

# THE MISSION TO JUSTICE AND GIVING THE EXERCISES

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HOW CAN THE Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius be given so that the process fully integrates faith and justice and leads to a deepened commitment to both, as presently understood in the Church's teaching? This article will offer some suggestions as to the earlier part of the process particularly in relation to preparation and the First Week of the Exercises.

What I have to say is addressed primarily to directors engaged in giving the full Exercises, whether in an enclosed thirty-day retreat, or in the 'Exercises in daily life'. My remarks are made on the understanding that not all people, perhaps a few only, are suitable to do the Exercises of Ignatius in their entirety; what I have to say will probably underline this. Physical strength and psychological maturity are important criteria, as is also the likelihood of apostolic benefit to the people of God.<sup>1</sup> The more the advice of Ignatius as to the choice of persons to make the complete Exercises is followed, particularly in relation to the last-named criterion, the better for the mission to justice.

## *The process of preparation*

The Exercises are aimed at enabling a person to respond to the grace of God moving him or her towards inner freedom, so that the person will be increasingly able to respond to the call of God, which is to work for the kingdom in ever-closer union with Christ. The contemporary Church has been given, very widely, the grace of hearing the call of God in and through the poor (among other ways) and of finding Christ living and suffering among them. In one sense there is nothing new about this; in another it implies a profound change of orientation and practice for the believing community. There is a wealth of evidence, scriptural and patristic, which indicates that there is nothing new about the thesis that to know God is to do justice, and that the Church is called to work

for justice through a preferential option for the poor so as to eliminate those evils which divide the body of Christ. On the other hand, as regards its newness, we must be honest with ourselves and admit that for us Christians in the rich world, especially for those of us who are white, middle-class or male, this is a new road which we have probably not travelled before and which we are not likely to find easy. Fear rises in us when we see this. At this point it is important to remember that it is not to a new thesis or doctrinal proposition that we are being asked to assent — not everybody might be easy with the statement 'to know God is to do justice'. What is asked of us is that we open our hearts to the spiritual experience of significant sections of the Church in the third world and elsewhere who have followed this road, and see if we cannot learn from them. The 'magnanimity and generosity towards his Creator and Lord'<sup>2</sup> which Ignatius so desired in the retreatant will drive us to learn from wherever we can how to draw closer to God.

What I am pointing to is not the Church's social teaching but the spiritual journey to justice. There are signposts on the journey, but the road is unclearly marked at times. We may not always like the language of the signposts, but we will try to avoid the temptation to refuse to go any further, or to deny that there is in fact any such road, merely because we do not like the language of the signs; and we will avoid the other temptation of mistaking the signs for the actual road, of thinking that because we are labouring to read the signs we are also moving on the road. The road of action for justice as a constructive element of our search for God<sup>3</sup> is proving for many people, particularly the poor but also those who are privileged to journey with them and suffer with them, a road to God: *via quaedam ad Deum*, as Ignatius would have said.<sup>4</sup>

Most directors are well aware that the majority of exercitants in the industrialized world are unfamiliar with the Church's teaching on justice, have very limited experience of poverty or structural injustice, and are likely to find such a statement as 'to know God is to do justice' a bit off-putting. Accordingly, serious preparation must be carried out beforehand. This will require carefully-planned consultation and co-operation between the spiritual director who will give the Exercises and one or more members of a faith and justice centre. The preparation must be thorough and completed well before the commencement of the Exercises so that it does not

interfere in any way with the dynamic of the Exercises which requires that the exercitant be left free to meet his or her Creator and Lord in whatever way the Lord chooses. The Exercises ought not to be used to serve some other purpose different from that for which they were designed. The preparation I suggest contains three consecutive stages.

*1 Some experience of structural injustice or poverty*

The prospective retreatant should undergo an exposure to a situation of poverty or structural social injustice several weeks prior to the retreat. The experience should be chosen by the spiritual director, in consultation with the social justice centre, with a view to providing the experience most appropriate for that particular directee. Such an experience, whether full-time or part-time, should be prolonged. Since it is undertaken in preparation for the Exercises, careful attention should be paid by the director to the goal of this stage, which is not merely the experience of deprivation nor merely meeting with a specific group of people. Rather there must be an encounter at one and the same moment both with people and the injustice they suffer.

*2 A theoretical understanding of injustice as rooted in social structures*

There should be some time for personal assimilation and rest after this experience and prior to the commencement of the Exercises. The directee should meet with the social justice advisor to discuss not the movements of the spirits within but the meaning and context of what he or she has encountered, on social, economic and political levels. The advisor might suggest reading which will enable the directee to acquire some understanding of the underlying causes of the injustice experienced along with its wider implications for society in general.

*3 A new understanding of faith*

The third stage involves the integration of faith and justice on the level of understanding. A one-sided emphasis on justice (without the faith element) will have markedly negative effects in the long run and particularly in the context of preparation for the Exercises. If our concept of justice is of a reality or ideal that is more than merely human, if we believe that in the last analysis it is Christ alone who brings justice to the world, then the concept

of faith which we have must be affected in some way by our development of an appropriate concept of justice.

I know that this programme may seem over-idealistic and impractical. I would reply that it is practical on a small scale on a pilot scheme basis and that it points to the seriousness of what we are about in relation to the retreatant's life.

### *The goal of preparation for the Exercises*

Justice like faith is a grace, the gift of God. My aim has been to suggest some answer to the question: how can we prepare a prospective retreatant to receive this gift and how can we create some of the conditions necessary for the dynamic of the Exercises to bear fruit in this area? The emphasis is on preparation; the purpose of the Exercises is not to inculcate a set of propositions. Ignatius's remark in Annotation 2, that the director should refrain from overmuch instruction of the exercitant, will help us to see that such preparation in advance can avoid the unnecessary and undesirable introduction of extraneous material into the process of the Exercises. If the type of preparation which I have outlined, or something like it, has been accomplished, then there is a different person as it were present before God at the beginning of the Exercises.

Let me illustrate by example. For some retreatants the question arises at some point: does God love me? But in our individualistic culture another question is rarely a serious personal one for exercitants: does God really care about those who suffer unjustly? That this is so should be profoundly disturbing for us because, in the last analysis, the two questions are the same. So, in the preparation, the would-be exercitant should be placed as close as possible to those who suffer so that, in one way or another, the question may begin to arise. It must come from within the person; it is no good if it is put there by the director during the retreat.

### *Sin in the Foundation*

The Principle and Foundation speaks of an order created by God, within which humanity is called towards a reverential awareness of God as creator of the universe and also to the service of God. Service includes practical action in response to God's mandate to use the earth in a creative, life-enhancing way. Since created reality is meant to help us to attain the end for which we came to

be, we may not use creation in whatever way we please. An exercitant aware of growing concern over the gradual destruction of the earth's natural resources and the long-term poisoning of much of the environment could well find this theme challenging. Ignatius's words are worth quoting:

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created. Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.<sup>5</sup>

These words have ecological and political overtones today that they did not have in the sixteenth century, nor even half a century ago. Once a matter of ascetic detachment, the discipline they propose may now be a matter of life and death. Formerly an exercitant would have had a general idea that one needs to be free of an inordinate consumer drive; this would seem to be a matter of moderation, a development of the virtue of temperance, applicable to all in every age. Now it is a matter of realizing that the failure to treat creation properly is bringing us to the brink of disaster. There may well be no 'other things on the face of the earth' for the coming generations if any one of a number of possible ecological catastrophes occurs.

In the prayer and reflection on the Principle and Foundation, the sense of something gone wrong, of serious disorder in our world, may press strongly upon a contemporary exercitant. Loss of reverence for creation may reflect in a new way loss of reverence for the Creator, and sin against the earth appear as sin against its children.<sup>6</sup> The Principle and Foundation may now suggest to our exercitant a strong counter-statement to the exploitation and destruction of the earth's resources in the interests of profit and not of service, to the enrichment beyond reason of the wealthy nations at the expense of the bare necessities for the poorer ones.

### *Sin in the First Week*

For the First Week of the Exercises Ignatius prescribes considerable time in meditation and prayer on sin: the sin of the angels and that of our first parents, the sins of other people and our own. He seems anxious that as far as possible the exercitant should

grasp the full range of sinfulness and experience deep feelings of shame, confusion and horror: not merely in relation to one's own personal sins but in relation to all sinfulness, and not so much sin in the abstract as actual specific sinfulness. There is of course much more to the First Week than growth in understanding and revulsion as regards sin. However it is precisely the development of the exercitant's understanding of sin that I intend to discuss in the following pages.

The levels of sinfulness which I shall explore resemble as it were spiralling circles, ever widening out and broadening to include yet more of the elements of human existence. I use the words 'sin' and 'sinfulness' not only in the sense of personal wrongdoing but also in the sense of a great and terrible power which enslaves us in mysterious ways, somewhat in the sense Paul uses it in the Letter to the Romans. Furthermore, it should be noted that the shift from the personal dimension to the collective does not reduce personal responsibility: far from it — the process will hopefully move the exercitant towards acceptance of greater responsibility for sin.

I distinguish four levels of sinfulness:

- 1 Personal sin.
- 2 Social sin, i.e. the sins of the group to which I belong.
- 3 Sinfulness which oppresses me in common with others.
- 4 Sinfulness which, as oppressing others, I choose to accept.

I put these four in a given order, because there is a certain logical progression in that order. However, it is recurrent, in the sense that one can return to the earlier stages and go deeper as a result of what one has gained in the later stages.

### *1 Personal sin*

I feel I need to say little on this, since much has already been written. In the Exercises, the exercitant strives to become aware of the sinfulness within, a disordered perverse response to an infinitely loving God. He must face himself as he really is: the concrete unfreedoms, the petty malice, the weakness and the cowardice, all of which hold him back from greater detachment and loving service of God.

This level is important because it concretizes sin inescapably, and concretizes it as mine and none other's. The exercitant must come to the unavoidable painful realization: I am a sinner and

quite incapable of saving or freeing myself. An exercitant who has not come to a deep awareness of this should not be allowed to explore the other levels of sin; otherwise his view of social sinfulness will be merely of social problems.

Obviously, as has been pointed out by others, it must be a genuine sense of sin, revealed to the exercitant by God, so that ultimately it becomes liberating, in and through the cross before which the exercitant faces Christ and himself. It will show a pattern of going through darkness and desolation to emerge eventually into a deep consolation at the wonderful mercy and goodness and love of God. A similar pattern should appear in the exploration and discovery of sin on the following levels: a pattern of opening oneself to the loving tenderness of God, asking for the grace of knowing one's sinfulness, allowing the darkness and the anguish of this knowledge to come upon oneself, and accepting the consolation offered in and through the redemptive cross of Christ.

## 2 *Social sin*

The director may put it to the exercitant that some of his sins (greed, envy, indifference, etc.) may be shared by others from similar background or by those among whom he works. A concrete instance would be the question of active participation or passive acquiescence in the securing by the exercitant's class or country of a larger share of the national or international cake at the expense of others who are worse off.

The exercitant who has gone through the preparation suggested earlier may begin to see how blind *he* has been, how narrow and self-centred his vision has been before now. He may now be in a position to understand how from personal individual sin, sinfulness and death have spread out to grip the whole world; he may see too that in its spreading out it has as it were acquired a life of its own, and though the result of careless individual actions yet it cannot be simply reversed by individual good actions alone.

One who has worked for or with the poor must examine how he may have sinned against them: perhaps by giving in to feelings of repulsion, resisting letting himself love them, insulating himself physically or emotionally from experiencing their pain or deprivation, failing to develop a sense of urgency as regards their plight, giving in to preferences to be with more 'congenial' cultured company, and so on.

As with the first level, it is important to pray that God will reveal this sinfulness. Part of it is personal sin in the sense that I do it; part of it is social sin in the sense that my class/country/power-bloc do it, and the choice does not lie solely in my hands. I am not *personally* guilty that the EEC will not give more favourable trading terms to the ACP (african, caribbean and pacific) countries, nor am I *personally* guilty of the Church's treatment of women as second-class citizens; but I am *socially* guilty. If I am a religious belonging to a community which refuses to feed people who come to the door asking for food or, let us say, decides to sell a part of its land to speculators in order to get the highest price, then the responsibility falls upon me too even though I may have objected strenuously. The really hard thing to face here is one's own impotence, and yet at the same time be willing to say and admit 'we have sinned'. Much of the sin denounced by the prophets in the Old Testament is the collective sin of the people. The sin is shared by all, by the devout and the irreverent, the righteous and the unjust alike; and the punishment is collective too. This is hard for us to accept, and hard for us to understand as a result of the individualistic culture which has grown through the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the romantic movement, and which has become the distinctive mark of western political culture.

What has been described above is a big step. It is a step forward from seeing only myself, with my need of God's love, my need to be special, my discovery of my own personal sins and God's forgiveness of them. Much spirituality stays at this point and never gets any further. It fails to get beyond the image and experience of God enclosing me alone in his arms and healing me of my hurts; sometimes there can be in this a slight element of wanting to escape from the hard cruel world that does not understand me. Ultimately we are meant to move beyond this. God is love and is community of three<sup>7</sup>; and the communion to which God invites us is for all. In entering into communion with him we are asked to enter into solidarity with our brothers and sisters; as Christ accepted the burden of their guilt in accepting them, so we too must accept their guilt — also, in any case, because it is ours.

### 3 *Sinfulness which oppresses me in common with others*

At any given time, the degree of progress along the road may be limited. A wise director will direct the retreatant's attention to

another level of understanding sinfulness. Naturally not all of these levels have to be touched during the Exercises. What is important is not that the exercitant do everything, but that he be as well disposed and open as possible to whatever grace the Lord may grant him.

Whereas sin in the first and second levels was considered from the point of view of personal or group failing or misdemeanour, in the third and fourth levels it will be viewed as an oppressive force from without.

Unequal trading relations, unemployment, bad housing, political violence, racial discrimination, etc., are evils of a structural nature whose responsibility transcends individuals. For those of us who are white, middle-class and living in the industrialized world, such evils are usually not experienced directly to any great extent. On the fourth level, I shall explore the possibility of vicarious experience of this through solidarity with the unemployed, the badly housed, etc. But since this is a deceptively elusive experience, I propose something different on the third level to prepare for it. It must be something directly affecting me, not vicarious or assumed in solidarity with others; nor is some experience of individual unjust actions against me quite what I have in mind. It must be oppressive, filling me with a sense of helplessness, apparently all-powerful. The best (though not the only) example I know of is the threat of nuclear holocaust. It is a human creation, an evil created by us and in theory within our control, yet in practice a terrifying reality which can fill us with an overwhelming sense of dread and hopelessness. Most people try not to think about the prospect of nuclear war, even though many of them believe it to be likely if not inevitable. The prospect is too horrific: a nuclear war, and almost equally the sort of planet we would be left with afterwards, are unbearable thoughts before which many people go numb emotionally. As a result the overpowering emotions which could be released are driven underground and suppressed; in the long run, this is bound to have serious consequences for our culture and society on psychological, social, aesthetic and faith levels.<sup>8</sup> The horror weighs on us, not on a day-to-day practical basis such as poverty or dilapidated housing, but as an oppressive nightmare which will not go away but lurks always in a corner of our consciousness.

I believe that facing this reality in the context of the Exercises

would be extremely difficult but could be very fruitful. Few data are needed. Most people have a rough idea that the military capacity of the world's superpowers is such that, if used, it would in all probability devastate the northern hemisphere, killing much of its population within a few days; and that within a short space of time afterwards, the side-effects of blast and fall-out, with their long-term consequences, would begin to reduce the entire planet to a desolate ruin empty of humanity and animal life, the atmosphere perhaps irreparably damaged, and the planet moving into a 'nuclear winter' of permanently darkened skies and sub-zero temperatures. It is enough, and too much for most of us, to know that; too many details can have an immunizing effect. The second important thing which we know is that this is a possibility at any point of our lives and has been so over the last thirty years. For the first time in human history since primeval days, the future of the human race is in doubt.

It is difficult to face the fact that the threat of final annihilation is the result of human sinfulness. To attempt to dissociate myself from the responsibility of creating the monster and keeping it in being is to attempt to dissociate myself from human sinfulness, and thus from humanity itself. Such attempts, which one will almost inevitably be tempted to make, must be recognized by the director for what they are. The pattern of the first exercise in the First Week, surveying the sin of the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, and the serious sin of any human being, relates all these in some way to us; we are not mere spectators. The prayer asking for 'shame and confusion' (Exx 48) and the recommendation that one consider oneself a 'great sinner' (Exx 74), with the force and vividness implicit in them, may be of help to the exercitant as regards this growth.

Growth can take place if the exercitant can let into his consciousness the terror and oppression of the nuclear threat — to himself, to all those whom he loves, and to his world. Facing this will probably be very draining emotionally; it is more than likely not a suitable theme for meditation for all. The director will probably need to have experienced it personally in order to be able to support the retreatant in the exercise, and not become frightened also by desolation, until such time as the grace begged for has been received, or the Lord's will has in some other way become clear. In any event it will take the retreatant some considerable

time to accept his own emotions in relation to this topic, and time too to learn how to present them to the Lord.

Experiences of helplessness, even of hopelessness and despair, may well be encountered. These can be preludes to grace, even though painful. Further, it is in and through them that the exercitant can begin to experience at a deep personal level what it feels like to be trapped and helpless and apparently without serious prospect of liberation. For such as myself the experiences of being uneducated, of being trapped in a hard-core unemployed group, of being elderly and forced to live in squalid conditions in terror of landlords, thieves and muggers, are not mine and can never really be mine. I can experience these only vicariously through a sympathetic solidarity with others. For some, the experience of helplessness, fear and darkness gained in and through facing the nuclear threat can be of enormous importance in beginning to understand what certain extremes of poverty and oppression are like; for, in the face of nuclear holocaust, we are all the poor and oppressed.

A few final points should be noted. First, the exercitant should begin to see his own smallness and his frailty in the face of massive, structured power. Second, he will be facing the sense that this oppressive nightmare will probably go on for the rest of his life; there is no light at the end of the tunnel for any of us on this one. Third, it can be an important point of encounter with the crucified Christ, to whom he might well find himself addressing the question: why did you bother to become one of us, since we had only another couple of millennia to go before we finally destroyed ourselves? The movement of the good spirit in this context could be one of very deep consolation. Fourth, it is important to remember that one of the sharpest pains of any kind of suffering is the isolation that can accompany it. There is a support to be gained in letting this particular burden surface and sharing it with others. One must grow to see others too suffering under this threat of annihilation even if their suffering is muted or denied; and see Christ, who has assumed and accepted our humanity once and for all, freely choosing to share the threat and the burden.

#### *4 Sinfulness which, as oppressing others, I choose to accept*

The experience of oppressive terror, arising out of human and thus avoidable evil, could be for many of us the key to entering

empathetically into the experience of the poor and marginalized at home and in the third world. If the experience has been worked through fruitfully, culminating in an acceptance of the reality of sin of which the exercitant is part, yet with renewed confidence in Christ's love for him and for the planet and its inhabitants, then the exercitant is ready to move on. The reader will note that I have been loading more and more sinfulness onto the exercitant, always weighting the burden to his capacity. This implies building an exercitant who, like Christ, takes ever more of the sinfulness of the world upon himself; the appropriateness of the triple question in the colloquy with Christ crucified is apparent here. This process of assuming more of the burden of sinfulness is a process of liberation. This liberation is part of the grace of the First Week.

Proceeding to this fourth level, therefore, the exercitant should have some felt insight into the experience of being powerless and radically impotent in the face of an organized structured evil arising from human sinfulness. An experience of inability to reform one's own life is not sufficient here because we are dealing with a cultural problem specific to western society, *viz.* the disjunction between the individual and the collective. Traditionally, one's sinfulness has been seen as being of a piece with that of others, but not that 'we have sinned together' or that 'your sinfulness might in some way be mine too'. This development has to be worked at, by directors and retreatants alike. If the exercitant has begun to realize that he is implicated in sin and evil that extends far beyond his individual self, then a new spiritual sensitivity is emerging. This sensitivity marks a leap beyond an awareness of evil in the world which affects him among others, into a deep sense that his own sinfulness is part of that evil and that if he is to discover that sinfulness then he must begin by learning to accept responsibility for evil in the world.<sup>9</sup> Mere awareness of evil in the world will not move the community of faith to overcome it in Christ.

The exercitant should present to himself for consideration the actual suffering of that particular group of which he has experience as well as the social structures which perpetuate that suffering. With this he asks for the grace of the first exercise to be able to experience the sinfulness in this particular situation. He is seeking to identify with them, to walk around in their skin, to see others (police, social workers, public representatives, clergy, employers,

and professional people) as they see them, and to feel their suffering, whether it be fear, isolation, the sense of being ignorant, the feeling of rejection, not having enough to eat, living in overcrowded conditions or being without a secure home, and so on. This will probably take quite some time.

He may notice that sometimes the poor cannot face the realities of their lives. They appear to take refuge in drink or drugs, they make no attempt to 'save' for the future and they seem to exhibit a rather childish psychological dependence on the system to keep them going. For one who is educated, from a middle-class background, secure and with influential connections (and these do not have to be very influential to remove one from the state of the voiceless and the powerless), this can be hard to understand and harder to accept. On the other hand, someone who has faced, in however small a way, the terror of the nuclear threat may be able to understand, from the inside as it were, why the poor sometimes cannot face the crushing weight of their situation. Fear and anxiety on one side and powerlessness and helplessness on the other are the twin grindstones which crush the poor. In attempting solidarity with them, one of the hardest things is to accept this and not insist on trying to change it straightaway.

Here I touch upon the idea of being with the poor, not just working for them. This is easier said than done for it involves a long slow process of growth. My own experience of working with elderly low-income tenants in the private rented housing sector in Ireland, during the years 1981-4, brought me in extensive contact with large numbers of people who were isolated, poor and socially marginalized. Many of their stories were heart-rending; on a few occasions premature death (twice by suicide) occurred. At different times I experienced strong anger and on some occasions a weary despair. It was only during a subsequent retreat that I suddenly realized that, although I had spent much time working for those people, on only a couple of occasions had I felt myself utterly powerless and unable to cope — as so many of them constantly felt. During the retreat I learned far more from those few occasions than from the rest of my experience, valuable though that too had been.

In the retreat context unnoticed aspects of one's experience in this area may begin to appear. Fear can be more openly acknowledged and placed before the Lord, as can repulsion, flinching from

those of his children who are handicapped, disfigured, deprived or coarsened. There is also the fear of being overwhelmed by the suffering, the injustice and the misery which we encounter in the lives of the marginalized and the poor, and with it the temptation to pull back from the commitment, to close off the area of raw exposure. Here it may be necessary for the director to remind the exercitant that it is Christ who saves, Christ who liberates people from sin and evil, from misery and injustice. What the exercitant is asked to do is to face it, trusting Christ, to enter into that particular experience of sinfulness which only the rejected, the voiceless and the brutalized experience; to enter into it, to work with all his strength to change it, and yet to accept it even while he gradually realizes that he will not be able to change it through his own efforts. If he hesitates or is frightened of it, the director must encourage and support him: not so much challenging him in a manner that may weigh him down more, nor on the other hand trying to pull him out of the desolation, but helping him to see this as part of a journey which he is making with Christ and reminding him that the Lord's consolation will eventually be with him.

In and through an empathetic identification with the poor and the marginalized one can meet the crucified Christ in a new way. Christ's crucifixion, carrying with it the full weight of sinfulness which issues in unmerited suffering, can become a focal symbol for the countless crosses upon which the deprived, the exploited and the slaughtered are crucified. Jesus is representative of our human condition: like to us in all things save sin<sup>10</sup> yet carrying the consequences<sup>11</sup> of it in his own body. This is an important dimension to the colloquy with Christ on the cross, to develop which both the understanding and the will need to be brought into play.<sup>12</sup> Insofar as the retreatant can move beyond seeing the crucifixion of Christ as the death of one innocent man to seeing it as representing and as gathering into itself the deaths and exploitation in human history, his understanding of the mystery of Christ will deepen.

This growth in understanding and in emotional capacity or response will affect the way in which the triple question (what have I done — am I doing — ought I to do for Christ?) is heard by the exercitant and the type of response that may now seem appropriate. Here is the question of the voiceless, the dehuman-

ized,<sup>13</sup> and the poor resounding through the personal being and body of Christ who says in solidarity with them, 'whatever you did for them you did for me'. Christ, through his life and death, creates a solidarity between us and people who are poor or oppressed. Through his death he breaks down the barriers created by structural injustice and every kind of sin, being in himself the 'peace between us' (Eph 2,14).

### *Conclusion*

The Second Week exercises will enable the retreatant to come to know Christ better. In the First Week, the emphasis is placed on encountering Christ crucified in the context of sinfulness. According as the exercitant's understanding and acceptance of the sinfulness in which he shares is matured, his relationship with Christ crucified will deepen.

As regards connecting the development of the aspects of sinfulness which I have outlined above to specific directives given by Ignatius for the First Week exercises, I think it better to leave this to the discretion of individual directors. What I hope I have made clear is that such connections can be made. The robust and vivid imagery used by Ignatius in the First Week, with which a privatized spirituality is so understandably impatient, acquires a new resonance in the schema I have suggested. The destitute and the dehumanized know that the horror of sin and hell exists; maybe it is necessary for us to learn it from them.

Let me make two points in conclusion. First, I am well aware that there are a number of important elements in the First Week concerning which I have said nothing. If it is said that I do not present a sufficiently balanced approach, I plead guilty and reply in mitigation that it was my intention to confine myself to exploring one aspect of the Exercises which has been only slightly developed as yet.

Second, this is a difficult road. Precisely because it will not do to throw into the process of the Exercises an undigested mass of data on social and economic issues under the general heading of sin, so for just that reason a mere reading of a handful of books will not be sufficient training for the director. Furthermore, it is necessary that the exercitant has come to terms to some extent with any outstanding issues relating to personal insecurity, affectivity, freedom, etc. For the immediate future, the area to work on will

be the development of dialogue and co-operation between those working in the justice field and those in the spirituality field. I believe that neither can travel this road without the help of the other.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Exx 18. Cf also *The Way Supplement* 38 (Summer 1980), articles by Brian O'Leary and Laurence Murphy.

<sup>2</sup> Exx 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1971 Synod of Bishops, document 'Justice in the world'.

<sup>4</sup> Cf G. Gutierrez, 'Drink from your own well' in *Concilium* 159, 9, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Exx 23.

<sup>6</sup> The contemporary resurgence of nature religions in the West is of some relevance here.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Jn 1,3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf Joanna Macy, 'Despair work' in *Evolutionary blues* (Summer/Fall 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Note in Exx 63 how Ignatius proposes that the exercitant ask for a knowledge of the world as well as of his own sins; the context indicates that he saw an important connection between the two areas of knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> Cf Heb 4,14-15.

<sup>11</sup> Cf 2 Cor 5,21.

<sup>12</sup> Exx 53 and 50.

<sup>13</sup> Cf Isai 52,14; 53,3.