THE IGNATIAN TRADITION
The Ignatian Tradition

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In memory of
Fr. James M. Burke, s.j.
(1921–1995)
Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Preface xv
Introduction xvii

The Ignatian Tradition xxi

I. Foundations 1
   Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) 3
   Mary Ward (1585–1645) 16

II. Contemplation in Action 25
   Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) 26
   Pierre Favre (1506–1546) 33

III. Mission 43
   Francis Xavier (1506–1552) 44
   Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) 48
   Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585–1652) 53

IV. Citizenship and Prophecy 61
   Edmund Campion (1540–1581) 62
   Alfred Delp (1907–1945) 67
   Ignacio Ellacuría (1930–1989) 74

V. Scholarship 81
   Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) 82
   Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) 88
   Karl Rahner (1904–1984) 93
VI. Imagination 99
   Daniel Seghers (1590–1661) 100
   Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) 104
   William F. Lynch (1908–1987) 111

VII. Renewal 121
   Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991) 123
   George Ganss (1905–2000) 129
   Josée Gsell (1925–1999) and the Christian Life Communities 134
   General Congregations 32 and 34 (1975, 1995) 140

Afterword 149

Notes 154
Acknowledgments


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Preface

The worldwide explosion of interest in “spirituality” has sent inquirers in several directions. One of the more fruitful is toward the traditional spiritualities that have enriched and nurtured the church for many hundreds of years. Among the oldest Christian spiritualities are those connected to particular foundations, charisms, or individuals. This series of spiritualities in history focuses on five distinct traditions within the history of the church, those now known as Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican, Franciscan, and Ignatian.

Each volume in the series seeks to present the given spiritual tradition through an anthology of writings by or about persons who have lived it, along with brief biographical introductions of those persons. Each volume is edited by an expert or experts in the tradition at hand.

The present volume of Ignatian spirituality has been coedited by Kevin F. Burke, s.j., and Eileen Burke-Sullivan, both experts in Ignatian spirituality. Father Burke is associate professor of systematic theology and dean of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California. He is author of several other works, including The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría (Georgetown University Press, 2000), Love that Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría, with Robert Lassalle-Klein (Liturgical Press, 2006), and Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings (Orbis Books, 2004). Doctor Burke-Sullivan is assistant professor of pastoral and systematic theology and director of the master of arts in ministry program at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska.

Their compact presentation of the essentials of the Ignatian tradition traces the bright spark of Ignatius’ genius chronologically and thematically through the four and a half centuries since he codified the methodology of The Spiritual Exercises that now serves as a touchstone for the thousands of his followers who have found and continue to find God in all things.
The lives and writings of the men and women in this volume—most but not all members of the Society of Jesus—show how remarkable and dedicated Christians lived St. Ignatius’ vision of contemplatives in action. Each entry adds another bold color to the picture of Ignatian spirituality, writ large in the continual unfolding of history of the church and of the world.

My own work on this book and for this series has continued with the able assistance of librarians, particularly the reference and interlibrary loan staff of Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, who have tirelessly met so many of my research needs. I am grateful as well for the congenial staff of Liturgical Press, and especially for the professional support and encouragement of Hans Christoffersen, editorial director, and Peter Dwyer, director of Liturgical Press.

Phyllis Zagano
December 31, 2008
Feast of St. John Francis Regis, s.j.
Introduction

Early in the twenty-first century, in the largely secularized culture of the United States and throughout the English-speaking world, the term “spirituality” is used astonishingly often and with a breadth of definition so inclusive as to be elusive, so capable of meaning anything as to become almost meaningless. Thus the phrase “the Ignatian tradition,” while virtually synonymous with “Ignatian spirituality,” serves the useful purpose of linking the discussion of particular spiritual practices to the concrete history that produced them. One speaks of tradition, after all, in terms of attitudes and behaviors that are recognizable within a series of historical eras—attitudes and behaviors of different people not always identical in specifics, but always identifiable as a pattern.

The Ignatian tradition came into being through the Christian life of grace granted to Ignatius of Loyola, a sixteenth-century Basque nobleman who abandoned his life of a wealthy courtier to become a means of grace for men and women of many cultures, languages, and vocations. It is as vital now, half a millennium later, as it ever has been. Pope Benedict XVI highlighted the distinctive gifts of the Ignatian tradition to the church, above all, the gift of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, in his trenchant remarks to General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus in February 2008:

The Spiritual Exercises are the fountain of your spirituality and the matrix of your Constitutions, but they are also a gift that the Spirit of the Lord has made to the entire Church: it is for you to continue to make it a precious and efficacious instrument for the spiritual growth of souls, for their initiation to prayer, to meditation, in this secularised world in which God seems to be absent.¹

The Ignatian tradition flows through the life of the Society of Jesus, through at least thirty-four international religious communities of women
shaped by this charism,² and through the lives of countless laypeople who find their spiritual companionship in Christian Life Community and other Jesuit/lay partner ministries, communities, and organizations throughout the world. It is alive too in communities of other Christian denominations, and even is beginning to shape the lives of men and women in the other great world religions.

As with the other major spiritual traditions in Christian history, the Ignatian tradition will be initially understood by reviewing the life and writings of the practical romantic who gave his name to the pattern. But to grasp this spiritual way as a tradition we must examine the lives and thoughts of others who through the centuries shaped their Christian lives after his. To that end the pages of this book combine a collection of brief biographies with a sampling of evocative writings by men and women who represent professionals at the Ignatian way of life. Each of the voices presented here has formally professed in a public way that this pattern of spirituality shapes his or her journey through human life into death. Most of the voices in this collection are Jesuits; two are women, a vowed religious and a laywoman.

The voices span five centuries of history, beginning with Ignatius and three of his early companions, Pierre Favre, Francis Xavier, and Jerome Nadal. Also included are a brief biography and writings of an Englishwoman, Mary Ward, who attempted against all odds to establish a women’s community similar to the Jesuits, inspired by Jesuit guidance, but independent of the Society of Jesus. The lives and writings of Xavier, Roberto de Nobili, and Antonio Ruiz de Montoya dramatically illustrate the missionary character of Ignatian spirituality, and the stunning degree of freedom and adaptability that the Ignatian tradition gives its practitioners in the face of new worlds and new cultures that awaited the Good News of God’s saving mercy. The literary, artistic, philosophical, theological, mathematical, and scientific contributions of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Daniel Seghers, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, William Lynch, Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and Ignacio Ellacuría exemplify the pursuit of the magis in a wide variety of scholarly and artistic enterprises in the modern period. Ellacuría, Edmund Campion, and Alfred Delp lived, worked, wrote, and violently died while witnessing to the magnanimity of the cross in the midst of the madness of violently corrupted political systems. In response to the Second Vatican Council, Pedro Arrupe, the twenty-eighth superior general of the Society of Jesus, José Gsell, the laywoman who helped reorganize the Christian Life Communities, and George Ganss, a scholar of the history and spiritual roots
of the Ignatian tradition, join the collective voices of recent Jesuit general congregations to give a sense of the direction that Ignatian spirituality is tending in both understanding and practice today. The afterword features the voices of the newest Jesuit general and the most recent general congregation.

Undoubtedly there will be readers who wonder why certain voices are included in such a small collection and, perhaps more insistently, why certain voices are omitted. Many famous Jesuits are not represented here, including most of the Jesuit saints. There are artists, missionaries, musicians, architects, scientists, writers, and a host of Ignatian but non-Jesuit religious and laypeople whose important voices are not presented here. It was never the plan of this book to attempt to say everything about the Ignatian tradition—if that were even possible. Nor is it the purpose of this short text to say that these are the best examples of Ignatian spirituality. Rather, our aim is to present representative figures, men and women living across a wide range of historical contexts and engaging in a variety of works and endeavors. One notices that all of these figures shared these traits in common: they read the signs of their times with an Ignatian perspective and responded with the freedom of the third degree of humility and the generosity of the magis.

Throughout this book we aim to present these representatives of the Ignatian tradition in a way that makes them as accessible as possible. For this reason, we occasionally modernize usages that would otherwise be misleading, and, in accordance with current practice, we have used gender-inclusive language wherever possible. We use citations and endnotes sparingly to clarify changes we have made, to explain unusual problems with translations or editions we are citing, and to identify those who assisted us with particular chapters.

In telling the stories of these Ignatian witnesses and gathering this collection of their writings we have been blessed to have had suggestions and support from many Jesuit and lay friends and colleagues. We are indebted to all of them and grateful for their interest and ideas. While we could not name every one of these advisors, we do want to particularly thank Fr. John Padberg, S.J., of the Institute of Jesuit Sources in St. Louis, for sharing his expansive wisdom of the Ignatian tradition when we sought his advice. We are also deeply grateful to Dr. Mary Kuhlman of Creighton University and Ms. Jessica Mueller of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley for their help in reading and correcting drafts, assisting with the numerous finishing details of the book, and serving as helpful eyes, ears, and hands. We thank Phyllis Zagano, our series editor,
for the invitation to work with her and for her patience, guidance, and editorial expertise. Likewise, we are indebted to the thoughtful and talented editorial staff at Liturgical Press.

Kevin expresses special thanks to his Jesuit and lay colleagues at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley and his companions in the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus. Eileen offers her deep gratitude to Michael Sullivan, husband and closest friend. Finally, as brother and sister, we dedicate this book to our uncle, Fr. James Burke, s.j. Father Jim was not only the first Jesuit we ever met; he was a gifted director of the spiritual exercises through whom we first came to know and love Ignatius as our own “friend in the Lord.”
The Ignatian Tradition

1555. The governing house of a new religious order in Rome. Two men sit in the sun on a balcony outside the room of the older man, the superior of the new order. Growing ever more crippled with the passing of the years, he limps back and forth still full of fire, laughing occasionally as he tells his tales. He stops pacing, eyes focusing far away. His voice softens, slows, fills with awe as he tells the story of “the pilgrim”—his own story—and the kindness with which God treated him.

The younger man, a Portuguese priest recently arrived in Rome, listens attentively. His eyes are poor so he squints at his elder pacing back and forth. He has a memory for every detail of cadence and content. Indeed, it was for this reason he was chosen as the older man’s recorder. After a time he rises and leaves the old man to his work. He hastens to his own room to write down what he has heard. His personal additions and comments are few, clarifications consigned to the margins. It is the old man’s story he tells, for the sake of those who follow him with love.

Such might have been the scene during the month of March as spring cloaked the hills of Rome in a green verdure visible from the balcony, or again, in the fall of that year when the story was resumed after the older priest recovered from a summer-long illness.1

In his last years, Ignatius of Loyola, founder and first superior general of the new Society of Jesus had been coaxed and pressured into disclosing the details of his personal transformation from a worldly caballero in the court of Charles V into a companion of the risen Christ eager to bring about the reign of God in his world and time. So loathe was Ignatius to talk about himself, that even after he agreed to give an account of his life for the sake of his companions he refused to write it himself, but agreed to tell it to a companion in the third person voice, identifying himself only as “the pilgrim.”
Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, a young Jesuit who was nearly blind but possessed of phenomenal memory, helped Ignatius to compose his *Autobiography*. Begun during the late summer of 1553, the work was interrupted by travels assigned to Gonçalves during most of 1554. In the spring of 1555 they picked up the narrative, but were interrupted by Ignatius’ ill health that summer. They resumed their work with renewed urgency in September and October. Gonçalves returned to Portugal in late October as Ignatius’ emissary on an urgent mission and the beloved general died the following July, shortly before Gonçalves returned to Rome. Most of the text of the *Autobiography* was read over by Ignatius before his death, and he seemed content with the younger man’s precise memory of the spoken account, so the Jesuit order has long credited the text as authoritative in describing the events narrated as Ignatius remembered them. Gonçalves later wrote his own *Memoriale*, a spiritual journal, which contains additional information about both the process and the men.

From the *Autobiography* we glean many important insights into Ignatius’ personal spiritual formation. We can practically hear Ignatius’ voice narrate the important steps in his spiritual development such as his brief description of his vigil at the altar of the Madonna at Montserrat:

> On the eve of the feast of Our Lady in March, at night in the year 1522, he went as secretly as he could to a beggar and, stripping off all his garments, he gave them to the beggar. He dressed himself in his chosen attire and went to kneel before the altar of our Lady. At times in this way and at other times standing, with his pilgrim’s staff in his hand, he spent the whole night. ²

From his remembrances we can appreciate the journey by which he grew into a contemplative in action. Likewise, we see how he handed on the experience of his journey through the formal process of the Spiritual Exercises. Through the Exercises, Ignatius attracted and formed the men who became his first companions in the Society of Jesus. His own human story thus contains the primary elements of the tradition that bears his name.

**The Biographical Roots of the Ignatian Tradition**

*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, a favorite phrase of Ignatius, emerged from the heart of medieval ideals of honor and glory that had shaped his early ambition, but had then been purified in the fires of mystical love. Liter-
ally translated “to the greater glory of God,” the phrase provides a summary statement that, like hypertext in the world of computers, springs open when pressed, to reveal a dense description of attitudes and behaviors. This manner of living the Christ life provides one of the great historical spiritualities found within the Christian tradition. In relationship to the major historical spiritualities of the monastic and the conventual traditions, the Ignatian pattern is the youngest. As such it draws on these earlier methods for living the Christian life but remains distinct from all of them because of its various emphases.

Ignatius Loyola was a man of his own time, but, like Martin Luther with whom he shares the sixteenth-century religious stage, seems to stand above that era. Born in the Basque country of northern Spain in 1491, within months of the completion of the Reconquista by Isabella and Ferdinand, and the discovery of the Americas, Ignatius entered history at a moment of extraordinary change in European culture. It was the dawn of Spain’s golden age of wealth and power. Initiated by Isabella’s material and social support of Christopher Columbus’ exploration voyage, this period of extraordinary wealth and power was fueled by the discovery of gold, silver, lands, crops, and slave labor of the peoples of the Americas.

From the larger world of European culture, the Renaissance inaugurated dramatic intellectual growth, as well as strong biblical and spiritual reform in the Spanish Catholic Church. Renaissance thinking set the stage for the Protestant Reformation, which in turn led to the end of Christendom as a united political reality. The printing press, invented only forty years before Ignatius’ birth, had already contributed to a revolution of language, literacy, and learning throughout Europe, even while he was a child. In this period of epochal change in Western culture the fundamental theistic worldview of the medieval period gave way to the dawn of an anthropocentric premodernity. Newly formed nations sent ambitious younger sons to unmapped continents where they claimed land and resources in the name of their monarchs, achieving both wealth and power.

In the midst of these momentous cultural quakes, Ignatius discovered a similar tectonic movement within his own heart and mind. He was drawn by circumstance and grace from a life of self glorification to a clear-eyed realism oriented to God’s glory. His experience of God’s gracious intervention in his personal human struggles, which he learned to carefully observe and methodize, provided the matrix of insights and practices that defined his own spiritual journey and became the foundation for the way of Christian life that is named for him.
Ignatius’ Early Life

Ignatius of Loyola was born into a Basque family of clan chiefs and baptized Íñigo, a common name in the Basque language of Euskadi. One of the youngest children in a family of eight boys and three girls, he lost his mother as a small child and his father when he was fifteen. The wife of an older brother cared for him after his mother’s death; that same brother inherited the estate and title of Loyola when their father died.

Because of the medieval law of primogeniture and as a younger son in a large noble family, Íñigo had few choices about the direction of his life. He could enlist in the king’s army, join in the exploration and conquest in the Americas, enter the service of the church as clergy, or serve one of the lords of the Spanish or imperial court. He had only a minimal education but he learned to read and write in Spanish. Apparently he also received tonsure—the first step toward the clerical state—at the age of thirteen. But after he turned fifteen an undisclosed reversal of fortune sent him to the court of his mother’s cousin, Juan Velazquez de Cuellar, the royal treasurer of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

While at court, Íñigo, acquired the style and flourish of a young courtier and began signing his name according to the Latin, Ignatius. He also became enamored of the popular romantic literature of the day: stories of heroic battles, glorious knightly competitions, and the conquest of the hearts of wealthy and beautiful women. He described this period of his life in a single sentence: “Up to the age of twenty-six he was a man given to the vanities of the world; and what he enjoyed most was warlike sport, with a great and foolish desire to win fame.”

A French cannonball fired at the small fortified city of Pamplona where he served among the defenders suddenly turned Ignatius’ life upside down. From all historical evidence Ignatius had committed himself to a hopeless cause, for the French completely outnumbered the Spanish. His sense of chivalrous honor, however, required him to serve king and country to the end. The cannonball seriously damaged his knee, but the French treated him compassionately. They moved him back to Loyola Castle where family physicians using the primitive surgery of the day did what they could for him. He nearly died after septicemia set in.

As he began to recover Ignatius realized the extent of his injury: a bone protruded near his knee leaving one leg significantly shorter than the other. Unwilling to have either his looks marred or his mobility impaired, Ignatius required the local doctors to saw off the segment that
jutted from his knee and reset the bones. Again he endured serious infection and again he barely survived. Aided by tortuous physical therapies that straightened and lengthened the leg, however, he did recover.

During this period of enforced immobility, Ignatius requested books to while away the time and take his mind off the pain. His pious sister-in-law had only two: a popular *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony (which included significant portions of both the Old and New Testaments) and *Golden Legends*, a collection of saints’ lives told in a chivalrous style that captured his imagination and enthusiasm. For over six months Ignatius read, reread, considered, and fantasized about these books. He even copied large segments of both into personal notebooks.

*Conversion and the First Steps in Discernment*

The Lutheran Reformation caused Catholic authorities in Spain to frown upon vernacular translations of the Bible. Because of this and because he knew no Latin, Ignatius had never read or studied Scripture. Ludolph’s *Life of Christ*, however, represented a theological and popular exposition of the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and paschal mystery. It also contained a conflation of the gospel narratives surrounding Jesus’ birth, public ministry, and death. Since Ignatius was born and raised in a Catholic family in that most Catholic of countries, the biblical stories provided him with no new data. But having time to read and consider their implications enabled him to experience the truth of the Christian message in an entirely new way. During these months, he ceased to be merely culturally religious and became profoundly faithful.

The *Autobiography* witnesses that from the days of his long physical recovery at Loyola Castle, Ignatius learned to pay careful attention to his affective response to the reading and the fantasies that he wove under the influence of both books. In his imaginary life he entertained himself by daydreams that at one time featured him pursuing and winning a very attractive woman’s favor through chivalrous deeds, and at other times described him as a poor and humble servant winning souls for God in the manner of St. Francis or St. Dominic. Both kinds of dreams gave him pleasure in the imagining, but the different states of mind and heart that resulted after spending hours weaving the various fantasies astonished him. When he dreamed of winning human praise and adulation he later felt bored and tired, but when he imagined that he accomplished deeds for God he later felt energized and alive. He told Gonçalves da Câmara that initially he didn’t take much note of this, but then a time
came when “his eyes were opened a little and he began to marvel at the
difference and to reflect upon it.”5

This first stage of discernment—observing his own thoughts and
feelings—led him to begin to address God less through structured for-
mula and instead to practice what he later named a “colloquy.” This
prayer is an intimate conversation, face-to-face, “in the way one friend
speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority—now begging a favor,
now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one’s concerns and
asking counsel about them” (SpEx 54).6 This very intimate conversational
prayer opened his mind and heart to discover the great love that God
had for him and the personal interest God took in his choices and in his
way of life. This experience of being radically loved and carefully guided
compelled Ignatius to leave the comfortable and politically powerful life
of a courtier and to seek God’s desire for his future. He began a relation-
ship with God that, in these beginning stages, he likened to study with
a good teacher who carefully guides his student.

Generally recovered in health, though permanently crippled, Ig-
natius set out walking on a new path—a path toward living in a way
more fully responsive to God’s desires for him. Years later Ignatius
would call himself the pilgrim—the one on the journey toward God—on
the way of companioning Jesus. He determined to visit Jerusalem, but
he stopped on the way and dwelt for almost a year in a cave near the
town of Manresa, Spain, down a steep hill from the Benedictine mon-
estery of Montserrat.

The Months at Manresa

In this setting Ignatius spent hours in prayer accompanied by rigor-
ous physical penances that occasionally left him near death from the
extreme privation of food, sleep, and shelter. His impulse was at least
in response to the medieval influence, undertaking an overwhelming
challenge to prove his worth and his devotion. Later he judged that such
efforts may not necessarily have been guided by God, but could well
have been responses to a more arrogant spirit of pride where he wanted
to “outdo” the giants of medieval spirituality, Francis and Dominic.
During these periods of severe self-deprivation he often suffered intense
bouts of scrupulosity and an obsessive guilt about his past that seemed
to reject the power of God’s mercy to forgive him. He even spiraled
toward suicide at least once during this period. He later actively discour-
aged his followers from imitating this extreme penitential behavior, and
suggested that they carefully discern the reasons for wanting to. It became clear to him that the matter of doing penance had to be an individual response of love, not an effort to achieve God’s love or attention. There should be no uniform expectation of certain ascetical acts required of all because each person is called to demonstrate love uniquely.

Once he discovered that his impulse toward severe penances and the scrupulosity that afflicted him were not from God, he set the pensive behavior aside, the scruples subsided, and he began to live a somewhat more ordered life. At this point he was granted a series of mystical graces, which he later described in his autobiographical account. These graces altered his understanding of his human nature, of God, and of God’s desire for his responsive love and service. He understood better his own dissolute history, and received God’s absolving mercy. He experienced himself as freed, by God’s grace, to seek and discover that which is truly of God. Conversely, he understood in a new way how self-destructive was his former attraction to sin.

Ignatius uses the classical phrase “the discernment of spirits” to name the process of distinguishing between “movements” toward God’s desires and “movements” toward his own sinful self-will. While the phrase was not new (numerous discussions about the necessity and practice of discernment appear in the New Testament and throughout the tradition), Ignatius made a striking contribution to this tradition: a psychologically sound and spiritually astute methodology for individual discernment of spirits and discernment of God’s will.

The ability to sort among the various attractions in one’s life and to discover a concrete expression of God’s desires within one’s talents and history is based on a graced freedom from compulsions, addictions, or inordinate attachments of all kinds. Ignatius’ mystical experience taught him that such freedom is ultimately based on an interior knowledge that God is both the source of all creation and the summit of all our genuine desires. He was convinced that each human person is created for a relationship with God and that all things and relationships given to each person are given to assist in the journey back toward God. Indeed, the purpose of human existence is to respond in freedom to the God of love. This knowledge serves as the foundation of a Christian spiritual life. Without a firm grounding in this first “principle and foundation” (SpEx 23) one cannot fruitfully pursue the spiritual journey.

Rooted in Ignatius’ experiences in Manresa, the Spiritual Exercises move from this foundation to a series of meditations on the nature of sin and God’s redeeming grace. Beginning with sin itself in macrocosmic
The Ignatian Tradition

terms, Ignatius narrowed the focus to meditations on the patterns of sin and weakness in each human life. He recognized that unless one experiences repentance, sin ultimately leads to eternal alienation from God and God’s goodness. Therefore, the recognition that one has participated in disrupting God’s ordered plan of love along with feelings of sorrow for collaborating in such destruction is sheer grace. Seemingly, for many Christians, that recognition alone enables them to live reasonable Christian lives thereafter. But some, including Ignatius himself, experience the call to do greater things in the service of Christ and the reign of God.

He invited such persons to move, even as he did, into a second phase of spiritual maturity. In this phase he was drawn to contemplate the life events of the mission, sufferings, and death of Jesus, and of the glory of the Lord’s resurrection. His prayer involved imagining himself present within the events recounted in the biblical texts he had so carefully copied from Ludolph’s Life of Christ. His contemplation of the mysteries of Christ formed a doorway through which he entered experientially into the Lord’s human life. Given a series of extraordinary graces, or “consolations,” he encountered the mystery of Jesus’ human and divine reality, the gift of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, and the role of Mary in the church. The climax of Ignatius’ experiences at Manresa occurred on the banks of the Cardoner River near the town. He received a graced insight so profound that he understood the created order, the mysteries of faith, and his relationship to God with such clarity that he later said if he added up every grace he ever received from God through his entire life it would not equal the clarity and completeness of those few moments. In the course of these eleven months of purification and enlightenment, his deepest desire shifted. Instead of a life of solitude and penance he now sought a life filled with the apostolic purpose of “helping souls” the way he had been helped.

Years of Study and Ordination

Leaving Manresa with this conviction of call and his desire to respond, Ignatius first fulfilled an earlier commitment to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Once there he was tempted to stay and try to convert Muslims, but the Franciscans in charge sent him back to Europe in order to keep a precarious peace with the Muslim authorities. This pilgrimage was particularly important because it helped Ignatius gain a memory of the physical place of Jesus’ life in the world. For the rest of his life he
would be able to imagine Jesus on earth more poignantly because he had a capacity to “compose the place” of an encounter in his memory and imagination. The use of these mental faculties was important to Ignatius. They are the personal doorways through which God’s Spirit works on the consciousness and affections of the individual disciple.

Returning to Spain he discovered other men and women who were hungry for a deeper spiritual life. He guided them through a series of prayer exercises based on his notes. This ministry brought him face-to-face with the Spanish Inquisition and forced him to experience imprisonment for brief periods as he awaited trials. He was tried and found innocent. Nevertheless, the religious authorities ordered him to limit, and in some cases cease, his work. He soon realized that, given the structures of the medieval Spanish church, he could not fulfill his mission from God unless he became a vowed religious or an ordained priest. Uncertain about finding the right religious community he opted to prepare for the priesthood. In his midthirties he enrolled in Latin, studying with preadolescent boys.

A year later, with the goal of ordination to the priesthood firmly in mind, he studied philosophy and theology at the Spanish universities in Alcalá, Barcelona, and Salamanca. In each of these cities he engaged in spiritual conversations and gave his Spiritual Exercises to men and women, clergy and laity, always inviting others to discover the interior freedom he had come to know. The inquisitors of each city, however, continued to harass him. Finally, he left Spain and matriculated at the University of Paris to complete his religious training.

At every stage of his formation into the priesthood he begged for his daily bread and for enough resources to pursue his studies as well to help others pay their tuition. He gave spiritual counsel and guided various people in the Spiritual Exercises. During the Paris years he took extended trips to Flanders and even to England to beg from wealthy patrons there. Many of those he directed became his greatest benefactors while others introduced him to ecclesial authorities capable of providing protection for his studies and his work.

*The Founding of the Society of Jesus*

Ignatius studied at the University of Paris for seven years. During that time he met the men who eventually joined him in his way of companioning Christ. Among them he discovered yet another crucial dimension of his “way,” the treasure of spiritual companionship with others
in Christ. He became a master at the art of spiritual conversation. He liked to say that he attempted always to enter through another’s door in order to draw that person out through his door. Thus, Ignatius invited his friends to discover the distinctive way God acted directly on and within their own lives.

When he had nearly finished his studies at Paris, he and six companions professed vows together on the Feast of the Assumption in 1534, both the traditional vows of poverty and chastity and then a third vow to either make their way to Jerusalem on a mission to preach the Gospel among the Muslims—if that would be possible within a year—or to go to Rome and place themselves at the direct service of the pope.

These compañeros, a company of friends committed to service of God, did not yet see themselves as a religious community. For this reason, they did not profess a vow of obedience to one of their own companions. But when an unusual combination of war, famine, and terrible weather made their mission to Jerusalem impossible, they journeyed to Rome to fulfill their alternative vow. On the way two further events shaped the final form of this “way of Ignatius.” The first was a remarkable vision of God the Father and Jesus carrying his cross that came to Ignatius while he was praying at a wayside shrine at La Storta. In the context of the vision the Father turned to Jesus and asked him to take Ignatius as companion and servant. God then told Ignatius that God would guide and support him and his companions in Rome. Quite reasonably, the companions took this profound experience of their leader as a sign of God’s blessing on the group, on their choice of the name Society of Jesus, and on their commitment to apostolic service to the whole church. For Ignatius it was a confirmation of the companionship and their common call to help souls through preaching, spiritual conversation, and giving the Spiritual Exercises.

The second singular occurrence was an activity that the companions undertook among themselves in relationship with God and each other. Over the course of the next three months, while engaged apostolically in ministries of teaching, preaching, and consoling the sick, they met together in a process of focused deliberation to discern whether to bind themselves to one another and effectively become a new religious community. They also took up a related but more problematic question as to whether to make a vow of obedience to one of their number. This so-called Deliberation of 1539 became a classic model of corporate decision making. The men committed themselves to hours of prayer, extensive fasting, and other penances. They pondered the situation and needs of
the world. They spent long hours sharing with one another their deepest desires, fears, spiritual consolations, and desolations. In the end they determined, with great joy and peace, that God was calling them to form a religious community. Likewise, in addition to their previous vows of poverty, chastity, and service to the Holy Father, they agreed to take a vow of obedience to one of their companions. This deliberation gave birth to the Society of Jesus.

Almost immediately after this decision some members of the group took up residence in Rome while others assumed missions to other parts of Europe. New opportunities to proclaim the Gospel soon followed in the recently discovered worlds of the Americas and Asia. Pope Paul III formally approved their petition to found a new order in 1540. Ignatius, but for his own vote, was elected the first general. He remained in Rome for the last sixteen years of his life, overseeing the initial growth of the new order, composing the Formula of the Institute and, with the help of his secretary, Juan de Pulanco, eventually writing the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

Principles of Ignatian Spirituality

We have rehearsed the story of Ignatius’ life as the immediate source of the Ignatian tradition. But his story by itself does not comprise the complete matrix from which this “way” of living the Christian Gospel emerges. The path of only one person, however laudable, remains simply that if others cannot understand the path and imitate it. As his life story illuminates, almost immediately after his conversion experience Ignatius realized that the graces he received, as well as his struggles to respond to them, were similar to those of others who engaged similar forms of prayer and ascetic practices with generosity and attention.

Ignatius not only guided his companions in his Spiritual Exercises, he expected his companions to share, from their own experience, this gift with others. In some cases his companions seemed to understand the dynamic and the “theory” of the process better than Ignatius did. Gradually the guiding book was edited and redacted to include the wisdom and experiences of those other first companions. While there are certain fundamental insights that are drawn from Ignatius himself, the spirituality that emerges from his way is enriched, more deeply understood, and handed on through the lived experience of many others in various languages and cultures, in places as far-flung as Portugal, India, Russia, South Africa, the missions of South America, and the city
of Rome. The movement grew through the ensuing five centuries of men and women, religious, clergy, and laity living this tradition. It continues to develop today.

Ignatian spirituality can be understood as a matrix of core principles. These principles manifest in specific behaviors and form a graced dynamic of synergistically interactive coordinates that shape both persons and communities of persons into apostolic witnesses of God’s trinitarian presence in history. We identify and briefly describe eight such core principles.

God’s a priori Love

The foundation of all Ignatian spirituality is the felt knowledge (described by the Spanish verb sentir) of God’s a priori love. This is not simply an ideological assent to an assertion that God loves, but is a deeply received psychological knowing, grounded in a graced (i.e., given) experience. A human person cannot confect or pretend the experience that is fundamentally transformative. All Christian spirituality presumes this love, but for Ignatius it became manifest for each person in a recognizable sensibility within each one who receives it and responds to it. For Ignatius this experiential knowing, both intellectual and affective, touches the core of human desire and provides the necessary energy for generous response. This experience of the a priori love of God forms the grace of the “principle and foundation” of the Exercises and of the whole spiritual life for two reasons. First, in its most explicit sense, all Christian spirituality flows from God’s first act of creating and redeeming each person. Second, a person’s experience of that love undercuts the power of self-loathing, the negative effects of human rejection, and the human tendency to fear death and a myriad of other perceived threats. This experience of a priori love locates a person in right relationship to the sovereignty of God.7

This grace provides foundation in a second sense because it establishes an experiential touchstone in the memory of the disciple from which discernment of spirits can proceed. If the retreatant can remember the power of the feeling of God’s love for her, that knowledge continues to feed her deepest and truest desires. Further, it clarifies how God’s grace operates identifiably within this specific human subject. This sensibility to God’s presence and love becomes the affective and intellectual foundation for future discernment of spirits.

In most cases the profound experience of being loved by God opens an exercitant (one who is in the process of making the Spiritual Exercises
or who, by extension, is living out Ignatian spirituality) to receive the graces of the first week: the subject’s knowledge of self as both sinner and loved. It is this knowledge of God’s love while one is far off and in sin (Eph 2:11-13) that establishes the possibility for a unique call. Finally this grace serves to provide the logical necessity both of responding to such overwhelming love by loving God, and fueling the subject’s humble service—about which more is said below.

**God’s Unique Operation in and with Each Person**

The experiential knowing of God’s love continues to operate uniquely with each person to lead him to his fullest development as a human person. Ignatius stated that he experienced God working directly in his mind and heart as a schoolmaster leads a student. This direct and immediate activity of God grounds the sensibility of different gifts and vocations that is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. No “one size fits all.” No spiritual or ascetical practice can be prescribed universally. Those guiding the Exercises are instructed in a series of twenty annotations at the very beginning of the book to adapt the process of growth to the specific needs, impedances, and gifts of each person they direct. Throughout the process this personalization continues with various notes, rules, suggestions, and recommendations all directed toward helping the director understand that the person she is guiding is unique before God. Some will move faster than others. Each will desire and request graces unique to her need, mission, and growth. Some will find profit in one meditation or contemplation over another. In every case God’s grace is uniquely given but with certain common manifestations of thought and feeling that allow the director to recognize and therefore guide the route of the path being followed by the disciple.

**To Be Fully Human Requires Spiritual Freedom**

God’s Spirit labors within the concreteness of human lives and historical moments to call every person into God’s reign of mercy and justice. No one can answer the call to God’s reign, however, unless he or she achieves spiritual freedom, that is, the capacity to recognize and accept God’s call to fuller humanity. Spiritual freedom always entails interior deliverance and often includes some kind of external liberation. It is characterized by courage in the face of terror, hope in the face of despair, wisdom in the face of ignorance or confusion, and joy in the face of unbearable grief.
Spiritual freedom intellectually recognizes the truth and prompts the will to choose the greater good in various circumstances of life and ministry. Ignatius recognized that spiritual freedom is the characteristic of the human as *imago Dei*, as one made in God’s image. It is the freedom to master one’s own fears and weaknesses even as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Ultimately it is the freedom that springs from being loved and it empowers one to love without compulsion or need. Such freedom is the goal of Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises.

Freedom reaches fruition in each human heart through active cooperation with its impelling movements. Both the Old and New Testaments witness to the liberating will of God and its requirement of a response: the commitment to fight or to labor in the manner of God’s compassion and justice. Failure to cooperate with the freedom that God wins for us ensures freedom’s loss and augers an even greater enslavement.

*Human Life Comes to Fruition through Obedience to God’s Will*

Because of the great influence of Ludolph’s *Life of Christ* during his recovery after Pamplona as well as his subsequent awareness of the conversion of his own will, the dominant Christian virtue for Ignatius was obedience to the will of the Father. Such obedience springs from gratitude. It flowers as the empowerment of spiritual freedom. It spreads out seeking the ultimate good of others. One who genuinely loves cannot will to do the beloved harm. Human logic would point out that with God there can be no mistake about knowing what is the best good for the beloved. So the issue lies in absolutely trusting that there is a God who does know all and loves each of us singularly. This trust is prior to knowing and flourishes even when our human knowledge comes up short. This trust is a grace given to the one who asks with deep desire and a willingness to listen, to obey.

*The “Enemy of Human Life” Works to Block Our Freedom, Disrupt Our Obedience, and Undermine Our Humanity*

Spiritual freedom, which enables us to be authentically human, is diminished and can even be destroyed by acquiescing to the power of the enemy of human life. For Ignatius, the enemy is any force or power, whether personal or corporate, that works within persons, cultures, or nature to diminish the way of mercy, justice, and compassion.
Human sin gives rise to a history marred by violence, depravity, and weakness. Everyone born into that history faces the threat of becoming enslaved to sin’s interior and exterior demands. The book of Genesis provides a biblical reflection on the general experience that we cannot choose what is good for us because we cannot even perceive clearly what is good. Even when we can perceive it, we often lack the will or the courage to do it. And even when we both perceive it and courageously act to accomplish it, we may well act from disordered motivations that undermine the outcome. Our perceptions are dulled, our desires are distorted, and our intentions corrupted. This is our condition without grace.

Despite this dark reality of human brokenness and sin, God’s power is always greater than any capacity of the enemy to harm the created order, for our real enemies are not divine powers but creatures who have failed to love God. With the assistance of God’s Spirit the enemy is overcome. This is true in the case of external forces enslaving whole populations or interior addictions driving one person to self-destruction. With our cooperation, God’s Spirit restores spiritual freedom and often material freedom.

Finding God in All Things

The way of Ignatius is essentially incarnational. Ignatius was clearly a man who read the signs of his times and responded to the world he was born into. He did so with the best tools he could find or forge. Ignatius did not look for God to work magic on the world. He never sought a deus ex machina. But he did find the presence of God manifest in every aspect of the created order. Too often in the Catholic experience, spirituality has been thought of as doing something pious, praying a rosary, or going to Mass. Ignatian spirituality does not deny the importance of intentional prayer activities, but it is more essentially about recognizing the presence and the power of God in absolutely everything and in every activity done for love. All the created order is overflowing with the divine existence. So the story is remembered of Ignatius going out each night on a balcony at the Roman College and doffing his hat in reverence to the God who created the stars. He knew that all of creation was holy.

In a particular way, Ignatius wanted those who followed him to understand that God is to be found in places where we are least comfortable looking for him. In his human life, Jesus faced the darkest dimensions of human evil and submitted willingly to its power in order that
God’s reign might be unleashed and made manifest in the world. Becoming a true companion of Jesus requires following him even when the way leads to crosses large and small. One might find God’s presence in the decision of a superior who does not understand his gifts, talents, or vision; one finds God in suffering and illness as much as in good health; one encounters God in disappointments as much as in success. One finds God even in the failure of God’s own project. All that is human, all that springs from the body, mind, and spirit, springs from God and for God.

God is not “more” present in a church than a courtroom, a monastery than an operating room, but God is found differently in each human context. God is present in and to every aspect of our human living and loving. In this spiritual tradition one can discover God’s presence in the groans of a dying old man as in the whispered prayers of the young novice. There is nothing inherently holier in spending time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament than there is in spending time teaching algebra to high school sophomores. There is nothing inherently more graced about saying the rosary than there is about fixing supper for one’s husband and children. Studying theology is not necessarily holier than working as a laborer, clerk, or executive. God is fully present in every molecule of the universe. The challenge is to find God where God is and not where we think God ought to be. Ignatian spirituality teaches that the essence of the spiritual life entails the moment-by-moment search for God’s desires throughout the course of one’s life.

An Apostolic Focus

Generally for those called by God to Ignatian spirituality, action in the world on behalf of God’s reign, according to one’s vocation and one’s talents, is imperative. What Ignatius called the desire to “help souls” was the ground for an apostolic approach to the world beyond any cloister or church building. In European religious practice of the sixteenth century this was unusual for vowed religious communities. Even lay organizations were often pious prayer societies. Today such apostolic focus represents a major theme for religious life due, in large part, to the pioneering work of Ignatius and his companions. As early as the twelfth century, Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman had seen the necessity for a ministry of preaching, hearing confessions, and responding to human needs in the highways and byways of medieval Europe beyond the convent and cloister. Even so, their rules called for extended and
established times for prayer, often sung in choir as generations of monks had done before them.

Ignatius did not replicate monastic practice when he and his companions determined to form a religious community. They saw themselves called above all to direct service of the Gospel in the streets of cities where humanity dwells in poverty, ignorance, and often violence. If one is faithful, attentive, and generous in redressing the greatest or most demanding needs to which he is sent, the labor itself, whether spiritual, material, intellectual, or social, and the relationships that arise from such service, provide both an encounter with the risen Lord and any necessary penance and self-abnegation. Formal prayer is limited to short periods of meditation each day, regular participation in Eucharist and reconciliation, and daily times of self-examination to discern whether one is following the light of consolation from God or desolation from darker impulses. This discerning examination focuses not only on interior movements of formal prayer but especially on the movements and impulses that occur during and within the daily activities of apostolic life and all human interactions. Holiness comes from an intimacy with God through partnership with Jesus in obediently discerned service of others.

Companionship in and with Christ

Despite some historic accusations that followers of Ignatius are “lone rangers,” in the work of spreading the Gospel an important sensibility of Ignatian spirituality is the necessity for companionship in prayer, in service, in the struggle for justice, in the works of mercy, indeed in all aspects of life. The first companion is Jesus Christ, but Jesus’ closest companions become guides, friends, and partners in the mission. The Spiritual Exercises are to be undertaken under the guidance of a spiritual companion. In the meditation on the two standards from the second week the retreatant recognizes the deep friendship among the servants of the Lord that characterizes those who rally under the standard of Christ. The word “companion” comes from the Spanish verb “to [have] bread with” and with it we are reminded that much of Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation and implementation of the reign of God in the world comes through the mediation of table fellowship. Companions are those who will not only walk the extra mile with you, but labor in the hot sun through the middle of the day and have a cold beer and hear your stories around the fire; or teach all day in the next classroom and then share a hot cup of tea with tales of the (mis)adventures of the
mission. Companionship is also an extension of the great love shared with those serving the same Lord in a project far away in another land, culture, and language—the sense that those who follow this pattern of Gospel life are “ours.”

**Ignatian Practices**

In addition to the matrix of core principles that distinguish Ignatian spirituality, Ignatius and his first companions developed a collection of basic practices that help to realize in each person’s life the essential principles described above. These practices are not rigid; nor are they absolute for every person who wants to live the Gospel in this way. They are better seen as a set of tools that can be effectively employed to open the heart, mind, and will of the Christian to receive God’s direction, and to become interiorly free and willing to be sent to the most effective labor of God’s reign. We focus here on five basic practices that give shape to Ignatian spirituality.

**Imaginative Prayer**

Methods of prayer that progressively lead to the discovery of, and eventual cooperation with, God’s actions within each person provide the driving energy of Ignatian spirituality. The forms of prayer Ignatius recommended for those undergoing the Spiritual Exercises are ordinarily incarnational or imagistic. These methods involve the whole range of intellectual capacities: memory, imagination, intuition, ability to reflect, and logical reasoning. They also engage the entire physical capacity to experience reality through the senses and the use of various postures in order to embody praise, sorrow, wonder, or need.

In the specific prayer called the “application of the senses,” Ignatius instructs directors of the Exercises to encourage their exercitants to “see with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Christ our Lord preached” (SpEx 91), “to see the different persons, first, those on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and in manner of acting . . . see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty . . . see our Lady and the angel saluting her” (SpEx 106). Likewise, he bids one “to listen to what the persons on the face of the earth say, that is how they speak to one another, swear and blaspheme . . . also hear what the Divine Persons say . . . listen to what the angel and our lady say” (SpEx
107). Most significantly, he urges the retreatant not only to see and hear but to put himself in the story. Thus, in the contemplation on the nativity, after seeing all the persons in the story, the exercitant is encouraged to consider herself “a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon [the Holy Family], contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence” (SpEx 114). This application of the senses requires the person to bring the affections into focus: the desires, fears, and hopes for the future. Finally, Ignatian prayer calls for the willful responsibility to choose among multiple options that surface.

All of the aspects of the human person are intentionally and deliberately drawn into prayer through the various methods that build upon one another. Through brief but dynamic daily prayer the Ignatian person engages in a generous, lifetime effort to hear and obey God’s will, gradually becoming an ever freer and more intimate participant in the Christ life.

Rules for Discernment

Ignatius found, both in his own experience and in the men and women that he guided spiritually, that all were inclined toward or away from God by various exterior coercions and, more forcefully, by inner compulsions, which he described as known or unknown human desires. Beyond basic human needs that allow us to survive, we have an array of wants or desires that are triggered by each person’s hope for a better human existence. Questions such as “What do I really want? Who do I want to become? Who do I want to be in relationship with? What do I want to have? How do I want to behave? What is truly meaningful or life-giving for me?” drive human choosing in a way that is not comparable in the rest of the animal kingdom. Responding to these and similar questions establishes a fabric of human existence that is either life-giving or death-dealing for oneself and sometimes for others. Choosing among incompatible desires is often the most difficult human task, but failure to choose can leave a person paralyzed in inaction.

Ignatius called “consolation” those intellectual insights, emotional impulses, invitations, or pulls that led him to love God more deeply and to desire whatever God desires. Conversely, he named “spiritual desolation” the various forms of intellectual darkness that led him to deny the will of God. Possessing wealth, power, security, or any material thing
leads a human to being possessed and therefore enslaved to these impulses he defined as desolation. He also recognized ripe occasions for desolation in human fears of death, change, or uncertainty because such fears often paralyze the human spirit.

Based on his own experiences with these and other drives, desires, and impulses Ignatius found he was able to help souls find their true inner freedom by guiding each one to trust God. God works for the radical good of each human life and guides each person within the complex interaction of ideas, emotions, and desires that surface in her life. To this end, Ignatius developed a broad set of very practical rules for determining whether inner movements or impulses come from God (spiritual consolations) or the enemy (spiritual desolation). Cooperating with consolation and working against desolation becomes the task of the spiritual journey into God. Necessarily the rules deal with intellectual processes, emotional experiences, willed decisions, and various actions or behaviors, but at the heart of all discernment is to discover one’s deepest and truest desires and the goal(s) they point to. In a reasonably healthy human person such desires are ordered toward one’s authentic good—and thus come from and lead toward God.

Generally, Ignatius’ rules follow the principle that as one draws closer toward God the enemy works harder to block the graced movement, so the task of discernment becomes more complex. His rules, therefore, are ordered to the stage of the spiritual journey where one actually is located. Furthermore, Ignatius was committed to staying within the ecclesial tradition. He points to the importance of weighing one’s personal wisdom against the long practice and insight of the apostolic community of faith even when interpreting that tradition within a new period of human growth. God’s Spirit will not act in a manner contrary to the teaching and practice of Jesus as witnessed by the church. He also recognized that choices build one upon another. A Spirit-led choice will not undermine or destroy a previously discerned decision that established a set of committed relationships.

An important experience in Ignatius’ life illustrated this insight. After his brushes with the Inquisition in Spain he determined that he needed to be ordained a priest in order to effectively help souls. Further, he had been scandalized often enough by mediocre or poor priests who did great harm to God’s people from ignorance of the scriptural, doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual aspects of the tradition. Ignatius saw that, among other things, effective priests needed to be well educated. For
this reason he entered a long process of education from elementary Latin
to a master of arts in theology. While he pursued his studies, Ignatius
discovered that he had to set aside some of the time given to prayer and
even his charitable work to accomplish his goal. He experienced what
appeared to be powerful consolations that kept him locked in delightful
prayer for hours during the night. Attending to these consolations, how-
ever, made it difficult to study or sleep enough to be a competent student.
He discerned that the experiences that seemed like consolations from
God were in fact leading him away from the apostolic work that God
called him to accomplish. This kind of false consolation was not new to
him, but it confirmed for him that a seeming good could be the counter-
feit of the enemy.

Determining what was graced or disgraced in such times could
not be determined solely by the feelings or thoughts that accompanied
them, but decisions had to be seen in relationship to the demands of
rightly discerned decisions already made. The capacity to discover
whether a seeming consolation is in fact that or a movement toward
less good or a disguised evil is a gift of God that is urgently necessary
for those who have responded to the call of Christ to greater service.
Ignatius’ more advanced rules indicate that the only way to discover
the truth of whether a desire is from God is to prayerfully determine the
context of its coming, the goal toward which it seems to lead, and the
relationship it has to other decisions. A discerner usually does this best
in dialogue with a trained guide who holds no vested interest in the
outcome.

Agere Contra (Practice Working against the Enemy)

When one following the Ignatian way discovers any manifestation
of the enemy blocking her path toward companionship with Jesus, she
is instructed to ask for the specific grace needed to counter this power.
It may be a grace of patience when the world seems to move too slowly,
the grace of courage in the face of fear, or the grace of compassion to deal
well with a difficult coworker. One is instructed to name—as a desire to
be prayed for—whatever specific grace one needs in a given situation.
Furthermore, the person asking for this grace is instructed to act confi-
dently as if the grace is already given. This works against the power of
desolation. Agere contra in the face of desolation is a generous act of
human cooperation that develops strength of will. By practicing it the
discerning person works to concretize in his own life the power of God’s
The Ignatian Tradition

grace. He develops a kind of spiritual muscle that corresponds to the language of spiritual exercises.

Examen

Accompanying the practice of prayer for a specific desire, Ignatius encouraged one who is seeking to grow in the spiritual life to practice a review of a specified period of time (one’s prayer time, or the morning of work, or the whole day) to discover whether the grace desired was granted, whether one practiced *agere contra* successfully, and to ascertain the spirits that moved one to various decisions and actions. This practice of examen becomes established as a habit while a person makes the Exercises. Afterward she will continue the practice each day providing the foundation for ongoing, daily discernment.

After participation in the Eucharist, Ignatius taught that the examen was the most important spiritual practice in the life of a Jesuit. If his mission required him to abandon virtually all other spiritual habits he must not give up the practice of daily examen; those few moments allow him to notice and face the hidden and unbidden impulses that subtly rule human choice if left unexamined. Even a serious disciple of Jesus, if he neglects to examine the movements of interior spirits, often falls prey to the manipulations of the enemy.

Magnanimity: The Magis and Humility

The virtue of generosity is witnessed to the degree that the exercitant remains faithful to prayer, open to the director’s guidance, steady in the practice of *agere contra*, generous in forgiving the wrongs of others, and passionate about laboring with Jesus and under his standard. Ignatius insists that one who begins the Exercises must be generous in these ways so that he can receive gifts in greater abundance from God. Beyond generosity, however, is the virtue of magnanimity, or greatness of heart, that causes a person to be the first to volunteer for the hardest job—not because one is masochistic or wants appreciation, but because one loves God and God’s work needs doing. In his forgiveness of the prodigal son the father in Jesus’ famous parable displays magnanimity. Likewise, the magnanimous include those who attend to the dispossessed at the margins of society and help them find ways to live. A variety of evangelical examples—giving your coat to one who asks for a shirt, walking the extra mile, caring for the injured neighbor on the road, and so on—witness to what Ignatius calls magnanimity.
Such largeness of spirit is rooted in the practice of humility, which is the fruit of gratitude. Like the word “love” in English, humility can have many meanings or shades of meaning. Humility within the Spiritual Exercises describes the grace of living the absolute truth that God is God and that I am not God for myself or anyone else. Further, my whole existence flows from God’s generosity, so I owe God everything. I recognize that all I am and all I have is gift of God. Gratitude flows inherently from this experience of God’s boundless generosity.

The capstone of the Spiritual Exercises is a contemplation to attain love for God. The meditation is constructed so as to arouse heartfelt gratitude in the exercitant. From gratitude flows humility. From humility flows increased generosity that explodes into magnanimity so profound, that she prays, “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty; my memory, my understanding, and all my will—all that I have and possess” (SpEx 234).

The exercitant asks that for the rest of his life he will understand that his truest and most glorious existence is to be a loyal servant of God. No rank or wealth or material measure in this life can change these simple facts about human existence. Such graced humility grants the recipient the desire to serve God’s reign in the most modest, most dangerous, or most difficult of tasks and at whatever cost might be required. Thus the most humble of all has the greatest and truest heart.

From this spirit of magnanimous love, the follower of the Ignatian tradition will seek to accomplish the most difficult or least sought-after work, that will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number, but in a manner that gives glory to God not self. The term magis is applied to this sensibility—to seek the greater glory of God by doing the task no one else wants but that has to be done for the good of many or of all. Finally, a magnanimous person does what he does for love alone without counting the cost or seeking redress for his losses or his suffering.

Summary

In summary, one can approach Ignatian spirituality both by tracing its emergence in the graced experiences of Ignatius of Loyola and by identifying the principles and practices at work when one adopts this way of Christian life. The principles and practices described above are all drawn from the totality of the Christian life, but the interweaving of these coordinates into a specific spiritual DNA causes the one who
chooses to be shaped by them (1) to seek the greater glory of God, (2) through companionship with Jesus, and (3) always be guided by the discerned Spirit of God; (4) to seek that greater glory (5) in the reality of this historical moment, (6) in this particular place, (7) within the whole created world. All of this suggests that while the Ignatian tradition attends to the traditional spiritual themes of purgation, illumination, and union, it is best approached as a mysticism of service.

Eileen Burke-Sullivan
PART I
FOUNDATIONS

There can be no doubt that St. Ignatius of Loyola generated the earliest expression of the pattern of insights and practices that bear his name. Likewise, the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius functions as the primary classical text for this spirituality. Ignatius discovered that his experience could be shared with others to evoke their own growth into the life of Christ, and it was his special genius to develop a method or pattern to mediate that sharing.

Another founder within the Ignatian tradition is the lesser-known Englishwoman, Mary Ward. She founded an apostolic religious order for women, modeled on the Society of Jesus, that today has two branches, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Congregation of Jesus. Mary’s translation of Ignatius’ insights into a pattern of active, communal life for women enabled many to witness to great holiness in the process of serving outside the cloister.

Both Ignatius of Loyola and Mary Ward can be understood to have founded religious institutes, that is, human structures placed at the service of the church and the world. We are here concerned with the foundations of a particular way of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a unique Christian tradition of spirituality. Theologically, the true founder of the Ignatian spiritual tradition is the Holy Spirit. But God built this tradition on the foundations—the life stories, mystical experiences, holy desires, and uncommon talents—of Ignatius and Mary. Thus, their lives and instructions serve as privileged texts for understanding the pattern of grace that God raised up through their cooperation. Likewise, their communities, marked by persecution, suppression, and eventual restoration, nurtured a spiritual tradition that grew and flourished for men and women within and beyond
their communities. Our first two chapters focus on these two foundations of the Ignatian tradition.

Eileen Burke-Sullivan
An overview of the life of Ignatius is presented in the essay that introduces this volume, *The Ignatian Tradition*, and need not be sketched here. The selections below taken from *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius* (where Ignatius tells his story in the third person and refers to himself as “the pilgrim”) dwell on certain key moments in his life as told in his own words. These include his early experiences with discernment (“Convalescence and Conversion”) while he was recovering from a cannonball wound he received while defending the city of Pamplona. They also include Ignatius’ description of his two most important mystical experiences, experiences that frame Ignatian spirituality. The first occurred in 1522 near the Cardoner River during his time in Manresa. In the wake of this powerful illumination Ignatius shaped and confirmed all of his foundational spiritual and theological insights. The latter vision occurred in 1537 in the chapel of La Storta on the road outside of Rome where Ignatius and two of his companions were journeying in order to place themselves at the service of the church. This event provided the first companions with a confirmation of their decision to found the Society of Jesus.

Without question the most influential book of Ignatius’ is *The Spiritual Exercises*. We include here the first five of twenty important comments that Ignatius offers those who direct and those who make the Exercises (“Introductory Explanations”; SpEx 1–5). This is followed by the brief paragraph known as the “Presupposition” of the Exercises (SpEx 22). It is often overlooked in directing or making the retreat. But one must not overlook it. It instructs the director to recognize that she may be biased in her listening skills—too eager to condemn or correct another’s statements. It is as valid and necessary today as the day Ignatius added it to the text. The third selection is the text of a famous meditation.
that Ignatius calls the “Principle and Foundation” (SpEx 23). Those who
direct the Spiritual Exercises today know that this meditation is designed
to test whether the person who wishes to make the Exercises has been
given the grace to do so by God, the grace of sensing God’s foundational
a priori love for him or her. One could say that the principle and founda-
tion provides a summary of the graces of the whole retreat—namely, the
spiritual freedom that one is seeking in making the Exercises. During
preparation days the retreatant is asked to consider what inner spirits
this powerful (and very countercultural) assertion arouses in the one
wanting to begin the Spiritual Exercises. The final selection from the
Spiritual Exercises is a portion of the famous “Contemplation to Attain
Divine Love” that completes or summarizes the process of the Exercises
(SpEx 230–37). This contemplation invites the retreatant to pray deeply
for the desire to love God who has so loved him. At the heart of this
prayer lies the grace of spiritual freedom that allows him to be utterly
indifferent to all but God’s identified will in his regard.

During the last years of his life, while administrating the newly
established Jesuit order, Ignatius worked with his secretary and friend
Juan de Pulanco to develop The Constitutions for the Society. The selection
included here (from part 9 of The Constitutions) concerns the character
of the man who is to be elected general of the Society. If anyone is to
manifest the character of Ignatian spirituality, it must be the man who
leads and guides the fortunes of Ignatius’ vowed followers. In this sum-
mary of the vision and gifts needed to fulfill the demands of such a
critical work Ignatius gives us a glimpse of what his spirituality looks
like coming down the street.

Eileen Burke-Sullivan and Kevin F. Burke, s.j.

From A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of St. Ignatius
Convalescence and Conversion (1521–1522)

By frequent reading of these books he grew somewhat fond of what
he found written therein. Setting his reading aside, he sometimes
paused to think about the things he had read, and at other times he
thought of the worldly things that formerly occupied his mind. Of
the many idle things that came to him, one took such a hold on his
heart that, without his realizing it, it engrossed him for two or three
hours at a time. He dreamed what he would achieve in the service
of a certain lady and thought of the means he would take to go to
the land where she lived, the clever sayings and words he would speak to her, and the knightly deeds he would perform for her. He was so enraptured with these thoughts of his that he never considered how impossible it was for him to accomplish them, for the lady was not one of the lesser nobility, neither was she a countess, nor a duchess, but her station was much higher than any of these.

Our Lord, nevertheless, came to his aid, bringing it about that these thoughts were followed by others arising from his reading. While reading the life of our Lord and those of the saints he used to pause and meditate, reasoning with himself: “What if I were to do what Saint Francis did, or to do what Saint Dominic did?” Thus in his thoughts he dwelt on many good deeds, always suggesting to himself great and difficult ones, but as soon as he considered doing them, they all appeared easy of performance. Throughout these thoughts he used to say to himself: “Saint Dominic did this, so I have to do it too. Saint Francis did this, so I have to do it too.” These thoughts lasted a long time, but after other thoughts had taken their place, the above-mentioned worldly ones returned to him and he dwelt on them for quite some length. This succession of such diverse thoughts—of worldly exploits that he desired to accomplish, or those of God that came to his imagination—stayed with him for a long time as he turned them over in his mind, and when he grew weary of them he set them aside to think of other matters.

There was this difference, however. When he thought of worldly matters he found much delight, but after growing weary and dismissing them he found that he was dry and unhappy. But when he thought of going barefoot to Jerusalem and of eating nothing but vegetables and of imitating the saints in all the austerities they performed, he not only found consolation in these thoughts but even after they had left him he remained happy and joyful. He did not consider nor did he stop to examine this difference until one day his eyes were partially opened and he began to wonder at this difference and to reflect upon it. From experience he knew that some thoughts left him sad while others made him happy, and little by little he came to perceive the different spirits that were moving him; one coming from the devil, the other coming from God.¹

Manresa and the Cardoner River (1522–1523)

During this period God was dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him. This was
because either he was thick and dull of brain, or because of the firm will that God Himself had implanted in him to serve Him—but he clearly recognized and has always recognized that it was in this way that God dealt with him. Furthermore, if he were to doubt this, he would think he was offending the Divine Majesty. One can see how God dealt with him in the following five examples.

First. He was greatly devoted to the Most Holy Trinity, and every day he prayed to each of the three Persons. But while doing the same to the Most Holy Trinity the thought came to him, why four prayers to the Trinity? But this thought caused him little or no trouble since it was of so little importance. One day, as he was saying the Hours of Our Lady on the monastery’s steps, his understanding was raised on high, so as to see the Most Holy Trinity under the aspect of three keys on a musical instrument, and as a result he shed many tears and sobbed so strongly that he could not control himself. Joining in a procession that came out of the monastery, that morning he could not hold back his tears until dinner-time, and after he had eaten he could not refrain from talking, with much joy and consolation, about the Most Holy Trinity, making use of different comparisons. This experience remained with him for the rest of his life so that whenever he prayed to the Most Holy Trinity he felt great devotion.

Second. One day it was granted him to understand, with great spiritual joy, the way in which God had created the world. He seemed to see a white object with rays stemming from it, from which God made light. He neither knew how to explain these things nor did he fully remember the spiritual lights that God had then imprinted on his soul.

Third. It was likewise in Manresa—where he stayed for almost a year, and after experiencing divine consolations and seeing the fruit that he was bringing forth in the souls he was helping—that he abandoned those extremes he had previously practiced and began to cut his nails and hair. One day, while in town and attending Mass in the church attached to the above-mentioned monastery, he saw with inward eyes, at the time of the elevation of the body of the Lord, some white rays coming from above. But after so long a time he is now unable to adequately explain this; nevertheless, he clearly saw with his understanding how our Lord Jesus Christ was present in that most holy Sacrament.

Fourth. During prayer he often, and for an extended period of time, saw with inward eyes the humanity of Christ, whose form ap-
peared to him as a white body, neither very large nor very small; nor did he see any differentiation of members. He often saw this in Manresa; and if he were to say twenty times or forty times, he would not presume to say that he was lying. He saw it again when he was in Jerusalem, and once more when he was on his way to Padua. He has also seen our Lady in similar form, without differentiation of members. These things that he saw at that time fortified him and gave such great support to his faith that many times he thought to himself: if there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would still resolve to die for them on the basis of what he had seen.

Fifth. He was once on his way, out of devotion, to a church a little more than a mile from Manresa, which I think was called Saint Paul. The road followed the path of the river and he was taken up with his devotions; he sat down for a while facing the river flowing far below him. As he sat there the eyes of his understanding were opened and though he saw no vision he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an elucidation so bright that all these things seemed new to him. He cannot expound in detail what he then understood, for they were many things, but he can state that he received such a lucidity in understanding that during the course of his entire life—now having passed his sixty-second year—if he were to gather all the helps he received from God and everything he knew, and add them together, he does not think they would add up to all that he received on that one occasion.²

La Storta (1537)

The companions returned to Venice in the same way that they had gone, that is, on foot and begging their way, but they were divided into three groups, in such a way that each group was made up of different nationalities. There in Venice, those who were not ordained were ordained for Mass, and the nuncio, who was then in Venice and who was later known as Cardinal Verallo, granted them faculties. They were ordained under the title of poverty and everyone took vows of poverty and chastity.

Ships were not sailing to the East that year because the Venetians had broken off relations with the Turks. Seeing that the possibility of sailing was becoming more remote, they dispersed throughout the Veneto region to wait out the year as they had agreed, and if
there were no sailing after the year had passed, they would go to Rome.

It fell to the pilgrim to go with Faber and Laínez to Vicenza. There they found a certain building outside the city that had neither doors nor windows. They stayed in it and slept on the bit of straw that they had brought. Twice a day two of them went out to seek alms in that locality and they returned with so little that they could hardly sustain themselves. They usually ate some bread—when they had bread—and the one who stayed at home took care of the cooking. In this way they spent forty days attending to nothing but their prayers.

After the forty days had passed, Master Jean Codure arrived and the four of them decided to begin preaching. All four went to different squares in the city, and at the same hour of the same day they began their sermons by shouting loudly to the people waving their birettas to call them together. These sermons caused much talk in the city and many persons were moved with devotion and abundantly supplied them with all that they materially needed.

During the period that he was in Vicenza, he received many spiritual visions and many rather ordinary consolations (it was just the opposite when he was in Paris), but especially when he began to prepare for his ordination in Venice and when he was getting ready to celebrate Mass. Also during his journeys he enjoyed great supernatural visitations of the kind that he used to have when he was in Manresa. While he was in Vicenza he learned that one of the companions, who was in Bassano, was at the point of death. Though he himself was ill with fever at the time, nevertheless, he started on the trip and walked so energetically that Faber, his companion, could not keep up with him. During that trip God gave him the assurance, and this he told to Faber, that the companion would not die from that illness. After he arrived at Bassano, the sick man was greatly consoled and quickly recovered.

Everyone then returned to Vicenza and all ten were there for some time and some went out begging alms in the towns around Vicenza.

They decided that after a year had passed, and if they still found no passage, they would go to Rome, and the pilgrim too, because the last time the companions had gone there the two men, about whom he had his doubts, had shown themselves most benevolent.

They went to Rome in three or four groups; the pilgrim was with Faber and Laínez, and on this journey God often visited him in a special way.
After he had been ordained a priest, he decided to wait another year before celebrating Mass, preparing himself and praying to our Lady to place him with her Son. One day, a few miles before reaching Rome, while praying in a church, he felt a great change in his soul and so clearly did he see God the Father place him with Christ, His Son, that he had no doubts that God the Father did place him with His Son.³

From *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

1. **Introductory Explanations**

To gain some understanding of the Spiritual Exercises which follow, and to aid both the one who gives them and the one who is to receive them.

**The First Explanation.** By the term Spiritual Exercises we mean every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities, such as will be mentioned later. For, just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul.

2. **The Second.** The person who gives to another the method and procedure for meditating or contemplating should accurately narrate the history contained in the contemplation or meditation, going over the points with only a brief or summary explanation. For in this way the person who is contemplating, by taking this history as the authentic foundation, and by reflecting on it and reasoning about it for oneself, can thus discover something that will bring better understanding or a more personalized concept of the history—either through one’s own reasoning or insofar as the understanding is enlightened by God’s grace. This brings more spiritual relish and spiritual fruit than if the one giving the Exercises had lengthily explained and amplified the meaning of the history. For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly.

3. **The Third.** In all the following Spiritual Exercises we use the acts of the intellect in reasoning and of the will in eliciting acts of the affections. In regard to the affective acts which spring from the
will we should note that when we are conversing with God our Lord or his saints vocally or mentally, greater reverence is demanded of us than when we are using the intellect to understand.

4. *The Fourth.* Four Weeks are taken for the following Exercises, corresponding to the four parts into which they are divided. That is, the First Week is devoted to the consideration and contemplation of sins; the Second, to the life of Christ our Lord up to and including Palm Sunday; the Third, to the Passion of Christ our Lord; and the Fourth, to the Resurrection and Ascension. To this Week are appended the Three Methods of Praying. However, this does not mean that each Week must necessarily consist of seven or eight days. For during the First Week some persons happen to be slower in finding what they are seeking, that is, contrition, sorrow, and tears for their sins. Similarly, some persons work more diligently than others, and are more pushed back and forth and tested by different spirits. In some cases, therefore, the Week needs to be shortened, and in others lengthened. This holds as well for all the following Weeks, while the retreatant is seeking what corresponds to their subject matter. But the Exercises ought to be completed in thirty days, more or less.

5. *The Fifth.* The persons who make the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering upon them with great spirit and generosity toward their Creator and Lord, and by offering all their desires and freedom to him so that His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will.

22. *Presupposition*

That both the giver and the maker of the Spiritual Exercises may be of greater help and benefit to each other, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it. Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.

23. *Principle and Foundation*

Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls.
The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created.

From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.

To attain this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters.

Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

230. Contemplation to Attain Love

Note. Two preliminary observations should be made.

First, Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words.

231. Second, Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover. Thus, if the one has knowledge, one gives it to the other who does not; and similarly in regard to honors or riches. Each shares with the other.

The usual Preparatory Prayer.

232. The First Prelude. A composition. Here it is to see myself as standing before God our Lord, and also before the angels and saints, who are interceding for me.

233. The Second Prelude is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things.

234. The First Point. I will call back in to my memory the gifts I have received—my creation, redemption, and other gifts particular to myself. I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and consequently how he, the same Lord, desires to give me even his very self, in accordance with his divine design.
Then I will reflect on myself, and consider what I on my part ought in all reason and justice to offer and give to the Divine Majesty, namely, all my possessions, and myself along with them. I will speak as one making an offering with deep affection, and say:

“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will—all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me love of yourself along with your grace, for that is enough for me.”

235. The Second Point. I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence; and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness and image of the Divine Majesty. Then once again I will reflect on myself, in the manner described in the first point, or in any other way I feel to be better. This same procedure will be used in each of the following points.

236. The Third Point. I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, he acts in the manner of one who is laboring. For example, he is working in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and all the rest—giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth. Then I will reflect on myself.

237. The Fourth Point. I will consider how all good things and gifts descend from above; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above; and so of justice, goodness, piety, mercy, and so forth—just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source. Then I will finish by reflecting on myself, as has been explained. I will conclude with a colloquy and an Our Father.

From The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus

The six qualities treated in this chapter are the most important, and all the rest are reduced to them. For they include the general’s perfection in relation to God; further, what perfects his heart, understanding, and execution; and further still, those qualities of body and those extrinsic goods which help him. Moreover, the impor-
tance of these six qualities is indicated by the order in which they are placed.

In regard to the qualities which are desirable in the superior general, the first is that he should be closely united with God our Lord and intimate with Him in prayer and all his actions, that from God, the foundation of all good, the general may so much the better obtain for the whole body of the Society a large share of His gifts and graces, and also great power and efficacy for all the means which will be used for the help of souls.

The second quality is that he should be a person whose example in the practice of all virtues is a help to the other members of the Society. Charity should be especially resplendent in him, toward all his fellow [human beings] and above all toward the members of the Society; and genuine humility too should shine forth, that these characteristics may make him highly loveable to God our Lord and to [all persons].

He ought also to be independent of all passions, by his keeping them controlled and mortified, so that in his interior they may not disturb the judgment of his intellect and in his exterior he may be so composed, particularly so self-controlled when speaking, that no one, whether a member of the Society who should regard him as a mirror and model, or an extern, may observe in him any thing or word which does not edify him.

However, he should know how to mingle rectitude and necessary severity with kindness and gentleness to such an extent that he neither allows himself to swerve from what he judges to be more pleasing to God our Lord nor ceases to have proper sympathy for his sons. Thus although they are being reprimanded or punished, they will recognize that in what he does he is proceeding rightly in our Lord and with charity, even though it is against their liking according to the lower man.

Magnanimity and fortitude of soul are likewise highly necessary for him to bear the weaknesses of many, to initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord, and to persevere in them with constancy when it is called for, without losing courage in the face of the contradictions (even though they come from persons of high rank and power) and without allowing himself to be moved by their entreaties or threats from what reason and the divine service require. He should be superior to all eventualities, without letting himself be exalted by those which succeed or depressed by those which go poorly, being altogether ready to receive death, if
necessary, for the good of the Society in the service of Jesus Christ, God and our Lord.

The third quality is that he ought to be endowed with great understanding and judgment, in order that this talent may not fail him either in the speculative or the practical matters which may arise. And although learning is highly necessary for one who will have so many learned men in his charge, still more necessary is prudence along with experience in spiritual and interior matters, that he may be able to discern the various spirits and to give counsel and remedies to so many who will have spiritual necessities.

He also needs discretion in exterior matters and a manner of handling such diverse affairs as well as of conversing with such various persons from within and without the Society.

The fourth quality, one highly necessary for the execution of business, is that he should be vigilant and solicitous to undertake enterprises as well as energetic in carrying them through to their completion and perfection, rather than careless and remiss in such a way that he leaves them begun but not finished.

The fifth quality has reference to the body. In regard to health, appearance, and age, on the one hand account should be taken of propriety and prestige, and on the other hand of the physical energies which his charge requires, that in it he may be able to fulfill his office to the glory of God our Lord.

Thus it seems that he ought to be neither very old, since such a one is generally not fit for the labors and cares of such a charge, nor very young, since a young man generally lacks the proper prestige and experience.

The sixth quality pertains to extrinsic endowments. Among these, preference ought to be given to those which help more toward edification and the service of God in such a charge. Examples are generally found in reputation, high esteem, and whatever else aids toward prestige with those within and without.

Nobility, wealth which was possessed in the world, reputation, and the like, are extrinsic endowments. Other things being equal, these are worthy of some consideration; but even if they are lacking, there are other things more important which could suffice for election.

Finally, he ought to be one of those who are most outstanding in every virtue, most deserving in the Society, and known as such for a considerable time. If any of the aforementioned qualities should be wanting, there should at least be no lack of great probity
and of love for the Society, nor of good judgment accompanied by sound learning. For in regard to other things, the aids which he will have (and which will be treated below) could through God’s help and favor supply to a great extent for many deficiencies.⁴
Mary Ward (1585–1645)

Born of English Catholic nobility in 1585, Mary Ward grew up among Elizabethan gentry in a world where acts of Parliament had made it treasonous to be a Catholic priest or to hold the Catholic faith. Catholics, wealthy or poor, were persecuted, driven into hiding, imprisoned, and put to death. Mary received an unusually thorough Renaissance education from her grandmother and from Jesuit priests who lived in hiding in her home. At seventeen she resisted her family’s attempts to arrange a marriage. Her reluctant father arranged her passage to St. Omer in Belgium where Mary founded a Poor Clare monastery for English noblewomen and began her own novitiate. Shortly afterward she experienced a call to establish an apostolic community of women like the Jesuits “only excepted which God by diversity of sex hath prohibited.”

Related by blood or marriage to most of the leading Catholics left in England, Mary attracted daughters and women servants of these families to join her. Taking a cue from Jesuit formation, the English Ladies secured a thorough education in theology, mathematics, classical languages, the arts, rhetoric, literature, and drama. The order grew rapidly and opened schools across the continent for girls and young women, teaching them not only to read, write, and guide a household, but to run small businesses, nurse the sick, provide spiritual direction and catechesis, care for the mentally ill, and comfort the brokenhearted. In their native England these women also disguised themselves as maids, housekeepers, widows, and craft makers to move through the households of both commoners and nobility, going where priests could not in order to draw lapsed Catholics back to the practice of their faith. Despite the success of the English Ladies’ schools and missionary projects neither European civil society nor the Catholic Church was prepared for women to take such an active role in the service of faith or development of culture outside the home or cloister.
After years of growing ecclesial animosity, the church’s German Inquisition imprisoned Mary Ward during the coldest months of 1630 although they pressed no formal charges nor held a formal trial. She was treated as a heretic without any evidence that she had ever said or written anything contrary to church teaching. Even after her release at Easter neither the ecclesial nor civil authorities brought formal charges against her. Nevertheless, Pope Urban VIII harshly suppressed the community of over a thousand women serving throughout Europe. Some of the group managed to stay together in small clusters of laywomen until they were reconstituted as a religious community some years later. Mary and some of her most loyal companions returned to England and lived in prayerful anonymity while her health failed. She died at the end of January 1645 and on her gravestone was inscribed: “To love the poor, persevere in the same, live, die and rise with them was all the aim of Mary Ward who having lived 60 years and 8 days died the 20 of January 1645.”

Mary’s collection of writings is not as familiar as that of Ignatius, but women called to the Ignatian spiritual path have long regarded her as an important voice of the tradition. Various scholars have gathered, collected, translated, and commented upon her journals, retreat notes, letters, and instructions to her sisters, along with the formula for her institute. Included here are short excerpts that illustrate the patiently discerning character of her spirituality and the centrality of God’s will to her life. Despite great deprivation, both material and spiritual, Mary demonstrates humor, courage, humility, and the spiritual freedom she possessed to suffer rather than betray what she believed God was asking of her.

Among the writings of Mary Ward, “The Formula of the Institute” represents the foundational document for her apostolic order. The language of this document bears some resemblance to the Jesuit formula, but encapsulates the distinctive charisms the Spirit bestows on Ward and her followers.

Ward’s “Instructions to Her Sisters at St. Omer” includes excerpts from a series of instructive talks she gave her novices during November 1617. In all ways she wanted the women of the community to be exemplars of “verity,” the truth and justice of God embodied in a deep and abiding charity. What she terms “preceding” grace is the a priori love of God that comes before humans perceive or understand their need for that love. This grace makes all goodness in humans possible. In scholastic terminology it is termed “actual grace.”
We have included several excerpts from “The Letters of Mary Ward.” There are 132 letters or fragments of letters of Mary still extant, although Mary wrote many more that were confiscated at the time of the suppression of her order in 1631. The first is typical of the many administrative letters she wrote to bishops, cardinals, and popes trying to secure ecclesial confirmation of her order and her rule. The church never granted such approval during her lifetime. Other fragments of letters come from the “lemon juice letters,” so called because she wrote them on scraps of paper with lemon juice (referred to as liquor) while imprisoned in an unheated sickroom in a Poor Clare monastery outside of Munich. Having lived under persecution in England, Mary and her community leaders, Elizabeth Cotton and Mary Poyntz, knew how to carry on this secret correspondence. The text could only be seen or deciphered when the scraps of paper were held close to a fire. Unable to see or communicate with her, the sisters hid fresh lemons in the laundry and sewing packets, which they delivered several times a week. For fear of discovery, the texts of the letters were often in a kind of code. One lay sister, Anne Turner, remained with her in imprisonment.

Eileen Burke-Sullivan

From “The Formula of the Institute” in Till God Will

1. Whoever wishes to serve beneath the banner of the Cross as a soldier of God in our Society [. . .] should keep in mind the following: after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty and obedience, she is a member of a Society founded primarily for this purpose: to strive for the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine.

2. She will do this by leading them back from heresy and evil ways to the faith, to a Christian manner of life and to special obedience to the Holy See, assembling people and preparing them to attend public sermons and lectures; by performing any service of the word of God, by instructing girls in spiritual practices and simple people in Christian doctrine . . . by encouraging them to go to confession and to the other sacraments, preparing them for their reception. She will also see that preachers and spiritual fathers are sent to cities and to remote places, seek out women of doubtful lives and prepare them to receive the grace of the sacraments. . . . She will also help in reconciling those estranged from the Church, assist and serve prisoners and those in hospitals, in fact, undertake
any work of charity which seems proper to further the glory of God and the common good, yet altogether gratis and without receiving any stipend for these labours. [. . . ]

4. . . . We pledge ourselves by a special vow to carry out whatever the present and future Roman Pontiffs may order which pertains to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith; and to go without subterfuge or excuse, as far as in us lies, to whatsoever provinces they may choose to send us—whether they are pleased to send us among the Turks or any other infidels, even to those who live in the region called the Indies. [. . . ]

6. No one should be admitted to profession in this Society without long and careful testing of her life and doctrine, as will be explained in the Constitutions. For all truth this way of life requires persons who are thoroughly humble and prudent in Christ as well as conspicuous in the purity of Christian life and learning.4

From “Instructions to Her Sisters at St. Omer” in Till God Will

While Mr. Sackville was commending us and our course and telling how much it was esteemed by men of judgment among the cardinals at Rome, Father Minister, who was present, answered: “It is true—while they are in their first fervour, but fervour will decay and when all is done, they are but women.”

I would know what you all think he meant by this speech of his “but women,” and what fervour is. Fervour is a will to do well, that is, a [preceding] grace of God and a gift given freely by God, which we could not merit. It is true that fervour doth many times grow cold, but what is the cause? Is it because we are women? No, but because we are imperfect women. There is no such difference between men and women.

Therefore, it is not because we are women but, as I said before, because we are imperfect women and love not [truth] but seek after lies. “Veritas Domini manet in aeternum”: the [truth] of the Lord remains forever. It is not veritas hominum, the [truth] of men, nor the [truth] of women, but veritas Domini, and this [truth] women may have as well as men. If we fail, it is for want of this [truth], but not because we are women.

Some religious, both men and women, have lost their fervour, because they have been unmindful of this [preceding] truth which is a gift of God; they have adhered to the sweetness they have found in prayer, and the content which they felt in the service of God. For all
in the beginning do forsake the world for God only, which is [truth]. But, as I say, asking too much sweetness and feelings, which when they fail them and are left in aridity, God seeming to leave them, they think that they have lost their fervour. This is also a lie, since they may have fervour in aridity, fervour not being placed in the feelings but in a will to do well, which women may have as well as men.

There is no such difference between men and women; yet women, may they not do great matters, as we have seen by example of many saints who have done great things? And I hope in God it will be seen that women in time will do much.

This is [truth]: to do what we have to do well. Many think it is nothing to do ordinary things. But for us it is. To do ordinary things well, to keep our Constitutions, and all other things that be ordinary in every office or employment whatsoever it be. To do it well: this is for us, and this by God’s grace will maintain fervour.

Heretofore we have been told by men we must believe. It is true, we must, but let us be wise and know what we are to believe and what not, and not to be made to think we can do nothing. If women are so inferior to men in all things, why are they not exempted in all things as they are in some? . . .

I would to God that all men understood this [truth], that women, if they will, may be perfect, and if they would not make us believe we can do nothing and that we are “but women”, we might do great matters.

There was a Father that came recently to England, whom I heard say that he would not for a thousand worlds be a woman, because he thought that a woman could not apprehend God! I answered nothing but only smiled, although I could have answered him by the experience I have of the contrary.5

From “The Letters of Mary Ward” in Till God Will

To Bishop Albergati in Germany, 1620

This quiet lasted many weeks, until on St. Athanasius day, while sitting at work with the rest, there came suddenly on me such alteration and disposition that the operation of an unexpressible power could only cause, and certainty that there I was not to remain, that some other thing was to be done by me, but what in particular was not shown. The change and alteration this wrought for half an hour or more was extraordinary. I saw that this was to be so as if I had seen or heard it spoken.
To leave what I loved much and enjoyed with such sensible contentment, to expose myself to new labours, which then I saw to be very many; to incur the several censures of men, and the great oppositions which on all sides would happen, afflicted me greatly. Yet had I no power to will or wish otherwise than to expose myself to all these inconveniences, and put myself into God’s hands with these uncertainties. By the advice of my confessor I continued the practice of that austere life half a year longer, the better to discover from whence that light came. When the rest were clothed, I departed from them, my confessor telling me I might be saved either by going or staying, which was all the encouragement or assistance any alive gave me at that time. . . .

My purposed time of stay in England expired, I returned to St Omer, with others who intended to be religious with me; great insistence was made by various spiritual and learned men that we would take upon us some rule already confirmed. Several Rules were procured by our friends both from Italy and France, and earnestly urged to make choice of some of them. They seemed not that which God would have done. And the refusal of them all caused much persecution, and all the more because I denied all and could not say what in particular I desired or found myself called unto. . . .

About this time, in the year 1611, I fell sick in great extremity, and being somewhat recovered and having made a vow to go in pilgrimage to Our Lady of Sichem, when I was alone and in some extraordinary repose of mind, I heard distinctly, not by sound of voice, but intellectually understood, these words: “Take the same of the Society.” This I understood as that we were to take the same both in matter and manner, that only excepted which God by diversity of sex hath prohibited. These few words gave so great a measure of light in that particular Institute, so much comfort and strength, and so changed the whole soul that it was impossible for me to doubt but that they came from him whose words are works.

February 13, 1631

I had yours the last night. Lest I forget, I have little or no liquor left. . . . For my health, I am worse indeed, that is, my appetite is less, my nightly fever much greater, my catarrh and cough also more, but with all this and what else God will send, you and I must and will be most contented, till our Lord dispose otherwise. . . .
Propose to the Abbess as coming from yourselves that she should persuade me to drink some little thing in the morning, and the like in the afternoons, since I seldom eat bread or flesh, only taking liquids, as a little wine warmed with an egg, which Anne can do in my chamber; so please send me a couple of eggs every afternoon, for that afternoon and the next morning.

... we can only read once a day what you write because we lack fire. Your last papers I cannot warm till night.

The Lady Abbess is full of my writings: she has been in some hope that I might enter here, since my first vows, she tells me, were in St Clare’s Order, but I pretend not to understand. ... 

[... ] I think I am in a Cloister, and shut in. We are in one pretty little room on the first floor, joining upon the cemetery where they bury their deceased saints. Our habitation is the place of the despaired of sick. It seems that we have displaced one who is about to die any moment. She has been sick these past three years, and has spit up all her lungs. Here we sometimes fry and sometimes we freeze, and that’s all there is to do. Three little windows closely walled up, our door chained and double-locked, and never opened but only at the entrance and departure of our two keepers, and the Lady Abbess who is the Chief Keeper. We were conducted here by the three who came with us and two Poor Clares who speak Italian.

Beds were placed by the door for the four nuns who guard us night and day. Mass and the Sacraments are not feasts for us to frequent, and for all this the place we inhabit has everything in it that could be wished for; indeed I say here and marvel at it, but our Lord and Master is also our Father and gives no more than is lady-like and is most easy to be borne. Be sure no complaints be made, nor notice taken of these things.

February 15, 1631

[... ] For my being sent to Rome, if so it happen it will be per-chance the best for us. But for the adverse part, I see not what it can profit them. For if they intend to have my life, they can kill me with less noise here; for in these parts they know no home nor friends. But here, or there, if God would have me die, I would not live: it is but to pay the rent a little before the day, and to live and suffer for God, or to die and to go to him are both singular goods and such as I merit not, and one of the two, I trust, in the mercies of God will
fall to my happy lot. . . . But I would have you both not the least troubled, but beg hard that he himself would do what he himself would have done.

February 18, 1631

I am heartily sorry for Father Ludovico. Let every one of the novices say a Dirige [a psalm from the beginning of Matins in the Office for the Dead] for his soul. I doubt he will not go alone, yet I am daily earnest with God in my poor manner that he would entirely pardon all our enemies, and let them go without further punishing them. It is good pleasing the Friend of friends and labouring in eternal works, and above all to be entirely and for ever at our Master’s disposal.