



PROGRESSIO

30

SPIRITUAL EXERCICES
IN
DAILY LIFE

Witness and reflection

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INTRODUCTION

Many CLC members throughout the world are choosing to do the Spiritual Exercises in daily life. Most of those choosing this option have already had an experience of the Exercises in the form of an enclosed retreat, which they have renewed yearly, and in the case of some people over a period of many years. As well, they are deepening this dynamic of the Exercises in an on-going way through their communal experience within their small CLC group. For them, the Exercises in daily life is a different way, perhaps a more demanding one, of approaching "the source" of our CLC spirituality. They have an intuition that the path is a hard one, since ordinary life is in itself very complex, and the Exercises will add one more degree of complexity to it.

Despite this, many are enthusiastic and begin this path. Perhaps what is ringing within them is the challenge of "integrating one's faith into one's life". Perhaps they see here a response, consistent with the style of life they have chosen, as the fruit of a process of spiritual growth. And, this too must be said, perhaps for many it is the only way of doing the Spiritual Exercises.

There is also another kind of person, becoming more and more numerous as time passes, who has had the experience of doing the Exercises in daily life and then begins the CLC way. For them, the CLC appears as the logical continuation of a dynamic that they have experienced for a certain period of time (almost always around a year). During their experience of the Exercises in daily life, and in assessing it, these people understand that what is at issue is a dynamic of life that must be kept up with. And the CLC proposes to them a process of continuous growth along the lines laid down by the Exercises. Thus it is that for many the choice of becoming members of the CLC is an obvious choice.

There are many other people who have questions but no practical experience of the Exercises in daily life. They have listened to others talk about their experiences, they know that the possibility exists... and, often, they do not know anything else. At times they feel attracted, not without fear, and want to begin this form of the retreat. They ask questions of others, usually their spiritual guide or their group guide, who often must acknowledge that they do not know this path well enough, either theoretically or practically.

With this in mind we considered it is worthwhile going further into this topic. A supplement has already been published on the retreat in daily life (N.18-19, November 1981), and it was received very well in many parts of the world. In it a considerable amount of guidance and counsel is offered by Fr Maurice Giuliani s.j., a man with wide experience, who has devoted much time to reflection on and to the study of the Exercises in daily life.

Along these same lines, but with a different style and purpose, we are now offering this new supplement. It has been made possible due to the efforts of two working groups created after PROVIDENCE '82. In the supplement's first part Fr. John Veltri s.j., taking advantage of an imaginary conversation already used by Karl Rahner in "St Ignatius speaks to a modern jesuit", puts into Ignatius' mouth a meditation containing valuable advice for the person intending to do the Exercises and for his or her guide. We believe it is a text that will help to introduce the Exercises in daily life to those who have expressed an interest in them.

The second part of the supplement is the witness given by people who have done the Exercises in daily life. They share simply and directly some facet of their experience. A few readers, especially those who have accompanied or desire to accompany others in the Exercises in daily life, will perhaps be inclined to analyze these experiences. They will seek data on such aspects as the period of time during which the experience lasts, the most

frequent difficulties, the relationship between the guide and the retreatant, the fruits gathered from the experience, the relationship with CLC, and so on. And they will surely find something of value in the witnesses set down.

Others will prefer to read this second part without making any special analysis, but simply with the spirit of one admiring what God has given to others through the Spiritual Exercises in daily life. Perhaps a few will find in these experiences one reason or other for beginning the experience.

Finally, this supplement's third part contains the experience and the reflections of guides for those doing the Exercises in daily life. Its value is similar to the second part of the supplement, but this time from the standpoint of the guide.

Without pretending to be a thesis on the topic, or even a systematic presentation of all aspects of it, this supplement on the Exercises in daily life will, we believe, offer material for reflection for a deepening knowledge of this way of experiencing the Exercises, one that, while foreseen by Ignatius himself, may none the less be considered a new challenge for our day and age.

PROGRESSIO

FIRST PART:

"A Meditation"
(Fr. John Veltri s.j.)

This meditation is a make-believe letter of St. Ignatius of Loyola for the person who desires to make the Spiritual Exercises in daily life. It has been adapted from "Ignatius of Loyola Speaks To A Modern Jesuit" (in the book Ignatius of Loyola, by Karl Rahner s.j. and Paul Imhof s.j.).

Letter from Ignatius
to a person who desires to make
the Spiritual Exercises in daily life

DEAR READER -- FROM IGNATIUS, ABOUT HIMSELF

As you know, my great desire was always
to tell people about God and his graces
and about Jesus... both crucified and risen,
so that their freedom would become the freedom of God.

I wanted to bring the same message as the church had always
brought
...and yet
I felt I could put this in a new way.

Why was this so?

I had a direct encounter with God,
particularly during those months at Manresa,
Where, as I told you in my autobiography,
God himself taught me like a school boy.

Yes, I Ignatius of Loyola, Inigo, as they called me,
I knew God... Father, Son and Spirit,
nameless and unfathomable,
mysterious and yet near...
bestowing themselves upon me in a manner
beyond all concrete imagining.

I knew him clearly in such nearness and grace
as is impossible to confound or mistake.

God himself ...

I knew, God himself...
not simply human words describing him.

I knew the Divine Majesty
and the freedom which is an integral part of them.

I knew them,

as you would say in your modern world -- experientially,

even if knowing them face to face, as I do now,

is again different ... and yet ...

somehow the same.

This is grace ... gift ...

I believe that the father, Son and Spirit

desire to give this gift of themselves

to all who desire to be open to it.

This grace that I received during those days at Manresa,

was not something that I considered a special privilege

for myself or a chosen few.

Therefore, I set down the structure of this experience

in a little manual which I called

The Spiritual Exercises.

I gave these exercises to anyone

to whom such an offer of spiritual help

might seem profitable.

I did this as a lay person,

long before I went to school

to learn theology for ordination.

I gave these exercises on the conviction

that God himself desires to communicate directly - personally

to the generous person eager to discover his will

and ready to act responsibly in the world

with deliberate choice.

Over the years, it has been observed,

that if persons are willing to dispose themselves generously,

according to the directives of these exercises,

that in time,

God himself leads them.

God can and will come directly to his human creatures whom he has created.

A person will know him truly when this happens, and that person will experience the sovereign power of God's freedom in her or his own life. This very simple and yet stupendous conviction of mine is a key to my spirituality.

About My Spirituality

Unfortunately, over the years, people have thought of my spirituality as being too rigidly methodical.

They did this because they separated the interior dynamic of the exercises, from its exterior structure, sometimes misinterpreting and misunderstanding the very simple approach that I have always believed in, namely...

We do the best we can, only by way of disposition and by way of creating an openness.

In the meantime, we know that only the Lord can give us what we are seeking.

My spirituality would be betrayed if it were reduced to methods, yet, the Spiritual Exercises contain many methods.

My spirituality would be betrayed if persons were not led, ultimately, to abandon all tangible assurances, including my methods; thus growing in confidence toward the inconceivable where there are no longer paths or methods and thus enter their final, fearful creaturely choice at the end of their lives.

To help others to experience God directly, and to realize

that the incomprehensible mystery we call God,
is near... and ...
we can talk to him.
This is the goal of the Spiritual Exercises
journey.

My Suggestions to You

do you desire that the Father, Son and Spirit
share themselves with you?

Do you desire to base your life choice and decisions
on this personal sharing and communication?

Then, by all means, enter into these Spiritual Exercises.
But you will have to pay a price --

the price is your time;
the price is your patience;
the price is putting aside, for almost a year,
frenetic occupations, pressing decisions,
that will scatter your energies and leave you so
unfocused
that you will not be able to give yourself
to the daily moments of solitude
that my Spiritual Exercises presume.

The price is a commitment to prayer,
each day, at a special time.

More prayer, possibly,
than you are used to,
and more discipline in your prayer
than you have been used to.

The price is waiting for God to influence your being
and trusting that he will do so.

The price is that you will have to surrender
your own personal methods... and wait...
at least, for a time.

Occasionally, you will feel that you should never have begun,
and you will experience a variety of reactions towards which you will become more and more sensitive.

Reactions that are interior,
some of which are spiritual movements.
Turmoil and joy ...
peace, uplift, comfort, happiness;
sadness, dryness, discouragement, tears
hope, enlightenment, temptation, fear.

In my Spiritual Exercises' manual,
I describe them as 'agitations'
caused by the action of the good and evil spirits.

Modern psychology will undoubtedly have a different explanation,
but the phenomena are the same,
and I have rules of discernment that will help you and your prayer guide sift through these reactions.

About Annotation 19

You are now about to enter into the process of the Spiritual Exercises' journey.
We call it the Spiritual Exercises according to Annotation 19.

At the beginning of the manual that I wrote as a prayer guide,
I included 22 different introductory notes or comments that apply to the whole of the Exercises.

In time, these comments came to be known as Annotations. The way you are receiving the Spiritual Exercises is according to Annotation 19,
or as some of your contemporaries call it,
Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life.

This journey will take you many, many months
which you will be making amidst your everyday life.

If you were to do this same journey
according to Annotation 20,
you would be doing so in the closed setting of a
retreat house,
away from everyday life,
away from usual activities and occupations

You might feel that this is a better way
of doing the Spiritual Exercises.
I used to think that way myself, particularly in my
time.

Remember, however, we didn't have retreat house then,
and the person who made the Spiritual Exercises,
even in a closed setting of 30 days,
had to take lodging in a boarding house,
away from home,
had to go to church several times a day
for mass, vespers and benediction...
had to go outside for toiletry needs,
go to the stream to wash clothes, and sometimes,
cook and shop for ones self.

There were many more distractions for the person
of the 20th Annotation in my time, than for the person
of the 20th Annotation in your retreat houses today.
Another difference in my time
had to do with the culture.
Society, then, was not what you refer to today as
schizoid... separated.
There was a more unified way of looking at life.

In the past 70 years, you seem to have discovered
what is called the unconscious, and, I believe,
you experience this phenomenon within you
as being separated from your conscious self.

Your life in various areas seems to be divided.

The public and private spheres of life
were not experienced as disparate,
as I believe, they are for you.
Nor did we speak of secular and sacred.

Persons of my time had an easier process
of integrating their spiritual experiences
with their secular experiences.

Therefore, when they went away for 30 days,
they would more automatically experience a unity
between their experiences.
Not so with the people of today.

The advantage of doing my Spiritual Exercises according to
Annotation 19, is that you will be taught to integrate
the experience of the Lord with your daily life.

In the next several months, many of your activities
of work, family and leisure, will appear to take you
away from the Lord.

I assure you, however, that if you are faithful
to your committed prayer time,
and to what you will learn in the course of the
Spiritual Exercises,
you will begin to find God in all things

This is the goal of my spiritual Exercises...

TO FIND GOD,
TO EXPERIENCE HIM,
TO RETURN LOVE FOR LOVE IN THE CHOICES YOU MAKE.

Your prayer guide is a companion on your journey.
She/he is neither your superior nor your judge.
You do not have a subject/superior relationship,
a slave/master relationship,
nor an obedience relationship with her or him.

Your guide is a companion pilgrim.
a sinner as you are.
a person whom God will use, at this point in your life,
as an instrument for your guidance.

I have given your guide very special instructions
on how to apply my Spiritual Exercises
without interfering;
but allowing the Lord to communicate himself
directly to you.

I presume, then, that you and your guide are peers,
are equals, are adults;
that each of you is coming out of good will,
that each of you is coming out of generosity.
Your relationship will be one of friendliness and
gentleness.

On your part, you who are making the Spiritual Exercises,
you are being asked to be deeply faithful
to the committed prayer exercises each day --
faithful to the period of meditation or contemplations,
to the review of this experience,
to the daily examination of consciousness

Then, when you meet with your prayer guide, you will share
what has been transpiring in your experiences...
the ups and downs,
the insights and struggles,
the success feelings, the failure feelings.

By listening to you and sharing in your prayer experiences;
she or he will be able to guide you and
help you proceed on your journey.

Her or his very first task
is to help you get beyond the barriers
that prevent God from being personal with you.
This may take a long time or it may proceed quickly;
there maybe a lot of teaching, explaining, dialogue
and possibly some experimenting.

However,
once you have allowed the Lord to be personal with you,
one you are free enough to allow your mystery
to be touched by the Lord's mystery,
then your guide moves into the second task.

Guides' Second Task

The second task is to sit on the side line
and let the Lord lead you.

I described this in the 15th Annotation:

"But while one is engaged
in the Spiritual Exercises it is more suitable
and much better
that the creator and Lord in person
communicate Himself to the devout soul
in quest of the divine will,
that He inflame it with His love and praise,
and dispose it for the way in which
it could better serve God in the future.
Therefore, the director of the Exercises,
as a balance at equilibrium,
without leaning to one side or the other,
should permit the Creator
to deal directly with the creature,
and the creature directly
with the Creator and Lord".

Two Exaggerations

There are two obvious exaggerations
which your guide will help you to avoid.

The first, is that God is not able to communicate himself
directly to you,
and that you can never have a close experience
with him.

Against this exaggeration,
your guide will teach you to take seriously
what happens in your human heart.

The second is a growing exaggeration in your day...
growing because your society, like my own,
is in transition,

you may be tempted
to look for black and white securities
that are not God.

This exaggeration states that every good feeling you have
is a direct experience of God.

Against this exaggeration, your guide will help you to
become better
attuned
to what is more authentic within your heart.

Often, it is with one or the other
of these two exaggerations,
that the enemy of our human nature
will attempt to obstruct
the good work that the Lord desires to do in you,
by seductively and persistently,
attempting to trivialize your attempts to be open
to God's initiatives.

What is my hope?

My hope is that week by week, slowly and gradually,
you will develop a greater ability, a greater facility
in entering the mystery of the Lord.

You can then experience his love
the way I was able to experience his love.

My hope is that you will grow in spiritual freedom
and in union
and love...
deep love with Jesus my risen Lord and King.

With all the communion of saints,
I am interceding on your behalf...
that at some point in your life,
you will be affected by the Lord's power,
that all the desires of your heart

and the actions and decisions
that flow from these desires,
will be oriented towards God our Father
and towards his service and praise.

We pray that you may grow in the awareness
of the Lord's continuous presence
in your everyday experiences,
and discover that presence
even in the social and environmental dimensions of your
life.

Then, later, living in faith and meditating on the word of
God,
you will be able to find God always and everywhere,
seek his will in every event,
and see Jesus, the Lord, in all people
and in all their struggles for liberation;
you will be able to make good judgments
and correct decisions in all your activities.

About Love

I finish here with two statements
that will be given again to you
towards the last weeks
of the Spiritual Exercises' journey.

The first, is that love ought to be manifested in deeds
rather than in words.
God's love poured into your heart
will move you towards your sisters and brothers.

The second, is that love consists in a mutual sharing
by the two parties involved.
The lover gives to and shares with the beloved
all that he has or can attain,
and the beloved acts towards the lover in like manner.

On your Spiritual Exercises' journey, you are the beloved
and God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

is your lover,
they desire to share everything that they have ...
even their intimate life with you.

Hopefully, through the power of Jesus' love
poured into your heart,
you will be able to share
everything that you have.

J. A. Veltri, s.j.

SECOND PART:

"Witness of the retreatants"

Men and women, lay and religious of various nationalities share with one another and the reader their experiences in living the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life.

SOME NOTES ON A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The pages that follow are meant to recall some characteristics of my experience with St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises (Sp.Ex.). Even though they are written in a not very systematic form and without any intention of deducing final conclusions, they will serve as an illustration of the motives that made me start the Exercises, the subsequent process and some of the results, as well as some of the problems which came up during and after them.

The decision

From the end of 1982 my wife and I and some friends were looking for some Church movement to get integrated in, in order to overcome the spiritual stagnation we felt within ourselves. We enquired about different movements until - partly due to some coincidences - we set ourselves up as a CLC-pre-community. We didn't know very well what we were up to. We were just feeling the necessity of starting something exacting, something that would help us grow.

For some months we had weekly meetings and our spiritual guide offered us the possibility of the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life. Some of us accepted the opportunity offered. As far as I am concerned, the commitment was the fruit of an impulse that, at least partly, was generated by my need for a more systematic experience of prayer and spiritual growth. I wanted to start a more demanding path, although I didn't know which one. During our first meetings as a pre-community we really practiced some of the forms of prayer recommended in the Spiritual Exercises. Nevertheless, I had the feeling that they were not very helpful in my case.

Along with the desire to begin a more committed experience, the idea of getting to know better our Spiritual guide and to be taught something by him made me enthusiastic, because I greatly respected and admired him.

The exacting level of the Sp.Ex. was just what I had been seeking for a long time. There were four weekly sessions of individual work lasting an hour each, in addition to a meeting of almost an hour with the spiritual guide.

On the other hand, the contents of the Exercises were a perfect surprise; the "contemplations", the "colloquies", the search for the "taste" of the contact with the Lord, to retain the blessing of being in communication with Him, the practice of discernment - all that seemed very new to me and gave me great joy.

This may have been the first fruit that I gained from the Spiritual Exercises. I experienced an increase of joy and happiness in my life. I began to be touched more and more with this new contact with the Lord, as well as with my own life. Even the prayers and the events of my daily life gained a new perspective and a new dimension. They were bringing me the kind of peace I had been seeking for many years.

Although they are strictly interrelated, I'd like to refer separately to my experience of prayer and my life during that period.

As far as my prayer is concerned, I had a series of new experiences that were simply fascinating me. For instance, at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises I felt a special closeness to and attraction for Mary. Later on, though I had not lost my initial enthusiasm for her, I developed a deep devotion to Jesus and to the Father.

I developed a taste for and a habit of reading and praying the Gospel. I discovered that the Ignatian "contemplation" is a way of praying which is able to produce a very special and vital approach to the life of the Lord.

Gradually, I became convinced that the criteria of "efficaciousness" with which I was evaluating my prayer were wrong and corresponded to an anthropocentric vision of the world. It was my belief that a moment of prayer was a "success" whenever it led to a series of good intentions and resolutions. Prayer in a certain sense was being limited to the generation of determined acts of the will. Going along with the Spiritual Exercises I discovered, or rather recognized within my innermost self, the shortsightedness of my vision. It is not our acts of will, but His which are important for changing the world and history. He is the protagonist, we are only His collaborators. This is how it was in the past and how it shall be in the future. When we pray, the "Spirit Himself intercedes for us with inexpressible longings" and surpasses the ambit of our conscience. And thus any moment of prayer turns into an action of much more efficaciousness for our salvation and for the salvation of the whole people, beyond anything that we were thinking or "feeling".

On the other hand, as far as my life is concerned, the prayers and meditations of the Spiritual Exercises became a kind of filter through which any action, feeling, challenge and attitude of everyday life had to pass. There were sudden "flashes" when I was in the midst of prayer, or a reading that shed light on the meaning of some events in my current life. Even some "common" and daily situations acquired a new significance. And so I discovered, for instance, how sin could penetrate into my habits, attitudes and mental operations. Many times it would appear under the guise of the good or seemed justified by a misleading rationalization that dissolved as soon as I put myself into the presence of the Lord.

On many occasions I believed that I was discovering the meaning of the joys and humiliations that were part and parcel of my daily life. During the weeks of the Spiritual Exercises I heard the Lord's call to be "the light of the world and the salt of the earth". He made me understand that the strength for doing so came from His Holy Spirit. And I also heard the Lord questioning my criteria for "efficaciousness" of actions. By and by the

Gospel was no longer a "distant" history or "myth", but became incarnated as a concrete call coming to me in my everyday life. I confirmed the value of my spiritual experience by the way it served the people and situations surrounding me.

All that I have said above was reflected in a greater commitment and maturity, as well as in a more practical day to day discernment. It affected my "style" of life. It let me see more clearly my own limitations and helped me to accept them. I started to see more clearly that the sense of my life, its "efficaciousness", is not the sum of my own efforts and exertions. In other words, it allowed me to reduce my arrogance and be more faithful to who I really am. This is, moreover, the starting point for a fuller development of anybody's vocation.

I could go on and on with disorderly enumerations. But I do think that the preceding paragraphs may help to illustrate the changes the Spiritual Exercises have brought about in my practice of prayer as well as in my daily life.

The problems

It is quite natural that the process described above was not without problems and tensions.

It is evident that the Exercises in daily life allows for - after more than a year of an intense praying experience - an integration with the "real world" one is living in. Nevertheless, along with the greater "landing strip" it can give to the life of the spirit, it happens that this "reality" and its tensions are often subject to difficulties, so that the fulfillment of the contemplations and the other activities considered is impeded. I imagine that a situation like this would occur less frequently if the Spiritual Exercises were being carried through in seclusion.

Secondly - and this is not a trait of the Sp.Ex. in daily life, but only the result of my specific personal experience - I think that I did not integrate my experience of the Spiritual Exercises with my participation in the Church. Specifically, I don't think that in that year I developed a sufficiently joyful attitude of participating in the sacraments and approaching them more often. Both of these attitudes are unmistakable signs of the faith and of a growing maturity in the spirit.

Lastly, a year after I concluded the Spiritual Exercises, I feel it is necessary that they be given a more effective "follow-up". It was rather hard for me to develop a practice of prayer which would give this experience a kind of continuity. Wouldn't it be good if at the end of the Spiritual Exercises a permanent - even if much less frequent - contact with the spiritual guide could be maintained! Perhaps it would be appropriate to develop some method or way of making it easier for those who have done the Spiritual Exercises to keep up their momentum. Guidance during days of recollection at certain times might be the answer.

And so, in writing these pages (perhaps not very useful to others), I was compelled to review my notebooks and to live again the joy and the happiness of what was, and in any case still is, my greater closeness to the Lord.

R.C. (Chile) (*)

(*) R.C. is an Economist.

A RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE

Initially, I had but one reason for making a retreat, a certain fondness for Ignatius and a strong desire to align my life with God's plan for me. I had glanced through the Exercises, finding them as dry as unbuttered toast, and thinking that I had thirty days ahead of me -which was not the case- I wanted to take the risk and make them. I realized that a door had been opened for me -a time of retreat in daily life- and I experienced that freedom which would be mine throughout the Exercises.

I was prepared for whatever restraints might be placed upon me, happy beyond words that I was being invited in. But instead I was "stretched" in every sense of the word.

I discovered that I was called to action and that my heart would somehow share in the very greatness of God. Somehow, I realized that I had but to open myself to His gifts, freely bestowed, so as to create the boundaries of my own freedom. I sensed that His confirmation of what was so intimate and so precious within me was mine if I but expressed it freely, allowing Him to strengthen me in my hesitations, correct me when correction was needed and support me in my dryness. This is what mattered most at the outset. I might descend into the depths but I knew that I would still be walking on solid ground.

The retreat director quickly does away with obstacles such as those which arise because of Ignatius' choice of words. Certain terminology requires an explanation and familiar words such as "joy" and "obedience" contain an unexpected richness of meaning. New tools --the "discernment of spirits" would be but one example-- were placed in my hands. I learned to make use of them as

I would a handrail or a weapon both in what already had and soon would take place in my life.

True, there is a method to follow, but one adapted to each person's needs. It was up to me to use my own means so as to reach my goal. I would adopt the imagination of Ignatius and be nourished by the frescos and tapestries of the Renaissance which I would make my own, passing then in review as I would a film clip. I would not be concerned if I did not make use of all that was given to me. A jar, once filled, can hold no more, and what one attempts to add will only spill over. Whatever the difficulties, I was never left alone; there is a definite movement to the Exercises, one which spreads throughout one's very being.

A retreat ? I was not going to lock myself away because my husband and children, my household responsibilities and social commitments were still there. My retreat lasted for four months and each time that I was confronted by some difficulty I was able to smile at my new-found freedom : "You are making a retreat in daily life."

Mastering time and one's self

If I did not leave the world behind me I did, in a sense, look elsewhere. One must look inwards and enter fully into the Exercises if one choses to complete them.

What I needed was time and a way of disappearing. I knew that I could do it as long as I was not seen doing it. It was a struggle to say no to certain activities, some more important than others, without seeming to do so, and to claim my right to solitude. The mother of a family is alone when she enters her room and locks the door behind her. To do this she must battle, in a courteous and loving manner, with those whom she shares her life.

The more one enters into the Exercises, the more one senses the need for this experience to continue. I learned how to plan my day and to set aside an hour, even if it was at the very end of the day. A lengthy preparation --lengthened in response to felt needs within me-- was required for those contemplations which could not be shortened. At these times, my door was locked and my clock placed next to my crucifix. What time I could call my own was spent in seeking continuity, that continuity which allowed me to review the material of the Exercises, helped by the instructions I had received and the readings I had done as well as by extending this contemplative attitude to whatever I did. If one is "in retreat" within oneself, any interruption is little more than something to smile over, for nothing is broken.

Mastering oneself: there are times when one needs absolute determination so as to jot down notes, for example, or respect the different points of a meditation (and this is a help), so as to be able to express oneself freely and listen attentively to one's director during direction. It is up to me to make use of my talents and God will not force my will. I paid no great price in sacrificing distractions in as much as my attention was held elsewhere. But there was a price to be paid if I was to remain confident in the face of obstacles, sharpening my will and using all of my other faculties, making one choice after another. The Exercises are anything but passive.

The retreat director

I have taken singing lessons. The instructor doesn't sing, she convinces her students that they should sing with their entire being: their muscles, their intelligence, their breath, their love of music, beyond any limits they might have. In this way the students strive for that purity of sound and their instructor lets

them know when they have reached it. This is, in a sense, comparable to the relationship between director and retreatant but with one important difference. He who is both author and music and who animates the movement of the Exercises is the One who gives them.

The first two "weeks" of the Exercises may have seemed to me to be somewhat static, but as soon as I began to embrace the Scriptures I saw the movement in all of its fullness. I am invited to see in what the love of Christ consists --the love of one who humbles himself in coming to meet me. This is not some sentimental dream but rather an exacting reality!

The context of the Exercises is ever open to minute adjustments ; the freedom of the Spirit makes itself felt. It is that same Spirit who saw to it that Nazareth was a time of intimate tranquillity and that I approached the moment of the Passion with an overwhelming sense of peacefulness. His leading me out of myself was far more profitable than twenty spiritual conferences on the subject.

The Experience of Emptiness :

One must experience the "I am not" if one is to hear the "I am" of God, and by being able to say "I am not" so as to hear His "I am" one finally learns to respond with "I want what you want and in this way I am." Now and then, and then with both regularity and great clarity, I experienced emptiness. One must pass through the desert : it too is part of the Paschal Mystery. If I borrowed from another so as to refine my own thoughts, it did not take long for me to realize that I had to let go. The breath of God is there for the asking, it is central to everything, it is everywhere, something that can only be received, never to be owned, always awaited with ever greater confidence.

What ordinarily took place between meetings with my "teacher" was as follows: total emptiness and an offering up of this moment of abandonment, my own miserable attempts to list the "lights" which I did not recognize as such, and a desire for synthesis and a sense of peacefulness. The better I was able to recognize God's creative action, the easier it was for me to be gratefully submissive.

If the final contemplations on the Resurrection were made in a sort of light-filled obscurity which I found disconcerting, the "contemplation for obtaining love" was like walking into bright sunshine. One goes out that Door through which the flock "come and go" freely. It is the whole person who has given himself or herself to God and who finds him in every aspect of life. It is another way of saying that this contemplation is one which never ends.

In life: blessings and temptations

The mastering of time is a very costly necessity in as much as life all too frequently grabs us by the throat. And yet one of the advantages of a "retreat in daily life" is being able to take one's time so as to go in depth to the extent desired. I did not make four meditations each day but, stretched out in time, I frequently made even more on a given theme. The freedom offered to the retreatant and the good grace of the director made it possible to schedule these meetings as they seemed necessary. There is no risk of losing contact with spiritual realities --one is, after all, being guided-- nor with material realities for that matter for they are our daily bread.

This way of life, this manner of being of Christ whom we are invited to look upon and make our own, must be adopted from the very beginning. Decisions must be reached

and immediate discernments made. "Consolations" and "desolations" become the ordinary thing in our lives. The questions raised by the Exercises --what I should do, what I desire, what I want-- are woven into my existence. I will not have to step down to a world I never left behind.

Nonetheless, there is a danger of being carried away by an ever increasing sense of wonder. Especially at the beginning one must be careful to protect interior silence: to keep the secret of the King ! And it isn't an easy thing to do. There is also the fear that it will all end too quickly: I spent a great deal of time in establishing real confidence. Finally, one does not escape those temptations inherent in every retreat, the demands made upon us which would have us give up, the tendency to dream and those spiritual attacks which God allows so that we might see ourselves more clearly.

To make an "election" !?

When I was given the "rules for making a good election" I found that they were excellent for making any important decision, but I was embarrassed. I was not going to change my life but rather continue in the direction and the movement I was already in. Although, it seemed to me that I had an election to make I couldn't find the words to articulate it. For the time being I had to accept this lack of clarity.

Today I realize that this election is becoming more precise, that it is there to throw light on my life. I see that what I recognized and made progressively my own was expressed at the very outset. I wanted to order my life to God: I was shown that Ignatian "indifference" was to give priority to God at all times, it was a searching with Christ, a submission of one's life to all that comes from God, and a life of prayer is rooted in faith and offered to the divine will in all of God's greatness.

Submission and freedom : the coming together of these two terms is brought about by the light of the Exercises. I have only to open to that page which shows the retreatant "submitting his being as creature, his life and his state to the praise of God." An act of free submission, which is an act of love, to the active love of Christ : my election will carry within it that intense "MORE" of Ignatius which receives the limitless "MORE" of God.

Faith in daylight

It is important that one's renewal include the renewal of one's vocabulary. I never made use of the word "faith", a remark made to me half way through the retreat. The notion was present, however, as an underlying but unexpressed reality, never used in its proper place and, I must admit, absent from my prayer.

Faith is the basis of obedience, the basis of "indifference", the basis of love. This is the only light I have at my disposal and I didn't realize it ! The Exercises, in teaching me how to make myself fully present to Christ, brought this word from my heart to my lips. In rereading my notes the word doesn't appear until Emmaus but it is there on each page of the "contemplation for obtaining love."

There is the first step which is faith --a leaving of self so as to go to the word of God-- and a second step which is that of the child who returns to his Father.

An experience of being a child of God

The experience of Jesus, which he invites me to share, is that of the Son who is only that, who receives

everything from the Father and who returns everything to Him. When, within my being, I allow the Spirit to say "yes" to the Father through the Son, I accept that I have been created by His loving will, the gift of life to his child. God as trinity is present in my freedom.

The Exercises place us in a filial attitude of receiving : to make our own the humiliation of Christ who carries out the Father's plan of love, the offering which ascends to the Father, the gift of self which is the supreme indifference of the Trinity ; to follow Christ and to discover the Son who goes to the Father and the Father wraps me in the arms of His crucified Son.

The Exercises are an experience of being child of God, and the sign of this is to be found in the filial confidence which, in the retreatant, takes the place of the generous disponibility experienced at the outset. I have yet to exhaust the simplicity of this discovery.

And now ?

I remember that afternoon when my daughter, a year old, began to walk. We helped her keep her balance and we opened our arms as we called her. She was overjoyed, she had found her enthusiasm and for the remainder of the day did little else than verify and rejoice in her discovery. As I completed the Exercises I, too, sensed this same enthusiasm within me, an enthusiasm seen in the light of faith and in the movement of the living God. And what would I do to hold on to it ?

Exteriorly this would be realized in three gestures. A daily meditation on the "Sume et Suscipe" ("Take and receive, O Lord, my liberty, etc."), a prayer which says "I give everything back to You." The particular examen each day which was made possible for me because it must be based on Christ and made in the greatness of God.

And making the Eucharist the very center of my day, whether I am able to participate or not. Finally, making that effort, day by day, to gently transform all that I do into prayer and this is something I will continue to practice. I am putting into practice what I have learned and it has pierced the very marrow of my being.

God, in His great goodness, saw to it that the reading selected by the Church for the Mass on the closing day of my retreat was a summary of what I had received from the Exercises. It was from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians which instructed me to kneel before the Father from whom all paternity comes, that Christ lives within me in faith and if I am rooted in love I will be able to understand the length and breath, the height and depth of God...

X... (*)

(*) This article is taken from "Vie Chrétienne", publication of the French CLC.

SEARCH FOR A DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD

It is not easy for me to speak of my experience of the Exercises, especially of my 14 months of the Exercises in daily life; these were months filled with events that were decisive for my spiritual life.

Initial motivation

I started the Exercises in daily life without specific expectations, and without any serious problem. Some people told me that they had a very deep experience of God and that was all that I expected. I did not know precisely what was going to happen to me. I preferred not to know, rather I wanted to find my personal journey little by little.

I started them enthusiastically and wanted to give myself fully; each moment was a novelty, a beautiful discovery, each Exercises was like an additional gift bestowed upon me, and I wanted to go ahead. I wanted to give myself to God, I wanted to pass through the stages of purification in order to be closer to Him, I wanted to say "yes" to Him, with more and more conviction.

A first stage

There were, of course, some critical moments (at times even periods) when I felt blocked because of the difficulties I had with the assimilation of the contents of the Exercises; this was caused by personal problems that absorbed me completely in the end.

There was a "first stage" of Exercises in daily life that lasted eight months. I had arrived at the beginning of the public life and I was conscious of having made some progress, but I also had a feeling that, as a whole, while my life had been quite calm during that period, I still had not come to the deeper experience which was aimed at by the contemplations.

A step ahead: the crises

That was time when the second stage of the Exercises began; my guide and I had agreed that from the beginning of summer I was to meditate on the Gospel until we met again in the fall. This led to a terrible crisis upsetting all my plans and bringing into question all that I thought I had acquired. I realize today that all that had been hitting me deeply and that even my very faith was being brought into question.

In the course of these months of solitude I felt that these Exercises which I had made profoundly had come to life again on a deeper level: at the very foundations of my Christian life, being aware of my sin with a deep desire of reconciliation, the necessity of a radical choice, of a certain readiness and obedience which led me, among other things, to give up something that was very dear to me, with the hope and certainty that this meant something in God's eyes.

This was an experience of a "spiritual desert" of being face to face with God; in an implacable situation but also, to a certain point, with a very clear feeling of His pardon, the certitude of a new beginning in which a precise mission was being granted to me. And this filled me with great joy and peace and I understood that a transformation had taken place within me, in which I had begun offering to the Lord all that I was and had, so that I could serve Him as He wanted it, not as I wanted.

The fruit

In the autumn I restarted the Exercises in a more precise way, with the Pascal Mystery; but this final stage was strongly influenced by what I had experienced during the summer.

More than a year after that experience I can say that the Exercises in daily life have profoundly changed my life, but that I had not understood the extent of this change until later. This was when I looked back over these months in order to understand who I am now and for drawing once more some nourishment for my spiritual life.

A.M.C. (Italy)

CHANGES IN THE WAY OF LIFE

A life integrated in Christ

My experience with the Exercises in daily life is, as far as my spiritual life is concerned, as follows. After having made these exercises, I find it very hard to speak of "spiritual" experience, because I can no longer distinguish between the spiritual and the non spiritual in my life. Now my encounter with the Lord is something quite different, it never ceases making appeals to me, calling me to be open to His wishes. I feel that my life is part of the Lord's plan; it is not completely mine, but His.

A constant, but still incomplete growth

My relationship with the Lord grows without a break though there are some conflicts now and then. When He desires it, I experience His peace and His fullness. I am searching for His kingdom with a certain determination; but I am not yet happy to "desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world" (Sp.Ex.n.167).

Changes in private and social life

Concerning my life and my obligations I note the following results. The Exercises helped me to restrict my activities; this does not mean reducing them, but rather being steadfast in anything that I am undertaking, and choosing clearer and better defined goals. For example, the Exercises made me make a choice so far as the Church is concerned, because I am committed to the CLCs and I have given up an earlier commitment to another Church movement. I am taking much more seriously my own life, my family, my work. I can understand now that the Lord is

everywhere, in all realities, and that He is calling me within the different situations of my life to announce His Gospel and build His Kingdom. Concretely speaking, that means for me that today I am quite different from what I had been, and that also my relationships to the things around me and to the people close to me has changed. I have more confidence in myself and I have become conscious of the gifts the Lord has bestowed upon me and still bestows; and I am now more able to be what I am and to accept others as they are. I have discovered the great gift of life in the Lord and that makes me live with more joy through the moments of joy and to suffer more deeply the inability to love and to forgive. I am no longer worried about the desire of conforming to a certain social status, no longer about appearing a cultured and refined person; rather, my principal preoccupation is the attempt to understand the Lord well and to serve Him when and where He wants me.

CLC: A concrete encounter with the Lord

What the CLC mean: my experience of the community has been that of a dynamical reality - something which is contrary to what I expected but which I still have not fully understood. I am not able to see the reality, the concrete, daily reality of the CLCs as closely connected to the Ignatian spirituality of the Exercises. Some times all that seems to me as nothing but a caricature, or even a disguise; at other moments it compels me towards being even more "Ignatian". Despite this "analysis", my essential engagement is my CLC commitment, because I believe this is where laypeople can have concrete encounters with the Lord, live and experience their "life with Him" and fulfill their mission as prophets, kings and priests.

M.L.C. (Italy)

AN EXACTING AND MAGNIFICENT EXPERIENCE

It is never easy to make an intelligible "public" report on the subject of a personal experience; this is even more difficult, if not impossible, if such an experience concerns the Holy Spirit and the relationship between the person and God, as is the case with the Spiritual Exercises. But this experience has been so concrete, so profound that it may be worthwhile trying to give an - even if pale - idea what it has been like; this might attract others or, at least, bear witness to the positive values any relationship with God - at the same time exacting and marvellous - presents, as experienced in the Exercises, especially with the Exercises in daily life.

A new and different experience

The Exercises in daily life were for me something quite new; they left their mark in my life of faith and in my very heart. I would like to say that they have transformed me as a person - partly, at least - because they drew me to make a more constant and intense contact with God. They taught me how to improve my relationships with others and with things, trying - for the moment with quite some success - how to unite faith and life, contemplation and action. In other terms: they allowed me to feel the beauty, the abundance and the spirituality of Ignatius. On the other hand, I cannot deny that this experience has been trying and at times even very dramatic. The beginning was difficult, although I had lived through a very good experience of an individually guided retreat. But, to say it in a word or two, the experience of the Exercises in daily life has been very, very different for me.

Dwelling with God

The difference in all this happens in the "day to day" process. This means in fact that one has to fit in - day by day - the "moment" of the Spirit in the Exercises and prayer within the normal course of everyday life and all its problems. That means, concretely speaking, that deliberate efforts are made to give God more space, if this is not in the normal course of every day (and that's something that one has to hope and search for but that is, at times, quite impossible) at least as often as possible during the week. This means "dwelling" with God, contemplating Him, placing one's self in His presence; that means (and is perhaps more necessary than anything else) the almost daily confrontation of one's life with the reality of the Gospel. In other words: we take into our hands the whole context and rhythm of our so often pressing and exhausting life of everyday, of our life as it is, always in a hurry and full of thousands of things... that are quite useless (and discovering this uselessness to be one of the benefits of the Exercises in daily life). We must take ourselves in hand and stand still; it may take shorter or longer periods of time to become quiet, but above all we must stop. We must do everything we can to create silence within us and around us and (this is another difficulty) leave behind our problems and troubles so as to hear Him whose voice is sometimes so difficult to hear.

Overcoming the difficulties

Sometimes I want to go to confession, because I do feel heavy, discouraged, because - in addition to the difficulties of normal life - unexpected moral and physical events have come up and have put the brakes on what has been my progress and, slowly but steadily, are putting to the test the fruit of each of the stages. The doubt, the fear of being unable to take up again the rhythm of my life, the difficulty of maintaining a certain balance suddenly appears very precarious. These feelings have at times almost ruined at its very foundation an

experience which I started with full enthusiasm, perhaps a bit ignorant of the real difficulties, but filled with undeniable goodwill. However, it happened just in these moments that I felt that God's presence was closer, as well as the importance and the wealth of a periodical encounter (each week, or at least each fortnight) with my spiritual guide. This way, by and by, I discovered my real self; I discovered my limits and my possibilities; above all, I discovered that God loves me, wholly and personally. And these discoveries, most of all the last one, but all of them accompanied by questions and suffering have filled my heart with joy and have drawn me to experience personally another reality I heard of, but that had been for me nothing but a "fiction": the joy and the fruit of the Spirit.

He is at our side

My experience with the Exercises had lasted quite some time (about one and a half year) and it has absorbed me in a way that, when it was over, I asked myself what I was going to do so as to "fill" the coming days and months. But any intense and profound experience leaves us with a feeling of surprise, almost of being lost; it seems difficult to find one's way ahead without that "something more" that is pushing us forward. However, I am deeply convinced that this is - in a certain way - very close to the feeling one has when leaving school to go to the university, having to face a life in which things are not already prepared for us, where the road has no neat signs, where there is no longer a more or less constant control. We are alone, facing ourselves and the world. And in the case of the Exercises, face to face with God. But this time we are no longer alone, because we have learned to know Him better and to feel Him at our side. It is simply a question of pursuing the road, but with our own means and, above all, with the acquired certitude that He is at our side. And this certitude is the most consoling result of the experience with the Exercises in daily Life.

M.L.M.(Italy)

MY THREE YEAR EXPERIENCE MAKING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The full Ignatian Exercises

I see my personal experience of the full Ignatian Exercises as the culmination of many years of making retreats using the Exercises. As I recall the days of preached retreats, I realize now that they were but a preparation for the profound experience of the full Exercises. While they were good experiences, for the most part, it was not until I made my first directed retreat that I really got the full impact of the Exercises and felt conscious of personal involvement. Many times in those days I was tense, anxious and even a little resentful especially on the day we meditated on sin. I just did not feel like such a sinner. However, I am sure that I must have received many graces and I developed a great respect for the Exercises and a deeper commitment to CLC.

Making the full Exercises over a three-year period was a whole new experience, a new dimension. Now I was going into them in depth, often repeating the same material and always gaining new insights. At first I had some anxiety. I was not sure of what I was doing. But my director encouraged and reassured me and from then on all went well and I was at peace.

The process

Meditating on the Principle and Foundation I gained a deeper realization of my lack of freedom and a deep sense of my unworthiness in the face of God's goodness. During the exercises of the First Week I slowly came to the realization of my own sinfulness but now instead of

depressing me, as it had in the past, I was filled with joy and gratitude to God for all His mercy and goodness. The awareness of God's love and goodness made me conscious of my unworthiness as a disciple and my longing to do more for my Lord. I was continually asking myself, "What have I done? What ought I to do? What will I do?" And I was asking the Lord for generosity in serving Him.

The contemplations on the public life of Our Lord in the Second Week brought me ever so much closer to the humanity of Christ, and the gentle persistence of His call; and my desire to respond grew through the years into my own real but human efforts with Him.

The Third Week experience of contemplating the Passion was almost overwhelming. My pain and suffering with Jesus became so acute that I found myself turning to the Father and asking Him in anger "Why are you letting Him suffer so?" I was conscious of the contrast between the sublime Lord and the hatred that surrounded Him. It was a painful and emotional experience.

How can I describe the Fourth Week? It was a glorious one for me. However, I find it hard to describe my experience during this time. It was truly a faith experience. I was deeply conscious of the consoling presence of the Risen Lord and overcome with love and longing. I felt His peace and love surrounding me and that has not left me. I wish I could find the words to thank Him for His great gift to me.

I was fortunate and indeed blessed in having the director I had for the Exercises. His gentle guidance, understanding and sensitivity helped to make it the joyful and rewarding experience it was.

I am sure that experiencing the Exercises as I did has had an effect on me and my life. Although there has been no radical conversion, I see a gradual change in myself in many imperceptible and subtle ways as I try to become a more Christ-centered person. With a deepening in my prayer life, I am getting to know myself better and

hopefully growing closer to God. As I strive to change my attitudes and ideals to conform more closely to Jesus, I feel a greater freedom. At the same time I realize my complete dependence on God and His grace. Now I have a greater desire than ever to serve my Lord in my neighbor and I look for opportunities to do this especially in the social problems of our day. But the greatest and the most wonderful effect is the conviction of God's presence in my life, His nearness and His great love for me.

L.J.C.

Loyola CLC Philadelphia

THE HEART OF THE APOSTOLATE

A Diocesan Priest accompanied by a laywoman

In 1975 I made the Exercises in daily life accompanied by a laywoman. I am not a member of the CLCs, but I felt myself called towards a more profound life of prayer. I am a priest of a Diocese in the East of the United States. For reasons of my ministry, I could not get away for thirty days. I have a week for my retreat; but some of the retreats for priests last from Monday through Friday. I had made several retreats of St. Ignatius, of 8 days each, in Jesuits Houses before making the Exercises in the daily life.

I started my retreat by meeting my guide each day for a week. These meetings took place at distance from my apostolate. When we continued the retreat, we met once a week, in which both of us continued our normal apostolate. Towards the end of the second phase or week of the Exercises, I managed to set aside two days for prayer, under the guidance of my director. I wanted to do the very same thing during the fourth phase or week of the Exercises.

Daily reflection on my apostolic work

The retreat has led me to question myself about my ministry: am I just keeping step with my apostolate, or am I really giving all that I have to give? Every day I was led to examine myself regarding my commitment and to reflect on the areas of my life, which the retreat revealed, were the main focus. I discovered that I had not been able to go on because I had not found any solution to

my problems. There was something there that I had never faced before in any enclosed retreat; in that situation, I always resolved to make changes, but when I went back to everyday life, things were different. This time, however, I was not able to forget, or to set aside, what the Lord had asked of me: I had to answer His call if I wanted to pursue my spiritual growth the way I said I wanted to grow.

A Diocesan priest
(U.S.A.)

THIRD PART:

Testimony of the guides

Accompanying those doing the Spiritual Exercises in daily life is a new experience, unknown to many. We present in this third part some of the testimony of persons who have served others as companions in this pilgrimage of the Exercises.

A CONVERSION OF THE GUIDE

In contemplating the action of the Lord's Spirit in the life of the person whom I am accompanying, I have received a great grace. I have been brought close to the same action of the Holy Spirit in my own life.

The regular guidance that I am continuing with this person consists in inviting her to complete trust in herself by accepting fully her confidence in me. This helps her to see that she may give to other persons and to God the same kind of trust. Her experience of having a person who listens to her, who understands and really loves her, has drawn her to discover that God loves her and that there are others who can love her. This has set her free from many delusions that she has had to cope with during her life.

But this striking, reciprocal confidence we have had for each other since the beginning of the retreat has led me to an interior "conversion": my role as spiritual guide has changed slowly and surely, so too has my relationship to God and my way of acting towards other people.

I know well that deceptions are normal, but I am discovering more and more that they are perhaps also a stage of egocentricity, a way of dominating other people... We do not accept others as they are, rather we tend to create them in our own image, we idealize them and mask them. We don't meet them in their own reality, which is both good and less good, which is bewildering and disconcerting. And by doing this we mask ourselves too. We do not accept ourselves as we are and we have an ideal view of ourselves that corresponds neither to who we are nor to how we are called to become. And so we pass from deception to deception because others (relatives and/or friends) whom we idealize, never correspond to the image that we make of them, just as we ourselves never correspond

to the image we have of ourselves. We even idealize God Himself, and in that state of things we will never meet either Him or others, or ourselves. In other words, we'll never meet anybody, only self-made images of them, and this leads to a kind of perpetual dissatisfaction.

Only God's grace, only an act of faith that converts us profoundly can make us come out of that state. And a true conversion it shall be: a complete return, a change of direction and orientation in our life. But this is not within human reach, we receive it by prayer and through God's grace and gratuity. This conversion means our insertion into that movement of God's gratuity: loving others as they are, as God loves them and not as we would wish them to be for our own self-centred satisfaction. To love them, not for what they can bring me but for the chance that they are for me to be open to something greater than my little self. By not masking their faces we do not hinder them from being themselves. In receiving the grace of unmasking myself I gain the courage to be who I am, with my history, where I discover the presence of God, the presence of His Spirit working in me, through me and around me. I also receive the grace to unmask God, of not making my false images of Him, but of accepting Him in His difference and His strangeness. I accept Him not only as the other, but as completely Other... the One who bewilders and disconcerts me. All this means that I accept being stripped and laid bare in my earthly poverty, there where I'm no longer making demands or false expectations on myself, on others and on God. I have being given this gift of entering into this movement of acceptance. I humbly accept the reality such as it is, of myself, of others and of God. Instead of putting out my hand to grab... I kneel down and receive in a moment of grace. Only then am I able to pass through the sensual and carnal to the level of faith, of interiority and depth. I am no longer considering anything from my point of view, but from the point of view of Him who is Love and who loves truly: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This movement introduces me into the ecstasy of the freedom of God's children - where I no longer look at others askance, nor God or myself, but where I consider everything from God's point of view, that is to say in faith.

And so all my demands are appeased. I pass from the order of effort (Voluntarism) to that of receiving as a poor person who receives humbly what is given for life.

I understand that God accepts me the way I am, with what is good and what is less good, and I receive the gift to accept others in the same way. This is the reign of peace, of inner soundness and a stability which is both human and divine, where there is no longer any place for rivalry, competition or the use of power for dominating others. I am being invited to enter into God's tenderness: "Where we would find it natural to see a fault and condemn and punish it, God sees only distress that cries out for help" (The wisdom of a poor person).

This conversion into God's tenderness leads to a movement of real charity which St. Paul describes in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes". This is the hour when everything becomes possible, because it's no longer we who act, but God acts through His Holy Spirit.

This conversion draws me to be respectful of others, of myself and of God. I accept that others have their own way according to God's desire for them and that I also have my own way according to God's desire for me.

We cannot discover the right path as long as we are casting glances to the right and to the left, trying to justify our attitudes and behaviour by the faults others have made. But this passes through a long journey of purification, renunciation and stripping away of possessions. There is a price for letting God love us: the full disposition of allowing ourselves to be guided.

This means to consent to be disarmed, to lose the fight with the angel, to be vanquished by the Other, by

others, to be capable of yielding, of giving up arguing, of listening, accepting and to waiting. I come to birth, to an exhilarating freedom which does not do away with all my mediocrity, but allows me to live in the liberty and gratuity of God.

Also, it is the great grace of reconciliation to enjoy to the full the profound peace that nothing, nobody can ever disturb.

"If we knew how to adore, truly there would be nothing that could trouble us and we would pass through the world with the tranquillity of the great rivers" (Wisdom of a poor person).

"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (John 14,27).

A Woman-guide (*)

(*) This testimony is taken from the bulletin n. 8 of "L'Association de la Bienfaisance", Paris.

SOME REFLECTION ON MY EXPERIENCE IN GIVING RETREATS IN DAILY LIFE

- a) Retreats in daily life are a very important facet of CLC, because they make a true experience of the Spiritual Exercises possible for many lay persons who lack the time or the money to make closed retreats of any length. So, since the Exercises are the source of CLC spirituality, we must use retreats in daily life more and do them better.
- b) Besides making the Exercises available to people who otherwise could not make them, I believe, with Giuliani and Cusson, that in our day for a number of persons retreats in daily life are, at least sometimes, preferable to closed retreats. This is especially true of persons whose prayer and reading tends to be somewhat divorced from the societal aspects of their life (their work or profession, the social problems of their culture, their political choices). Because, while it is more difficult (but not impossible) to achieve the same depth in a retreat-in-daily-life as in a closed retreat, it is usually easier to achieve more effective integration of life.
- c) I believe it is harder - more demanding of the director - to give retreats in daily life than closed retreats, for three reasons:
- aa) Because of the continuing cares and impediments of daily living, the retreatant needs greater decision and perseverance in order to continue to give his/her best to the retreat. In a way, a closed retreat involves above all a single decision - though one will need to persevere in it. A retreat-in-daily-life involves a whole series of decisions as one goes along;

- bb) Greater flexibility is needed, since the demands of the retreatant's work, family, etc. may require more adjustment in length of prayer time, number of prayer periods a week, etc.
- cc) Discernment is more difficult, since it involves more elements - not only what is happening in the prayer, but also what is happening in the retreatant's work, family, life, the news, etc.
- d) All who give directed retreats seem to agree that it is often helpful for the retreat-in-daily-life to include within it a "closed" period -- e.g., a day or a weekend of quiet time, perhaps at a center or retreat house, at a time when special depth is desired, such as at the start of the retreat-in-daily-life, or at a key point within it.
- e) I find the awareness examen (examen of consciousness) even more important in the daily life retreat than in a closed one. Since the framework of a daily life retreat is less quiet and contemplative than for a closed retreat, it is even more important for the retreatant to reflect on what movements of soul have been experienced, and what events and feelings have affected one's inner life.
- f) In my conferences with a retreatant-in-daily-life, we always begin by talking over, not what prayer was done and what happened in it, but what significant events (at work, in the family, in the neighborhood, on the news) may have touched them or moved them. This is one way of furthering something very important - that the retreatant views the retreat-in-daily-life not just as the prayer periods and examens and conferences with the guide, but rather as the entire life experience of the retreatant during the period covered by the overall retreat.

g) Integration of the social dimension of faith and life into the retreat. I feel that this integration is absolutely necessary if the retreat guide and the retreatants are to:

aa) Make living contact with the true Jesus, the complete Jesus, as the gospels present him. Therefore, not only the Jesus who loves, cares, heals, forms his apostles, prays, but also the Jesus in solidarity with the poor, going out to the marginalized, challenging injustice and those practices and traditions that are opposed to justice and love. The Jesus, too, who is arrested and put to death precisely because of his vigorous, public, repeated, specific challenging of various forms of injustice.

bb) Relate the Exercises dynamic and content to the real world, which for this retreatant (I am speaking of my own cultural situation; other countries cultures will have to relate this to their own situation) is the world of the USA of 1983-84, and which therefore includes not only the personal and interpersonal aspects of this retreatant's existence, but equally as much the societal aspects: the number of hours of television they watch (and how much of it is commercials, and of what sort), the threat of a nuclear catastrophe that overhangs the 1983-84 world (and that the retreatant is a citizen of one of the two super-powers which will likely determine whether nuclear war occurs), the movement for women's equality, the consumer society, the threat to the environment, etc. And it is in this milieu that the retreatant will need to live out his/her retreat lights and gifts and decisions. Not to help retreatants take account of this reality means, I feel, that one is not helping them to deal with the whole of their lives, but only part of them.

Nicholas Rieman s.j.

MY EXPERIENCE IN GUIDING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN DAILY LIFE

Shortly after the session in Grottaferrata with Fr Giuliani (June 1981) I began guiding four people in the Exercises in daily life. It was my first time and I had to think of the best way of doing it. "Ready made materials" were not available. My first thought was to adapt the outline of the personally guided retreat to the Exercises in daily life. I must say that my task was made much easier by the spiritual experience of the people I was guiding, all adults, who had been members of the CLC for some time or belonged to other Church organizations. They were familiar with the terminology of Ignatius and with the over all plan of the Exercises; they had also previously been in various enclosed retreats of between four to eight days. The experience of praying as well as the various ways in which it can be done, were not new to them.

First of all I made an effort to get close to the personal situation of each single one of them insisting very much on establishing the link between accomplishing the exercises and every day life. And I spent quite a bit of time on the Principle and Foundation, for the purpose of clarifying their relationship with God, and the images of God that can be of help in the spirit of the retreat.

As for the time, I was seeing those on retreat every 8 or 12 days, and I never insisted that it was necessary to plan in advance a particular time for daily prayer. Each one was to decide these times according to their possibilities and needs; when the experience was positive often the wish was there to extend the time dedicated to prayer. It was found that everybody sooner or later had decided to have an intense period of praying in the form of an enclosed retreat of two or three days, for the purpose of assessing their own situation or maybe also for the purpose of finding help in going through a difficult time.

Since the situation of laypeople in Italy is not very well developed, I find that the Exercises in daily life offer the chance to promote a greater responsibility among them and to allow them to take their place within the Church. In many cases after (and sometimes during) the experience of the Exercises in daily life some of the people have felt the need to intellectually prepare themselves through courses in Theology, Exegesis etc.. All this has brought about the formation of some laypeople as the responsible people for CLC groups. I have noticed as well that the retreatants have now a stronger feeling of being part of the vision of St. Ignatius and that in fact they are more identified with his message and have a much greater sense of being on mission.

When I recall the joy that I experienced, I would have to say it arose because I saw some laypeople become "adults" and cut the immature ties which they had had with priests. I would also like to add that it was a joy for me to meet on equal terms with some laypeople who were sharing the same spirituality and the same desires as me.

A guide (Italy)

JAPAN: "OUR WAY OF ACTING"

We are giving the Spiritual Exercises almost continually in the Tokyo area. For the time being our need is not for the complete Exercises in Daily Life but for the equivalent of the enclosed 8 day retreat. During the first time people experience it, they will not go too deeply, but it will be the best preparation for the next experience of the Exercises. We can see that many of them receive great graces from such a retreat. It is a new start for a their life of prayer, for a liberation from personal luck of freedom or for the discovery of a new sense of mission.

The way we work is this: We have a team of Guides, some of them extremely well trained, some well enough. Usually we work with about eight to ten guides together. According to the number of retreatants that each of the guides can take, we decide on the total number of retreatants that we will accept on each occasion.

Each retreat last about eight weeks and is preceded by two weeks of preparation. We choose eight weeks, so that one week is more or less equivalent to one day in the full-time 8 day retreat. This means that it will also include eight interview with the guide.

The guides commit themselves, to give one hour a week to each of their retreatants for the interview, to attend the weekly study session for the guides during which they are supervised as a general rule (if the guides cannot attend these meetings most of the time, we exclude them), and to share with the other guides in the sharing sessions their "input" for their retreatants.

The retreatants commit themselves: to have at least half an hour of prayer a day plus the daily examination of consciousness (taking notes of the main movements, feelings, etc.), to a weekly interview with the

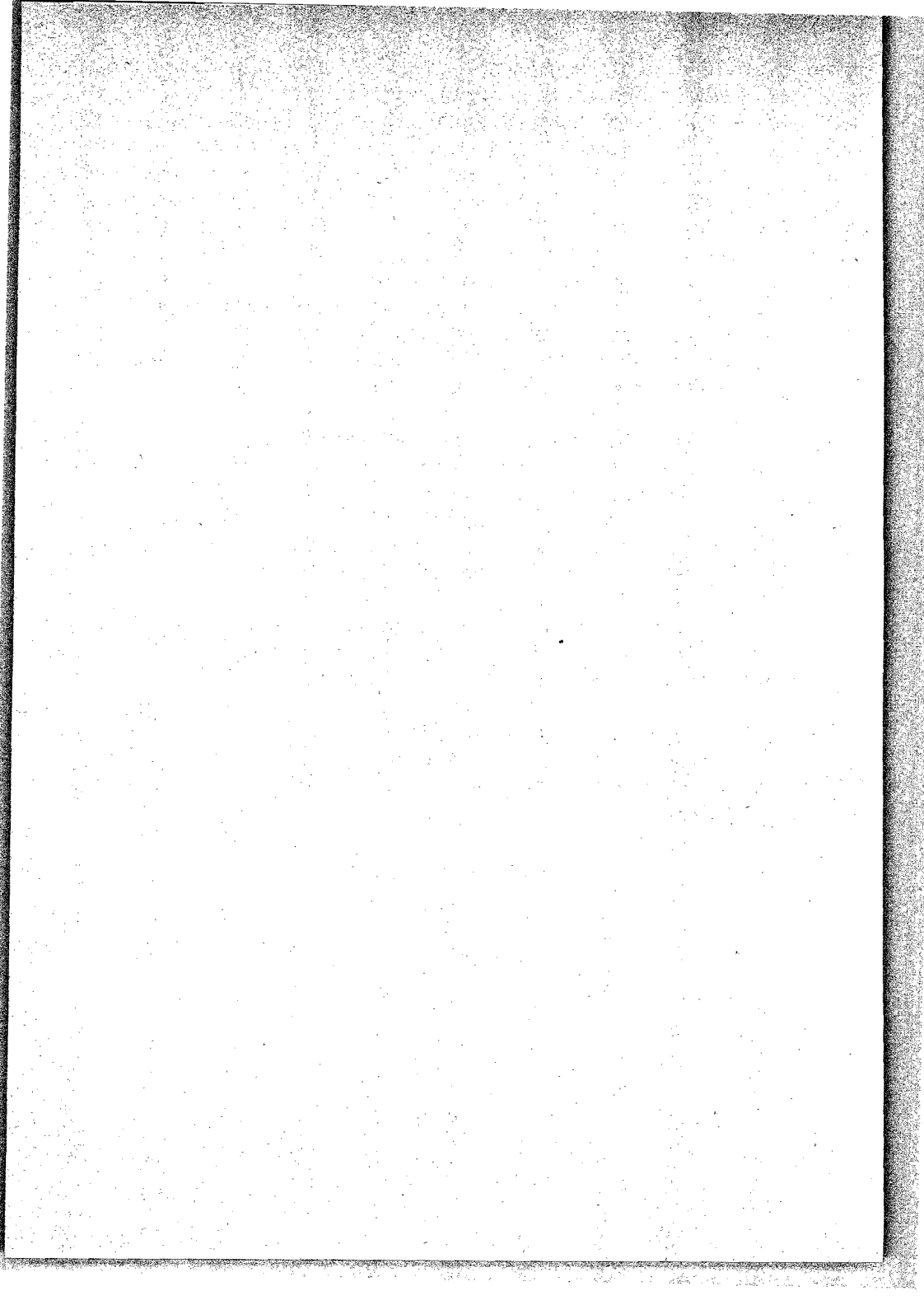
guide, (time and place of the interview are agreed upon by both of them), and as a general rule to attend the weekly sharing meeting of the retreatants. This meeting is not necessary or essential to the Exercises. Nowever in practice, we notice that the help of the group for the experience of the Exercises in daily life is extremely important. So now if they cannot attend the meeting most of the time, we do not accept them. In these meetings we start with a revision of their life in small groups of 2 to 4 people by means of questions which we offer them. Then there is an instruction or input by one or two of the guides (the content has been decided in the meeting of guides). Finally there is Mass for the whole group.

This is how we work in the Tokyo area, and now we have started in the Osaka area too, though with less frequency. We insist that with this way of making the Exercises they have not experience the whole of the Exercises but just a small portion of them. We invite them to repeat the experience in the following year or so.

Most of the retreatants receive very great graces and become very deeply rooted in life - perhaps even more than one could expect from a closed 8 day retreat.

We welcome any criticisms, questions or suggestions. We know it is not the ideal way, but we do find it is feasible at the actual state of growth or our community towards mission.

Isidoro Ribas, s.j.



LIST OF FORMATION MATERIAL
(Available in English)

1. What are the Christian Life Communities (CLC) ?

- "General Principles" US\$ 0.50
- "General Principles and Deepening understanding of the General Principles" 2.00
- SURVEY (An overall view of the CLC formation process with its aims, means, phases of growth, content and method.) 3.00
- "God works like that: Origins of the CLC"
Fr. Louis PAULUSSEN s.j. 1.50
- "The CLC World Community: Origin and meaning of Providence '82".
Fr. Juan OCHAGAVIA s.j. 3.00

2. Basic CLC Formation Documents

- "Christian formation according to the Gospels"
Card. Carlo Martini 2.00
- "Who are you Ignatius of Loyola"?.
Fr. Jean-Claude DHOTEL s.j. 4.00
- "Towards CLC: Beginnings and growth".
Fr. Juan Miguel LETURIA s.j. 2.50
- "Guideposts for a Group" (Program for the initial phase of adult CLC formation, a practical guide for 10 meetings by French CLCs). 2.50
- "Formation Document N.1" (Outline and Pedagogy -used at Rome and Manila- of an intensive introductory course to CLC). 2.00

3. On Mission...

- "Formation Document N.2" (Outline and pedagogy of social insertion session focused on Mission). 2.00
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- "Putting Gospel Values to Work" (Practical helps for growing in total liberation).
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- "Prepare the way" (Some methods of preparing for the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius). 2.00
- "Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life: Witness and reflection" 2.50

5. Complementary formation material

- "Human Community or Church of God?".
Fr. Jacques TRUBLET s.j. 4.00
- "Centred on the Eucharist (John Paull II's Letter to Card. Knox for the Eucharistic Congress at Lourdes 1981 and Fr Arrupe's address to a group of young people where he gives a personal testimony of the power of the Eucharist) 2.00
- "Sense of the Church". 1.50
(By an international Working-group)

6. On Youth Formation

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 - 3 - Commitment
 - Second Cycle: also a set of 4 booklets 11.00
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 - 7 - Mission and Service

7. Other Documents

- "On the Road of the Beatitudes: A life style for today". Fr. José Antonio ESQUIVEL s.j. 1.00
- "An Ignatian Witness" (unedited texts). Fr. Horacio DE LA COSTA s.j. 1.50
- "CLC and Married Couples: Some Witnesses". 2.00
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