do we deserve any better? 'If with my prayer there came severe temptations and aridities and tribulations', says Teresa of Avila, 'and these leave me humble, then I should consider it good prayer, for by the best prayer I mean that which is most pleasing to God. One must not think that a person who is suffering is not praying. He is offering up his sufferings to God, and many a time he is praying much more truly than one who goes away by himself and meditates his head off and, if he has squeezed out a few tears, thinks that is prayer'.[20]

Our Lady as she stood by the cross is our great model. She was there, living in her son, yet helpless, incapable of relieving his pain. She was experiencing his pain in herself, not by substitution but by

extension from him. We too wish to experience what it was like for him, not in order to grow but in friendship, sharing. As St Bernard notes: 'No sword could pierce your Son's flesh without piercing your own soul. After your own Son Jesus gave us his life, the cruel lance, which opened his side and would not spare him in death, though it could do him no injury, could not touch his soul yet it pierced your soul'.[21]

Compassion not sympathy (197; Isai 53,4.5). Sympathy is not enough. We can offer sympathy because we share the same nature. We can put ourselves in another's position and know how we would feel under those circumstances. Thus we might unexpectedly come across a car accident, be horrified, and do all we could to help. But there would be no feeling of guilt about it, no sense of responsibility for what had happened. We may even feel good at being able to experience sympathy for our Lord but this would be a prostitution of our feelings. 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' It was not they who crucified my Lord; it was I. As St Bernardine of Sienna observes: 'It would be more salutary if they wept, not for the Passion, but for its cause, their own sins'. Fr Vincent McNabb O.P. says very pointedly: 'It avails us nothing to weep for our Saviour's sufferings if we do not weep for our sins that wrought these sufferings. Every tear should cleanse the weeper. Tears that leave the weeper in his sin had better not have been shed. When we sinners are contented with our tears we are not wholly discontented with our sins'.[22]

Sufferings so cruel (196; Gal 2,20). Truly; but there is a danger that if we concentrate on the sufferings we shall miss or lay less emphasis on the love with which he bore them. This would be to miss the mark. The evangelists are very sparing of the details of his suffering. St Peter Chrysologus makes our Lord say: 'The nails do not pierce me with pain but with love of you; my wounds do not draw groans out of me but draw you into my heart. I return good for evil, love for injuries; the deeper the wound, the greater the love'.

Freely (195, 196). *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit* (Isai 53,7; cf Jn 10,18; Mt 26,53). Jesus has to will his Passion. Until Christ says 'yes' with his human will the Passion cannot begin, and the Father cannot compel him. Unless he says 'yes' the Passion will have no meaning. It was Gethsemane which gave it that meaning. He entered the garden with 'fear, sadness, and disgust' in his soul. He struggled in prayer. Finally, 'an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength' (Lk 21,43). Grace is not an anaesthetic. Christ

had no personal love of suffering, no desire to suffer; his sufferings were acceptable to him because they were the will of the Father, and the strength to accept the will of the Father came to him from the Father (Heb 5,8.9). I learn from Christ how to give meaning to my sufferings — and how to help others to give meanings to theirs.[23]

Because of our solidarity with Christ and because of the uniqueness of his redemption, we too are able through our sufferings to redeem with him, under him, assisting in the distribution of what his Passion has won for us. 'It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church' (Col 1,24; cf 2 Cor 4,9). But our suffering must be according to the measure that God makes possible for us, for 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor 9,7); and it is our ability to give cheerfully that measures our capacity to give. I recall also that Christ suffers today in others and my compassion is for the suffering Christ today. I ask myself, 'what I ought to do and to suffer for him' (197): for him, not for my sins (Mt 25,25ff).

Christ suffers alone. Probably the most significant remark one can make in order to ensure that the compassion that we offer to Christ in his suffering is healthy is to say that we should not imagine we are alleviating or reducing what he then suffered. This would not be right sentiment but sheer sentimentality. Nothing we can do now can make the original cross easier to bear. 'He trod the wine-press alone' (Isai 63,3; cf Rom 5,10; Eph 2,8.9; Titus 3,4-8). It is only by accepting this fact that the full weight of the Passion can strike us. I contributed — nothing. All is owed to Christ. Contemplation of the Passion demands self-abasement.

Isaiah. One way to contemplate the Passion is by a *lectio divina* on one or more of the Passion-narratives of the evangelists. Another way could be through the Suffering Servant songs of Isaiah:

42,1-4 The Servant is the elect of God,
49,1-6 chosen from birth for service,
50,4-9 service that entails suffering,
52,13-53,12 reaching extreme limits and costing him his life.

The Servant may have begun as a personification of Israel; but by the time of the fourth song, the Servant has become a person. The other prophets suffered as a consequence of their mission. The

Servant's sufferings are the organ of his mission (53,6.12), and it is worldwide (49,6). The suffering brings a blessing even on those who inflict it. Moses delivered Israel from the egyptian bondage; the Servant delivers from inner disloyalty of heart.

The seven last words (279). In addition to the isaian songs the christian tradition provides other ways of entering meditatively into the Passion of Jesus. One of these is by contemplating the 'seven last words', the words that the gospels give us as having been spoken by Jesus just before he died (Lk 23,34; Lk 23,43; Jn 19,26; Mt 27,46; Jn 19,28; Jn 19,20 and Lk 23,46).

The unity of the Passion (206, 208, 209). We tend to find reasons for evading the monotony of the dull and the pressure of pain. Ignatius warns us about this. We are to maintain ourselves in the ambience of the Passion. We are not 'to admit joyful thoughts, even though good and holy, as on the Resurrection, and of Paradise, but rather exciting myself to sorrow, pain, and anguish, recalling frequently to mind the troubles, labours, and sorrows of Christ our Lord, which he has endured from the moment he was born up to the mystery of the Passion on which I am now engaged' (206).

The Third Week is always concluded, whether the 'week' is longer or shorter, by a review of the entire Passion. This is to emphasize the unity of the Passion (208, 209). Nevertheless, although 'the peculiar grace to be demanded in the Passion' is sorrow with Christ, we gratefully receive from our Lord whatever grace he sees we stand most in need of and which draws us closer to him. This might, for instance, be strength being poured into us and giving us the power to keep our election; or it could be love flowing out to us from Christ in gratitude for the election we have made on his behalf. The grace will nearly always be connected with the election (15).

The purpose of the Third Week. Presuming the election to have been made in the Second Week, the exercitant now wishes to strengthen his resolve; but, above all, he seeks confirmation of it. This, as we have already said, is a fresh grace. We ask to experience God's satisfaction with our having chosen his will, his gratitude, his guarantee that he will help us to fulfil it, our union with him. It is to these graces, coming in various ways over and above the special grace of sharing the Passion, that we have just referred. While they differ they do not contradict; on the contrary they are consolation, confirming that aspect of the Passion we have chosen in our life.

The election can also be confirmed in a more crucifying way. The

consolation originally confirming the election may disappear. There is an onslaught by way of desolation against the election we have made. Our Lord gives us an example of this in his agony in the garden. If this attack fails, there is next an onslaught against the person himself. Again our Lord gives us an example of this in his cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Forewarned is forearmed. It is confirmation of another kind. We overcome by exercising the fidelity of Christ. The powers of darkness overreach themselves and occasion their own defeat (Heb 5,7-10).

If the exercitant is not concerned with an election, the Third Week enables him to deepen the sacrificial nature of his chosen life. This is where the Second Week ended, at the conclusion of 'amendment and reform of one's life and state': 'Wherefore, let each be convinced that he will make progress in all spiritual matters in proportion as he shall have divested himself of his own self-love, his own will, and self-interest' (189).

St Ignatius proposes for our consideration the Eucharist as a sacrament — 'Christ our Lord . . . gave to his disciples his most holy body and precious blood' (191) — and the Eucharist as a sacrifice — 'He instituted the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, as the greatest proof of his love, saying, 'Take ye, and eat' (289).

SIN, DEATH, RESURRECTION

'Help us to overcome our pride — and raise us from the depths of our weakness'.[24] The connection between sin and death is not arbitrary. The account of the first sin as given us in Genesis makes it plain that sin is man's futile bid for independence. God had forbidden them to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2,17). The father of lies presents Eve with the fallacious explanation of this command. God knows, he tells her, that to eat the fruit of this tree would be an act of independence; they would then become like gods, making good and evil for themselves, not subject to any law or constraint outside their own wills.

The story of the fall of our first parents in the garden purports to be of their life before the fall (prelapsarian). In fact, the story is told in postlapsarian style, and that is why we fallen children of God can identify so easily with the working of temptation in the minds of Adam and Eve. We are tempted and we sin in the same way. We cannot face the fact that we can choose evil, and so in succumbing to temptation we always rationalize, that is to say, we attempt to justify

our decisions, to make good whatever we want to do. This desire to be independent in the moral order is pride. I choose my will in preference to God's. In fact, as St Thomas Aquinas points out, God forbids us only those things which are against our own good: there is nothing arbitrary in God's commands.[25]

All sin is pride, so that the only reparation and cure for this is its opposite, humility. Humility is truth; that is to say, humility means recognizing that God, against whom we have sinned, is Infinite Truth, Infinite Goodness and Infinite Love, and that we are totally dependent on him our Creator for our very being. We have no existence outside of him. Yet what man could atone for a sin committed against God? The only one capable of making such an atonement is Jesus Christ, God as well as man. It was his loving acceptance of death that wrought our salvation (Rom 3,24).

The pathway to humility is humiliation. But humiliation leads to humility only if the humiliation is recognized and accepted. Man's complete humiliation is death. Death is total passivity. Man as he has known himself ceases to be. He is, as it were, annihilated, truly a victim. Illness or old age may impair our power of self-determination but it rarely disposes us of it completely. We can generally always react to our disabilities, mentally rejecting or accepting. Sickness may be said to be a rehearsal for death. In death our humiliation is complete. There is nothing we can do except commit ourselves with confidence into the hands of God — 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' (Lk 23,46). It is only in death that our Lord could say, 'It is accomplished' (Jn 19,30). It is in death that all the free decisions of our life are summed up and recapitulated, each free act being made in virtue of the free acts that have gone before. All our Lord's salvific life was in his death.

Death is our final end, but all life long we are dying to self and leaving ourselves to the mastering of God. It is a lesson we need continually to re-learn. It is a lesson that Paul had to learn, and he tells us of the occasion when the light began to dawn on him (2 Cor 12,7-10). God's power is shown to its best advantage in weakness. If we recognize and confess our personal weakness and powerlessness this calls down on us God's mercy, and therefore Paul will declare: 'I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong'.

The paschal mystery is in the nature of fallen human beings: resurrection through death. It is the constant rhythm of a christian life. At first the Passion and death of Christ were an embarrassment to the early disciples. The Messiah was not expected to suffer. Hence the Passion narratives were the first and longest portion of the gospels. It was thought necessary to show on the one hand the malevolence of men and on the other hand the fulfilment of prophecy; or, as in the early Paul, simply to accept suffering as the will of God and as a sign of the coming of the last days. Gradually, however, it was realized that there is an inner intelligibility in suffering and death (2 Cor 4,17), and that it was they that worked glory within us; and that death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15,55). Glory or resurrection is not a reward attached to us later extrinsically, like a medal. Glory, as someone has put it, is grace with the lid off! (1 Jn 3,1-2; cf Rom 6,3-5).

THE SOLITUDE OF OUR LADY (208)

After contemplating the burial of Christ and accompanying our Lady to 'the house to which she went after the burial of her Son', and after two periods of prayer on the entire Passion, St Ignatius suggests that for the rest of that day the exercitant should consider the body of Christ in the tomb, dead but still divine, and that he should ponder also 'on the solitude of our Lady in such great grief and affliction of spirit' as well as the solitude of the disciples.

Ignatius directs us during this Third Week to recall 'frequently to mind the troubles, labours, and sorrows of Christ our Lord which he has endured from the moment he was born up to the particular mystery of the Passion' (206). It will be equally profitable, if devotion urges me, to consider the dolours of our Lady, traditionally numbered as seven: Simeon's prophecy of the sword that would pierce her soul and her son becoming a sign of contradiction, the flight into Egypt, the loss in the temple, the nailing of Christ to the cross, the piercing of the side of Jesus on the cross, the taking down from the cross, and the burial.

One of the advantages of contemplating our Lady in her solitude is that it will heighten our joy and appreciation in the first contemplation of the Fourth Week (218) which is 'how Christ our Lord appeared to our Lady' (299). In the same way, to consider the solitude of the disciples will increase our joy at the way our Lord exercises 'the office of Comforter' (224) towards them.

However, there is one great difference between Mary and the disciples. St Bonaventure puts it this way when offering an explanation of why Saturday is dedicated to our Blessed Lady. It is, he says, because on that day (Holy Saturday) *in sola Virgine stetit ecclesia*, — the faith of the Church stood firm only in Mary. After the three days' loss of Jesus when he remained behind in the temple, although she did not understand his reply at the time, she 'stored up all these things in her heart' (Lk 2,51). In her pain and solitude Mary is still 'the woman of faith'. She believed that the promises made to her at the annunciation would be fulfilled, even though she did not know the manner. Mary waits on God, still the faithful handmaid of the Lord.

NOTES

[1] This article is part of a longer directory for the Exercises on which Fr Copeland had been working before he died in May 1982. The numbers in brackets which are not scripture references refer to the numbered paragraphs of the Spiritual Exercises.
[2] Goodier, A.: *The life that is light* (London, 1935), vol II, p 145.
[3] *Adv Helv. VI, PL* 23,189-90.
[4] Augustine: *De Trinitate*, 1,8,16.
[5] John of the Cross: *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 22.
[6] St Teresa of Avila: *Life*, ch 27.
[7] Poulain: *Graces of interior prayer*, ch 6.
[8] 18 July 1536.
[9] Homily XII on Philippians, *PG* 62, 273.
[10] *De Religione S.I. IX*, 5, 28-29.
[11] Andrew Shonacrux.
[12] Morris, J.: *Lights on prayer* (London), sect 2.
[13] Rahner, H.: *Ignatius the theologian* (London, 1968), p 141.
[14] Cf Walsh, J.: 'Discernment of spirits', in *Supplement to The Way* 16 (1972), p 54.
[15] Letter, 30 May 1556.
[16] *The Divine Office*, Evening Prayer, Friday, week 2.
[17] St Augustine: *Sermon* 329.
[18] St Bonaventure.
[19] St Anselm.
[20] St Teresa: *Letters*, 122.
[21] St Bernard: *Sermon*.
[22] St Bernardine of Siena: *Some mysteries of Jesus Christ*, p 36.
[23] Cf W. Yeomans, 'The pattern of his death', in *The Way* (July 1965).
[24] *The Divine Office*, Morning Prayer, Friday, week 2 of Advent.
[25] *Contra Gentiles* III, 122.