

Ignatius at the Cardoner, Galina Oussatcheva (Cardoner House, Toronto)

The Gift of Ignatian Community in a World Experiencing Crisis

Ignatian Family Retreat 2021

This icon, commissioned by the Cardoner Jesuit Community for its chapel, shows Ignatius at the moment of the Cardoner illumination, gazing up into the face of Holy Wisdom manifesting the Word. The understanding given him at this time, he said, was so great that all other gifts given afterwards, if they were combined, could not equal to it. The dynamism borne of this illumination by the Cardoner River would eventually give birth to the Society of Jesus, and to the gift of Ignatian community.

Introduction to the Retreat

The Gift of Ignatian Community in a World Experiencing Crisis

The year 2021 marks the 500th anniversary of the conversion of Saint Ignatius, a date that is of particular significance for all of us, but particularly for the Society of Jesus and the Christian Life Communities. As such, the Superior General of the Jesuits has announced an Ignatian Year to begin in May 2021 and end in June 2022.

But the year 2021 also marks the 400th anniversary of Mary Ward's Institutum, the first complete plan for what would become the IBVM-CJ communities; the 170th anniversary of the first arrival of Sisters of Saint Joseph in Canada; and the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Xavière Sisters, Missionaries of Christ Jesus by Claire Monestès. 2020 was also the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Faithful Companions of Jesus by Marie Madeleine d'Houët.

It seemed important, in this context, to invite all the members of the wider Ignatian Family in Canada to celebrate together this Ignatian Year with a common retreat. The theme for this retreat was suggested by the experience of living in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and cultural breakdowns it brought to light. The attempts of various groups to enforce their ideologies as a way of recovering what they perceived as stability and the common good, at the cost of continuing patterns of exclusion and injustice (against refugees and migrants, African Americans, First Nations peoples, and so on), only served to highlight and worsen these breakdowns.

Ignatian community is a true gift in this time: it is not built from the outside in, by imposing structures and cultural norms from outside, but from the inside out, through active listening to and welcome of the other and genuine giving of self in love to the neighbour, whoever they are. It is rooted in an experience of "friendship in the Lord" that fosters the building of an apostolic body that goes out to share this experience of reconciliation and being "gathered together by the great love of God" with others. By deepening this experience, and sharing it as members of the Ignatian family, we can become better able to share it as a healing gift in a world in crisis.

The retreat is intended for all members of the Ignatian Family in Canada: members of religious congregations and their Associates, the Christian Life Communities, colleagues and friends in our various works and apostolates. The retreat is made up of 8 "movements" that correspond to the 4 weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. These movements, like those of a symphony, build up the experience of Ignatian community as a framework for personal and communal prayer and discernment. They can be lived as an 8-day closed retreat (with 3 to 5 prayer periods a day), or as a one month or two-month retreat in daily life (with 3 to 6 prayer periods a week). We recommend that you make this retreat with the help of a director who can help you discern how best to use the materials in light of the Spirit's work, or with a small spiritual conversation group with

whom you can share the fruits of prayer, and thereby include the dimension of lived Ignatian community in the retreat.

It will not always be possible to use ALL the materials proposed as part of a particular movement; it is part of the prayerful discernment of the retreatant with their director or spiritual companion to listen to the Spirit and make a wise selection for prayer, keeping in mind that Saint Ignatius always encouraged the use of repetition to go deeper: it is not the consuming of many things, but the savouring of few things deeply that leads to God. Similarly, allowing the Spirit to lead one to remember one's experiences of community in prayer and to shed new light on them can be life-giving.

Each movement is presented in classic Ignatian fashion, with preparatory prayer, composition of place, the grace to be sought, suggestions for prayer, and time of colloquy. The suggestions for prayer are taken from Scripture and from the founding documents and resources of those Ignatian communities which were represented on the planning committee: the Jesuits, the Christian Life Communities, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, The Xavières Missionaries of Christ Jesus, the Faithful Companions of Jesus and the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary / Congregation of Jesus. There are many more members of the Ignatian Family in Canada, and we encourage those congregations and groups to make use of their founding documents as well. Prayer with the insights of our various founders and foundresses and communities can enrich our experience of our own charism within the Ignatian Family. In this way, we hope the Ignatian Family can itself become more conscious of itself as an apostolic body called by God to serve God and the neighbour in Canada.

For those who can participate, the week of July 22 to 31 has been set aside as a special time for as many members of the Ignatian Family to make the retreat "together-but-apart." Though COVID-19 regulations do not allow gathering together physically, we can make the retreat at the same time, right where we are. To foster this sense of being together, an opening prayer service will be broadcast online on the evening of July 22, and a closing celebration on the late morning of July 31, Feast of Saint Ignatius Loyola. All are welcome to these celebrations, and a link will be made available. We also encourage you to create online spiritual conversation groups to share the fruits of the retreat with one another, depending on the format (8-day or in daily life) which you are using.

The members of the committee:

Dominique Cyr (CVX-CLC)
Gill Goulding CJ
Laurence Loubières XMCJ
Gilles Mongeau SJ
Joanna Walsh FCJ

First Movement

«How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!»

PREPARATORY PRAYER "I offer myself to you for this time of prayer: my desires, my intelligence, my will. Send your Spirit, kindle the fire of your love in my heart."

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

Reading and rereading the Scripture text, I imagine myself embraced by Trinitarian love, in right relation with others and with all creatures; Trinitarian communion is both the origin and purpose of creation. I take the time to remember the communities I have been part of since I was born: my family, school, parish, sports teams, etc.

THE GRACE I SEEK

To experience myself as beloved of God in communion (belonging) with others and with creation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Psalm 133
- Isaiah 43:1-7, *remembering that this is a passage about Israel as a people, and their mission to help bring about the gathering of all nations into God's great love.*
- Sirach 17:1-15, *the beauty and harmony of creation, and of right relation with God, the neighbour and all creatures, under conditions of original justice*
- Principle and Foundation, *Spiritual Exercises #23* (*see the back of this sheet*)
- KEEP IN MIND that the Spirit may lead you into Ignatian repetition of a meaningful experience

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

Principle and Foundation (Puhl, adapted)

We are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save our soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for us to help us in attaining the end for which we are created.

Hence, we are to make use of them in as far as they help us in the attainment of our end, and we must rid ourselves of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to us.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

A Communal Principle and Foundation (Wickham, adapted)

So that we may better fulfil the divine purpose of human existence, the common task assigned to us in creation is to build on earth, co-creatively with God, new ways of living together in justice and love.

With the help of God's grace, this will draw humanity closer to God in this world and in the next.

At present it means that the Creator calls upon us to give our best efforts to the common task of striving for better (more loving and more just) ways of living on earth. Lest our common destiny and all that human beings need to do together may seem too vast, too much beyond our vision, perhaps we can start by focusing on our families, our work and our personal ways of coping, of affirming others and of sharing one another's struggles. We should be ready, however, to take part in larger affairs whenever an opportunity arises, in spite of our fears and limitations. Whatever the task presented to us, we choose that which contributes more to the coming of God's Reign and turn away from what impedes that Reign.

Our desire should be to allow our life work and every practical task to receive value from the larger destiny God has given to us.

Second Movement

«For God so loved the world…»

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

PART I *"Lord, the one you love is sick"*

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

I imagine the infection that begins to spread at the dawn of human history, from the betrayal of Adam and Eve, through the murder of Abel by Cain, the pride of Babel, the Golden Calf…. I see myself caught up in a web of deceit, violence and lies. I gaze upon the present world crisis and what it reveals of our divisions and the injustice rooted in structures of oppression from which I and my community benefit and to which we contribute.

THE GRACE I SEEK

To experience myself as part of a web of brokenness in a world in crisis, but rescued and called by Jesus

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Luke 15:11-32, *noting that the father not only welcomes the younger son, but seeks to bring about the reconciliation of both his sons*.
- John 3:16-21, *praying that the gentle light of Christ might reveal the lie and deceit in which I am caught up, and the salvation the Son brings*
- John 11:1-44. *The raising of Lazarus helps us enter into Christ's overcoming of sin and death by love*
- KEEP IN MIND that the Spirit may lead you into an Ignatian repetition of a meaningful experience; FINISH THE MOVEMENT with the exercise on the Call of God's Reign on the back of this page

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

PART II *The Call of God's Reign*

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

"The Reign. I have chosen a ridiculed and scourged King who was betrayed by the courts of justice: Herod and Pilate; who was betrayed by love: Peter, Judas, the apostles… I have chosen a King, a crucified spouse, I chose him freely, desiring to share his life. It is no longer necessary to make the choice; though I made the choice poorly, I have finally begun to take the first steps on the royal road of the cross. All that remains is for me to make offerings of greater value. Lord, I ratify with my will all my past offerings, I ratify them with my heart that wants to love your more." (*Claire Monestès, foundress of the Xavière*)

In 1609 based in London and still discerning her way forward Mary Ward was under pressure to enter the Carmelites. On this particular morning while brushing her hair "something very supernatural befell me ... I was abstracted out of my whole being and it was shown to me with clearness and inexpressible certainty, that I was not to be of the order of St. Teresa, but some other thing was determined for me, without all comparison more to the glory of God than my entrance into that holy religious order. I did not see what the assured good thing would be, but the glory to God which was to come through it, showed itself inexplicably and so abundantly as to fill my soul in such a way that I remained for a good space without feeling or hearing anything but the sound: GLORY, GLORY, GLORY. ... I found my heart full of love for this thing, accompanied by such glory that not yet can I comprehend what it is."

THE GRACE I SEEK

To experience myself as called by Jesus with others into a new community of friendship in the Lord that journeys with him through suffering to glory

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Mark 9:30-41, *as Jesus calls his own to humble service of each other, in vulnerability and powerlessness* OR
- Matthew 16:13-24, *the service of God's Reign passes through self-sacrifice rather than self-will* OR
- Matthew 10:1-14, *a model of pilgrimage in poverty for Ignatius and the First Companions*

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

Third Movement

Incarnation and Holy Family

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

With Jean-Pierre Médaille SJ, co-founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, gaze upon the Most Holy Trinity gazing upon the world. Notice the fullness of love of the Father, the total self-emptying of the Son, the desire of the Spirit to fill many souls. At the Incarnation, a new and created trinity comes into being: Jesus, Word made flesh, filled with zeal for souls; Mary ever-faithful to every inspiration of grace; and Joseph, filled with loving care for Mary, Jesus and every dear neighbour. The painting on the back of this page may help you (*The Uncreated and Created Trinities*, Sisters of Saint Joseph in Canada, Hamilton).

THE GRACE I SEEK

To know Jesus more intimately, who becomes human for us in a human family, that I may follow him more closely and love him more.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- The Contemplation on the Incarnation from the Spiritual Exercises, using the composition of place and Luke 1:26-38.
- Luke 2:1-20, noting how, for Luke, the birth itself restores right relationship among God, human beings, and all creation
- Luke 2:42-52, the finding in the temple, noting especially the manner in which the Holy Family traverses this time of crisis and potential conflict
- KEEP IN MIND that the Spirit may lead you into an Ignatian repetition of a meaningful experience

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.



Fourth Movement

Two Standards

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

Consider the chief of the enemy seated on a high throne, dominating everything. Consider how he summons many to scatter them to all parts of the world to sow hatred and division. They are to tempt people to covet riches (possessed by created goods) that they may more easily covet the empty honours of this world (possessed by the opinion of others) and then come to overweening pride (possessed by my own willfulness).
Consider Christ our Lord standing in a lowly place, his appearance beautiful and attractive. Consider how he gathers together so many persons to send them throughout the world to share the Good News, Consider the address he makes to these friends whom he sends on this enterprise, recommending to them to seek to help all, first by attracting them to the highest spiritual poverty (freedom before created goods), to a desire for insults and contempt (freedom before the opinion of others), and to a genuine humility (freedom before my own self-will).

THE GRACE I SEEK

A deeper knowledge of the deceits of the enemy and help to guard against them. Also, ask for a deep-felt knowledge of Jesus' strategy since he is "the way, the truth and the life," with a growing desire to imitate him by adopting his strategy and following the lead of his Spirit.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Matthew 4:1-11: in living through the temptations, Jesus learns the freedom to serve the Father alone
- Galatians 5:13-26, the fruits of the Spirit and works of the flesh
- Mary Ward's Vision of the Just Soul (*on the back of this page*) with its threefold path of freedom (from the slavery of self, with an entire disposition for all good works); sincerity (interior transparency such that we appear as we are); and justice (complete communion with God's will)
- Fr. Médaille's Maxims of Purity of Intention (*on the back of this page*)
- KEEP IN MIND the possibility of Ignatian repetition

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

VISION OF THE JUST SOUL



As she made the Spiritual Exercises in the fall of 1615, "God showed Mary a just soul in inexpressible beauty. All the virtues seemed to form in it a chain whereby it was not only cut off from everything earthly but was perfectly detached from self and united with God."

Mary Ward writes: "The felicity of this estate (forasmuch as I can express) was a singular freedom from all that could make one adhere to earthly things, with an entire application and apt disposition to all good works. Something also happened discovering the freedom that such a soul should have to refer all to God…. Works of justice, done in innocence, and that we be such as we appear, and appear such as we are, those things often since occurred to my mind with a liking for them."

As she reflected on this vision, she found herself asking "why this state of justice, and virtue of sincerity should appear to be so especially requisite as a ground of all those other virtues necessary to be exercised by those of the Institute, and it occurred that… being grounded in this, we should gain at God's hands true wisdom and the ability to perform all such other things as the perfection of this Institute demands of us."

MAXIMS OF PURITY OF INTENTION

4.4 Rejoice that God is glorified no matter who promotes his glory. It is the great mistake of some zealous persons to want to do everything themselves or through their associates, and to be unable to tolerate that others succeed in their undertakings and in the care they take to make God known and loved. Anyone who thinks this way is far from pure love of God and from true humility. Humility makes a person to be just as content and even more content, when others seem to be advancing God's glory more than she herself is doing, and more than she could do if she were engaged in those same holy works herself.

4.6 In all your works, be on your guard against seeking the satisfaction and consolation that accompanies the efforts of those who work for the advancement of God's glory and the salvation of the neighbours. Desire only that God be glorified and that others be instructed and brought to salvation and perfection. Do not stop to look for the satisfaction and pleasure that comes from seeing one's work succeed.

Fifth Movement

Partners in Christ's Mission

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

As you read and re-read the Scripture, become present to the place where Jesus and his friends are, its length and breadth, whether a village, a town or a deserted place, and so on. Is the day warm or cool, sunny or grey? Are there many people, or just a few? It may be helpful to notice if you are in the scene.

THE GRACE I SEEK

To experience myself as participating intimately in Christ's reconciling mission, as a member of a community built on spiritual conversation and apostolic discernment.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Mark 1:16-39, *as Jesus gathers friends and journeys with them*
- John 4:1-42, *as Jesus crosses boundaries and empowers the Samaritan woman to share in his proclamation of God's Reign*
- Luke 9:1-6 with verse 10, *noticing Jesus' desire to share in spiritual conversation with the twelve.*
- Matthew 16:13-20: *in a deserted place, Jesus draws the Twelve into deeper discernment*
- Consider the various formulae of Ignatian communities, drawing consolation and fruit from them (*on the back of this page*)
- KEEP IN MIND the possibility of Ignatian repetition

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

XAVIÈRE IDENTITY "*In Christo Jesu*"

As Xavières, missionaries of Christ Jesus, we are called, according to Claire Monestès's charism, to follow Christ in his mission: to gather up all things in himself and reconcile all human beings in his own Body through the Spirit's action to the Father's praise and glory…

It is our strong desire to forge links between the Church and those who are still far away from her. Thus, since our foundation, we have opted not to wear any religious habit so as more easily to go and meet people everywhere and live among them. Our religious vocation can, in principle, be lived in any social setting without any distinction of race, country, culture and religion. We are particularly concerned to adapt ourselves in response to changes in the world and to the calls of the Church.

"*Binding my daughters to the bringing to fullness of Christ's mystical body, is this not to give them what they need to live, work and die in joy, and this to the end of time?" (Claire Monestès)*

FORMULA OF THE INSTITUTE (SJ 1550)

…. He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the Word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments. Moreover, he should show him/herself ready to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.

FORMULA OF THE INSTITUTE (FCJ) 1826, updated 1985

…. Like Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, and like the holy women, messengers of the Good News, we are sent to proclaim the Truth, Jesus who is alive and lives among us, who is Son of God and Saviour of the world.

…. According to place and circumstance we may engage in whatever work contributes to the salvation of souls and in the manner which appears most conducive to the service and glory of God and the good of the neighbour.

We particularly devote ourselves to certain ministries confided to us by our foundress, 'the education of youth, especially the poor, the work of retreats and missions.'

Above all we are Companions of Jesus whose lives must reveal him to the world.

CLC CHARISM #8

Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures….

The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians. Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

Sixth Movement

"That they may be one as we are one"

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

The celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of our apostolic community life. We stand at the foot of the cross of Jesus uniting ourselves with the redemptive offering of the risen, glorious Christ that we may become a community of his faithful companions in spirit and in truth. (*Formula FCJ*)

This mission, lived in truth, makes of our lives a sacrifice of praise which, united to that of Christ, takes on all its density and value. The Eucharist, memorial of the new Covenant and sacrament of unity between God and humanity, is the foundation of our communal and apostolic life. It is our daily food. (*Constitutions XMCJ*)

THE GRACE I SEEK

To experience myself as rooted in a union of mind and heart with and in Christ, living *community as mission* with others.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Matthew 26:20-30 OR Luke 22:14-27
- John 17:20-24
- John 13:34-35
- Consider Decree 11.12 of GC32, Decree 2.19 of GC35, and the Eucharistic Letter of Father Médaille (*on the back of this page*), noting the link between community and mission
- KEEP IN MIND the possibility of Ignatian repetition

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

EXCERPT FROM THE EUCHARISTIC LETTER (CSJ)

…. Moreover, my dear daughter, the Holy Sacrament is a mystery of union, and it brings this very union about. This Eucharistic Jesus unites all creatures to himself and to God his Father, and – think of the title *communion* – he unites all the faithful to one another in a common union. Of this union Jesus speaks in profoundly moving terms when he asks his Father that all may be one, that they may be perfectly one in him and in God his Father, just as the Father and he are but one.

There, my dear daughter, is the end of our totally selfless Congregation. It is wholly directed toward the achievement of this total double union:

- Of ourselves and the dear neighbour with God,
- Of ourselves with all others, whoever they may be,
- Of all others, among themselves and with us,
- But all in Jesus and in God his Father

…. You will note that I have called this double union total. By this word I mean to express all the perfection that can be found in the reality and practice of love of God and love of the dear neighbour.

GC32, DECREE 11: UNION OF MINDS AND HEARTS

12. …. Every Jesuit community is a faith community, and it is in the Eucharist that those who believe in Christ come together to celebrate their common faith. Our participation at the same table in the Body and Blood of Christ, more than anything else, makes us one companionship totally dedicated to Christ's mission in the world.

GC35, DECREE 2: A FIRE THAT KINDLES OTHER FIRES

19. …. Our life together testifies to our friendship in the Lord, a sharing of faith and life together, above all in the celebration of the Eucharist. Following Jesus together acts as a pointer to the disciples *en mouvement* with their Lord. Jesuit identity and Jesuit mission are linked by community; indeed, identity, community, and mission are a kind of triptych shedding light on how our companionship is best understood. This companionship shows how people different in background and diverse in talent can live together as true "friends in the Lord." Jesuit identity is relational; it grows in and through our diversities of culture, nationalities, and languages, enriching and challenging us. This is a process that we enter upon as we join the Society, and we grow in it every day….

Seventh Movement
"I thirst"

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

As you read and re-read the Scripture, become present by your imagination to the people and places of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. See yourself at the foot of the Cross with the faithful women and John the Beloved Disciple.

THE GRACE I SEEK

To know Jesus more intimately as he suffers with the persecuted and makes friends of enemies, that I may be united to him in his compassion for all.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- John 13:1-17
- Luke 23:7-12: *already in his Passion, Jesus makes friends of enemies!*
- John 19:16-37
- Philippians 2:6-11
- Elements of the spiritual experience of Marie Madeleine d'Houët FCJ, as she offers herself to satisfy her Lord's thirst for the salvation of souls (*on the back of this page*)
- #101-102 of the General Examen of the Ignatian Constitutions
- KEEP IN MIND the possibility of Ignatian repetition

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

The Spiritual Experience of Marie Madeleine d'Houët FCJ

June 13, 1817: *Feast of the Sacred Heart*
"Sometime later, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, I was at the convent of the Sacred Heart, waiting for Mass. I was reflecting on the happiness of those who belong entirely to God and whose only occupation is to love Him and spend time with Him in prayer. I regretted that God had not called me to Carmel. Suddenly, I distinctly heard a voice from the crucifix on the altar that said, 'I thirst.' These words moved me deeply. I knelt in adoration and offered myself to God, with my whole heart, for all that he would ask of me." (*Memoir* of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, Foundress of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus).

1818
"Now I understand! My name is Madeleine; I wish to be like my patron saint who loved Jesus her master so truly that she looked after his needs and accompanied him in his travels, even to the foot of the cross with the other Holy Women who did not, like the apostles, abandon him, but proved to be his Faithful Companions." (*Memoir* of Fr. Ferdinand Jeantier, SJ 1860)

General Examen of the Ignatian Constitutions (SJ – IBVM/CJ – FCJ)

[101] It is likewise very important to bring to the attention of those who are being examined, emphasizing it and giving it great weight in the sight of our Creator and Lord, to how great a degree it helps and profits in the spiritual life to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces, and to accept and desire with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. Just as those of the world who follow the world love and seek with such great diligence honors, fame, and esteem for a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who proceed spiritually and truly follow Christ our Lord love and intensely desire everything opposite. That is to say, they desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him, to such an extent that where there would be no offense to his Divine Majesty and no imputation of sin to the neighbor, they desire to suffer injuries, false accusations, and affronts, and to be held and esteemed as fools (but without their giving any occasion for this), because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, by putting on his garb and uniform, since it was for our spiritual profit that he clothed himself as he did. For he gave us an example that in all things possible to us we might seek, with the aid of his grace, to imitate and follow him, since he is the way which leads all to life. Therefore, candidates should be asked whether they find themselves with such desires, which are so salutary and fruitful for the perfection of their soul.
[102] Where through human weakness and personal misery candidates do not experience in themselves such ardent desires in our Lord, they should be asked whether they have any desires to experience them. If they answer affirmatively that they do wish to have such holy desires, then, so that they may the better reach them in fact, they should be questioned further: Are they determined and ready to accept and suffer with patience, with the help of God's grace, any such injuries, mockeries, and affronts entailed by the wearing of this uniform of Christ our Lord, and any other affronts offered them, whether by someone inside the house or the Society (where they desire to obey, live humbly, and gain eternal life) or outside it by any persons whatsoever on earth, returning them not evil for evil but good for evil?

Eighth Movement
"The whole group of believers were of one heart and mind"

PREPARATORY PRAYER as usual

COMPOSITION OF PLACE

As you read and re-read the Scripture, become present by your imagination to the people and places of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Become present to the radical joy of Easter at work in the early Christian community, gathering them together and sending them out on a "reverse pilgrimage" from Jerusalem to the nations.

THE GRACE I SEEK

To share in the joy of the Risen Jesus, so as to share that joy with others as a community of love sent on mission.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- John 20:11-18
- Luke 24:13-35
- Matthew 28:16-20
- Acts 2:41-47 and 4:32-35
- *Contemplatio ad amorem* (Spiritual Exercises #230) with the commentary of Claire Monestès XMCJ and Michael Buckley SJ (*on the back of this page*)
- KEEP IN MIND the possibility of Ignatian repetition

DIALOGUE (COLLOQUY)

I speak with the Lord about my desires, and I listen to him, in a conversation friend to friend.

REVIEW

After the time of prayer has come to an end, I note those essential elements I wish to bring to spiritual conversation with my director or my group.

Contemplatio ad Amorem

Love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words.

Love consists in a mutual sharing of goods, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses, or something of that which he has or is able to give; and vice versa the beloved shares with the lover… Thus, one always gives to the other.

[*At this point, a review of the graces of the retreat and the blessings of Ignatian community might be appropriate*]

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and finally, how much, as far as he can, the same Lord desires to give himself to me according to his divine decrees.

Then I will reflect on myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the divine majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it.

From the October 1920 Retreat Notes of Claire Monestès

Spirit of joy of the fourth week. There is a common element to abnegation of self and to joy, it is self-forgetfulness. Is it my resurrection that I rejoice over? No, it is because of the resurrection of Jesus in my soul, because of his glory, because of his joy of heaven…. This retreat ends as it began. My soul is made for the praise and glory of God and by this means to obtain possession of God…. Heaven! It is to love in peace…. I know that all this is beyond my courage, but nothing is beyond his grace, and I trust that I will accomplish his will to the full… To have a spirit turned to praise at all times. To praise God in all things and in all people.

Memento of Claire Monestès

To not experience joy is possible. To not possess joy in the Xavière, that is impossible. In the people of God where I am one with Christ, the love of Christ presses me on: all is joy.

Michael Buckley SJ: *Mission in Companionship* (Studies, 1979)

What Ignatius wanted for his men was communion, a unity among themselves by a few simplicities of community life when together and by the frequent exchange of letters while apart. The foundation of this communion was not a multitude of common practices, but their union within an intense love of God…. It is the explicit expression of what is foundational of intercommunion and community within the Society of Jesus: a familiar love of God – sharing in this with one another, they share deeply in the values and hopes of one another's lives.

…. The fundamental issue is not whether men will live together, but how; not whether they will have made some common commitments, but whether they will routinely share them. The question of Jesuits living together is essentially a question of their daily communion. Jesuit life exists only through and in the communion of these men among themselves. It does not finally matter if a Jesuit's mission takes him away or if he lives in the same residence with others. The same telling question is critical for both: What is the level and intensity of fraternal communion in his life? …. Communion or communication is the experience that constitutes a Jesuit community. This doctrine reaches back to the two prenotes on the Contemplation to Attain Love. The first indicates that love is shown in actions, and the second specifies those actions as a *comunicación*.

A community-oriented examen

I take a moment to quiet myself. I become aware of my body, my breathing, the flow of consciousness in my mind. I strive to open myself to the loving presence of the Trinity, in and all around me. I ask the Holy Spirit to guide my prayer.

- I bring before the Lord a specific community I want to pray upon and to which I belong: my family, team at work, religious community, parish, sports team…

- In which instances of the life of this community have I experienced a deep sense of communion? What did it feel like? What contributed to this? How have these experiences nurtured me? What desires do they foster in me? I take the time to ponder and to give thanks for these moments.

- When was this community prevented from being a place of communion and harmony? How did it feel? What was happening? Why was it the case? How did I feel drawn to react? What is perhaps still in need of healing, reconciliation? I consider these situations and offer them to the Lord's mercy.

- As I reflect further, what would help this community grow towards a greater unity of mind and hearts? How can this community further the spread of joy and peace around? What inner attitudes of Christ am I - and are we - called to embrace towards this goal? What are some new ways of doing things that we could experiment?

I thank God for what the Spirit has shown me, and I ask for God's continuing grace and guidance to be an instrument of communion in this community and in the world.



…and Jesus said to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room,
"*Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.*" (Mark 16:15)