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PRAYER OF PAUL VI
FOR THE III LATIN AMERICAN
GENERAL CONFERENCE

Listen, O God our Father Almighty,
to the prayer of this People,
who as your sons worship you,
praise you, and love you.
Confirm, O Lord, our faith.
Grant us the strenght to profess it sincerely
and spread it enthusiastically among all men,
your sons and our brothers.
Bestow on us, most merciful Father,
the hope that does not disappoint,
the hope that is guaranteed us by the ministry
of the holy church of Your Son
and our Lord, Jesus Christ.
Affirm us in that charity which is above all
riches
and is poured forth in our hearts
by the ineffable grace
of the Holy Spirit.
Enlighten, Lord, our Pastors,
so that, in union with the See of Peter,
they may give a new impulse to evangelization
in our continent of Latin America.
May this prayer of ours
find support in the motherly intercession
of Mary most Holy
and of the saints, our protectors.

Amen

WHEN ARE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES "IGNATIAN"?

Reflections on the uniqueness and the manifold quality of a method.

Alex LEFRANK S.J.

I - ON THE NOTION "SPIRITUAL EXERCISES"

The history of a term

To this day, the term "Spiritual Exercises" awakens mixed feelings in the minds of many. They recall those two- or three-day affairs when they had to silently sit through the sermonizing of a priest who wanted to stir them to life in Christ.

The word "exercises" has been accepted and applied in this general spiritual sense for centuries. It refers to a wide variety of practices: spiritual activities such as reading of Scripture, vocal prayer, meditation, mental prayer, contemplation. But it also meant even exercises of a physical sort that formed part of monastic routine: manual labor, fasting, penitential practices, etc. It was not until the 14th and 15th centuries, when Devotio moderna, that movement so important in the development of Christian Life, appeared on the scene, that there developed a more systematic organization of such "exercises". It became customary to arrange various exercises in sequence, thus developing a kind of "way", the terminus of which was union with God.

The influence of Devotio moderna reached Spain. Cisneros, the Abbot of Montserrat (died 1510) published a work entitled "Exercitatorium", which borrowed heavily from the abundance of "Books of Exercises" which were so popular in the Devotio moderna circles. Ignatius accepted the influence of this tradition already during his three day stay at Montserrat where he prepared for the general confession that climaxed his conversion. He was probably influenced by it later during his time in Manresa and Barcelona. Out of his own spiritual and apostolic experience there came what we today call the "Book of the Exercises".

With the spread of the Jesuit order, these "Exercises" of Ignatius have overshadowed the formerly popular broader use of the word. And so it came about that "Exercises" have been simply identified with "The Exercises of Ignatius". And because it is always easier to be able to deal with living and constantly changing reality by keeping it in a neatly labelled drawer, so for the last four hundred years everything that came out of the drawer marked "Exercises" by way of adaptation or simplification was simply tagged with the name of Ignatius. Only in recent decades has there been any thought given to these origins. We are trying now to reach a fresh grasp of the fundamental dynamic of Ignatius' Exercises.

The way Ignatius used the term "Exercises"

The declaration which Ignatius makes in the first sentence of the Spiritual Exercises makes it quite clear that he used the term "exercises" in the broadest sense of the word.

"By this name of Spiritual Exercises is meant every way of examining one's conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying, vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions, as will be said later. For as strolling, walking and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies, and, after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul, is called a Spiritual Exercise." (S.E. no. 1).

On close inspection, three points stand out:

- (1) Ignatius defines a goal for the Spiritual Exercises: "to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul".
- (2) In consideration of this goal, an order is established, that is, a sequence of exercises: "preparing and disposing the soul (a), to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies (b), and, after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul (c)".
- (3) A number of expressions indicate a wide variety of

spiritual activities: "every method", "other spiritual operations", "any method". The particular bodily exercises mentioned have only the nature of an example rather than to be understood synonymously. In this way, the Means-End relationship is stressed, which finds expression throughout the book. Means are helps to reach an end, no more and no less. Likewise, it is clear that they should be used flexibly, not rigidly.

Ignatian Exercises - a definite method?

When we take "Spiritual Exercises" to mean simply the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, we are departing from the language used by Ignatius himself. As he saw it, spiritual exercises were just different ways of "preparing and disposing the soul". Can we say, as a consequence, that there is simply no such thing as "the" Exercises of Ignatius?

With this question, we touch upon a basic tension that is present in all retreat work. On the one hand, there can be no question of looking for a single method, worked out in all details, fitting all persons, all times and situations, the perfect observance of which guarantees reaching the goal. On the other hand, this does not mean that there are no structures and norms to be taken into account. When we pay attention to such structures and norms, there is developed something that could be called a method.

The word "method" means, with stark literalism, "after-way". Method is a way that is entered upon to go after a goal. Pioneers discover a way, they lay out the way which others can follow after. In the life of the spirit, we call pioneers "masters".

Ignatius was this kind of master. He took great pains and suffered much to find a way to the goal and groped his way step by step. In the so-called "Pilgrim's Report" (usual English translation: Autobiography) he described the way he followed in his search. This narration is the best commentary on the Book of the Exercises (1). Ignatius was

(1) For the connection between the Autobiography and the Exercises, cf. the stimulating book of Leo Bakker: Freiheit und Erfahrung. Echter Verlag, Würzburg, 1970.

very conscious of the fact that this was his way, and he was not prepared to open it up indiscretely and without adaptation to others. And still he felt that the experiences which he gained in this way could be of service to others. What was the last thing in his mind God gradually brought him to: guiding others to seek and move along their way.

Are there then "the" Exercises of Ignatius? They exist as the once-for-all way that Ignatius himself travelled. In this sense they do not exist for others. They exist as a collection of hints and suggestions for teaching various exercises which Ignatius learned from his own experience and that of others. These are set down in the Book of the Exercises.

Of course, "the" Exercises of Ignatius do not exist as a lived reality, simply in the form of a collection of concrete directions set down in a book. What comes from these suggestions and introductory hints in terms of lived spiritual activity and concrete experiences-- is that they are very different for each person. Out of the sequence of these exercises and experiences develops each time the way of the concrete exercises of a human being.

It is clear that Ignatius too thought in this way as evidenced by two characteristics of the text of the Exercises. First of all, both in the different parts and in the connection of them to form the Book of Exercises, there is an impression of an unfinished work. There is no fully developed "closing experience". And especially, the interrelation of the different kinds of teachings and suggestions is never clearly expressed (2).

The text makes it very clear throughout that the suggestions and the guidance to be given must always be adapted to the particular situation of each exercitant. The

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- (2) To this group of instructions and rules also belong those of "the three modes of prayer" (nos. 238-260), the rules "for dealing with scruples" (nos. 345-351), and finally the rules "in order to have the true sentiment which we ought to have in the Church Militant" (nos. 352-370).

first edition of the book was limited to a controlled number of copies and Ignatius was careful to see that the only ones to get their hands on the book were those who knew through experience how to use it. What he meant by "knowing how to use the book" was respect for the fact that all the suggestions are merely means to an end. The only one to possess this quality is a companion who is well oriented to the goal of all paths, to God the Lord, for whom no means in itself is important.

II - EXERCISES AS A WAY OF CONVERSION

Limits

What then are "Ignatian" exercises? The first answer is: a sequence of exercises which have a relationship with Ignatius' Book of Exercises. But in line with the observation already made, one should add to this answer: a slavishly literal fidelity to the text, because it ignores this means-end relationship that was so important for Ignatius.

Still less deserving of the Ignatian title are exercises that make use of only a part of the teachings, say, the parts rich in content, and totally by-pass other parts, for example, the introduction to methods of prayer or the rules for discerning spirits. This way of using the Exercises, is unfortunately still all too frequent today. The attempt is made to present in five to eight days all the meditations -- or, at least, the most important ones -- that are originally spread over thirty days. In this way the repetitions of contemplations are precisely left out. The inner growth of prayer can take place only here as a by-product. The goal of the several stages of the Exercises, which are so eloquently described in the Book of Exercises (called "Weeks"), are absent and are not even experienced in part. Certainly, this form of exercises can result in a prayerful deepening of the essential elements of faith. It can be a prior reflection to the real path to come, which path at most can only be partially indicated in such a retreat. In all cases, such a form of the exercises can at most be only an introduction to the Ignatian Exercises, a quick glance of the same. But it cannot be equated with the Ignatian Exercises(3).

(3) The title of the Exercises "Spiritual Exercises" to conquer oneself and regulate one's life without determining oneself through any tendency that is disordered" (n. 21).

If we then reject a partial interpretation of the book of the Exercises, i.e. which treats only one aspect of them, how can Exercises of less than thirty days duration really be called Ignatian? It seems to result, from the above reflections, that the factor of time plays an important function. But these are few who are inclined or even able to devote a whole month to doing these Exercises. Hence, are they or are they not Ignatian Exercises, these retreats that last ten, eight, five or three days? By raising such questions, regarding the name to be given to these abbreviated forms, what is intended is to focus attention on the real goals and the consequences of a method.

Criteria

To find the answers to these questions, we must reflect on the fundamental purpose of the Exercises, and then see how this can be maintained in different situations.

This purpose may be summed up in two points:

- (1) It deals with the whole man, with the "tendencies (dispositions of his life" (no. 1). Putting it negatively, it does not deal merely with new learning, nor with something intellectual. The Exercises are not concerned with questions of culture. To tell the truth, the boundaries are flexible, because the desire for thought is part of man and may not and should not be excluded from the Exercises. But the primary aim - which may also help engender new learning - is an essential encounter (meeting).

What we have just said also allows us to distinguish between the goal of the Exercises and other projects related to man. We recall here other creative exercises or those purely of body-therapy. Even though these more clearly manifest the difficulty of fixing boundaries when they too release other energies of man, they differ in the stress on mind and will, and yet indirectly work towards the same total goal.

In positive terms, the Exercises serve the purpose of Integration. Man, as a whole, needs to be healed. As if radiating from one center, all man's elements, energies, instincts, aptitudes, forms and areas of experience need to be basically reached and reordered. This already brings to the second statement regarding the fundamental objective of the Exercises.

- (2) The Exercises open to man the promise of salvation and the need of conversion. They offer to help him find his vocation and achieve it (cf. nos. 1 & 21).

With this is implied a process of transformation, which goes deep to the very foundation of the person. Sacred Scripture puts it clearly: "For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here" (2Cor 5: 17). "I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my Spirit in you, and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances." (Ez 36: 26-27).

In this way the Exercises differentiate themselves from courses which do not have a deep transformation of the participants as their end. This is the case with some courses on meditation. Then the question quickly follows: is it possible to attempt this transformation which goes beyond mere external changes? Besides, is it not precisely the aim of meditation to free man from action and to make him capable of change?

This question takes us to the very heart of our present problem. A point already made by Ignatius and his Exercises, it touches in general the very essence of all spiritual exercises.

Interdependence between activity and passivity

To throw light on the depth and breadth of the change implied in the exercises, we have used the words of Saint Paul "a new creature". Now, only God can create in the proper sense of the word. Hence everything depends on the grace of God and on it alone.

Then, how can man change himself? He is incapable of lifting himself by the hair of his head. More so, he needs to have a passive attitude, to let himself be worked upon, to give himself up.

On this point, frequently, the accusation of voluntarism has been made against the Exercises. A sense of fatalism has been attributed to the efforts and strengths of

the spiritual life. This criticism refers to a very narrow practice of the Exercises, earlier referred to. But if one considers the Book of the Exercises and the very attitude of Ignatius, as much as it is known to us, this criticism turns out to be a one-sided view of things. An unprejudiced examination shows precisely the mind of Ignatius: in the annotations to the Exercises, he combines perfectly activity and passivity in man, his total dependence on God and his relative autonomy, the universal action of God and the cooperation of man, finally grace and liberty. In the following pages, we would like to add something of a response to the question as to how Exercises given over a relatively short duration may become viable and Ignatian.

To make oneself disponible and receptive

Firstly, the very definition of the Spiritual Exercises is "every way of preparing and disposing the soul" (no. 1). This defines the work of the exercitant as being a practice, according to the desired direction, of an activity of man which orients him towards receptivity.

In this way man realizes his role and place as creature, where as before, moved by his own energies and original sin, he was inclined to be independent, to work by himself, to secure his existence by his own action. The key theme of spiritual poverty is here insinuated.

The correctness of our interpretation of "disponibility" (no. 1) as receptivity is confirmed by a declaration of Ignatius about seeking and finding the will of God which indicates the very end of the Exercises: "... In the Spiritual Exercises, when seeking the Divine Will, it is more fitting and much better that the Creator and Lord Himself should communicate Himself to the devote soul, inflaming it with His love and praise and disposing it for the way in which it will be better able to serve Him in future" (no. 15). This is beyond doubt one of the most important texts of the whole book of the Exercises. It is in conformity with his own experience and expresses here his faith in the immediate action of God towards the exercitant. As the whole internal dynamics of the Exercises shows, especially concerning the "election", this does not imply a grace from God which works unconsciously and automatically. But it implies a personal relationship with God which man experiences as a being immensely loved. This text also attributes the quality of disponibility to the action of God.

Awareness of the above theme is expressed by Ignatius in the "general preparatory prayer" which he consistently prescribes from the first to the last contemplation. "To ask grace of God our Lord that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty" (no. 46). This prayer sums up the "Principle and Foundation" (n. 23) and inspires the whole course of the Exercises. This gives an idea that man in so far as he is a creature of God is not just in an abstract plan, but included in a prayer relationship. In a word, Ignatius wishes to introduce the exercitant to a movement from independent action to humble reception.

To ask what I desire

For the rest, he takes seriously the creaturehood of man as a positive fact. He does not remain content with the preparatory prayer mentioned, which could be said to contain the whole dynamic of the Exercises. If a man really lives this prayer, he lives the very goal of the Exercises. Other schools of spirituality are happy to show the infinite distance between God and creature and invite one to allow oneself to sink in this abyss. Ignatius does not deny this, but by means of stages he introduces this to his disciple.

His pedagogy is seen especially in the Second Prelude or particular preparatory prayer as opposed to the First or general one. The preamble begins: "To ask God our Lord for what I want and desire" (no. 48). But do not our will and desire ultimately lead us to God? Referring to Augustin it can be quoted: "We are made for you O Lord, and our hearts are uneasy until they find their rest in you" (Confessions I, 1). Every petition would then be superfluous: because either our desire is in its origin the desire of God, or it is false. Speaking abstractly there is nothing to contradict such logic.

But the concrete situation of an exercitant is to be always on the move. As yet he has not found God so as to experience a true and pure desire of Him. He is still walking in a mist. If he aspires to joy, this desire is still weak. For one thing he is still inclined to be self-seeking. Ignorant still of that infinite space as the secret place of love, he is not able to lose himself in it. Nevertheless, even though still insufficiently purified, this desire still motivates him towards God. With the suggestion he gives "to ask for what I want and desire", Ignatius puts the exercitant on the move.

The choice of subject

The instruction continues: "The petition has to be according to the subject matter; that is, if the contemplation is on the Resurrection, one is to ask for joy with Christ in joy; if it is on the Passion, he is to ask for pain, tears and torment with Christ in torment. Here it will be to ask shame and confusion at myself, seeing how many times I deserved to be condemned for my so many sins" (no. 48). It may be asked here if the exercitant can really petition and desire what the subject matter of prayer prescribes. Is not the content of the matter the only guideline in the Exercises?

This question concerns the duty of the retreat guide, which precisely consists in presenting to his exercitant at each moment the right matter. Now, a subject matter for prayer is right and fitting when it corresponds to his actual desire. Thus the exercitant is slowly prepared to reach and receive this corresponding satisfaction. To fulfill his duty, therefore, the guide has to have an exact perception of what is going on in the exercitant. Otherwise, on the one hand, the guide may underestimate the grace, which as an initial desire and aspiration, is already making itself felt in the exercitant, or on the other hand he may spoil the whole process by suggesting subject matter for prayer which does not correspond to any desire or only to a very weak one at best.

But when saying "The petition has to be according to the subject matter..." (no. 48), Ignatius indicates that for him this matter is not just some collection of truths put together, but it is something connected with and corresponding to the growing desire of man. In the passage quoted above, "subject matter" refers to the great stages or "weeks" of the Exercises. Far from being an intellectual content, this matter is a happening in which the exercitant participates. To be more exact, in so far as he is a baptized and redeemed Christian, the exercitant is already part of this happening: of the Fall and of the Sin of the World; of the Redemption by the Cross, and of the Resurrection of Christ; of the call to follow Christ and participate in his life, in his passion and resurrection. It is also implied here that the exercitant completes this happening in his own life and thus he transforms himself.

(continued on p. 21)

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

CRISES

It's already a well-recognized fact that, in any growth process, there are various steps, patterns of ups and downs. We have seen this to be true of community as well as individual growth. And it is true in all areas: "spiritual, apostolic and human" (GP 11). In the Spiritual Exercises, we see the outline of our growth process in capsule form; St. Ignatius did know the effects of consolation and desolation, of joy and crisis, on the human spirit in its journey toward God, self, and others. Briefly stated: when a person starts becoming more aware, the healthy first step is to emphasize the positive: God created and loves me... yes, I am lovable!... there is beauty in every person and creature. And the healthy next step is to see the other side of that coin: I do refuse to love and to be loved... there is pain and sickness in every person... the world around me is in agony:

But we know that seeing things as they truly are does not lead to despair - rather, to a real encounter with the Lord, as Savior. Isn't that part of the meaning of "the truth will set you free"? (John 8:32)

Most of the time, we want to see only certain aspects of ourselves - we limit our consciousness to our strengths, good points. The negative as-

pects are pushed deep down in our consciousness. We don't look at them, and yet paradoxically, our actions and total self-image tend to be more dominated by them. At the moment when we do confront our weakness consciously, we can know we are reaching our deepest core; we are looking at our whole self, honestly. It is at this point of our selves that we can encounter God most directly, for it is where He dwells and is waiting for us.

Such critical confrontation is not a one-time experience, but one which occurs throughout life in various ways, ultimately forming us as mature Christians. In the following article, the question of young people's crises will be treated. Adolescence is the time of emerging personhood, and therefore marks the first manifestation of personal crises as such. If a young person receives good help at this stage, he or she is off to a positive start in growth toward freedom, faith, and love.

Editor

In this article, we are speaking specifically about high school students, ages 14-18. We should note first of all that the young people in question are basically "normal", are not psychologically or emotionally disturbed in the formal sense. Such special cases, of course, require professional help.

Our reflections here flow mainly out of some years' experience of living with such students as a prefect in a dormitory, and teaching various subjects, in Japan. We won't, then, be dealing with crises of CLC groups as such, but with those of individual persons. Rather than concentrating on the nature of particular crises in detail, more over, we feel it's important to speak of the guide's role—the kind of help which he or she can best offer the young person. And we hope that this may be applicable to many kinds of situations. (These reflections are also inevitably influenced by our own struggle as a young person, being led finally, to Christianity. The struggle still continues!)

Types of Crises (briefly)

At the risk of oversimplification, we are grouping

youth's problems under the one heading of "identity crisis". The following are some of its principal aspects:

1) Past traumatic experiences.

Various sad events of childhood, whose scar still remains in the here and now.

2) Emerging personhood: who am I?

Deeply connected with the young person's (unconscious) beginning search: who is God?

3) Peer pressure.

Social relationships - conflict between desire to be an individual and fear of being different.

4) Family relationships.

Resentment of authority; no longer child, not yet adult; wanting to behave as adult, to make transition from dependence to independence - yet, not knowing how. Projecting the resulting frustration on family members. If parents are immature, problem is prolonged.

5) Relationship to "the world".

Society's problems are usually most reflected in youth, who are vulnerable and caught up in today's rapid changes. Most seem confused by too many new phenomena and choices, for which they have no suitable model to follow.

In the end, each individual's problems are unique; therefore, we don't go into detail here. It's up to the guide to help each one identify his/her own specific needs.

Role of Helper

This leads us to the central point: what kind of help is truly effective for a young person going through a crisis period?

In our experience, the first step is simply becoming a friend. Being a friend in this sense has many implications: gaining the trust of the young person; showing that one is available and willing to listen; creating an atmosphere of "I like you, and I'm here if you need me".

This will hopefully encourage the young person to start expressing his problem, gradually. This very expres-

sion is the first step toward solving the problem. From the outset, the good helper finds himself spending much more time listening than talking. If the guide can ask relevant questions at this point, though, it is a big help to the person who is trying to clarify and understand his situation. Here and throughout, it's good to keep recalling that a guide doesn't try to figure out the person's problem and offer ready-made solutions, but tries to help the person discover those things himself.

After the young person has been led to express several aspects of his problem situation, the guide's best help might be to broaden the problem's perspective. He can offer objectivity: "Don't be afraid. You're not the first one to have problems, and I know you can overcome yours." The guide might mention how certain artists have expressed their feelings; e.g., some young person might find his or her own emotion in Pascal's "Pensées" - the fear of human instability. Another person might find his feeling echoed in Beethoven's heroic expression of struggle to become oneself. (Popular music may appeal more to some young people, so the guide should be sensitive). Most young people would like to feel that their helper really understands the problem with his heart and head, sympathizes with him, yet remains calm and detached enough to avoid pushing in a certain direction, or projecting his own needs on the young person.

At this point, the young person has admitted his/ her own weakness quite openly. Now, more than ever, he realizes his need for help and healing. This is the point at which the guide could mention Scripture passages like: "I have come to call, not the self-righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13) or "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness, power reaches perfection" (2 Cor 12: 9-10). The guide could act as a facilitator in the young person's encounter with God, e.g., encouraging him to bring the problem to God in trust and confidence, depending on His love.

Next is the step of identifying possible solutions. The guide might ask, "What do you think would change this situation for the better?" The young person will probably be able to think of several possibilities himself. If he can't, the guide could offer various suggestions (e.g., "The next time that fellow calls you a name, why don't you try doing..... and see what happens?"). At any rate, after a little advice and encouragement, the young person chooses one or more possible ways to approach the problem's solution.

The sequence of steps mentioned above need not take place in the formal structure of a counseling interview. Some young people feel freer in a light, informal situation. In fact, a couple of the young person's friends could be present. Some problems, e.g. peer pressure, may actually lend themselves better to treatment in a group.

After several days, some contact in the form of a follow-up should be made. Without this, the young person would tend to lose faith in the guide's concern for him. In addition, more help is certainly needed. The two should evaluate together the outcome of the young person's attempts. The guide could tell what type of help is needed from that point. After the youth has experienced a certain amount of success in dealing with his/her problem, the guide may ask him to find a meaning in this experience.

Outcome of crises

Overcoming a crisis can have many meanings, some of which can be seen immediately, others are recognized only in the larger context of a person's life. Among the immediate results could be:

- that the person comes to know himself more deeply.
- that the person experiences an increase in self-confidence, wonder, and gratitude; hopefully, there can be a conscious encounter with the Lord Jesus.
- that the person has a greater ability to encounter others in a real way.
- that the person is somewhat prepared to deal with future crises.

Long-term results might include:

- that the people around the individual could also be helped, e.g., his parents.
- that the young person could ultimately make a good decision regarding his/her vocation.
- that the young person could ultimately make a contribution to healing society's wounds, e.g., becoming a good parent, seeing his profession as a Christian ministry, etc.

In summary, the responsibility of a youth guide is not small. He or she is one of God's instruments of salvation, both for the individuals he helps, and through them, the world of tomorrow. For this important work, the guide needs to be rooted in prayer, a sacramental life, and ideally in a faith-sharing community.

John Shin-ichi AIURA

News from China

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING...

Without striving for anything great and striking, but with a little prayer, "Lord, not our will, but thine be done," we passed the year.

Owing to examination pressures, most of the secondary Catholic students in Taiwan found difficulty in going to Sunday masses, not to say joining religious activities. To arouse their awareness to live as true Christians, to bear witness to Christ, therefore, becomes the main theme of our two formation camps in the summer, with over 100 college students participating who have a thirst for spiritual formation. In the camp, we spent 7 days discussing the mission of the Christians, our country, the Church, our personal relations with God; and to have a better grasp of the CLC movement, we studied the General Principles. Group dynamics serve to help members to understand the strengths and importance of a community too. Over 80% of the college CLCers have to undergo these formation courses which are considered to be basic ones here.

In Taiwan, there are 36 college units with over 500 members. Formation camps helped members to have the sense of unity in the Lord besides regular functions which are held by each unit individually.

Under the guidance of three guides, 20 students who made the 8 days individually-guided SE experienced deeply God's graces and loving care. They realized how important the Spiritual Exercises are in helping them to discern the will of God.

A leadership camp was organized and it lasted for 3 days. Short though it might be, participants were able to share their joys and difficulties at being servants of the Lord for his brethren. To be a leader is no easy task; it means to be with the members, to be understanding, and to lead the group in the direction of the movement in our country.

30 students spent a month together known as the "month

of living faith"; by this they experienced a community living and studied theology courses with themes on society, on God, on Christ and mission of the Church. Members found the course of great benefit to them.

With the new scholastic year, each unit decided on a half-year plan varying from General Principles' study to self-understanding according to their needs. Each unit aims at being Christocentric despite differences in formats of meetings which are held weekly.

We try to live our CLC way of life through participation in apostolic work such as visiting orphans, those in the homes for the aged, and the sick. We work in parishes and co-operate with other Church organizations.

To enable more members to serve in the CLC, an annual election was held towards the end of the year. Formation camps, a leadership camp and 8 days' Spiritual Exercises were organized during the Christmas season. These are formation activities too valuable to be omitted.

Apart from regular meetings, joint meetings and functions with adult CLCs are held; or famous theologians are invited for talks which help to reinforce unity in our movement. In Taiwan, the CLC movement is growing rapidly, every year one or two new units are added to the list.

We met with difficulties; we offered them to the Lord; we know these are the best gifts we can offer, we believe Taiwan is a place blessed by the Lord, we aspire for tomorrow. We have confidence to go ahead, we long more earnestly that CLC in other countries can share with us their experiences and advice. We welcome questions and letters, and share with you our experience because in the Lord, we are a big family!

Helen TANG

CHRISTIAN LIFE GROUPS IN ZAMBIA

I wish to share with all the CLC how Zambia CLC-which is predominantly school Youth CLC - celebrated the 1978 World CLC Day.

About 200 youth CLCers assembled in Lusaka on April 1st to explore the theme "Human Dignity". The day was filled with talks, discussions, reflection, sketches and all kinds of sharing.

Lunch was a spectacular scene in a large hall where we sat in groups of twenty-four, thus bringing to one's mind that vivid picture of the story of the feeding of the five thousand. We communally ate the "five loaves and two fishes" which we managed to fetch through individual contributions. We all ate and were satisfied!

The theme was divided into:

- Human person as such
- Human person as a civic (political) being
- Human person as an economic being
- Human person as a social being
- Human person as a religious being.

Posters declared:

"Love speaks all languages"

"Caution! Human beings here, handle with care."

"Peace and love should be our main goal" etc.

Highlight of the day was the Eucharistic celebration. The echo today is "That day, April 1st, must be lived" in our communities. What a challenge!

Of the many observations it was clear that there is a first world in the so called third world and third world in the so called first world. For a follow-up we surely have to be practical in our findings; therefore guidelines to help in synthesizing our direction were distributed.

Yes, Jesus came to reveal Human Dignity, but what is our role in the mission? Spectators? Reporters? Security men? or players? Have we said - and done - yes or no, or simply abstained?

Vincent SANDAMUKA

Hence, the petitions formulated by Ignatius always refer to affective experiences: "shame and confusion"(no.48), "a growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins" (no.55), "a fear of the pains" merited (no. 65), "that I may not be deaf to his Call" (no. 91), "interior knowledge of the Lord...that I may more love and follow him" (no.104), etc. The general history of salvation has to become a personal history.

To answer now the question on whether the transformation of man can be understood as the goal of the Exercises, it may be said that God has wanted to save man and has brought this about in salvation history and now He offers this to every man. God awakens in man a desire for this salvation. To work out a transformation of man is not then to do just something external, but to help him to realize fully this interior call or offer.

Practical conclusions

We have tried to follow Ignatius in his spiritual process. Our findings result in the following practical conclusions:

- (1) The whole Exercises have the nature of a preparation for this salvation event. In this way man functions each time more and more in his role as creature and so makes himself free to receive.
- (2) The exercitant's genuine desire is the sign that points to each stage in the Exercises. In it he shows he accepts the gratuitous invitation of God to man. This desire, however weak and divided, is nevertheless real in the awareness of man. In the measure in which this desire is taken up in prayer and deepened in a confrontation with the subject matter of salvation history, it grows and is purified; it encourages man to greater and greater generosity with God.
- (3) As a whole, and also at each stage, the goal of the process of the Exercises is an experience of faith, of salvation or of grace. Already known or arrived at, the history of salvation given by God to man as a gift has to become a personal fulfillment. Hence the eventual outcome, which is affectively expressed, takes on a particular importance. The exercitant has to be encouraged to allow himself freely to feel, to express, to perceive and to participate in this experience.

- (4) In developing the subject matter of the Contemplation God, who is really active, makes himself visible to the exercitant. By means of meditation and prayer, the subject matter becomes a happening which takes hold of the exercitant. This matter now developed follows, on the one hand, a line of continuing the experience of salvation history and, on the other hand, of making the exercitant more receptive. This receptivity is manifested in his desires.
- (5) The work of the guide will be to facilitate the practice of the right exercise (cf. 1), to understand the evolving desire of the exercitant (cf. 2), in order to be able to suggest the right subject matter (cf. 4) in such a way that the experience mentioned becomes a possibility (cf. 3).

Only after assuring this fundamental position is it possible to justify the diversity in practice regarding the Exercises. If they move within this triangle of the desire of the exercitant, the subject matter of salvation history, and finally the role of the guide, then only can such practices become truly useful and merit the name of Exercises in the real Ignatian sense.

III - PROCESS OF THE EXERCISES AND COMMUNITY

Until now, we have kept absolute silence on an essential question in the practice of the Exercises: the question of Community. Ignatius almost knew of no other form than the Exercises given to individuals (4). In this form the particular situation, desires, experiences of the individual exercitant could be well considered.

But even the above practice gives rise to some critical questions. Is not the individual too much separated from real life, which above all, consists of a social existence of man? Is not salvation history in the Old and New Testaments precisely that of a people and therefore of a Community? Does not this isolation weaken the element of Community?

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- (4) Already in the time of Ignatius there existed, in the most strictly cloistered monasteries of contemplatives, the practice of giving Exercises in common.

Yet if one studies the history of the Exercises, it was not these questions which made the early practice to be abandoned. It was rather the impossibility of spending so much energy, time, etc. Not that the Exercises given by groups or common instructions had any more of a community emphasis than those given individually. Only recently, given a better awareness of the loneliness of man and isolation of Christians, this community consciousness has been introduced and even adopted as a goal. How can this change be justified still keeping in mind the objectives of the Ignatian Exercises?

The basic determination of man for relations

When searching for an answer, perhaps more than one, we must consider the relationship between the Exercises and the human condition, i.e. evaluate the importance of community.

Man comes from a community. He is born into a family and in the community of this primary group he makes his first and decisive experiences. The experiences that follow he assimilates only in the measure in which they refer to the first. Spontaneously those feelings and reactions which he lived during his first years in the company of parents, brothers and sisters are awakened. Thus, for example, an adult relates to a person who resembles his mother in the same way as he did to her, or at least it is his tendency. To grow in maturity implies becoming aware of this pattern of dependence on early behaviour and to work at eliminating it.

In this first community one also absorbs the fundamental experience of values: security, love, goodness, etc. or the absence of these. This means that life could have been experienced as a threat and other people as threatening. Ordinarily our first experiences are at the same time positive and negative. These experiences determine our fundamental orientation in life, which in turn determines our behaviour and our choice of a "concept about the world".

Healing and conversion have evidently to keep these realities in mind. How? "Can a man re-enter his mother's womb-and that of his family-and be born anew?" asks Nicodemus. The answer of Jesus speaks of rebirth. If healing must be more than a mere pain-killer for wounds, if conversion must be more than some superficial resolution, if vocation must be more than just an attractive ideal for an

individual, then the Exercises must reach to these very foundations of man, determined by these basic experiences in which the deepest orientations of being are rooted. Can the Community help in this?

The role of the community in the process of transformation

In one stroke we immediately exclude here previous experiences where the faculty of communication in man is so blocked or so rigidly fixed that only therapy can reestablish it. In general, one can assume the fact that these fundamental experiences are such that one can draw sufficient vital energy from them and support oneself with them. This energy exists at least as one's hope and desire so to say. The Exercises awaken this energy and strengthen it. This conforms entirely with the ways of God in the history of salvation. He gives a promise and a definite experience, to put one on the move. Then He guides one through the desert to the great experience of Himself.

To fortify and to nourish

The community can provide the needed security. It can be for the individual a great space in which the voice or message of each member finds an echo. Man aspires to this. He would like that others understand him, give him recognition and approval. This security gives strength and confidence to the personal experiences, however weak they may be, helping one to enjoy them, to repeat them, to expand on them with new strengths. This same security is obtained in community if, by his attitude, the guide creates a climate of mutual acceptance in which the participants willingly share their feelings and experiences. Here the principles that experiences in themselves are neither good nor bad and that different experiences may be simultaneously felt in a common situation must always be remembered. After an initial reluctance, the participants will plunge into sharing their impressions, their feelings and their thoughts.

In this way, meditation and communication are linked and mutually support each other. In Christian terms, the testimony of faith of one individual is a nourishment for another. This environment is destroyed by discussions in which reasoning pretends to be of greater importance. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the periods of sharing are preceded by periods of silence. Often it is better to first have an exercise - meditation, reflection, prayer

- and only afterwards to have mutual sharing of experiences. Such exchanges are not judged; only questions of clarification may be asked. Here the guide should evaluate if the exercise corresponds to the level of the participants and then he should know how to proceed.

The community dimension to strengthen individual experiences is likewise indicated when the Exercises speak of arousing joy in faith, a feeling of hope, of a coming satisfaction. Every intense spiritual process begins this way. Based on the book of the Exercises we can call this the "foundation phase". When this type of Exercises lasts, for example, for five days, some small crisis may arise: a day of distaste for prayer, a clearer perception of one's imperfections, or sadness due to the sufferings in the world. As long as these negative experiences do not touch the deep wounds of our first experiences which we carefully guard in secret, they cannot bring about a more fundamental positive situation.

Radical heal

But if we really want to be cured and to convert ourselves, those deep wounds have to be uncovered and healed. For this, is not the community a help? If yes, how?

I do not feel I am capable of giving a clear answer applicable to all cases here. On one hand experience shows that it is difficult for an individual alone with his guide to solve the problems of life. A community can provide certain help in this case because here the individual learns, in a climate of mutual trust, what the others think of him. This feedback leads to the question of the difference between one's image of oneself and how others consider him. If the climate of trust - in God and in others - is sufficient, one can slowly uncover the wounds which before have remained hidden under a false image of oneself and of others. This freedom paves the way for an experience of healing and of mercy which God always offers, but which man is not capable of receiving as long as he claims to be healthy and problem-free to himself and before others.

In this process, the community plays a double role : to provide a climate of trust and openness, but also to be a mirror in which I can really discover myself. The quicker the first function is fulfilled, the more rapidly and easily will the second become operative.

This comparison implies having an experienced group. As it is frequently said, its goal is "to improve the perception of oneself and of others and thus to be able to modify one's behavior". In fact, a community where this is realized, as described earlier, is a kind of experienced group. The individual not only perceives himself through others or through this goodness in the group, but, what is even more important is that he sees the reality of a God of healing. This can also be experienced by others in the group as God works in all simultaneously. But there is more hope for this effect if the whole group believes and prays openly. Such a group will reach deeper levels of self-awareness because mutual trust is more active.

When and how can such a community be formed? If one considers the diversity of groups and of communities in the Church, one does not have the impression that such communities are common. And often, the groups that do meet in faith frequently remains just in the first gear, as action or discussion groups, as belonging to that "foundation phase" mentioned above. Besides the desires of the participants and the help of the guide, a certain amount of time is necessary for a climate of faith and trust to develop. Such a community will be more likened to a group that has already been meeting for a long time - a CLC group, a parish group, a religious community - with relatively frequent and regular meetings, rather than a group of exercitants brought together for eight or ten days. Sometimes, however, the Exercises can give rise to an exceptional situation where strangers meeting only for this period of time, without earlier or continuing acquaintance of each other, may actually go deeper in this healing experience than that which daily routine life permits.

A combination of both makes it easier to move in the described direction: a long standing group functioning as a faith community and having deep experiences of the foundation phase, now makes a close retreat of eight or ten days as a group. Of course the private and individual interview with the guide is never discarded, neither is the time for individual personal prayer left out so that each participant may follow his own process of healing and conversion. However, these Exercises are not just community exercises, nor do they have as their goal the formation of a community, even though it may be expected that much is produced in this direction.

Listening to a personal call

The text of the Book of Exercises mentioned at the start gives a third and final goal for these Spiritual Exercises: "Every way...to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul" (no. 1). The phase in which this goal is dealt with comes only in the "second week" of the Exercises. The individually guided Exercises is surely the form most convenient. Here it is implied that one perceives the absolutely personal and individual call of God made in a dialogue of love between Christ and the individual. In this a community can naturally only act as base and witness, but never play the role of go-between (mediator).

Let us now try to summarize. We have asked ourselves whether a community can help in attaining the goal, if it can be useful for making the Spiritual Exercises. The answer is neither yes nor no. Experience shows that a community is useful for the experiences of the foundation phase; few experiences, moreover, testify to its usefulness in the exercitant's search for the way he must follow in the crisis phase. During this phase a community may even be dangerous. It is not easy to create such conditions of community that can prove such intervention to be good. If this seldom happens, then in the crisis phase the Exercises have to be individually made. This is because a real community is difficult to come by or build up. Therefore, if it is a question of an exercitant responding to a call and to his personal vocation, then the individually made Exercises at this point is certainly the better form.

This points again to the importance of knowing at least a little of the personal history of the exercitant if one wishes to give him Exercises that will really help him towards his salvation and vocation. From this flows the importance of contacts with the exercitant before the Exercises - oral contacts, which are preferable, or by letters. In the latter some simple questions may be found useful. The Exercises are a means. All means are relative, i.e. they must relate to the goal which they serve. If our goal is an infinite God, then any means naturally lose their importance. But since the goal is great and beautiful, it is good to pay attention even to the less important means, if only they can make us be better prepared.

THE GLASS WALL

Nearly a century ago the monster had paid his last visit to the same area and for the last few years the monster had again been warming up. But none had expected his sudden emergence on the new-moon night of the 19th of November 1977-when the vast population was asleep. The ghastly demon of a cyclone with a disastrous tidal wave, like a nineteen feet high black-glass-wall struck the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh.

The wave of destruction would have hardly lasted for four hours, but after the whole commotion was over literally not a single blade of grass stood upright. Apart from the loss of crops, trees, animals and even men, in many places whole villages have been wiped out. There was no trace of their existence anywhere. It is unimaginable that on that very spot many people had lived. Such was the destruction of the tidal wave and the cyclone. The woe of sorrow is written across the faces of those alive and those who escaped from the clutches of death.

You must have surely read, heard and seen in the newspapers, radio, magazines, and films about this devastating cyclone. Since early December many voluntary agencies, together with the government, have been working round the clock to bring a new life to the people by giving, first, an immediate relief as a first-aid, and then the rehabilitation programme which is a long-term project.

Well, this cyclone and the destruction caused by the tidal wave, posed to us (the Juniors of Mt. St. Joseph, Bangalore) one of life's many challenges. We have as in the past tried to live our lives and tried to say, whenever possible, a big YES to life. Because we realized that if we become unaware and unwitnessing to the things around us then we become not only insensitive but also untrue to ourselves. We, sensitive as we are, could not allow this to

happen to us. So on the 28th of December 1977, we boarded the bus for Vijayawada and headed towards the Catholic Relief Camp at Nagayalanka.

Immediately on our arrival we were divided into four groups: three for the sub-centres, i.e. Mandapakala, Georgepetta and Kammanamolu and also for working at the base camp at Nagayalanka. In all, we worked in about fifteen villages and several hamlets in the worst hit areas. The work of relief and cleaning the environment was difficult owing to the nasty thorns everywhere and the uncooperative and at times querulous attitude of the people. But nothing deterred us from working for the suffering and helpless people. And our perseverance paid rich dividends.

There were various kinds of work which we did. For example:

- removing the dirt and filth from the villages, and cleaning the roads for communication and future relief work;
- burying and burning the corpses and carcasses;
- attending to the drinking water and sanitation problems;
- helping to make temporary thatched huts for all -because the government is taking up the project of building permanent pucca houses later;
- distributing clothes, the essential household goods, rations...etc.
- attending to the sick (the doctors from St. John Medical College did good work).

Then to make the people stand on their own feet, small kitchen-gardens, flower and fruit gardens were started afresh. This programme was taken up as a short term project, because until the desalination of the fields is done no farming is possible on a large scale. Besides these works, we helped the people to harvest and thresh the paddy left over after the tidal wave's onslaught. Through this program we helped many people by giving them jobs on a small scale.

After the day's hard work under the scorching heat of the sun, we got so tired that when we hit our beds we never knew when it was morning, unless some early bird (one of us) woke us up.

Well, many had come, worked and gone, and so did we. But the value of the work we did is nothing compared to what we received from the people. We really had the EXPERIENCE of our lives, one which we shall cherish always, and

this experience has made each one of us a little more mature, understanding, sympathetic, loving and responsive to the needs of our neighbours.

In the beginning the condition of the people was such that they seemed to be living corpses! They had no life in them after the shock of losing everything(literally!);that is, husbands or wives, all the children, houses, crops and all other properties. People did not seem to move nor did they feel like doing anything. At first, we were a bit discouraged by this lethargic attitude.As we went on working, meeting the people and reflecting,our attitude of anger towards them changed. We became more sympathetic and understanding. Then we began encouraging them.

The women-folk,as soon as they saw us(and even during our stay) would continually wail for their children -night and day.We did not know Telugu and thus found it difficult to say anything to console them. We blurted out something in Hindi but that was meaningless to them. The only thing we did was to stand by them with our heads down. There was complete darkness in their lives.

The fact that we stood by in their hour of peril, trial, desolation and despair, that we worked for them, that we prayed for them and with them, and that we were able to make them laugh, was our greatest contribution. To help us to encourage them, this thought that.."the web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and evil together" was a stimulus. We stood like beacon lights in their life's pitchdarkness. Through our work we were able to bring new light and hope into their lives, we showed them a new way. We were able to do that just because JESUS was with us. And it was He, the source of light,life and hope,who helped us all along. He was the Way.

There were a few instances at the camps where we really helped them fight fear. Whenever the people saw dark clouds often accompanied by strong wind they left their huts with a few belongings in a bag and ran, wailing and crying, to the main road or to the camp centres. During those moments it was hard for us to convince them that nothing would happen.But after a lot of persuasion and firmness we were able to quieten them and send them back. Such was the effect of the cyclone and the tidal wave. They seemed to be helpless in the grip of some all-powerful monster, their limbs paralyzed,their minds deadened.They were badly caught in the quagmire of defeatism and fear, and life hardly remained in them.

When we stood by them during those hours, we tried our best not only to fill them with bodily courage but also to remove the fear from their minds. It was our job to make them fearless. The dominating cause of inactivity in the people was fear---pervasive, oppressive, strangling fear; fear of loss of husbands or wives, relatives and children; fear of loss of house and property, and above all the fear of losing their lives. They always felt that they were on the brink of death. It was against this all-pervading fear that our determined efforts and hard work gave them support and filled their minds with courage. Be not afraid! Was it so simple as that? Not quite. And yet fear builds its phantoms which are more fearsome than reality itself.

With quite some effort we were able to lift this black pall of fear, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. As the fear was a close companion to a real - life - experience, so courage, determination and hope followed when fear was driven out. Not that the people become courageous overnight but a sea-change was visible by the time we left, for fear and furtive behaviour had lessened.

In the beginning the people just used to stand and watch us. They thought that we were harijans (low-caste) and later they mistook us for government employees, but when they got to know us their misgivings vanished and they very happily joined us for work. Now their response was such that the whole pattern of work changed: "from they helping us" to "we helping them"! Now, of course, the work of rehabilitation progressed faster. They began to take responsibility for their own work and the future.

When we completed building huts in certain villages, namely Georgepetta, Kammanalolu and Chintakola, a priest amongst us would bless all the houses and their family members. After this little ceremony we used to have a little get-together with the people, and this made them forget their past (at least for the moment!) and filled their hearts with happiness and hope for the future. It encouraged them to live a new life-a new beginning! When we were leaving many of the people wept; their hearts were filled with gratitude. Our parting was very touching and memorable.

An after-thought: I worked for almost three weeks, I worked so much, but what did I gain? ... I felt that God really loves men and that His Spirit in men can never be conquered and crushed; that people, especially the poor,

have tremendous strength to bear all kinds of suffering. The poor people deprived of everything through centuries of struggle against their environment had been taught to endure; and even in nothingness, desolation and despair, they had a certain calm dignity, a feeling of submission to an all-powerful fate.

I wondered whether I could act as they did. Those people of Divi Taluk area have lost everything from relatives to property--now they are busy building up a new life. Their lives, which were once sheer darkness, are now full of hope and joy. Once again we can see the unspoilt and pure smiles on their faces. This, I feel, shows man's greatness --his indomitable spirit! If he falls, he will rise again with greater courage and strive harder than before to lead and live a nobler life--a life of hope and trust in the Lord!

For... *"Life is no idle dream, but a solemn reality,
based on and encompassed by eternity."* ...

so the struggle
to live goes on
...

Joe ALEXEI S.J.