



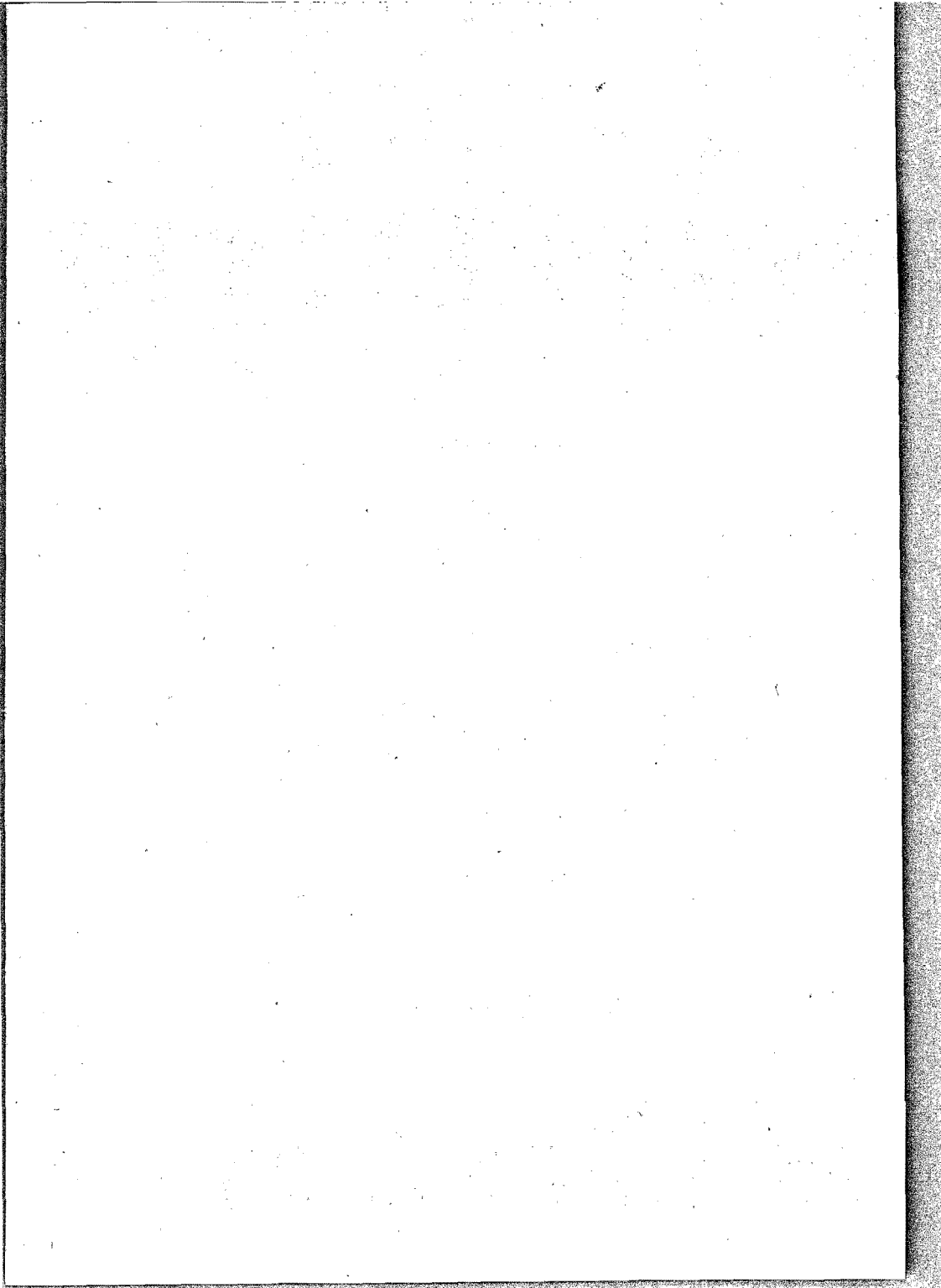
PROGRESSIO

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND CLC FORMATION

Patrick O'Sullivan S. J.

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FOREWORD

Hilaire Belloc once said of Spring, as violets bloom suddenly at her feet, "She blesses us with surprises." I experienced a similar sense of wonder and joy as I read through this Supplement of PROGRESSIO.

Since the author has spent more than thirty-three years in the Society of Jesus, during six of which he served as Provincial for the Jesuits of Australia, I had been anticipating the usual fare: a "meat-and-potatoes" commentary on the Spiritual Exercises, garnished with a correlation between the Exercises and CLC formation. No such thing. Thank God! To my delight I found that I had in hand a work of a totally different genre.

For the past five years, Father Patrick O'Sullivan, in his capacity as vice-ecclesiastical assistant of the CLC's at the world level, has been travelling far and wide, explaining and fostering the Ignatian spirit that underpins and nourishes the vitality of the CLC communities. Those who benefited from his oral presentations have prevailed upon him to share with a wider public the reflections and perspectives that have proven so effective with his audiences. In this Supplement he gives us a sampling of them, retaining much of the original wit and sparkle of the oral sessions.

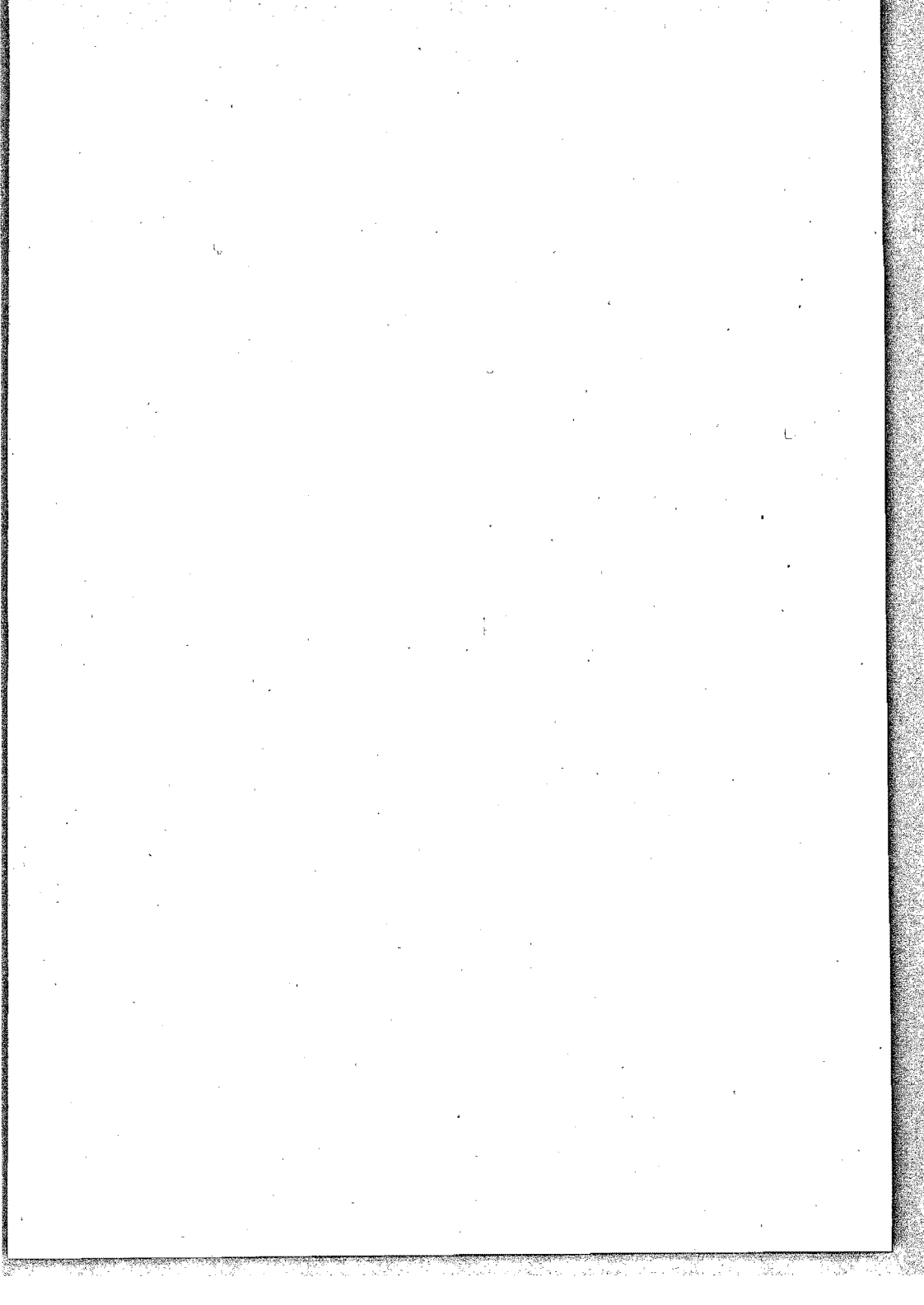
Father O'Sullivan is obviously one who has lived and loved the Spiritual Exercises. He knows them thoroughly and presumes that his readers will have a similar familiarity with them. But his aim is not to impress us with the depth or originality of his own insights; nor does he intend his remarks to be normative for others. Rather, his observations and imagery are provocatively seminal. It is obvious that the author, along with Ignatius of Loyola, believes that the deepest delight and most lasting consolation flow from personal discoveries rather than from elaborate expositions by another. Accordingly, in effect he is extending to us an invitation: each of us is to reflect upon our own personal experience. As we do so, with a growing sense of wonder we

may discover therein numerous instances of how God has been communicating Himself to us, in a manner corresponding to what Ignatius Himself must have experienced. The mystery of God showering His blessings on His creatures is common to all, and yet it is inexhaustibly diversified and personal. I, for example, had to take all what the author had to say about "marriage" as an analogy of God's relationship with us, and transpose it into the key of "friendship", since I have more experience with friendship than with marriage! It was well worth the effort.

As the mysterious voice said to Saint Augustine, "Tolle, lege!" Take up the book and read.

Dominic Maruca S.J.

I
THE PATTERN OF THE EXERCISES



THE PATTERN OF THE EXERCISES

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are the record of one man's progressive journey into the mystery of Salvation, as revealed in Jesus; so they record the various stages of a journey in faith. St. Ignatius (still a layman!) found that this record of his own experiences, and what he learnt in the process and through further reflection, 'resonated' with the lives of many others. As a result, he used his own experiences, and his insights, to tap the growth in faith of his retreatants, to help them express this, and then to build on the experience revealed in this way. Consequently, the Spiritual Exercises are not a program to be imposed, but rather an instrument for touching the faith-life of a person that is already there, and for fostering its growth. Seen in this light, Ignatian spirituality is not restricted to any particular social class; on the contrary, it belongs to the Church and is available for anyone who has come to the realisation that belief in Jesus is a life-giving experience - however they express it - and want to grow closer to Him.

What does it mean to grow in Faith? Is there a recognised pattern for this growth? To grow in Faith means to grow in a personal relationship with Christ (and so the Father, the Spirit and Their People); and the pattern for this growth is the same as the pattern that occurs in the growth and unfolding of a relationship between two people. Let us take the case of two people who meet, fall in love and get married.

ATTITUDES AND DISPOSITIONS

First of all, for two people to be able to begin a personal relationship, at any depth, certain attitudes or dispositions are necessary - without these attitudes or dispositions, nothing of any note can happen between them. What are some of these attitudes, dispositions?

a) A sense of mystery, a sense of wonder - a realisation on the person's part that he or she does not have all the answers. In addition, the person realises that he or she has feelings and is more or less at home with this realisation.

b) A sense of reverence or respect. No relationship has any future where there is no trace of mutual respect; without respect, people only relate on the level of mutual convenience and simply use one another.

c) Generosity is essential for any relationship to grow. If I only see the world and other people in terms of myself, my world will grow smaller and smaller, and eventually I will end up being the only person who lives in my world: "*Unless the seed... dies it remains alone.*"

d) The capacity to persevere in something we take on is also very important in personal relationships. Without a sense of commitment - personal investment and responsibility - no relationship can develop.

e) Finally, an attitude of openness is very necessary. If my mind is closed to what another person has to say, the chances are my heart will follow suit. If I cannot really listen to what another person says, I am not accepting that person. If I am full of prejudices, I may find someone to reinforce my fears, but the relationship will be a loveless one - based on mutual fears.

Falling in love - a positive experience of life

If two people have, in some degree, the attitudes and dispositions we have just been describing, they are capable of entering into a deep relationship, and may even fall in love.

When two people fall in love, their lives are filled with a sense of completion and well-being and there is magic in the air. Part of the 'chemistry' of falling in love is that we meet someone who, in a radical way, awakens and fulfills our emotional needs; so we feel life is good - "God's in His heaven - all's right with the world", to coin a phrase.

The Moment of Truth

If a couple fall in love and get married, it is only a question of time before the "magic" in their relationship changes. When two people are in love, each fulfills the emotional needs of the other, and each experiences the other as fulfilling his or her emotional needs. But once these emotional needs have been met, over a period of time, each begins to experience the other in a more realistic way - not as an extension of him or herself, but as the person really is. Each person becomes more aware of the limitations of the other and is also very much aware of revealing his or her own limitations. This is the moment of truth when we touch the limitations of others and become aware of our own limitations. Now, if there has been no real loving underneath the "falling in love", this moment of truth can spell the end of the relationship. But if the "falling in love" has been based on real loving, this moment of truth can be a very rich moment, where people experience real forgiveness - they not only excuse one another, they forgive one another; they offer forgiveness and are prepared to accept forgiveness.

Renewed self-giving

In acknowledging and accepting their own frailty and the frailty of the other, a new freedom dawns, love deepens and the relationship grows. On the basis of this new discovery of one another, their desire to give more and to grow together blossoms.

Growing intimacy

When a couple passes through the crisis of the moment of truth, they come to know each other in a new way. Fears are lessened, a sense of wonder and gratitude deepens and they continually surprise one another with new discoveries about each other.

Reading the presence of the other

As a couple grow together in their relationship, one marked effect that develops is the sensitivity each develops to the other's moods and feelings. For example, a wife might be able to 'read' what sort of a day her husband has had just by the way he opens the door and walks in; or a husband might immediately 'read' how things have gone with his wife during the day the moment he sees her and how her hair is arranged. In other words as a couple grows together in love, each can intuitively read the presence of the other and how he or she is.

A growing identification

a) As the capacity for loving grows, so does the capacity for suffering and compassion - "Rain in your heart, and I have no umbrella, but may I walk beside you?" The wife's suffering becomes the suffering of the husband, and vice-versa.

b) What also grows is the capacity for joy and hope and "family pride", in the good sense. A husband's joys and successes are the joys and successes of his wife, and the reverse is true.

This whole pattern of growing in a relationship - personal growth - is cyclic, rather than linear. In other words, people do not pass through one stage, once and for all, but rather they continually pass through the various stages, each new time at a greater depth.

The Pattern of the Exercises

This pattern of growth that we have just described is exactly the same pattern of growth that is outlined in the Exercises.

ATTITUDES, DISPOSITIONS: THE ANNOTATIONS

In the book of the Exercises, St. Ignatius has a series of introductory remarks - called Annotations - which are mainly for the benefit of the person directing the Exercises. In these introductory remarks, St. Ignatius highlights certain attitudes or dispositions which the retreatant should have, to a certain extent, if he or she is to benefit from the experience of the Exercises. These are the attitudes, dispositions we have already referred to: a sense of mystery, as opposed to an over-intellectual approach to life that is more concerned with solving problems than surrendering to mystery - "... it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth" (Annotation 2); the capacity to be aware of and accept our feelings and emotions - "When the one who is giving the Exercises perceives that the exercitant is not affected by any spiritual experiences such as consolations or desolations, and that he is not troubled by different spirits, he ought to ply him with questions about the exercises..." (6) and "...it will be very helpful if the one giving the Exercises is kept faithfully informed about the various disturbances and thoughts caused by the action of different spirits" (17); a sense of reverence - "... we observe that when in acts of the will we address God our Lord or His saints either vocally or mentally, greater reverence is required on our part than when we use the intellect in reasoning" (3); generosity - "It will be very profitable for the one who is to go through the Exercises to enter upon them with magnanimity and generosity toward his Creator and Lord..." (5); perseverance - "... the exercitant must always take care that he is satisfied in the consciousness of having persevered in the exercise for a full hour..." (12); and finally, openness - "To assure better co-operation between the one who is giving the Exercises and the exercitant, and more beneficial results for both, it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false" (22).

FALLING IN LOVE - A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE:
THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION,
A POSITIVE FAITH-VISION OF LIFE, AS A GIFT

For the process of the Exercises to begin, the person must have a basically positive experience of life and a faith-vision of creation. Without such an experience behind him or her, it could be quite destructive for a person to enter into the process of the Exercises. It is one thing to be sorrowing and suffering, but it is quite another thing to experience life only as burden and a threat, never as a promise and a gift. Consequently, if all a person's experience and vision of life can amount to is - "Everything I like is either illegal, immoral or fattening", then that would be a sign that they are not quite ready to begin the Exercises, as the basic truth of the Principle and Foundation has not yet been experienced.

As well as the Salvation History recorded in the Scriptures, and the Salvation History unfolding in and through the life of the People of God, each one of us has his or her own Salvation History. Our Faith tells us that the Trinity has created us and called us in love to be sons and daughters of the Father, brothers and sisters in Christ, through the Spirit. All these are personal titles, which means that the Father has touched me personally: He has touched me personally and continually invites me to be fully myself, in Him, for His People. His will for me is not something imposed from the 'outside', that I must measure up to; rather, it is my own authentic growth and development in Him, for His People. But how can I grow in this way if I do not know His touch? His voice? If I am not really convinced He has touched me? So, my life of faith - I - will grow to the extent that I realise, perhaps in a fumbling sort of way, that the Father has touched me; and I recognise His touch; and I want it more and more. This, basically, is the grace of the Principle and Foundation; it sets a person up for life, just as falling in love sets two people up for marriage.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH: SIN - THE FIRST WEEK OF THE EXERCISES

Once the basic experience expressed in the Principle and Foundation is brought to light, and prayed over, then the movement of the Exercises begins. The form this movement quite often takes is that people pass from the realisation of all they have been given by the Father to the realisation of how poorly they have responded to the Father's love - they become conscious of sin.

There are many things to be said about sin which, like love, is a mystery; without in any way minimising the importance of childhood experiences, the evil in our hearts remains a mystery and can never be explained away in terms of bad toilet-training. Interestingly enough, one of the first things St. Ignatius does is to draw our attention to the sheer irrationality - and so mystery - of sin, through a consideration of the sin of the Angels. This was brought home to me very clearly many years ago when I was a university chaplain, and in the course of a discussion on sin, one of the students said - "I simply cannot accept the story of the sin of the Angels. Either they did not know what they were doing, in which case God took advantage of them and punished them unjustly; or they did really know what they were doing - but what they chose just does not make sense". The only answer I could think of at the time - "Yes, that sort of thing does give sin a bad name", proved totally inadequate. Because the only real answer is - "They did know what they were doing, and, yes, it doesn't make sense... there is absolutely nothing to be said for sin... that is why the Father is so against it". Sin, in its essence, is a mystery; it is denying a life-giving truth we have experienced - not just a truth we have been told about, but a truth we have experienced; it is looking for life where, in our hearts, we know life is not to be found.

St. Ignatius also dwells on the fact that sin is a social event, with physical effects, but all the time the focus for our prayer is not so much ourself and our sin as the person of Christ; it is only by looking intently at Christ that we can become aware of the disorder of our actions and the sin in our lives. Just as in the relationship of a married couple, so in our relationship with Christ - the admission of our own sin is a very healthy and freeing experience. It is a real moment of truth, and as Carl Rogers says - "The facts are always friendly". It is a fact of life that

each of us is sinful and it is also a fact of life that if we do not acknowledge and accept our own sins and limitations, we project them onto other people and fiercely condemn in them what we are too fearful to acknowledge in ourselves. It is also a fact of life that if we never know repentance, we will become victims of remorse. Remorse ties us to the past; it is a sign of our inability to accept something we have done, and so we keep going back to it, looking at it from all sorts of different angles, to see if what we did was really as bad as we fear it was. It is an extremely negative experience, with no future - only a haunting past. Repentance, on the other hand, is a very positive experience that frees us from our past and looks to the future. When we repent, we first of all accept what we have done and in accepting it, we begin to be free of it. Through sorrowing over what we have done, we reestablish the basic orientation of our life and so we look to the future, with hope. A graphic illustration of the difference between remorse and repentance is the difference between Judas and Peter. Judas could not accept what he had done and so he could not be sorry for what he had done - he could only be sorry for himself. Peter saw clearly what he had done and accepted it with no reservations - so he broke down and cried, but the tears were not for himself; they were for his Friend whom he had denied. Peter was forgiven; Judas could never forgive himself.

RENEWED SELF-GIVING: THE KINGDOM

The experience of sin in the Exercises ends with the person - a sinner but loved and forgiven - desiring to offer himself or herself anew, in the service of the Kingdom.

Just as in a marriage relationship this experience has overtones of falling in love again, so in the Exercises the grace of the Principle and Foundation (which in one way or another runs through all the weeks of the Exercises) very much underlies this offering of oneself to the Kingdom. For unless I have a positive faith-vision, which includes a belief in myself, I will not offer myself to the Lord, as I will not believe I have anything to offer. And unless I have a realisation of my own worth, I will not be able to deny myself and let-go in the Lord's service as I will not be convinced that there is anything to let-go of.

A GROWING INTIMACY: "TO SEE THEE MORE CLEARLY,
LOVE THEE MORE DEARLY, FOLLOW THEE MORE NEARLY..."

- THE SECOND WEEK OF THE EXERCISES

If we want to serve in the Kingdom, we must know Christ, His values, His mind - "*let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...*" (Phil.2/5). So the Second Week of the Exercises is devoted to deepening our intimacy with Christ, through praying over His life, the things He did, how He did them, what choices He made - in a word, what were the values of Christ. A value is a life-giving truth; to get to know the values of Christ is to see where He drew His life from - in the realisation that we, too, must draw our life from the same Source; otherwise we have no place in the Kingdom.

This growing intimacy with Christ highlights an important aspect of Ignatian spirituality, namely it is an integrated spirituality that touches and involves every aspect of our lives. Already we may have noticed in the First Week the blending of faith and feelings as we pray for tears, shame, confusion, abhorrence for our sins - not contrived feelings but very real feelings, asked for again and again in the context of Faith. Here the emphasis is different. Just as in a marriage relationship, intimacy grows and the relationship deepens the more each person reveals his or her heart to the other, so our relationship with Christ grows as He gradually becomes the Lord of every corner of our heart, every aspect of our life.

Another aspect of Ignatian spirituality that this Week of the Exercises highlights is what we might call an uncommon reverence for persons, first and foremost the person of Christ. In the meditation on the Nativity we read - "*The first point will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence*". Other spiritualities might treat this scene differently - for example, they might encourage us to pick up the Child and hold Him with great reverence and love; and that is a beautiful way of praying the scene. But Ignatius' way of showing reverence as he envisages the scene is quite different, but just as engaging - here is his King, and it was unthinkable to Ignatius that his King would be born without a maid to look after Him and His Mother!

READING THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER: DISCERNMENT

As a marriage grows in the way we have been describing, the couple develop an intuitive awareness of the moods and feelings of each other - of how each one is present to the other at any particular moment. This intuitive awareness of the presence of the other, which flows from a deep loving, can be compared with what is called "discernment" in Ignatian spirituality. For to "discern" is nothing more than to read the presence of the Lord in my life, and how He is present to me - in other words, to recognise His invitations at any particular moment of my life. As we have said, in a marriage this 'reading' is the fruit of selflessness and love, and in our relationship with Christ, exactly the same holds true. I will never be able to discern the Lord's voice unless there is love and selflessness in my heart; for without this love and selflessness, the only voices I will hear will be the voices of my own needs and desires. It is very difficult for the Lord to make Himself heard if the only voice I listen to is the voice of my own self-indulgence.

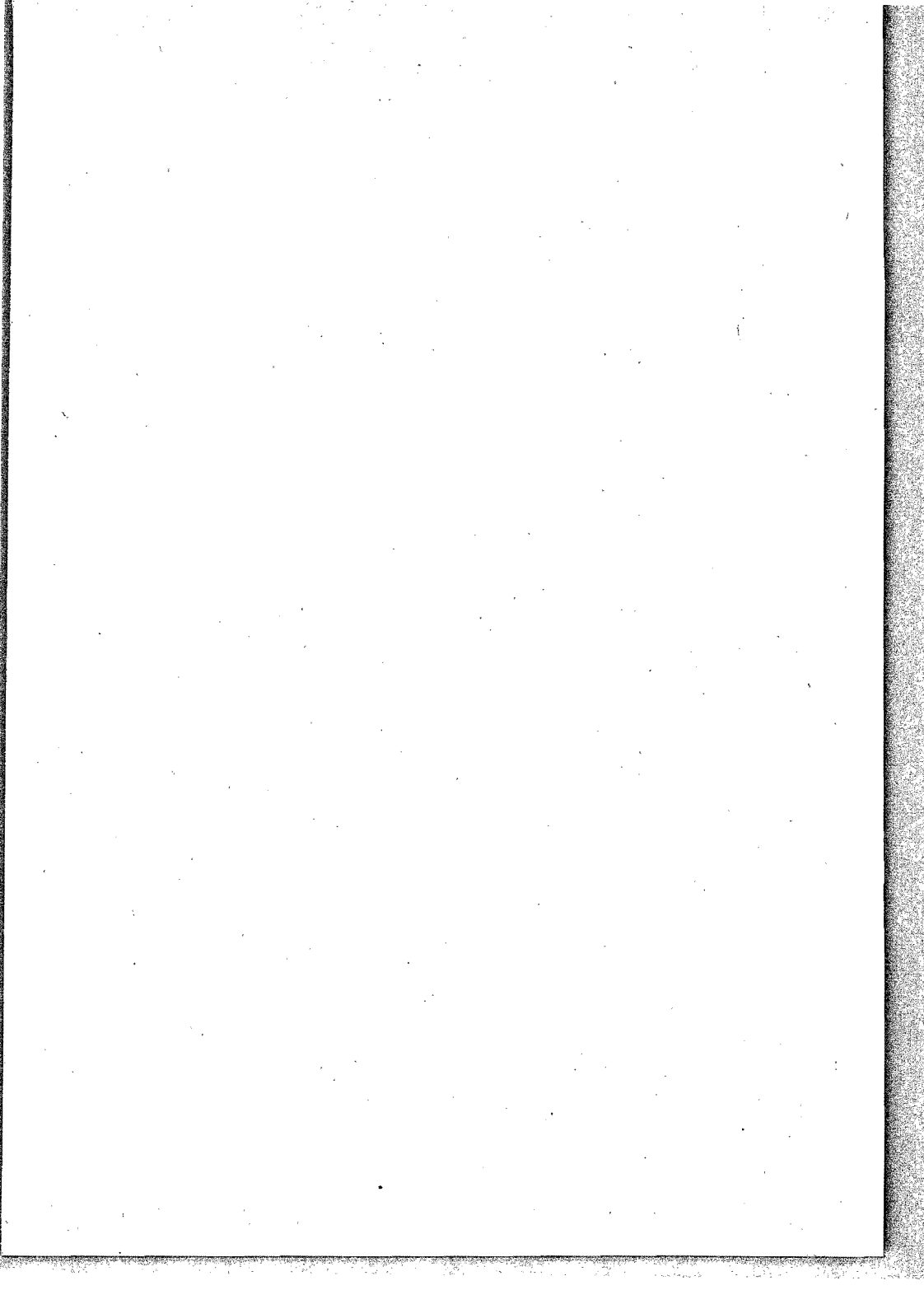
A GROWING IDENTIFICATION: THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION

- THIRD AND FOURTH WEEKS

a) Again, just as in a marriage, as we have said, the wife's suffering becomes the suffering of the husband, and vice-versa, so our growing relationship with Christ leads us to com-passion - not pity, compassion. When we pity, we stand apart from the person we are pitying, but when there is compassion in our hearts, there is a certain identification with the person who is suffering. And the reverse is also true - when we are identified with anyone, their suffering becomes our suffering. So, in the Exercises, we pray to identify with Christ in His Passion. This brings us ever more closer to Christ, to those who are suffering, and deepens our own conversion of heart.

b) As the capacity to suffer with Christ grows, so does our capacity to believe in His victory and to reverence and serve Him as the Lord of History. Through Christ's death and resurrection, literally "*All things hang together in Him*" (Cols 1/17). The truths of our faith which, as Rahner says, are nothing more than "*The articulation and expression of our own deepest human experiences*", acknowledge this Real Presence in every human situation and reveal to us how we can experience it.

II
FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE EXERCISES



MARY

The Role of Mary in the Exercises

Mary plays a significant role in the experience of the Exercises, as is evident from her presence in the First Week when we pray the Triple Colloquy (63). She is also prominent in the Second Week, not only in the Gospel scenes St. Ignatius suggests we meditate on, but also in the Triple Colloquy of the Two Standards (147). Again, we consider "*the desolation of our Lady, her great sorrow and weariness*" in the Third Week. However, it is in the Fourth Week that St. Ignatius reveals the privileged place that Mary holds in his own heart and so in his spirituality, when the first meditation he proposes on the Risen Lord is His appearing to His Mother (219). St. Ignatius' comment on this scene is almost amusing in its curt dismissal of any possible challenge to the contrary - "*Though this is not mentioned explicitly in the Scripture it must be considered as stated when Scripture says that He appeared to many others. For Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written, 'Are you also without understanding?'*" (299).

It would seem that this is a very deep insight of St. Ignatius in proposing Mary as the first witness of the Resurrection. Christ can only dwell in our hearts if we enter into His Paschal Mystery, and Mary is a very important element in our understanding of the Paschal Mystery. For example, in the very moving story of Job in the Old Testament, we have a good man trying to understand the problem of suffering - especially the suffering of the just. But the author can go just so far in grappling with this great mystery. Job loses everything, his possessions, his family, his health, his friends. And the end of the story is that his former prosperity is finally restored. But that has rather a hollow ring - the good old days are brought back and everything is just as it used to be! That is where the story falters. On the other hand, the Paschal Mystery is a completely different story. There is the suffering of the just, loss, desolation, and then the Resurrection. But the Resurrection is not a return to the good old days - it is an invitation to and an experience of a completely new way of living. This comes through very strongly in the Gospel of

Luke, for example. There we have the fond memories - Mary's memories - of the times when Jesus walked the earth; but there is no wistfulness, not the slightest suggestion of yearning for the good old days. And why not? Because there was an intense awareness, in the heart of Mary, of the new and life-giving presence of her Risen Lord in her own heart and in the hearts of His followers. In other words, part of the witness, the reality of Mary for us is that in our own loss and suffering, we do not look for a restoration - we believe in Resurrection. Every loss, every diminishment is a sharing in the Paschal Mystery - an invitation to let go, as Mary did, and experience something of the new life in Jesus that the Father is offering us.

Mary - Model for Mission in the CLC's

Number 8 of the General Principles states: "*Since the spirituality of our groups is centred on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ; she is the image of our own collaboration in His mission. Mary's cooperation with her Son began with her 'fiat' in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation.*"

a) In the Annunciation scene, what appears most strikingly is Mary's complete availability for the Father's mission. In an instant, all her own plans are changed, her life is turned upside down and she risks all - her "good name", the love of Joseph whom she also loved dearly - in her unconditional surrender to the Father's will. A new age in the world's history dawns because one young Jewish girl entrusts herself completely into the Father's hands and accepts His invitation.

b) In the scene of the Visitation, where Mary prays her Magnificat, we are given further insights into Mary as the model for mission.

1. "*My soul glorifies the lord*": God's glory is revealed through His saving His People. The glory of God is the "Liberation of the whole man and all men", for "the glory of God is man fully alive".

2. *"My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"*: This reminds us that the basis for our hope - in our mission - is that the victory has been won, because God is our Saviour. Mary also reminds us that there is only one Messiah: through believing in her Son we are delivered from false messiahs and false hopes.
3. *"He looks on His servant in her lowliness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed"*: Like Mary we acknowledge the gifts the Lord has given us and are grateful for them, because we can be effective servants in the Kingdom, for His People.
4. *"The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy is His name!"*: We, too, are to realise that if we rely on the Lord and His power, nothing is impossible - we can "Dream the Impossible Dream".
5. *"His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear Him"*: We are to have a sense of Salvation History and of the Lord's fidelity to His promises. Perhaps what the world needs most today is the experience of fidelity - people who are committed and are faithful to their word. It is very difficult to believe in a faithful God if we see no faithful people. The Lord is a faithful lover: in His Kingdom, we can be no less.
6. *"He puts forth His arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted. He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly"*: Here we are reminded to put on the mind of Christ, who emptied Himself, and was raised up by the Father as the Lord of History. If we are to work in building up the Kingdom, the only values that 'work' are the values of Christ (cf. Sp. Ex. 136 - The Meditation on the Two Standards).
7. *"He fills the starving with good things, send the rich away empty"*: We can see here a call to Justice - to be like God our Father who has a preference for the poor.
8. *"He protects Israel, His servant, remembering His mercy, the mercy promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his sons forever"*: God's promises can never fail. Some years ago when Dr. Frank Sheed (the English publisher) was visiting Australia, in a press interview he was asked - "Are you optimistic about the future of the Catholic Church?" Dr. Sheed replied - "I have no grounds for optimism, but every reason to hope". Christian hope goes much

deeper than optimism; it is rooted in the Father's fidelity to His promises - His loving mercy.

(Note: Though the Magnificat was most likely composed by the early Church, it nevertheless authentically reflects the mind and heart of Mary, - especially since we see here the early Church giving Mary one of her earliest titles, "Mother of the Lord", which really means. "Mother of the Reigning King".)

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE EXERCISES

Though the Exercises are geared to a radical conversion of heart on the personal level, the context in which this is set is a social, not an individualistic one. This context is set very clearly in the First Week where we begin with the sin of the Angels which is nothing less than a cosmic event. Then follows the sin of our First Parents and "the great corruption which came upon the human race"(51). In number 57 St. Ignatius tells us to "consider all the corruption and loathsomeness of my body". Initially this may sound rather off-putting and full of the spirit of Manichee; however, St. Ignatius is alerting us to a very important insight, namely there are physical effects of sin. In the next sentence (57) this is put even more strongly - "I will consider myself as a source of corruption and contagion from which has issued countless sins and evils and the most offensive poison". Grim words! but the reality is even more grim - the fact is that our personal sins do not stop with us; they become imbedded in our social structures which can oppress and even destroy others.

In the meditation on the Kingdom, the social dimension of our following of Christ is put quite explicitly - "It is my will to conquer the whole world and all my enemies, and thus enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labour with me..."(95). We meet the same world vision in the contemplation on the Incarnation - "...the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse or circuit of all the earth, filled with human beings"(102). We too are invited "to see the great extent of the surface of the earth, inhabited by so many different peoples..."(103).

It is quite clear, then, that the social dimension is very strongly in the Exercises, especially in the meditations on sin and the Kingdom - injustice and mission.

CHRIST AND CREATION - A BASIS FOR SOCIAL ACTION

a) The world is a unity - a 'global village'. On the mere physical level, we could never count the number of people who are involved in our life at any given moment during the day - they are the people who made each item of clothing we are wearing, grew and marketed the food we last ate, made our watch, our typewriter, writing-paper, the chair we sit on, the building we work in... the list is endless and far-reaching.

b) This involvement of so many people in our lives does not bring about the unity of creation. Rather, because creation is basically one - coming forth from the one creative act of God - we can interact with countless others and experience this unity.

A number of years ago when Father Borelli (made famous through Morris West's book about him - "Children of the Sun") was visiting Australia, he was invited to give a lunch-time talk at the University of Melbourne. The invitation came through the Catholic society at the University, and so Fr. Borelli presumed that his audience was Catholic, and took as his subject "the Mystical Body of Christ". But as the talk progressed, Fr. Borelli suddenly realised that he was talking to a mixed audience, so he deftly switched his theme to the brotherhood of man, and the unity of all creation. It was a very hot day, and at one stage, to illustrate his point Fr. Borelli said - "That nice glass of cold water you had with your lunch - maybe it began its life as a little trickle of perspiration, rolling down the back of some African worker."

c) Our participation in this world is always limited by space and time; as human beings, we live at a particular time, in a particular place. However, at the moment of death, we leave behind the limitations of space and time.

d) At this unique moment, we are no longer in time and subject to its limitations, nor yet in eternity. This is the moment of truth when we go to the very heart of creation and see its whole meaning and our part in it. There we are faced with a choice - do we assert the truth of what we are, and choose to be part of the Divine Plan, or do we opt to remain aloof, apart?

e) So the moment of Truth is the opportunity for us to enter much more deeply into the reality of creation and participate more fully in its destiny.

f) A moment's reflection should convince us that people, after their death, can exert a much wider influence on the lives of others than they ever did while they were living... e.g. Plato, Shakespeare.

g) When Jesus was on earth, He was subject to the limitations of space and time; He lived at a particular period of the world's history, in a particular country.

h) Through His dying, Jesus left behind the limitations of space and time. At His moment of truth, He confronted the heart of creation and through His resurrection, entered completely and fully - now in His humanity - into the whole of creation. Through His dying and rising, He entered into a completely new relationship with creation; He now became in His flesh what He already was as the Word - the Still Point of all that is... As St. Paul says, "*In Him all things hold together*".

i) It is hard to find an analogy for such a unique and all-determining event. Perhaps the closest we can get is to think of the theme of a novel; the theme underlies every incident, every phrase, giving context and meaning to them all.

j) Because Christ, in His humanity, is now the theme of creation, because all creation literally vibrates with His Real Presence, men and women can feel at home in creation and fulfill themselves through 'the fellowship of things'. Any activity that engages the human person and leads to authentic personal growth and development is, in fact, an encounter with the presence of Jesus, whether this is realised or not.

k) Because Christ is so fully immersed in creation, it is possible to have the Christian sacraments. These are the moments when the veil is drawn back and we encounter, more explicitly, the presence of Christ. The sacraments - espe-

cially the Eucharist - are the sign and guarantee of Christ's enduring presence in creation.

1) The role of the Christian is to discern this Real Presence of Christ in every aspect of life. The role of the Christian is also to believe, in the midst of turmoil and injustice, that the victory has been won and that the power and presence of Christ are there to be tapped. Looking at the world today, we have no grounds for comfort, but believing in Christ, we have every reason to hope.

THE EXERCISES AND PRAYER

a) A crucial part of the experience of the Exercises is the petition we make before each meditation. A person may find that though he or she has much 'matter' for prayer, when they actually pray, they use little, if any, of the matter prepared - they might simply say the Jesus prayer, for example. (This probably would apply more to people who make a form of the Exercises regularly.) There is no problem here. The process of the Exercises does not depend on the amount of matter covered; what it depends on is the grace we pray for, and how we present ourselves to the Lord, with that desire in our hearts. The rest is His affair. So it is most important that we make our petition before each prayer session. The process of the Exercises is simply that once a petition is granted, that is, once the Lord meets us in the way we need His healing touch, then we move on to asking for a new, deeper encounter - a new grace.

b) "Grace" is the Trinity present in our hearts, and the change in us this Presence brings about. So the various "graces" of the different weeks of the Exercises are the many (and progressive) different ways the Trinity is present to us, and changing us - to bring about a closer union with Them.

c) Outside of a retreat, we can continue to live the experience of the Exercises if we know where we stand in relation to the sequence of the weeks of the Exercises.

Depending on where we see ourselves - and hence the importance of a spiritual guide - we know what grace we need most, and so what to ask for. Alternatively, being aware of a recurrent theme in our prayer helps us locate ourselves in the process of the Exercises.

d) St. Ignatius is most insistent that the full time (one hour) be given to each prayer session (12). He is not suggesting that we 'pray by the clock' - nothing could be further from his mind. Nor is he suggesting that we turn prayer into an endurance test - though should this happen, he certainly would want to know why. Rather, he is drawing our attention to the simple fact that the chief way in which we can express to ourself that someone, something, is important is by giving time to them. If there is someone we do not like and wish to have nothing to do with, the standard phrase for saying all that is - "I have no time for him". The reverse is true, too; if we spend a lot of time with someone, that is saying that they figure prominently in our life. For the Lord to figure prominently in our life, we must spend time with Him - in prayer.

Another reason why the time-factor is very important in our prayer is because the ability - or inability - to be still for an appreciable length of time shows us quite clearly whether our heart is at peace or restless. For prayer at any depth there must be a basic self-possession. We will never be at home with God if we are not at home with ourself.

e) St. Ignatius is also insistent that we should prepare for our prayer (e.g. 73:1) - "*After retiring, just before falling asleep, for the space of a Hail Mary, I will think of the hour when I have to rise, and why I am rising, and briefly sum up the exercise I have to go through*". And again, "*When I wake up, I will not permit my thoughts to roam at will, but will turn my mind at once to the subject I am about to contemplate...*" (74:2). There is both a mixture of wisdom and ordinary common sense here. Preparation for prayer is both a sign and expression of our taking our prayer seriously, and investing ourselves in it. Our self-investment in prayer will not happen at any depth unless we bring it to prayer - rather like the mediaeval Irish poem: "*To go to Rome, great the labour, little the gain. You will not find your King there unless you bring Him with you*". Moreover, it is impossible to pray against the stream of our

living; if the pattern of our life is that we give ourselves to daydreaming and are ruled by the whim or phantasy of the moment, the same pattern will occur in our prayer.

f) St. Ignatius frequently invites us to use our imagination when we pray (e.g. 47 - "First Prelude: This is a mental representation of the place"; 66-70 and 121-125 - "Application of the Senses").

- 1) When we pray with our imagination, the "success" of this form of prayer does not depend on the vividness with which we imagine a particular scene or reality. Rather, praying with our imagination is using an image to put us in touch with a reality; so the "success" of our prayer depends on whether or not the image we use actually leads us to the reality (or the Reality to us).
- 2) "The Application of the Senses" is a way of praying with the imagination which allows the Reality, through various images, to seep into our whole being. Again, this form of prayer does not depend on our capacity to create vivid images; rather, it depends on our capacity to open every aspect of our being to the Reality we seek.
- 3) It is worth recalling that at this present moment in the Church, not only do we Christians live in an age of 'broken symbols', but our imagination is continually being assaulted by 'secular' images and values. Consequently, any movement towards 'sacralising' our imagination can be a great help for our prayer, as it can make for prayer being a more integrated experience, with regard to our faith and feelings.
- 4) Occasionally, an imaginative exercise in prayer, when we allow ourselves to become completely immersed in a Gospel scene, can be very helpful in revealing to ourselves some aspect of our affective relationship with Christ. For example, we might take the Gospel scene where Our Lord comes to the Apostles walking on the water, and imagine ourselves in the boat with Peter and the others. After Peter's attempt to walk on the water, we can imagine ourselves following him. This exercise, which puts us in touch with Christ in a particular situation, quickly reveals an aspect of our affective relationship with Him, namely, to what extent we are fearful or trusting.

5. Quite often we fail to realise that our image of Christ has a profound effect on our prayer - especially if we stop at the image.

g) In number 76 of the Exercises, St. Ignatius draws our attention to the importance of our bodily posture when we pray. If, as it is said, 80% of our communication is non-verbal, we should be aware of what we are saying with our bodies when we go before the Lord in prayer. If our posture is floppy, our prayer will be sloppy; if our posture is effectively saying - "I do not expect much to happen", then our expectations will certainly be fulfilled: "Blessed are they who look for nothing for they shall find it." Prayer is not only something we do but it is also how we are before the Lord; our bodily posture tells us a lot about how we are, especially since our own self-image is very much influenced by how we experience our bodies. The ideal posture for anyone is a posture that is both poised and relaxed and gives the person a feeling that he or she is 'bodying-forth' their faith.

h) As St. Ignatius suggests in Annotation 3, prayer is basically a surrender to the Lord. Prayer is not 'thinking about' but rather 'being present to' the Lord, in an attitude of love and surrender. The heart of prayer is to let go - to let God be God in my life. As Fr. van Breemen points out, we cannot pray with our hands closed - that is a sign we are hanging on. We can only really pray with our hands open - holding on to nothing and holding nothing back from the Lord. Whatever we pray for will be rendered back to the Father at the moment of our death, when we have to let go of everything. So the attitude of letting go - "*Not my will but Thine be done*" - is the deepest expression of our human reality and enables us to enter into the process of the Exercises, which is geared to an ever growing identification with the Father's will.

i) The colloquies (cf. 54) are an important part of the Exercises. One reason why they are important is because they bring home to us the significance of our hearing ourselves address the Lord lovingly, hopefully, trustingly. For Jesus to be a real person in our lives, we must approach Him, from our side, in the way we relate with other persons - which means we must talk to Him. Moreover, we must be aware that the way we address Our Lord is most important, as

the words we use help create our experience of Him. It will be difficult to love the Lord if we never hear ourselves speak lovingly to Him.

This is a serious business; we should not use words lightly when we talk to the Lord. ("Some people use words to express their thoughts; some people use words to conceal their thoughts; and some people use words instead of thoughts.") There is a tremendous power in our words which perhaps we are not always aware of. As we have said, our words not only describe our experience but they also determine our experience and our attitudes. I know of one gentleman who, when he learnt English, was very selective in what he learnt and developed an eye for the strongest words possible to describe any situation. So, in a friendly discussion, instead of saying - "I don't quite agree with your remark", he would be more inclined to say - "I will destroy your argument". An interesting exercise that can bring home this whole point is "The Conjugation of Irregular Adjectives" - seeing how the same reality changes according to how we describe it; for example, "I am firm; you are stubborn; he is a pig-headed fool", or, "I am slim; you are thin, she is skinny".

Not only should we not use words lightly when we speak to the Lord; they should come from the heart. It is very refreshing to meet people with whom there is no gap between the person and his or her words. The words of such people come from the heart and carry life. Our talking to the Lord, in reverence and love, can help us become this sort of person.

j) There is a story told of an immigrant in the United States who wanted to return to his home country. After searching for ways and means for some time, eventually he met a gentleman who gave him simple and clear instructions - "Meet me tonight", the gentleman said, "at midnight, down on the docks, with \$100 in your pocket." So the immigrant turned up at the docks at midnight, was promptly knocked on the head, robbed, and woke up the next morning, to find himself in a small row-boat, chained to an oar, in the middle of the Atlantic. There were other men also chained to an oar, rowing away, keeping in time with a man at the back of the boat who was slowly beating a drum. After some hours of this, the immigrant leant across to the man nearest to him, and asked in hushed tones - "Do we tip the drummer?" His neighbour solemnly answered - "I didn't the last time".

St. Ignatius, it would seem, was a firm believer that the only mistake we really make is the one we don't learn from. And so he tells us - "After an exercise is finished... I will consider for the space of a quarter of an hour how I succeeded in the meditation... If poorly, I will seek the cause of the failure... If I have succeeded, I will give thanks to God our Lord..."(77:5). The habit of evaluation is very strong in Ignatian spirituality; it brings in that necessary touch of realism and also helps us to be more aware of our own Salvation History, as we become more aware of what is going on in our own hearts, and also of our patterns of behaviour.

k) Outside of the Exercises, one dimension of prayer we should never lose sight of is the power of prayer to bring conversion and healing to others we pray for. Time and time again in the Gospels, we see people are healed or their sins forgiven through the faith and prayers of their friends or relatives - "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven'" (Mk 2/5).

FAITH AND THE EXERCISES

Earlier we said that the grace of the Principle and Foundation was the gift of a basic faith-vision of life, which can be expressed through a sense of the Absolute, a sense of mystery and a sense of life as a gift. We also said that the grace of the Principle and Foundation runs right through the whole of the Exercises, so some further reflections of faith would seem to be in order.

a) For the Christian, faith is the authentic view of what life is all about. So the view of faith we take must show clearly how it is that the more human we are, the more Christian we are, and vice-versa.

b) At its most basic, faith is saying 'Yes' to life - accepting that life is a gift and that life has meaning. This is not something we can prove - it is an option we make. To accept that life has meaning is to accept that my life is measured by 'something' beyond me; this is an act of surrender, an act of faith. Anyone who acknowledges any

absolute value has faith; a value is a life-growing truth; to acknowledge an absolute value is to draw life from something beyond myself.

c) So faith is the attitude which brings us to grips with reality; we see what 'is there' and respond to its demands; the alternative is to see things and people only in terms of myself - to experience 'meaning' only by reference to myself, and in terms of my own needs. One choice leads to love, a growing awareness of reality and deeper involvement in it; the other leads to a growing isolation, cynicism and selfishness (perhaps even neurosis). We cannot even begin to be a person unless we have the basic attitude of faith - openness to 'what is there'.

d) Our own personal growth and our faith (i.e. vision of life) go hand in hand. The sort of person we are (the quality of our life) and the quality of our faith can never be separated. For faith is the capacity to be rather than to have - it is the ability to let-go.

e) Full Christian faith is not just saying 'Yes' to life; it is saying 'Yes' - committing ourselves - to another, Christ. The capacity to see people as others (and not just extensions of ourself) and the capacity to say 'Yes' to Christ are inseparable. We cannot have an effective relationship with Christ if we do not relate effectively with people.

f) Christian faith is supernatural, which is another way of saying that the initiative always comes from the Father. A sense of 'gift' is an essential dimension of our faith, and can be expressed in countless different ways. For example, in times of suffering and loss it leads us to ask, not "Why is this happening to me?", but "How is the Father loving me in this?" Christian faith is also supernatural in the sense that it opens us up to a whole new way of loving and forgiveness which go far beyond human resources and can only be experienced through the power of the Spirit of Christ.

g) Christian faith is sure and certain, in the sense that I stake my whole life on the belief that "Jesus is risen

and is 'there' for us". There are, of course, different models of certainty; for example, there is mathematical certainty: $2 \times 2 = 4$; no one in their right mind doubts that. On the other hand, no one in their right mind becomes emotionally involved with a multiplication table. The prime model for certainty is a personal commitment that gives meaning to our whole life.

h) Though Christian faith is sure and certain, paradoxically, there is also an element of doubt in it - "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief". However, without playing around with words, it is most important to locate this doubt correctly. The root of this doubt lies in our human condition. Faith is a personal commitment to Jesus, but because we are both body and spirit, flawed by sin, we can never commit ourselves irrevocably in this life so that there is no possibility of our taking back what we have given. We can commit ourselves irrevocably in the sense that we have no intention of taking back, but we can never eliminate the possibility of our taking back - which we do every time we sin. Because there is always a "gap" in our commitment, something "foreign" can work itself into this gap. (The positive side of this is that when we sin, we are never given completely to our sin, and so, under grace, repentance is possible). So the source of our doubt lies in ourselves, and it is most important that that is where we locate our doubts and difficulties. We might say, for example, that there is only one real question in life - "Is there ANYONE 'there'?" And sometimes we may feel that there is no one there. But there is a world of difference between saying - "Sometimes I feel there is no one there", or "Sometimes I wonder if I really believe there is someone there", in contrast with - "Sometimes I wonder if there is anyone there?" The first two statements focus on ourselves and show the state of our commitment at that particular moment; the last statement focusses on the Object of our commitment and says that it is a questionable reality. Questioning ourselves can deepen our commitment; questioning the Object of our commitment can only lessen our commitment.

i) Though Christian faith is both sure and certain, there is also a strong element of obscurity in our faith. In fact, it is rather consoling to see that the Scriptures make it very clear that there is something elusive about the presence of the Risen Lord. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus did not recognise Jesus; Mary Magdalene thought He

was a gardener; in the upper room, the disciples thought he was a ghost; by the lakeside, the Apostles did not know who He was. The message here is very clear - the Risen Lord is only known by Resurrection faith, which means He can be close to people, deeply involved in their lives, without their being able immediately to grasp this.

j) If we say we believe in something or someone, we must be able to say what difference it makes and in what way we see there a promise of life. As Christians, we must be able to name our experience of Christ. 'If we do not find God under our own skin, we will never find Him'. In other words, all the formulas of our faith express some life-giving Truth; these formulas only become fully 'operative' in our life when we can begin to name the living experience we encounter through believing. For something is lacking in our life if we say we believe in a life-giving Truth and are yet unable to name the life it gives. This can be very challenging. For example, what does it mean in our life if we say we believe Mary was assumed body and soul into Heaven? First of all it means we believe that Mary is 'there' - in her life, not only has the victory been won but now it shows forth in every aspect of her being. And this truth also tells us about our own life and experiences. It reminds us that our bodies are never 'neutral'; it reminds us that if we lead a life of self-indulgence, this will show in our bodies because we will be depriving them of the Spirit of Christ, just as it reminds us that if we live a life of love, in openness to the Spirit, this will also show in our bodies. This latter is part of the promise of life that the Assumption of Mary offers us. The ultimate reason why people really believe is because their belief has given them life and holds an enduring promise of life.

k) In the Scriptures we see time and time again that people come to Christ with a specific request; the request is granted; on the basis of this living experience of deliverance, the person comes to believe in Christ. It would seem that no one really believes in Christ unless they see in this belief a hope of deliverance.

l) Our Christian faith ceases to be faith and becomes an ideology if we start dividing people into "goodies" and "baddies". An ideology, of its nature, is exclusive and divisive; Christian faith is all-embracing and seeks to unite people. Love unites, sin divides.

m) The Mystery of Faith. There are three ways in which Christ is present in a Eucharistic context.

1. He is present in His word. A number of years ago appeared a very famous film, "The Miracle Worker" which was the story of Helen Keller - the little girl from the United States who was born blind, deaf and dumb. At the age of something like 12 months, Helen Keller had spoken one word "water", but after that one word, she had had no personal contact with anyone. So she grew up like a well-trained animal, unable to communicate and unable to be reached on the personal level. Then one day a nurse, Annie Sullivan, came into her life. Annie Sullivan would not accept that her little charge should continue to live at a sub-human level; she tried all sorts of different ways to break into her life, but without success. Then one day during dinner, Helen Keller threw a tantrum in complete frustration, scattering food and dishes over herself and everywhere. Annie Sullivan grappled her, dragged her out into the courtyard and put her under a pump to clean away the mess. Helen Keller was screaming all the while, but as soon as the water hit her, she suddenly stopped screaming and said one word - "water". Most dramatically, her life completely changed in an instant. That one word set up a whole chain of communication with her nurse; through speaking that one word, she broke out of her 'prison' and suddenly became a human person. That one word opened up for her a whole new way of living.

When we hear the word of God in the Eucharist, we are hearing a Word that opens up for us a whole new way of living - "The Word of God is alive and active..." Christ is present in His Word and we hear His Word to the extent that we really listen to the words of others. In every true relationship, there has to be an element of surrender to the other; otherwise we never meet the other person. Where there is no mystery, no surrender, there is no personal relationship. We can only be open to the Mystery of the Word if we die to ourselves for others - like Bread that is broken.

2. Christ is present in His people for we are the Body of Christ. What does it mean to live in Christ and to see Christ in other? Our Lord gives us a very clear idea of what this means in Matthew, chapter 25, in His description of the Last Judgment - "*I was hungry, and you gave me to eat...*" The important point to note here is that the Just

have had an encounter with Christ - a very deep encounter that seals their eternal destiny - yet they have not recognised Him - "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and give you to eat...?" How is this possible? What does it mean to encounter Christ, to see Him in others? In the light of this passage, we meet Christ in His people when we experience them the way He does; that is, whenever we care for people, are sensitive to them and their needs, and love and respect them, we are living the Christ-life because that is exactly the sort of experience that Christ has of His people. Everyone's life is a series of experiences; if people have the same experiences, they are living the same sort of life. So, if we have the same sort of experience of people that Christ has, we are living His life, we are living in Him, we are seeing Him - experiencing Him - in others. But to do this, we must die to ourselves - like Bread that is broken.

3. Finally, Christ is present in the Eucharist when we 'celebrate' the Eucharist - when the gifts we bring, bread and wine, become His Body and Blood. Without the bread and wine there can be no celebration. One of the things this means for us is that we cannot properly celebrate in the Eucharist what we do not bring in our hearts. In other words, we cannot really celebrate the Peace of Christ unless we come with a certain peace in our heart - if we are at peace with those we live with, at peace with those we work with, we will go back to them with an ever deeper peace. We really cannot celebrate the Eucharist as an experience of stillness and prayer if the Mass is the only time we try to be still and pray; unless we bring an experience of stillness and prayer to the Mass, we will have nothing to celebrate and the Mass itself will cease to be an experience of prayer. Unless, in some way, we already have a sense of Mystery which we bring to the Mass, we will not have the experience of celebrating a Christian Mystery. Unless we have a sense of surrender to the Father, which can be expressed in terms of openness to others, when we come to the Mass, we will not be able to celebrate Christ's surrender to His Father - because there will be no reflection of this in our own heart. So if we come to the Mass with peace in our heart, with an experience of stillness and prayer, with a sense of Mystery and with a sense of surrender, we will be able to celebrate what the Eucharist means. And we, too, will become like that Bread that is broken.

Ideally, the deeper our experience of the Exercises, the deeper will be our experience of the Mass. For one thing, the Four Weeks of the Exercises follow exactly the same pattern we see in the Mass - Penitential rite, identification with the Word, dying (i.e. offering ourselves) with Christ, encountering the Risen Lord.

RULES FOR THINKING WITH THE CHURCH

An important dimension of Ignatian spirituality is his attitude to the Church, clearly expressed in his Rules for Thinking with the Church. It is worth remembering that the Church in the time of St. Ignatius was full of ambiguities and 'scandals'. When St. Ignatius was growing up, he would have known of Julius II (1503-13) who was the last Pope to lead the Papal army into battle. On one occasion when St. Ignatius wanted to see a later Pope, (Paul III), the Pope could not see him as he was otherwise occupied - celebrating the wedding of his daughter. Yet, in spite of these ambiguities and scandals, St. Ignatius had a clear vision of the role of Church Authority in directing the church's mission, and what it meant to be faithful to the Church.

However, the Second Vatican Council has given us new models of the Church, which lead to the question - how are we to understand St. Ignatius' Rules for Thinking with the Church? Here we give some tentative suggestions.

a) Perhaps the first thing to note is that the context of the Rules of St. Ignatius is mission: "*The following rules should be observed to foster the true attitude of mind we ought to have in the church militant*" (352). So the Rules are not at all concerned with - "How far can I go before I am actually in conflict with what the Church says?" Rather, they are concerned with a closer identification with the Church's mission, in the sense that we are to be people of healing and reconciliation, for a more united and effective mission.

b) The English word "Thinking" (with the Church) does not quite capture the force of the Spanish word "Sentido", which places much more emphasis on having a sympathetic and

understanding attitude, even feeling, towards the Church. We are to love the Church as a Mother - not tolerate Her as a step-Mother. Nine of the Rules St. Ignatius gives bring this home very clearly, as they begin - "We ought to praise..." So we are to see ourselves identified with the Church, within the Church; in no way can we understand and love the Church if we set ourselves outside of or apart from Her. Moreover, if we really love the Church, we will be sensitive to Her shortcomings - our shortcomings - and suffer on account of them.

c) A number of the Rules that St. Ignatius gives were historically conditioned, as they were sensitive issues on which the Church of his day was taking a stand. The equivalent for us today would be those issues which the Church has declared to be Her priorities.

d) One model of the Church which the Second Vatican Council gives us is "The People of God". According to this model, the Church is a net-work of personal relations, based on Christ and in Christ. The Pope and the Bishops are part of the People of God, with whom, in faith, we all relate, in some way. In what way? In a special way, namely, when the Pope speaks, my relationship with him is such that I listen to him in a way I do not quite listen to anyone else - with openness, acceptance, the desire to be one with him in what he says and the presumption that this will be the case.

e) This, of course, implies a certain familiarity with important Church documents; it is difficult to think with the Church if we do not know what the Church is thinking.

f) We should, then, be aware of the priorities of the Universal Church - Evangelisation and Justice through the implementation of Vatican II. No authentic local directives can ever be in conflict with the priorities of the Universal Church.

g) After Providence '82, where the World Community of the CLC's was born, a concern for the world's problems is not only one facet of World Community but also one experience of thinking with the Church.

h) Thinking with the Universal Church should be an incentive to become more involved with one's local Church.

i) Respect for Authority is an important aspect of St. Ignatius' thinking with the Church; Authority is to be respected because it is the intrusion of the Other and opens up the whole dimension of faith. Though public confrontation with Church Authority can never be automatically excluded as an authentic Christian option, it is never an Ignatian option.

On the other hand, respect for Authority should never lead to the sort of subservience that deprives people of their apostolic initiative. This is quite contrary to the spirit of Vatican II, which places great emphasis on the role of the laity and the irreplaceable part they play in the mission of the Church.

Neither should we gloss over St. Ignatius' injunction - *"But while it does harm in the absence of our superiors to speak evil of them before the people, it may be profitable to discuss their bad conduct with those who can apply a remedy"* (362).

The "Sensus Fidelium" (the practice and belief of ordinary good Catholics) is an authentic reflection of the Teaching Authority of the Church.

THE EXERCISES AND COMMUNITY GROWTH

We have already described how the pattern of growth in a personal relationship is the same as the pattern of growth in faith that we find in the Spiritual Exercises. The final point to note in this connection is that the different stages a group of people goes through as the group gradually becomes a Christian Community (more specifically, a Christian Life Community) is, again, exactly the same pattern we find in the Exercises. This point is developed at length in the booklet - "Survey of the Formation Process in the Christian Life Communities", so here we will only add some further comments.

a) The beginnings of a group - the Pre-community stage: the Annotations

When a group first forms, it is important to clarify - at this stage in a rather general way - where the group wants to go. If the people want to remain a group on a rather informal and superficial level, that is exactly what will happen. But if the group wants to become a community, then the group - and its guide - should be aware that the group will not move unless its members have certain dispositions/attitudes. These are the dispositions or attitudes that we have already noted as mentioned by St. Ignatius in his introductory remarks (Annotations). Without these dispositions, a person is simply not capable of entering into the experience of the Exercises; and without these dispositions a group is equally incapable of starting the movement towards becoming a community. There is no question of elitism here as these dispositions are not limited to any social class; rather it is a question of plain, common sense - it is impossible to build a community if there is not the material to build with.

Consequently, the main emphasis at this stage of a group's life is to help people discover their attitudes and deepen them - in line with the Annotations in the Exercises. It can also be helpful to introduce them to some form of reflection on their own experience, as an initial experience of discernment. It was precisely in this way that the conversion of St. Ignatius began. When he was convalescing, he was frequently given to day-dreaming. He began to notice that some preoccupations left him feeling drained and empty, while others left him feeling peaceful and 'all together'. Gradually he came to realise that there were forces at play in his own heart - forces which drained away his life and forces which renewed him. This is a very common human experience but to become more and more aware of it is an important step in personal growth and can help people in their initial commitment to a group.

b) Stage of Initiation - the 'honey-moon stage': the Principle and Foundation

When a group of people have been together for some time and have discovered similar basic attitudes in one another, the group begins to grow as a group and take on its own identity; in a word, people enjoy being in the group - the group life becomes a 'positive experience'.

At this stage it is important to foster the positive experiences of the group as these are the solid foundation for future development.

- 1) People should be educated in listening. Real listening speaks of openness, respect, 'surrender' to the other; the quality of our listening is an expression of the quality of our whole life. Not listening to people can be a very good way of destroying them. Listening is a very creative experience; it can never be reduced to that period in a conversation when I am not talking. The feeling of having been listened to is a very, very positive experience.
- 2) Members should be encouraged to share on the level of experience - not on the level of ideas, but on the level of experience. And they are to be encouraged, never forced; that betrays a lack of respect for the person. The ability to express what is in our heart makes us more and more a person of faith. For then we are in touch with ourselves, and if we are in touch with ourselves, we are in touch with the Spirit and can read His presence. On the other hand, if we are not in touch with our own heart, it is very difficult to hear what comes from the heart of another person.
- 3) Members should be encouraged to share on the level of faith. When we speak words of faith, we both express our faith and we deepen our commitment. When others speak words of faith to us, they reinforce our faith and commitment and create an atmosphere of trust and openness. Community cannot grow unless people can meet on the level of personal faith.

c) Stage of Redemption - Group sin: the First Week of the Exercises

After a group has been together for some length of time, and grown together as a group through sharing many positive experiences, it is only a further question of time before the group sin begins to surface. Various reactions are possible when this happens. The members can back off and settle for peaceful coexistence, thereby burying any hopes of becoming a community. Or, with the help of their guide, who alerts them to what is going on, they can face the fact that not only is each one sinful, but the group as a whole has generated group sin, which must be confronted if the group is to experience deliverance and freedom. So, with the help of a guide who knows the Spiritual Exercises, the group sin can be faced and overcome - if there has been a solid foundation in the previous phase. Without a solid foundation, facing the group sin can blow the whole group apart, just as it can be destructive for a person who has not 'acquired' the grace of the Principle and Foundation to move into the First Week of the Exercises.

d) Stage of Redemption, part II - closer identification with Christ and His Mission: the Kingdom and the Second Week

When the group sin has been faced and overcome, the members of the group come together now as a community, with a much deeper sense of freedom and a renewed sense of mission.

This stage and the later stages of community are well described in the Survey on Formation already mentioned, so there is no need to go into them here. The main point we have been concerned with is to show how a group of people develops a life of its own in its growth towards becoming a community, and the signs of this growth are identical with the growth pattern we find in the Exercises.

A FINAL REFLECTION

In a recent book by a Carmelite nun in England, "Guidelines for Mystical Prayer", the author (Ruth Burrows) makes the point that we are all very adept at mythologising and taming our saints. She takes the case of Thérèse of Lisieux as a prime example; we have romanticised the Little Flower, covered her with roses and a pretty smile and so neglected her basic message, which is total and unspectacular abandonment to the Father's love. The image lingers, not the message; everyone likes roses, and who is challenged by flowers?

The same sort of thing happens with many other saints, but it has never happened with St. Ignatius. He is respected but he has never been what we would call a 'popular' saint, and never will be. Why? Presumably one of the reasons is that any attempt to tame St. Ignatius never gets very far because it is impossible to separate the man from his message. As a matter of fact, St. Ignatius is a rather uncomfortable saint to get to know. The moment we draw near Ignatius, he takes us by the hand, leads us to Jesus on the Cross and says - "Take a good look; now, what are you going to do about that?" Then he leaves us.

There is a story told of a Jesuit in Australia who, on one occasion, was travelling along a deserted country road, many miles from any township, when his car hit a patch of gravel and turned completely over. He tried to get out of the car, but found he was trapped. So he lay there, upside down, pondering the situation for quite some time, and later he recounted his ponderings. "It occurred to me", he said, "that perhaps my last hours had come. So I asked myself - 'Am I ready to meet Christ my Redeemer?' After some reflection, I said to myself, in all humility, 'Yes, I think so'. So then I asked myself, 'Am I ready to meet Father Ignatius?' After a time, I had to say, 'No, not quite ready yet.'" Unfortunately the story is not completely true, but, as the Italians say, "Se non è vero, è ben trovato" - the point is still worth making.

Though St. Ignatius is an uncomfortable saint to get to know, it is well worth the effort and leads to a deeper understanding of his spirituality. For, as we have said, the man and his message are inseparable. A saint who not only 'composed' the Spiritual Exercises, but, as General of the Society of Jesus, gave a public penance to a fellow Jesuit who repeatedly called him "Father", not "Iñigo" like everyone else, is, to say the least, intriguing, and certainly worth cultivating.

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