

“This book might be described as a little *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In Bert Daelemans’s *An Ignatian Journey of the Cross* the reader will find an uplifting and interesting approach to contemplating the Way of the Cross through poetic writing, visual images, and selected pieces of music in the context of the Ignatian tradition. For those who seek beauty, hope, and inspiration, the book will be a source of reflection and sustenance.”

—Gesa Thiessen, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

“St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* have formed the basis of numerous retreats and meditations across the centuries since they were first completed in 1541. He proposed that as a reader one ‘represent to yourself in the imagination’ the scene being described, and in this short volume Bert Daelemans takes him at his word by centering his own meditations around the work of the contemporary German sculptor, Werner Klenk (b. 1942). Daelemans already has in print a profound analysis of how modern architecture and the contemporary church might successfully interact. Here he displays equal insight into some of the other arts but in a way that never loses sight of overarching pastoral and spiritual concerns.”

—David Brown

Wardlaw Professor of Theology, Aesthetics and Culture
University of St Andrews, Fellow of the British Academy

“More than mere devotional practice, this contemporary, existential, and artistic Way of the Cross is at once a guide to meditation and a path to encounter Christ in whom we are and find what we are searching for: a fullness of joy and life beyond our own darkness and our daily struggles.”

—Georges Ruysen, SJ

Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome, Italy

“Bert Daelemans, SJ, gently guides us in the contemplation of the Passion of Jesus through a series of sculptural images. As we, reverently or even shyly, approach Jesus in this *via crucis*, we are led to discover that it is Jesus who walks with us during the course of our lives. We are captivated by Jesus in these most genuinely human moments of his divinity—to see, to listen, to feel, and even to taste the beauty, the truth, and the proximity of God living and embracing our humanity. By way of a dialogue with this Jesus, so truly meek and humble, we are encouraged to experience a moving encounter with him in a journey of discernment so as to grow in his likeness.”

—Miyako Namikawa, RSCJ, Madrid, Spain

“Fr. Daelemans’s sensitive interpretation of the Ignatian text, enhanced by Werner Klenk’s beautifully photographed Way of the Cross in bronze, offers an engaging and deeply personal spiritual experience. In this relatively compact work, the full range of our human capacities for prayer—imagination, the senses, memory, and intuition—are brought into play. We move at our own pace. The graced moments ripen slowly. This is a book to keep.”

—Fr. William Pearsall, SJ
University Chaplain, University of Manchester

“This is a wonderful book, which invites us on a journey with Jesus as he faces his most difficult and most glorious moments on his journey of the Cross. It is a tough and challenging journey—almost harrowing, yet intimate and beautiful—calling us to explore the depth of our own being and all of our relationships, not least with Jesus and with ourselves. This is a text I have and will use often for meditation and contemplation, and I found the use of images and music suggestions, along with the Scripture and almost poetic text, really helpful and evocative—drawing me into the exercises in spite of my reluctance!”

—Jim Culliton, SJ, Dublin, Ireland

“For anyone seeking to walk with Christ in the dynamic of the Exercises and willing to allow Christ’s Passion to meld with her or his own struggles, hopes, and desires, this is a book one can savor and keep exploring for its many doorways into the Christian Mystery we believe and live. It is ideal for individuals, spiritual directors who companion contemporary pilgrims, and community prayer groups choosing Christ together. He bids us to ‘breathe in’ the grace of each movement and to ‘breathe out’ a response, offered as a gift. This is an integrated Catholic spirituality in its fullest expression and depth.”

—Paul A. Janowiak, SJ
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

“It is rare to find a spiritual writer who combines so many gifts: theology, aesthetics, and intimate familiarity with Saint Ignatius’s wisdom about prayer. *An Ignatian Journey* combines art, Scripture, poetry, and even suggestions for music in a single, multifaceted meditation. As with Saint Ignatius’s great classic, the *Spiritual Exercises*, the prayer engages the senses, the imagination, and the heart. I am sure that any who desire a deeper and more personal encounter with the Lord will find in this unusual and beautiful book a continual source of inspiration.”

—Nicholas Austin, SJ, Heythrop College

An Ignatian Journey of the Cross

Exercises in Discernment

Bert Daelemans, SJ

Foreword by

Jane Ferdon, OP,
and George R. Murphy, SJ



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Daelemans, Bert.

An Ignatian journey of the cross : exercises in discernment /
Bert Daelemans, S.J.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-8146-4718-9 — ISBN 978-0-8146-4743-1 (ebook)

1. Ignatius, of Loyola, Saint, 1491–1556. Exercitia spiritualia.
2. Spiritual life—Catholic Church. 3. Spiritual exercises. I. Title.

BX2179.L8D34 2015

232.96—dc23

2015025004

Dans nos ténèbres, il n'y a pas une place pour la Beauté.
Toute la place est pour la Beauté.

*In our darkness, there is no place for beauty.
Beauty fills all space.*

René Char (1907–1988)

To Aylan (+2015)

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A golden rule . . .

We ought to note well the course of the thoughts,
And if the beginning, middle, and end is all good, inclined to all
good,
It is a sign of the good Angel;
But if in the course of the thoughts which he brings it ends in
something bad,
Of a distracting tendency, or less good than what the soul had
previously proposed to do,
Or if it weakens it or disquiets or disturbs the soul,
Taking away its peace, tranquility and quiet, which it had before,
It is a clear sign that it proceeds from the evil spirit, enemy of our
profit and eternal salvation. [SpEx 333]

Foreword

Artists feed each other in their search for beauty and truth. This book, for seekers of truth and beauty, for believers and unbelievers, invites us into a variety of encounters across time on what it means to be human: the sculpture of German artist Werner Klenk; the art of photography; a series of classical musicians; the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures; the prayers, reflections, questions, and insights of a person schooled in Ignatian spirituality and Christian humanism. It is an eminently contemplative book at the interface of seeing and hearing, thinking and feeling, remembering and hoping.

When contemplation, according to the eminent preacher Walter Burghardt, is defined as “a long, loving look at the real,” one might anticipate beautiful sunrises, magnificent clouds, breathtaking horizons or other heartwarming scenes. Daelemans’s book does not fulfill that kind of anticipation. He sees “the real” but it is the real that confronts suffering and brings out a beauty and intimacy that can be found there. Daelemans reflects on the Way of the Cross and the Jesus who reveals himself there.

Ecce homo—behold the man. This is not, at first glance, the triumphant King, the victorious warrior. This is the condemned person, beaten, scourged, humiliated, judged worthy of the death penalty. He is not the energetic, youthful preacher and healer who attracts large crowds of enthusiastic followers. Nevertheless, Daelemans brings us into an encounter with a beautiful man, the tragedy of love abandoned, betrayed, rejected, but the beauty of faithful

love, the beauty of encountering help along the way, the beauty of courageous endurance.

The book is subtitled “discernment.” This is the discernment necessary in times of darkness and suffering. Is this a darkness where the Holy One invites us or the invitation of a destructive spirit? Is the darkness a desolation, leading us away from God and the Holy and the human, or is the darkness a consoling invitation to intimacy, to friendship in difficult times, to help and accompaniment, to courageous endurance and acceptance?

This book compels us to stop along the way, to engage a very human Jesus, to let surface our deepest fears, longings, and hopes. We meet a Jesus who falls, who needs help and receives it from strangers, from friends, and from family, who consoles others and is not blind to their suffering even as he suffers. This Jesus knows the pain of suffering, loneliness, betrayal, disappointment, and failure. He also knows the fidelity of a God who sustains him.

Daelemans, like the Way of the Cross, does not romanticize suffering, nor does he deny it. In facing his way, Jesus opens the way for us. Daelemans is a trustworthy and knowledgeable companion. Savor the book, savor the journey.

Jane Ferdon, OP, and George R. Murphy, SJ

Before You Go This Way

Pathfinders are pathseekers who keep walking
because they know where to find traces of the way.

Godfinders are Godseekers who keep walking
because they know where to find faces of God.

This book is a collection of fifteen spiritual exercises for people who search to experience God with the help of Ignatian discernment. This Ignatian journey helps to discover clues in discernment by contemplating Christ in his Passion. It is written in such a way as to foster the integration of Ignatian spirituality with everyday life. By contemplating a work of art, we are invited to follow step by step the downward path of the disfigured Christ who configures us in his glorious transfiguration. We all share his humanity: let us also share his divinity, the glory of his cross.

Art and beauty have long been able to deepen our spirituality. The Ignatian journey indicated here follows the steadfast rhythm of a bronze Way of the Cross, by German artist Werner Klenk. In this beautiful artwork, he has captured with astonishing and disarming power the essence of a Christian lifestyle made of encounters. Most of the time, we tend to look at art from a purely aesthetic point of view. We do not always have the clues to release the theological depth that is often hidden in the greatest masterpieces. This is one intention of this book: to guide us in the fascinating discovery of the Christian Mystery present in a work of art. This is already an Ignatian journey that connects us with our senses, imagination, and memory.

The second aim is to show the true extension of the Passion of Christ as depicted in a Way of the Cross. Most of the time, a *via crucis* is reduced to a popular form of religious piety. This goes beyond the extraordinary power of the *via crucis* to shed light on everyday life—often disgracefully touched by the cross in all its forms. The nearness of Christ in this masterpiece of Werner Klenk is disarmingly and powerfully palpable even on a photograph.

The third aim is to go this Way of the Cross as an Ignatian journey of discernment. Remarkably, the rules of discernment of the Spiritual Exercises can easily be pointed out in this Way of the Cross, which is made essentially of encounters between persons.

At times, life looks like a Way of the Cross. Pain is there, uninvited. It seems impossible to discern the smallest source of light in the tremendous darkness that surrounds us. Fortunately, nobody walks this way alone. This little guide is a practical introduction in Ignatian discernment, retrieving the old tradition of including imagery for prayer purposes.

Each station is a different spiritual exercise for growing in divinely human values, such as humility, solidarity, tenderness, etc. Together, they reveal the magnificent vulnerability of our shared humanity and the glorious miracle of our shared divinity. No prerequisites are needed for this book: only the willingness to contemplate, to recognize, and to savor what makes us profoundly human will reveal the disarming, nascent beauty that our world secretly longs for.

The slow and silent contemplation of this work of art gave way to a series of spiritual exercises in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola. In the four steps that I propose here, you will easily recognize the well-known Ignatian pattern of the Four Weeks. At the end of each step, you might go back

to the exercises offered here, so as to collect and revisit the moments of grace when you savored more fruit and profit.

For it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing
things interiorly,
That contents and satisfies the soul. [SpEx 2]

The emphasis of these spiritual exercises lies on the attentive contemplation of the sculpture and the mystery it brings to light. Bronze communicates so much more than words alone can tell. Often, not only during Lent, our life resembles a Way of the Cross. When many voices obscure our way, it will be essential to discern the encounters that give life:

Therefore they have need to be very well examined
Before entire credit is given them, or they are put into
effect. [SpEx 336]

Before each exercise, I suggest some biblical readings, a passage of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and a piece of music, which all might help to release more of the mystery enclosed in the encounter between universal truth and your particular daily life. An easy rule to discern God is this:

It is proper to God [. . .] to give true spiritual gladness
and joy,
Taking away all sadness and disturbance. [SpEx 329]

The text is intended to make easier this contemplative act. Word and image belong together in order to make room for our own mystery. At times, we will feel the need to stop reading so that deeper echoes may come to the surface. The dialogue between text and image brings to light the centrality of the cross in Jesus' life and in our own lives:

If any want to become my followers,
Let them [. . .] take up their cross daily and follow me.
(Luke 9:23)

The Way of the Cross (1987–1988) from the German artist Werner Klenk (www.klenk-bildhauer.de) can be admired in the church of Maria Königin in Lennestadt, Germany. This work consists of three reliefs (50x250) in bronze, each depicting five Stations of the Cross.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola are quoted according to the translation of Elder Mullan, SJ (1914) [SpEx].

Photography: Rudolf Paulus (†) and Bert Daelemans, SJ

My profound gratitude is due to John Dardis, SJ, for proof-reading this text.

FIRST STEP

WORLD—THREE ATTITUDES

The first step consists in contemplating three basic attitudes of Christ in relation to our world, in order to kindle my desire to follow him in this world.



MAKING A CHOICE



HERE I AM



HUMILITY

In this first step, it helps to savor the contrast between the attitudes of Christ and the indifference, hedonism, or violence of our present world and to discover within this world an immense, albeit at times fragile, desire for peace and communion.

Consider how Christ our Lord puts himself [. . .]
In a lowly place, beautiful and attractive. [SpEx 144]



URTEIL

1

MAKING A CHOICE

Ecce homo: Jesus or Pilate?

The good Angel touches [. . .] sweetly, lightly, and gently,
Like a drop of water which enters into a sponge;
And the evil touches [. . .] sharply and with noise and disquiet,
As when the drop of water falls on stone. [SpEx 335]

READINGS: Ps 40; John 19:1-16; Matt 27:15-26

EXERCISES: Meditation on the two standards [SpEx 136-147]

MUSIC: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, from *Matthäus Passion*

Here is the man! (John 19:5)

Thus starts our story with Jesus.
Someone has shown us this man.
Here is that other man, Pilate.

A man rises out of the bronze.
Another seems to become bronze.
He stands still, dreadfully alone.
Even though the other one looks at Him.
Alone—precisely because the other one
Looks down at him.

There is no greater contrast than this:

One high on his throne,
The other stands at his feet;

One comfortably inside,
The other in the cold outside;

One protected,
The other projected;

One richly clothed,
The other indefensibly naked;

One without face,
The other pure expression;

Hands that are cramped and closed,
Hands that are open, free, and innocent.

One washes his hands in guilt,
The other cleansed the feet of his friends;

One anonymously in his own name,
The other in name of God and—quite simply—of everyone;

One apparently free
But, in fact, brutally imprisoned
The other detained
And entirely free;

The one as slave
The other as king.

Smashed in a corner,
Thirty silver coins sadly
Witness the bloody treason
Of the disciple, the friend, the other who left him, who
cut himself out.

Here is the man!

I recognize myself in the metallic mask of the one
And in the vulnerable gaze of the other.

I know: behind this opaque superficiality
I also hide with my harsh judgment.
This is me.

. . . the water in the dish has dried up.

Two deep, gentle eyes look at me.
I recognize this pain.
Vulnerability looks at me
In this searching gaze: my own
And that of my neighbor.

Only in this inquiring gaze
Will we drink Living Water.

Only in this most refined and personal center
Do I find depth and rest.

Only in this helpless and consoling gaze
That approaches me
And adopts all human cries
Does God give Godself away
And do I find an answer.

Here is the man!

It is good to see God in this man.
Good to see how to be human.

It is good to lift up our eyes to this human being,
Like Adam and Eve, like desert people
Lifting up their eyes to the serpent (Gen 2:4–3:24;
Num 21:4; John 3:14).

“Behold the man” is first of all
Daring to look at humanity,
My being human.

“Behold the Man” is also
Daring to look at sinfulness,
Not in an oppressing way,
But in an uplifting way,
Taking me as I am.

To look is to lift up the eyes,
Not looking down and not moving anymore,
What is always the easiest way.

This looking is a lifting and a longing
To Someone who has seen me long before I opened my
eyes.

To behold this human being
Is to encounter God.

This is the judgment of Pilate:
Not only does he condemn Christ,
But also himself.

Every time that we judge the other,
We sharply judge ourselves.

Behold the man,
The broken, humiliated man.

He was detained in the night,
Betrayed by a kiss,
Mocked even though He was innocent,
Beaten up and handed over.

Behold the broken Body
And dare to see God.

Behold the broken Bread
And see Life.

When all are scattered,
Jesus teaches us with His Body.

When He is going to die, alone,
Jesus teaches us with His Body.

He gives away his Body
So that we become his Body.

His Body washes the feet of Simon
And receives the kiss of Judas.

On the moment of separation,
Jesus teaches us with the intimacy of his Body.

Instead of separation,
Jesus says: intimacy.

Instead of brokenness,
Jesus sings: communion.

He does not take away the separation and the brokenness,
But speaks with silent words that everybody understands
And dances on the rhythm of a very old tune that we all
know.

Here is the Lamb of God
Who takes away the sins of the world! (John 1:29)

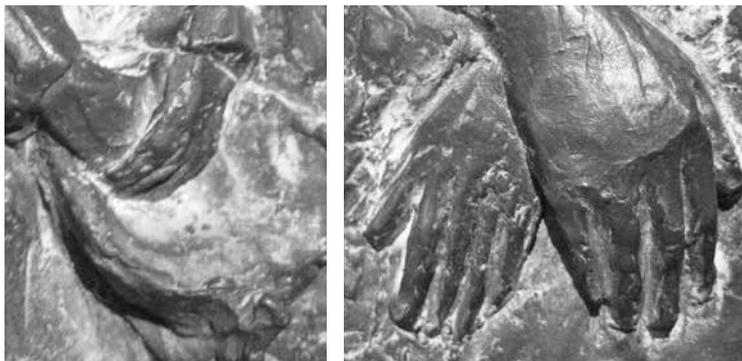
Such was the Epiphany—revelation—of the Baptist.

Here is the man! (John 19:5)

Such is the Epiphany of the coward

. . . that I am.

Cowards cannot condemn him.
Closed, accomplice hands: you cannot come to me.
The one hand hides the other.



Jesus, instead, gives himself
With open, patient hands:
Here I am. Compliant, serene.

This man is abandoned,
Left alone.

Ah, why did they not leave him alone!

No, harsh words make him small.

The tough gaze of Pilate: *Here is the man!*

The stiff silence, the traitor's kiss of Judas.

The hard judgment of the people: *Crucify him!* (John 19:15)

My rigid look: this human nonbeing cannot be God.

His answer?

A pure and silent

YES

To life,
To love,
To God,
To humanity:

Foundation of his life,
The YES that he is and wants to be, now and forever.

Behold the Bridegroom.

He stands in our midst
As the one who serves (Luke 22:27),
And washes our feet (John 13:5).



Behold the King.
There are two kings in front
of us:
The faceless king on his
throne
And the broken king with the
crown of thorns
In the midst of a crowd of
thorns.
. . . whom will I follow?

During a few contemplative moments,
I pray, let go . . .

Breathing in: *This is my Son . . .*

Breathing out: . . . *listen to him.* (Matt 17:5)

*God,
Bound hand and foot in Your Son,
Surrendered due to our arbitrariness,
Also today You give Yourself as the True Way to Life.*

*Awaken in us Your Spirit so that,
From now on, we do not judge but console.*