

HOW TO GIVE A RETREAT

Practical Notes
by
Ignatius Iparraguirre S.J.,



1959
ST.XAVIER'S HIGH SCHOOL
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TO THE IMMACULATE

TRANSLATOR'S S PREFACE

The retreat movement has in the past few years made great progress especially in Europe and America, and we hear in some countries of thousands of retreats being given each year. Still the movement does not produce the fruit that could be desired, or even expected from it, because of the shortage of Retreat Masters. Some, in fact, are giving as "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius", retreats that would be emphatically repudiated by the Saint.

It is to make good this shortage of properly trained Retreat Masters that Father Iparraguirre (an acknowledged authority on the Spiritual Exercises) published, a few years ago, a small work called "A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises." It was meant to initiate young priests and seminarians in the art of giving retreats, and it described the structure and leading trends of the Ignatian method.

Encouraged by the enormous success of this first work, Father Iparraguirre produced another book, meant to help priests already engaged in retreat-work. It is this book we now wish to present to English-speaking readers. The book is a practical manual, containing hints on matters, some of which might at first appear trivial, but which play an important part in the success or failure of a retreat. The Retreat Master will find in it valuable suggestions on the techniques of the Ignatian Exercises, and their adaption to concrete conditions. Through a sequel to the previous work, Father Iparraguirre's new book is self-contained and can be read and studied independently.

We wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to Father Chianese (author of the English translation of "A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises"), for having allowed us to reproduce the first part of the "Key" in our publication. The fact that this has been done almost verbatim accounts for the small divergencies in our translation from the Spanish original ("Direccion de una tanda de ejercicios").

Finally we express our thanks for the valuable suggestions made by those who have read through the manuscript.

Bombay, 18th March 1959 ANGELO BENEDETTI, S.J.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A few years ago we issued a small publication under the title "A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises" to help young priests and students of theology to prepare themselves to give retreats.

The booklet was meant to serve as a kind of preliminary course in the training of Retreat Masters, and thanks be to God, it has fulfilled its mission yielding abundant fruit. We have therefore thought it expedient to publish a kind of second course, so that those who have already begun preaching retreats may gradually perfect their technique.

This is the aim of our present publication. Wishing to be practical, we have divided the whole matter into different days. This will enable the young Retreat Master to find with ease what is most suited to each moment and situation.

As a model we have planned a retreat of five days, for in our opinion it is hardly possible to fit the whole Ignatian structure into a shorter span of time, without depriving it of much that is valuable. Three or four days may be sufficient for a fruitful retreat on the First Week alone. Here we have a higher aim in view, namely, to give to young retreatants proper guidance in the solution of their personal problems. For this they need an amount of time and leisure, which they hardly find in a four-day retreat. Even in five days many aspects will have to be dealt with in abridged form; nevertheless sound spiritual training added to the experience gained in former retreats will enable the exercitant to solve the problem of his future for God's glory, the good of his soul and his own happiness.

This booklet then, forms part of a campaign to promote retreats of five days. We have frequently received from foreign countries letters of congratulation and approval of this good custom, so widespread in Spain, and we have been asked by no means to abandon this providential practice. A four-day retreat is an excellent preparation for a five-day one; but when a young man wishes seriously to find a definite solution to the central problem of his life, he should devote to it at least five days.

Here we are concerned chiefly with retreats to youth, because it is generally in this type of retreat that the new Director will make his debut. Later experience will teach him how to adapt the Spiritual Exercises to other groups.

Many of the practical remarks made in this booklet are directive in character. They are meant to serve the beginner as a guide. It is obviously impossible to give all possible practical hints. We have

accordingly taken useful recommendations from the old Directories and the most important commentators. This, we trust, will help Retreat Masters who still lack sufficient experience, lest they waste time, to the detriment of the retreatants, and themselves too late or perhaps never receive the right orientation in the preaching of retreats. Later each may choose for himself the method which best suits his character and genius.

As a rule the ideas have been put in a schematic and concise form; but whenever the difficulty or depth of the subject required it, we have felt obliged to present a fuller explanation.

Within the framework of five days we have exposed the fundamental points that form the structure of the Exercises. This would have remained incomplete, had certain ideas already developed in "A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises" not been repeated here. We have deemed it expedient to reproduce the entire first part, so as to have everything together, even though this matter belongs to a previous stage in the training of the Retreat Master.

We trust that these pages, garnering as they do what is best in the most famous writers on the Exercises, will guide many in their task of preaching retreats, and help them to attain some measure of perfection in the technique of the Ignatian Exercises.

May all those who feel moved to spend themselves in this providential method of spiritual regeneration, fulfill their mission with the help of the Sacred Heart and the most Blessed Virgin, to whom we entrust this training course during this Marian Year dedicated to Her Immaculate Conception.

Ona, 11th February 1954.

IGNATIUS IPARRAGUIRRE, S. J.

CONTENTS

Page

Translator's Preface

Author's Preface

FIRST PART

PREREQUISITES FOR THE DIRECTION OF A RETREAT

I. Short bibliographical notes

II. Fundamental steps in the formation of a Retreat Master

III. Ignatian Method

IV. Adaptation

V. The making of an ideal Retreat Master'

VI. Explaining the points for the meditation

VII. The object of the Spiritual Exercises

VIII. Remarks

SECOND PART

THE WAYS OF GIVING A RETREAT

Introduction — First Duties of the Retreat Master

1. He must show himself a Retreat Master

2. He must study the disposition of the retreatants

3. He must teach them how to make the examination of conscience and meditation

4. Observations

First Day

I. Order of Time

II. Meditations: Principle and Foundation (1st. part)

Page

A) THEORY:

1. Its raison d'etre
2. The basic truth of the Principle and Foundation
3. Practical consequences
4. Logical consequences
5. Some applications of these consequences

B) PRACTICE:

1. Varying importance of the elements
2. Ways of proposing the Principle and Foundation

III. Instructions

IV. First meditation in the evening: Indifference (second part of the Principle and Foundation)

A) THEORY

B) PRACTICE

1. Psychological preparation
2. The explanation itself

V. Second meditation in the evening: Triple Sin

VI. Other exercises

1. The Morning Offering and the Exercises
2. Mass
3. In the dining room
4. Rosary
5. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament
6. Way of the Cross
7. Reading
8. Final act before retiring
9. Taking down notes

VII. Remarks

Second Day

1. Order of Time

II. Development of the 1st Week

A) SCHEME

B) FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME:

1. End of the 1st Week

2. Steps for the attainment of this end

3. First part of the plan: that I may fully understand the disorder.

III. Meditation on the Triple Sin (1st day, fourth meditation)

A) THEORY

B) PRACTICE

IV. First meditation (2nd day): Personal Sins

A) SECOND PART OF THE PLAN: TO EXPERIENCE DETESTATION FOR SIN

B) PRACTICE

V. Second meditation (2nd day): Repetition on sins

A) GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

B) PRACTICE

VI. Instruction for the second day

VII. Meditations of the evening (2nd day): Eternal truths

VIII. Other exercises:

1. Prayers for the dying or preparation for death

2. Final exercise before retiring

3. Contact with the Retreat Master

4. Questionnaire

Third Day

Page

I. Order of Time

II. First meditation (3rd day): Last judgement

III. Second meditation (3rd day): Mercy of God

IV. Instruction for the 3rd day

V. Other exercises

1. Confession

a) Time

b) Preparation

c) During Confession

d) After Confession

2. Act of Thanksgiving

3. Final exercise before retiring

VI. Synthesis of the fruit of the 1st Week

VII. Meditation after Confession: Kingdom of Christ

VIII. Entrance into the 2nd Week

1. Connection with the 1st Week and with the general object

2. Drawing closer to Christ gradually and progressively

3. Psychological preparation for the meditation

4. Function of the parable

5. Application to the Eternal King

IX. Fourth meditation (3rd day): Incarnation

Fourth Day

I. Order of Time

II. Contemplations for the morning (4th day): Infancy of Our Lord

1. Its connection with the consideration of the Eternal King

2. Function of the contemplations of Our Lord's Infancy

3. Steps towards this gradual union

The method for this progressive union: Contemplation

5. How to present the mysteries of the Infancy

III. Instruction (4th day): Vocation, Election of a state of life,

IV. Evening meditations (4th day): The Standards and Three Classes of Men

1. From affection for the person of Christ to affection for His tastes and principles
2. Revision of criteria in the light of Christ's principles
3. Plan and focussing of the meditation on the Two Standards
4. Practical hints on the meditation of the Two Standards
5. Meditation on the Three Classes of Men
6. Practice and adaptation of the meditation on the Classes of Men
7. The Three Ways of Humility
8. Tactics to be employed in order to obtain this new affectionate attachment to the true doctrine of Christ

V. Election or Reform

1. All the Exercises hitherto have served as a preparation for the Election
2. Necessary requirements for the Election
3. The Election
4. Theory of the Election
 - a) Preamble
 - b) The matter for the Election
 - c) The actual Election takes place at one of the Three "Times" given below

VI. Other Exercises

1. In general
2. Time for the Election or Reform of life
3. Contact with the Director
4. Holy Hour

VII. Parallelism between 1st and 2nd Week

Fifth Day

I. Order of Time

II. Contemplations for the morning (5th day): Passion of Our Lord

III. End of the 3rd Week

1. Gradual increase of freedom and spiritual simplification suggested by

St. Ignatius

2. A few indications regarding the fruit of the 3rd Week

3. The contemplations on the Passion

IV. Instruction (5th day): Perseverance

V. Contemplations in the evening (5th day): Matter of the 4th Week

1. Remarks regarding the end of the 4th Week

2. Subject matter for the contemplations of the last evening

VI. Last Contemplation to Obtain Love

1. Purpose and brief analysis of the Contemplation to Obtain Love

2. Synthesis of the Contemplation to Obtain Love

3. Way of exposing and adapting the Contemplation to Obtain Love

VII. Other exercises

1. General atmosphere of the Exercises

2. Offering of one's election and resolutions

3. Meeting the Retreat Master

4. Final Act of Thanksgiving

FIRST PART

PREREQUISITES FOR THE DIRECTION OF A RETREAT

1. SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Text

The basic edition is that of *Monumenta Historica S.J., Exercitia et Directoria* (Madrid, 1919), which reproduces the manuscript used by St. Ignatius, commonly known as the "Autograph," which contains the corrections made by St. Ignatius himself, and both Latin translations approved by Paul III on 31st July 1548. One of them is most probably the work of the Saint himself, whereas the other, more elaborate, is attributed to Fr. Frusio. Finally we have a third translation (in Latin) by Fr. Roothaan which is strictly literal.

English Translations of the Text

1. The Jesuit John Morris, a convert and old secretary of Cardinal Wiseman, published in 1880 a translation, which was re-edited several times and has been considered the standard text for a long time. Fifth Edition, London (Burns, Oates and Washbourne), 1952.

2. The Anglican author W. H. LONGRIDGE has added to his translation of the Text and the Directory, a valuable commentary with historical and philological notes. London (Robert Scott) 1919. Fourth Edition, Mowbray, 1950. A detailed review of the book is given by "La Civiltà Cattolica" 3 (1922) 54-59 and "Manresa" 2 (1926) 368-373.

3. FR. ALOISIUS AMBRUZZI has published his translation under the title: *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. With a Commentary*. Mangalore (St. Aloysius College) 1927. Second Edition, 1931.

4. FR. RICKABY has also a good translation. London (Burns, Oates and Washbourne), 1915. Second Edition, 1923.

5. Leaving aside the Benedictine publications on the subject by Stanbrook and by Thomas Moore, one of the most recent and notable translations is that of the American Jesuit Louis PUHL: *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, A New Translation. Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, Westminster (Newman Press) 1951. This translation is based on the most modern studies on the Ignatian Text. This is not always literal but contains paraphrases which render the meaning clearer.

Development of the Exercises

It is a well known fact that the substance of the book of the Exercises was composed by St. Ignatius at Manresa in 1522, but still in the form of notes which he had jotted down for his own personal use. During the remaining years of his life St. Ignatius perfected them in very minute points. Certain similarities have been discovered between the Exercises and some ascetical writers, such as Dionysius the Carthusian, Varazze, Kempis and other representatives of the "devotio moderna", but this dependence, if any, does not really touch the very soul of the book. The substantial structure has as its only source the supernatural enlightenment the Saint experienced at Manresa.

Dealing with these problems we have such authors as Hugo RAHNER: *S. Ignace de Loyola et la genese des Exercices* (Toulouse, 1948), pg. 139. (Translation from the German. It is clear and concise) ; HENRY PINARD DE LA BOULLAYE: *Les Etapes de redaction des Exercices*. Seventh Edition (Paris, 1950), pg. VII-68; and PETER DE LETURIA: *Genesis de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio y su influjo en la fundacion de la Compania de Jesus*, Vol. 11 pg. 3-58 (Rome, Institutum Historicum S.J. 1957) ; Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.J. Vol. XI.

History

H. BERNARD: *Essai historique sur les Exercices Spirituels de S. Ignace (1521-1599)*. Louvain, 1926 pg. 262. An essay containing propositions often inspiring, though devoid sometimes of sufficient foundation. IGNACIO IPARRAGUIRRE: *Historia de los Ejercicios espirituales*. Two Volumes, Rome-Bilbao, 1946-1954.

Theory

The chief commentator is FR. LUIS DE LA PALMA (✠ 1641) in his classical work: *Camino espiritual de la manera que lo ensena San Ignacio en su libro de los Ejercicios*. Other older writers deserving special mention are Fr. Aquiles Gagliardi (✠1607): *Commentarii seu explanationes in Ex. Sp.* (Brugge, 1882) and Fr. Francis Suarez (✠1617): *De Religione, Tract. X, lib. IX, chap. 5-7*.

Good commentaries have also been written by A. Le Gaudier (✠1722), Gaspar de Figuera (✠ 1637), Nicolas Lancicius (✠1652), Ignatius Diertins (✠ 1722), L. Belecus (✠1757), B. de Moncada (✠1768).

Among the modern writers we have: JOSEPH CALVERAS: *The Harvest Field of the Spiritual Exercises*. (Bombay, St. Xavier's College, 1940). P. ROIG: *Teoria de los Ejercicios Espirdtuales* (Barcelona, Libreria

Religiosa). FRANCIS CALCAGNO: *Ascetica Ignaziana P. I. Docurnenta.* (Torino, Marietti, 1936). IGNATIUS IPARRAGUIRRE: *A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises*, (Calcutta, Little Flower Press, 1955). We wish also to mention the names of Ponlevoy, Mercier, Meschler, Marchetti, Ferrusola, Denis, Nonell, and among the most recent, Valensin and Pinard de la Boullaye.

Commentaries with Exposition

There is still another group of authors who comment on the theory of the Exercises and at the same time give an explanation of the meditations and documents. They are very useful guides when there is question of actually giving the different meditations. Among the modern English authors we may point out: HENRY GABRIEL: *An Eight Days' Retreat for Religious.* Fifth Edition (New York, P. J: Kenedy and Sons, 1937). Practical, revealing deep experience of spiritual problems. ALBAN GOODIER: *The Life That is Light.* 3 vols. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1935). More extensive use is made of Scripture. A. Ambruzzi: There are various works, chiefly the one cited above and *A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.* Third Edition. (Westminster, Maryland, The Newman Press). He has some other very useful works in Italian, particularly, *Esercizi sacerdotali secondo Sant' Ignazio* (Vincenza, Favero, 1956). Francis RANCIS Xavier McMenemy: *Eight-Day Retreat* (Milwaukee, Bruce 1956). Peter Sontag: *God's Ways with Men.* Vol. I, *A Retreat for Layfolk* (Patna, Catholic Mission Press, 1945). This author together with McMenemy follows very closely the Ignatian Text. Sontag is more practical, McMenemy more 'technical'. Sontag's book is much more apostolic in outlook.

Other works, translated into English are those of Hummelauer, (Westminster, Newman Press) ; Longhaye, (London, Sands and Co., 1928), abridged edit.; Meschler (Woodstoeck College, 1889).

Among those foreign works not yet translated the following are worth mentioning: IGNATIUS CASANOVAS: *Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Barcelona, Edit. Balmes, 1945). Francis X. Calcagno: *Ascetica Ignaziana* 3 vols. (Torino, Marietti, 1936). Leone Rosa: *Il mese degli esercizi spirituali di sant' Ignazio* (Bassano del Grappa, Villa di S. Giuseppe, 1948). Henri Pinard de la Boullaye: *Exercices spirituels selon la methode de Saint Ignace* (Paris, Beauchesne, 1951-1954). Great variety of schemes and meditations. He develops the spiritual doctrine contained in the Exercises rather than the meditations themselves. Felix Mollat:

Maitre, ou habitez vous. Une retraite avec Saint Ignace de Loyola. (Paris, Aubier, 1958.) Very good applications to our modern life. Antonio Encinas: *Los ejercicios de San Ignacio*. explicacion y comentario manual para formar directores y para la oracion mental diaria. Segunda edicion (Santander, Sal Terrae, 1954) bring out clearly and forcibly the value and meaning of Ignatian principles contained in the text. Antonino Oraa: *Ejercicios espirituales de san Ignacio de Loyola*. Explicacion de las meditaciones y documentos en ellos contenidos. (Madrid, Razon y Fe, 1954.) Quinta edicion. Abundance of documents and valuable quotations.

See also the works of Frs. Calveras and Valensin quoted above.

Catalogues of Bibliography

The most important ones are those of Pr. Raitz Von Frenzt: *Exercitien-Bibliographie*, (Freiburg, 1940.) and Fr. Ignatius Iparraguirre: *Orientaciones bibliograficas sobre san Ignacio de Loyola*, (Roma, Institutum Historicum S.J., Via dei Penitenzieri, 20; 1957) ; in pages 75-101 the most important works on the Exercises are given with an appreciation of several of them.

The monthly review *Manresa* prints regularly a bibliography of the current books and articles on the Exercises. The commentaries of Frs. Oraa (pp. 1424-1446), Orsini (fifth vol. pp. 1353-1369) and Pinard de la Boullaye also contain very useful bibliographies.

Fr. Canuto H. Marin in his *Enchiridion of the Exercises* has gathered almost 600 papal documents on the Exercises, besides several others written by Cardinals, Bishops and Superiors of Religious orders, to which he has added very valuable and enlightened notes. Its title is *Spiritualia Exercitia secundum Romanorum Pontificum Documenta* (Barcelona, Libreria Religiosa, 1941).

An abridged edition of this same work was printed under the title: *Los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola, Documentos Pontificios* (Zaragoza, 1952).

II. FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN THE FORMATION OF A RETREAT MASTER

1. A clear grasp of the closely-knit structure of the Exercises.
2. A deep assimilation of the leading Ignatian principles and of the spirituality contained in the book.
3. Ability to adapt these principles and this doctrine to each exercitant.

Here certain qualities come into play, some directly related to the Ignatian technique and others of a more general character. The latter include such things as the difficult art of a good conversationalist, of commanding the attention of an audience, of knowing the language and mentality of each particular audience, and an adequate knowledge of psychology, pedagogy and ascetical theology. Although *the formation of a Retreat Master must take* these qualities into consideration, we prescind from them in these notes.

Qualities which are directly related to the Ignatian Technique

1. *Continual and fervent prayer to Our Lord, to our Blessed Lady, to the Guardian Angels of the exercitants, to St. Ignatius, Bl. Peter Faber and other saints who are Heavenly Patrons of the Exercises.*

The direction of souls is an art of the supernatural world. Grace is the indispensable means to achieve even the most insignificant result in this field. Prayer therefore is absolutely essential to the Retreat Master. On the other hand, spiritual direction is an art and as such can and *must be learnt* at the school of the great Masters as experience teaches us.

2. *A personal realization of the methods and principles of the Exercises, practised and lived in ordinary everyday life.*

3. *A systematic and progressive study of the Ignatian technique.* It is this last point we develop in the notes that follow.

Study of the Text

How to study the Text (from the letter written by Rev. Fr. Martin, General of the Society of Jesus, on 1st March 1900):

a) Go through the whole book with great earnestness, pondering and meditating on it.

b) Grasp fully, and bring out the very deep meaning hidden in the words.

c) Know the common and ultimate end of the Exercises as a whole.

d) Know the end proper to each Week.

e) Know the end proper to each Exercise.

f) Discover: its inner force
its connections

the motives which may excite the various affections and by which the will may be drawn.

g) Lastly, explore every nook and cranny of this heavenly treasure-house.

An exhaustive study as just described requires "long, earnest and constant effort" (Rev. Fr. Martin).

Lest we should think this method proposed by Rev. Fr. Martin exaggerated, we must not forget that it is a question of extracting from extremely concise texts an untold wealth of deep spiritual doctrine.

This concise treatise in fact contains:

"The best I could ever wish, think and feel in this life, both for personal profit and as a means to help many others to gain yet greater spiritual fruit and advance yet further in the way of perfection" (St. Ignatius).

"All that could be needed for the spiritual instruction and interior life of the soul" (Suarez).

"Perfection itself, nay, the very peak of perfection" (Becano).

In short: *It is absolutely necessary* to have a knowledge of the Exercises which is both *scientific* and practical.

We require: A *scientific knowledge* of the end of each meditation, of the closely-knit psychological connection between the various exercises, together with knowledge of the point on which the whole affective force of the previous exercise gravitates.

A *practical knowledge*, so that having experienced *personally* the innate efficacy of each exercise we may be able to make their efficacy felt by the exercitant so that it penetrate his very heart.

We may quote St. Ignatius:

"The Spiritual Exercises are the most important spiritual weapon in the armoury of the spiritual life, and every Retreat Master should make himself an expert in the dexterous use of them."

This point is emphasized by Bartholomeo Torres, a most able defender of the Spiritual Exercises:

"Only he who has passed through this profound and sweet experience will be able to understand fully the meaning of the Spiritual Exercises and at the same time come to recognize the harmony existing between its teaching and that of the Gospels and the Fathers of the Church".

Very important practical rules for the study of the Text.

1. The most useful method to a deep study of the mind of St. Ignatius is to gather and *compare parallel passages*, namely, texts which express the same idea in a different way. St. Ignatius' expressions are very concise. To understand their full force, one should study the various ways in which St. Ignatius expresses the same ideas. Only then will one get at the nuance which lay at the back of his mind. The surest way to grasp his mind is to follow the guide of his words. We recommend for this research the dictionary written by Fr. Calveras, the notes of Fr. Roothaan and the text published by Fr. Denis.

2. *Study the relation of each expression to the meditation as a whole.* It is only by placing each expression in its proper context that we will be free from error in interpreting its meaning, and thus discover the secret of the Ignatian structure.

3. A necessary guide to a deeper understanding of the end proper to each day or week *is a study of the petitions and colloquies*, in which the Saint usually points out the fruit to be obtained. It will help to compare the various petitions and colloquies, noting how they gradually progress to higher things.

Reading thus, one will not be lost in sterile considerations, which have for their aim not so much the main fruit to be obtained, but side issues of secondary importance. These distract from or alter entirely the text of St. Ignatius.

4. In order to understand the Ignatian system of developing an idea and drawing the will, little by little, to the choice of that which is most pleasing to God, it is essential to follow the connections between notes, meditations and rules both in themselves, and in relation to the general end in view.

5. In short, the Director ought "to make himself *quite familiar with the text*", for "every time he reads it, he will draw from it new understanding and new light" (See Direct.) "Exercitia Spiritualia. . . . *fiant eis familiaria*" (Ratio Studiorum. 272. Sec. 1, Romae 1954).

Theoretical explanation of the text during the retreat

1. It is therefore necessary to understand thoroughly the text of the Exercises. Yet giving a retreat does not mean practising mental gymnastics on the exact significance of this or that sentence.

2. The study of the text, for the Director, should be a thing of the past; for the exercitant, it is at most something to be done later.

The latter ought to trust the Retreat Master as the "Praesupponendum" suggests. It is not a time for study and discussion, but a time for drawing spiritual profit.

3. The exercitant should be impressed by the command that the Retreat Master has of the meaning of the Ignatian text, and of the way he grasps the true significance of each document.

He should not feel ill at ease, as he would, were he to see the Retreat Master wade painfully through a mass of texts and quotations.

4. We would not exclude altogether philological and historical allusions. These may be made when circumstances demand it, for a better influence over the audience, or for a better understanding of a particularly difficult passage. They should be made only when necessary.

5. The usual way of proceeding should be to go *straight to the mind of St. Ignatius*, to the central idea of the text. To limit oneself to the words or the mere material expression is bound to make for dullness.

III. IGNATIAN METHOD

In what does it consist?

Let us say that it consists of matter and form. Its form is the general and immediate end of the Exercises themselves and of each document in particular; its matter is the documents themselves, meditations, contemplations, notes. Add to this as *conditio sine qua non* the activity of both Director and exercitant, according to the mind of the Saint. To give the Exercises, or even one of the meditations, for a purpose other than the one which St. Ignatius intended, is not to give the Ignatian Exercises. The same must be said of any attempt to obtain the end of the Exercises, or even of a particular Week, by proposing meditations foreign to the mind of St. Ignatius.

One should keep in mind that:—

The Exercises ought to be purely and exclusively "*Ignatian*".

a) "The Exercises of St. Ignatius will always remain one of the most efficacious remedies for the spiritual regeneration and right ordering of the world provided they be truly and *authentically Ignatian*" (*Pius XII*).

b) "This can be said in general, that one ought to adhere strictly to the annotations, rules and to the whole method of giving the Retreat, as given in the book itself of the Exercises.

"And our holy Father St. Ignatius' teaching is, that if all this is done faithfully, such meditation will prove very useful; and on the contrary, if it is neglected there will be little fruit and profit" (Gil Gonzalez).

2. "*Ignatianism*" does not mean repeating exactly word for word the words of the text. It may sound paradoxical, yet Retreats given in this way would be, in the great majority of cases, anti-Ignatian. The reason is that the text is being used for a purpose other than that intended by the Saint. He drafted the text for the use of the *Director*, providing him with the bare framework, the skeleton, the outline of fundamental points and guiding principles.

To propose, therefore, to the exercitant the Exercises just as they are would be like putting before him spiritual food raw and unprepared. An essential element, according to the mind of St. Ignatius, would be lacking, namely, that the Director should prepare and adapt each meditation to the present state of each exercitant. This is the reason why St. Ignatius usually speaks of one or of very few exercitants; it *is essential* to know the present state of his soul, if the Director is to choose that which is most suitable for his spiritual profit.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are intended for the individual. They include general norms, universal principles: but the application to the particular individual *is a work reserved to the Director*, who is in immediate contact with the exercitant and will be able to select the aspects which fit the concrete situation.

3. The text ought to be a *beacon to lead* us into the mind of St. Ignatius.

We may note that the force and lasting value of the Exercises derive – as Paul III once remarked – *from the pure evangelical stream which flows along the limpid channels prepared by Ignatius.*

"He succeeds in synthesizing the evangelical ascetic life efficaciously, fixing it in the eternal laws of the moral world and lifting it up to vital union with Jesus Christ and with the divinity itself" (M.H.S.J.).

As far back as the XVI century an anonymous author defined the Exercises: *"The Gospel itself rearranged in a practical system for us to learn a suitable method of work and prayer"*.

To give the Ignatian text a Gospel background, to make use of the light from the Gospel to illumine the Exercises is to grasp more and more the mind of St. Ignatius, to approach closer and closer the spring itself, living and rich in practical application.

4. What is truly 'Ignatian' is not to stop at the outer bark of the text, but through the text *to reach the mind of the Saint* in the basic principles of his spirituality. Only he who is imbued with the thought and mind of St. Ignatius can – without fear of going wrong or of altering the text – apply the method of the Exercises to the particular needs of each soul and draw from the Ignatian marrow that which is most suitable to each particular case.

5. In short, the mechanical repetition of the text is not Ignatian. One should *apply* the deep meaning hidden in the text wisely and appropriately to the needs of each exercitant that he may order his life and find a solution to the problems of his soul, all the while remaining "faithful both to the spirit and to the method of the Exercises" (Pius XII).

The deeper one assimilates the way of feeling, judging and appreciating things shown by St. Ignatius in his Exercises, the better one is able to transfuse into other souls the driving power contained in the same Exercises.

6. Such transfusion cannot be effected, unless one gives all the essential elements, and unless the application be made in the manner required by the Saint. Otherwise, there will not be adapting, but altering, and in many cases even disfiguring the text.

During the Congress on the Exercises, held at Barcelona in 1941, general agreement was reached on "the elements, according to tradition, held to be essential in order that the Exercises be given according to the method of St. Ignatius".

The essential elements are

1. The end and purpose of the Exercises (Ex. 1, 21, 233)
2. Steps in order to achieve this end
 - a) Acceptance of the ideal proposed to us (Principle and Foundation).
 - b) Purification of the soul through compunction (1st Week).
 - c) Total self-oblation to Christ (The Kingdom of Christ).
 - d) Knowledge and love of Christ (2nd Week).

e) Ordering of the three powers of the soul:

—of the intellect (The Two Standards),

—of the will (The Three Classes),

—of the heart (Three Modes of Humility).

f) Election or Reform of life.

g) Contemplation on the Passion and Resurrection.

h) Life of union and familiarity with God (Contemplation for Obtaining Love).

i) Enabling the exercitant to walk unaided along the path of virtue (Three Methods of Prayer, General Examen, etc.).

3. Method of giving the Exercises

a) Perfect recollection as desired by St. Ignatius.

b) Personal activity in the meditations.

c) Drawing down grace from God (colloquies, petitions and penance).

d) Constant reflection of the soul upon itself.

Watchfulness throughout the day, not only over the ordinary actions by means of the particular examen, but also a check on the meditations themselves by means of an examen proper to each. Constant attention to the interior movements of grace.

e) To explain the special rules (annotations, additions, etc.) necessary for the achievement of all this.

IV. ADAPTATION

1. Adaptation (*i.e. adapting the Exercises to the peculiar needs of each exercitant or group*) is one of the fundamental prerequisites of the *Ignatian* technique. And yet it is most *difficult* to handle.

2. "Such an adaptation must vary continuously even during the same Retreat, because it will depend on three elements which must never be lost sight of during the Exercises, namely: the exercitant, the enemy of our soul, grace"; and also on the Director himself (E. Hernandez).

It is precisely in the constant change taking place in these factors that the great *difficulty* of adaptation lies. Hence the need of experience, prudence and knowledge in order to choose the correct method.

3. In all adaptation the *end in view and the method remain unchanged*. The purpose of adaptation is precisely to see that the end in view is achieved by the application of this particular method. The Retreat Master will aim at solving the present problem of the exercitant, making use of those principles which can give the right solution, and in the exact measure demanded by circumstances.

4. If the proper adaptation is lacking, the truths of the Exercises will not be applied in their proper measure, and so will not yield the results expected. On the other hand, excessive adaptation will make us go beyond the limits prescribed by St. Ignatius, altering his mind and hence failing to obtain the fruits desired by the Saint.

5. "It would be an illusion to depart in any way from the genuine Exercises of St. Ignatius for the sake of variety and accommodation, and yet expect to obtain that fruit which the Exercises are wont to produce" (Rev. Fr. Ledochowski).

Pius XII gives a timely warning against the double danger in this regard. On the one hand, there is the danger of diluting the Exercises "in the colourless water of super-adaptation", and on the other, a yet greater danger of dismantling "some essential parts of the Ignatian machinery".

Such exercises are the result of an exaggerated striving for originality, of an excessive preoccupation with novelty both in language and composition.

6. "Not everything should be given in exactly the same way to everybody without any discrimination whatever; each one should, with the greatest prudence, be given only what is most suitable to his particular state.

"That such was the mind of St. Ignatius is inferred from the fact that he gave to the Retreat Master full freedom to alter or adapt any of the rules according to the type and the needs of his retreatants" (Gagliardi 41).

7. The criterion given by St. Ignatius in the Directory of Fr. Victoria concerning the proper use of the additions must be extended to all the other exercises. "The Retreat Master should beware of over-emphasizing the additions, or on the contrary, belittling their importance . . . (let him keep in mind) the different temperaments of the retreatants; he should not force those of a melancholic disposition to narrow confinement . . . and with like prudence he should deal with persons of a delicate constitution, or those who are not accustomed to these exercises, thus aiming in everything at their greater spiritual good" (Ex. 794).

8. "It would be quite *contrary to the spirit of the rules themselves*, to explain all of them to each and every group of retreatants, whatever be their state or condition, in exactly the same manner and order, as they are found in the book of the Exercises; it would be a great mistake indeed, to think that such was the mind of our Holy Father, so that he did not even allow the Director to take any other points but those given in the book. I would compare such a gross mistake with that committed by a person who wished to cure every patient with the same prescription" (La Palma, bk. 4, ch. 2).

9. Here we can only point out the *general principles* and factors which ought to regulate our adaptation in order to reach the golden mean. How to apply these principles in practice depends on the concrete circumstances of each case.

Such factors are:

a) *The natural* ability, health, education, character and peculiar circumstances of life of each exercitant (Ex. 18-20).

The particular end in view proposed to us concretely in the course of the present Exercises. "He who gives the Exercises should note how far he can proceed with the exercitant and where he should stop" (Gagliardi).

c) *The matter chosen* which should be adapted to the particular needs of the exercitant and moulded according to his reactions (Ex. 4, 17).

The spiritual atmosphere in which the exercitant moves and the means by which such a warm spiritual atmosphere can be made to envelop him.

V. THE MAKING OF AN IDEAL RETREAT MASTER

The ideal Retreat Master should have outstanding qualities. To know them will be a great stimulus for the prospective Retreat Master to *work without ceasing during the time of his formation* towards the attainment of such a lofty ideal.

Briefly, such qualities may be reduced to two:

- light and inspiration from the Holy Spirit.
- natural talent enriched by experience and personal effort.

He needs especially:

1. *Holiness of life.*

a) The Exercises are a life which one transplants to other souls. The higher the degree of supernatural life in the Director, the greater will be his ability to effect such a transfusion.

b) He who gives the Exercises is not in reality the Director. God Himself is the chief Retreat Master, in whose hands he is but *an instrument* (Annot. 15). And he will be the fitter instrument, the closer he is united with God Our Lord.

c) The Director should be a master of prayer, capable of judging the various motions of the Spirit in general, and especially at the time of the election.

d) "Ita devotionem debere affici ... ut ex abundantia et virtute suae devotionis et sensus in Christo, etiamsi paucis verbis agendum ipsi est, tamen *vim imprimere possit* ei quem instruit" (Nadal: Epp. Nad. 4,669).

2. The greatest attention is to be paid to the action of God in the soul. The Director "should think of himself as one who co-operates with Divine Grace" (Direct. Fr. Cordeses).

3. Discernment of spirits. "A wealth of experience is required from constant meditation on them and from dealing with souls" (Cordeses). Such a discernment "is a gift from above on which we should rely more than on any purely human effort" (Ceccotti).

4. *Knowledge of the spiritual life and deeper knowledge of dogmatic, ascetical and moral theology.*

5. An intimate *knowledge of the exercitant*, of his problems and environment, and of any other factor which may influence his progress during the Exercises: his likes and dislikes, his qualities.

6. Tact and prudence.

7. Variety and wealth of ideas and various expedients drawn, not from the substitution of any meditation given by St. Ignatius, but from the absolute command he has of the inexhaustible treasure hidden in them all.

VI. EXPLAINING THE POINTS FOR THE MEDITATION

1. *The fundamental rule is this: Teach both the manner and methods of praying.* The points therefore should be given with this end in view, at shorter or greater length according to the character of the exercitants. In

general, the length of time employed in giving the points will be in inverse ratio to their level of spirituality. Ordinarily, time can be shortened as the exercitant becomes more familiar with prayer. Less time is usually required for the exposition of subjects which are concrete and appealing to the sensibility, such as the Passion.

2. Wherever the exercitant is not yet able to do so, it is necessary to *instruct him how to pray* and examine his conscience. Some Retreat Masters have obtained good results with exercitants less accustomed to pray by making with them some meditations aloud. It is an excellent method to give at the same time both *theory and practice*.

3. Likewise the Director should insist, without fear of repeating himself, on the *personal effort* required from the exercitant during meditation, examen, free time.

4. It is necessary to work *with an eye to the future* and see to the instruction of the exercitant by providing him with that background of ideas on which the meditations are based.

"Let the Director, little by little and in small doses, as the occasion offers, instruct, encourage and direct the exercitant on points of doctrine, so that he may make progress and aim at greater things. This is the method used in teaching children any of the liberal arts; any other system will leave them with a muddled mind and hinder their progress. This is what the booklet itself of the Exercises demands; this is the reason why it is free of any set order and scientific method; these are supposed in the one who gives the Exercises" (Gagliardi).

5. The subject-matter must be *deeply assimilated first and the form duly prepared*, according to the character and to the greater or lesser ability of the Retreat Master,

The latter should prepare himself in all *earnestness* beforehand. If he has given the Retreat more than once, he can do with a shorter preparation; but he should *never omit the immediate preparation*. This must be a personal work. He may make use of notes or books, but what he himself has lived or assimilated will prove more efficacious.

6. The same *personal activity* should characterize the exercitant; otherwise we will not have the Ignatian Exercises. This is the reason why little or no profit is drawn from points which are stereotyped, and which the Director does not recast in the light of experience and of the needs of the exercitant.

7. Witty talk and flashy ideas should not become ends in themselves. They are only a means. Consequently, they are to be used just so far as they help

an idea to sink deeper into the soul. If the soul stops at the outer dressing, it will lose valuable time and will often be distracted. There is danger here of making an end of something which is only a means, though it be an important means.

On the other hand, one should cultivate this outward form especially when dealing with a cultured audience, for simplicity does not exclude brilliancy and style in explanation of points. It is a great advantage to be able *to express oneself in a short, clear and compact style*.

One point more to be noted: "after a very brilliant instruction the exercitant will be more interested in taking down notes than in meditating: we are not busy with literature, but trying to elevate souls towards God" (Frederich).

8. Moreover, one must avoid employing the time assigned for points, for an exposition of doctrines and theories, which though good in themselves are alien to the matter of the Exercises. It would be quite wrong, therefore, to make use of the Retreat in order to give to workers a course on sociology, to fathers of families lectures on education, or to youngsters a series of pre-marital talks.

9. *The secret of success* lies in putting oneself entirely at the disposal of the exercitant. This, we must remember, implies a great spirit of self-abnegation and sacrifice. It is a heavy task which requires constant attention, putting aside all other business, but taking an interest in minute and often annoying details.

VII. THE OBJECT OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

A man may make the Exercises with various objects in view: the solution of a particular problem, the election of a state of life, learning how to pray, increase of grace, practice of penance, getting out of a state of lukewarmness.

These are particular objectives, which should be kept in mind in directing the soul towards the aim of the Exercises.

Above all these particular objectives, there is an aim which is essential to the Exercises themselves. The other objectives can be obtained only in so far as they fall within the scope of this general aim. There is some divergence among commentators in defining this aim, This is due, not only to the different angles from which it has been examined, but also to the various elements which *each commentator* thought to be of special importance in the particular environment in which he was living or for which he was writing.

Such a divergence springs from stressing some aspect in preference to others, rather than from the basic Ignatian thought, which is clearly indicated in the book of the Exercises.

Hence, as far as possible, we shall quote here the words of St. Ignatius. We shall touch all those elements which the Saint himself considers essential.

The numbers in the text of the book of the Exercises which throw light on the aim of the Retreat are: 1, 21, 23, 87, 104, 167, 170, 189b, 233, 352. The ideas expressed in these numbers may be summarized as follows:

General and ultimate end

1. "To praise, reverence and serve God" (Ex. 23) "within our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church" (Ex. 170): this is the ultimate end of the Exercises; herein man finds his salvation and happiness.

St. Ignatius speaks of "salud" (health), a term which adds to the thought of "salvation" the idea of quiet and harmonious possession of life, with the normal development of its spiritual functions and a certain agility and suppleness in the use of them.

A more immediate and particular end of the Exercises is "to find God's will in the disposition of one's own life" (Ex. 1).

The choice of a state of life is in practice the object to be attained by those who have not yet chosen, or who contemplate changing their state of life. But this choice is not the final end of the Exercises. What of those whose state in life is already determined? The teaching of the Exercises embraces the choice "not only of a state of life, but also of anything else which appertains to good conduct" (Nadal: M.H.S.J.).

2. *To find greater conformity to the will of God* in one's present state of life, both in general and in particular.

This supposes "that we search for and discover the particular shape which God wants us to give our life (more contemplation? more penance? more action?); that we take decisions dictated here and now in this concrete instance by the present state of our soul or by external circumstances, by the progress already attained, by the present demands of grace and the advance being made in the spiritual life. . . . The Exercises enable the soul to take

such decisions in the full brightness of supernatural light and with absolute generosity" (De Guibert).

Hence Fr. De Guibert defines the fundamental character of the Exercises as: "A spirituality of active and generous conformity to the will of God. . . a spirituality of service".

Means to achieve such an object

a) *Positive means*: "To prepare and dispose one's soul" (Ex. 1). In practice to conform one's life to that of the Divine Model, Jesus, imitating Him at every instant in the fulfilment of God's will sought and found in prayer.

b) *Negative means*: "To free oneself of all inordinate affections" (Ex. 1).

Affection: a tendency towards some person or object.

Inordinate: undue, a tendency which is greater or smaller than is due.

Right order requires that love take me to God. If love does not take me to God, the reason is that it stops at this or that creature. The love, therefore, for this particular creature is no more a means to reach God, my last End, but becomes an obstacle, a stumbling-block, which retards my ascent to God or at least detains me unduly on the way there. This is the reason why it is called *inordinate*. In order that an affection be called *well-ordered*, it should not only exclude any inordinate tendency towards creatures, but should imply a well-ordered tendency towards God.

This double activity, positive and negative, is what St. Ignatius calls "to overcome oneself" (Ex. 21).

This means that:

1. "Sensuality should obey reason".
2. "All the inferior parts of the soul should be perfectly subject to the superior" (Ex. 87).

The Spiritual Exercises then gradually propose to the retreatant

1. Self-conquest
2. to offset any ill-ordered affection, and
3. to dispose and prepare the soul to search for and
4. to discover God's will in its regard, and

5. thus be enabled to *love and serve God in all things*, thus thereby to secure the salvation of his soul.

VIII. REMARKS

1. The Exercises do *not provide* ready-made perfection. They prepare and dispose the soul towards its attainment.

2. The choice and reform of one's state of life are but the practical applications in two particular cases of the general end of the Exercises.

3. St. Ignatius provides a compendium of perfection, a summary of the whole spiritual life up to its highest point, a *brief and intense course in spiritual life*.

4. Each soul will find in the Exercises all that it needs in order to achieve the perfection best suited to it, a method of prayer adequate to its needs, principles of spiritual life which will enable it to attain therein what will be for it in the concrete the highest possible degree.

"It is obviously wrong to limit oneself to teaching beginners just a good method of meditating and of making a general confession, while omitting all reference to other methods of prayer and higher contemplation. It is equally wrong to give up the Exercises in the case of people more advanced in spiritual life, and to ignore the inner secrets of a soul which has already achieved union with God" (La Palma).

"Unless man puts an obstacle in the way, either because he does not want it or because he is inconstant, (the Spiritual Exercises) lead infallibly to *the highest evangelical perfection*" (Gagliardi).

"There will he progress up to absolute perfection and holiness . . ." (Becano). They contain in embryo every conceivable perfection" (Blondo).

5. The Exercises, when done in their entirety, suppose a soul *called by God to a life of perfection*. Hence it is not a question of choosing a life of perfection but rather of choosing therein a definite state and a particular manner of life in such a state.

6. Furthermore the Exercises suppose *a vocation to the apostolate*, though not precisely to the apostolic life.

The retreatant cannot ignore the apostolic mission with which God entrusts him. The Exercises expect him *to live Christianity to the full*. He may choose the contemplative life or the married state, but whichever state he chooses he must keep a mind the needs of souls: he must offer for them his

prayer and works, for he must remember that all men are at least potentially members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

A true Christian cannot ignore the lot of so many of his brethren. His is the apostolate of prayer, or of action, or of sacrifice, all equally indispensable for a true love and imitation of Jesus who is Mediator, Redeemer and Saviour of all. (Ex. 1, 7, 95, 107, 137, 146, 307).

7. Hence the fruit of the Exercises is to obtain a spirit of prayer, perfect union with God, a complete conformity to His will.

These are most efficacious means to the attainment of the highest-perfection. They may prove to be the best means to rid oneself of ill-ordered affections, and thus find God's will.

8. "Our Holy Father aimed in the Exercises *at the very peak of perfection*; he expects the retreatant to have the same sentiments which were in Christ Jesus, and leads him by no other way than the way trodden and marked by His footsteps" (Becano).

SECOND PART

THE WAYS OF GIVING A RETREAT

INTRODUCTION

FIRST DUTIES OF THE RETREAT MASTER

1. Show himself a Retreat Master

First impressions are all important. The Retreat Master must show himself a man of God, able to place the soul in contact with Our Lord. He must be well versed in the ways of God and of the soul, so that as intermediary and guide he can put one in contact with the other.

2. Study the disposition of the retreatants

a) This is the purpose of his first visit to the retreatant, which should be made as early as possible. In it he enquires about the retreatant's dispositions, breaks down barriers, exchanges impressions, gives general directions; in short, he builds up an atmosphere of friendly confidence, which will make it easy for the retreatant to open his soul to him in future visits.

b) *The first Instruction.*

This sets the tone for the whole Retreat, and should therefore begin in an atmosphere of seriousness. The talk should be given on the opening night, and strict silence enforced after it. This is the decisive start of the Exercises.

The annotations, adapted, of course, to the retreatants, should be explained, especially the 1st, 5th and 20th.

The talk itself may have three parts:

1. a) *An explanation of* what the Exercises are and the end they aim at.

b) *Dispositions which* inspire the retreatant: interior recollection, personal conversation with God, great attention to the movements of grace, personal effort, openness with the Retreat Master, docility, generosity (this is the most vital factor), and a trust in God which conquers discouragement and despondency.

2. *Practical Remarks:*

The Retreat Master should speak a few practical words about following of the time-table, about going about the house, about keeping silence: retreatants should not enter one another's rooms, should not ask anything from anybody save the man in charge, etc. These instructions should not be given as if to school boys, even if the retreatants be young, but as to grown men. The purpose of the regulations should be stressed. Silence, for instance,

is insisted on, because they have come to talk to God, and for this it is necessary to shut out all distracting voices, just as one tries to shut out noises when listening to a concert, or to the radio.

3. *Exhortation:*

The Retreat Master should:

- a) Show them the *importance* of these days for their future, even on the natural plane.
- b) Point out the serious *responsibility* they will incur should they not make the retreat well, or, worse still, prevent others from making it well,
- c) Make them realise that they must face their problems with the *seriousness proper to men*, precisely because these are personal issues which they must solve for themselves.
- d) At the same time, inspire confidence, give encouragement and infuse enthusiasm. The grace of God never fails us.
- e) Place the Retreat under the protection of Our Lady, the Angels and the Saints.

3. Teach them the way to make the examination of conscience and meditation

- a) The examination of conscience and meditation are the *instruments* with which the work of the Retreat has to be accomplished. Hence the first job is to learn how to handle them.
- b) One should if possible see to it that the retreatants come *prepared* with some idea of these exercises. Thanks be to God, the practice of the examination of conscience and even of meditation is growing among youth. It is for the ordinary confessors and the Retreat Masters to foster this in those confided to their care.
- c) Each of us is in fact continually meditating and examining a thousand problems in daily life. The retreatants should therefore be shown that they have merely to apply to supernatural things, before God, what they have long been doing with their studies, amusements, projects and plans. This is one of the best means of showing them what meditation is, and will stir them a great deal.
- d) No long and *complicated lessons* on meditation need be given. It is enough that the retreatant be told to go before God and to keep in contact with Him, reflecting on the ideas proposed by the Retreat Master, or those which Our Lord Himself may inspire in him, asking all the while for grace to

put into practice what he feels God wants from him, and pouring out his heart in colloquies, such as we make to those we love.

A suitable *admixture of theory with practice* is recommended. A special instruction may be dedicated to this on the first day in which, while ways of meditation and examination are being explained, practical methods are demonstrated.

Some of the ways in which this can be done are

1) Take the preludes and the additions with the retreatant and then develop the point in the form of a prayer. In brief *meditate aloud*.

This method, though tiring if carried on for a long time, is admirable as an initial example of what meditation should be. However, a few minutes break should be made now and then, to enable the retreatant to continue by himself the prayer begun by the Retreat Master.

2) After each point has been explained, let the retreatant kneel down, recall the main ideas that have been developed, and meditate on them for a few minutes by himself.

Weariness is thus avoided and a certain variety brought in, which enables the retreatant to penetrate these truths more intimately and relish them personally.

3) The minutes spent in silent prayer can be lengthened, *interrupted with short vivid sentences*, pregnant with ideas.

4) In all these methods it may be advisable to sum up at the end the pith and marrow of the meditation, so that the retreatants can ruminate over it in their rooms. This summary may even be *dictated* to them, as was done in the old Society.

5) Even though they were made to pray at intervals during the explanation of the points, the retreatants must be given some time to *meditate in their rooms*. Calm repose, isolation and personal effort in the room cannot be replaced by any amount of collective recollection.

6) When leaving the chapel they may be given a typed *scheme* of the meditation, but should be advised to use it *only after* they have exhausted the ideas they have personally picked up.

7) One may suggest *things to be done in their rooms*, e.g. to kneel at the prie-dieu, to kiss the crucifix and speak to Our Lord, to fix their eyes on some holy picture.

4. Observations

Lest he be deceived, the Retreat Master must bear in mind that not all come to the Retreat with the best dispositions. He should not on that account be discouraged, but should try to improve the dispositions of his charges.

Those who come to make a Retreat may be classified as follows:

1. *Those who come with a wrong end in view:* To spend a few days of leisure, to please their good pious employers. This happens especially with workers, the young, and timid people. The Retreat Master must try to bring home to them the real end of the Retreat. He should make them see the beauty of the ideal laid down in the Principle and Foundation, and the great importance of the work they have undertaken. He should stir up their interest by showing them the problems they have to face.

2. *Those who come without any end in view:* Apathy, unwillingness to come, coming under compulsion. This happens when schoolboys are sent to a Retreat by classes, as in the case of the annual Retreat, or when young men are compelled to go by their sweethearts or mothers. The Retreat Master must try to whet their appetite, to create interest by examples and illustrations to awaken in them a desire to be better.

3. *Those who come with negative ends in view:* To eliminate a habitual sin, to get rid of anxieties, doubts, scruples. All the ideas developed by the Retreat Master which do not bear on the particular problem, which burdens their soul will go for nothing. The retreatant will simply pay no attention to them.

The Retreat Master, while pointing out the place of the subject he is treating in the remedy for the soul's disease, must not be content with that. He must strive to create a rival preoccupation in the mind of the retreatant, which will take him out of himself and his obsession.

4. *Those who come with concrete problems in view:* The choice of a career or state of life, questions of appointment, status, change of profession, decisions entailing a very special responsibility.

The Retreat Master must bear the particular problem in mind, but endeavour to broaden the intentions of the retreatant.

5. *Those who come with general desires of holiness:* This is the normal attitude of a retreatant with no special problems, and not making the Retreat for the first time.

Here the Retreat Master must take advantage of the good dispositions of the retreatant, but take care to see that these do not remain lost in abstract generalisations, but are embodied in concrete resolves.

FIRST DAY

I. ORDER OF TIME

Offering to God of the works of the day and the Exercises.

First Meditation or Explanation: *The Principle and Foundation* (1st part).

Mass.

Breakfast and Free Time.

Second Meditation: *Principle and Foundation* (1st part cont.).

Time for Reviewing the meditation and taking notes. Free Time.

Instruction: on way of making the *meditations and examens*.

Lunch. Rest.

Stations of the Cross.

Third Meditation or Explanation: *Indifference*.

Rosary and Benediction. A second Instruction may be given, especially if the retreatants are less educated.

Tea. Walk in Silence.

Fourth Meditation: *The Triple Sin*.

Time for Reviewing meditation and taking notes, Free Time.

Supper. Closing devotions. Examination of Conscience. Retire.

Note

- 1) The above time-table has been proposed as a pattern, to be adapted to local needs.
- 2) Late in the morning, if time permits, a group visit to the Blessed Sacrament may be made. A short fervent talk by the Retreat Master, does much to stir up devotion.
- 3) On the first day an instruction on the nature and method of prayer may precede the four meditations; or alternatively, one may have two instructions and only three meditations.

II. MEDITATIONS: PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION (FIRST PART)

A) THEORY

1. Its raison d'etre

To love and serve God in all things, which is the fruit aimed at by the Exercises, we must, as we have seen, order our lives. And since to order our

lives means to conform our actions to the true norm of order, we must know what this true norm of order is. St. Ignatius points it out to us here.

The norm indicated can be summed up thus: *To act in everything according to the end for which God has created us, and in the measure demanded by Him.* Only by acting in this way shall we be able to fulfil God's plan in our regard, arrive at the summit of perfection and lead well-ordered lives.

WELL-ORDERED means in practice that we make use of creatures for the end for which they have been created and in the measure demanded by this end.

ILL-ORDERED means that we make use of creatures for an end for which they have not been made, or that we use them in a way other than that demanded by the Creator's purpose, even though such a use may not be against the nature of the creature itself.

Such a way of acting would evidently be unreasonable: a violence done to the right order of things. Hence the moral collapse in a world where the criterion of the Principle and Foundation is not followed.

St. Ignatius begins by showing us the purpose of creation, viz, to lead us to God, and focuses on man's supreme problem, that of his relation to God. He places man in his true context, in the supernatural. He builds up in him a consciousness of eternity. The exercitant feels that he is moving in a world of truth; that he is laying a solid foundation to his own life; that he is beginning to walk along a safe path. It matters little that the going is rough: man today is ready to pay a price for the truth.

2. The basic truth of the Principle and Foundation can be formulated as follows

God alone possesses the fullness of being; all else is a participation of the being of God. The whole relationship between God and me derives from the fact that He is my Creator.

Everything: not only myself, but

a) *Every human being:* "man". There are men who, in the light of our own littleness appear to be great. St. Ignatius wants from the beginning to do away with any fascination produced by anything human. To offset it, he proposes the truth: man and everything in man is created.

b) *The other things.* Every thing whether animate or inanimate, whether within me or without. Nothing at all is excepted.

c) *Therefore He is the Lord.* I am totally dependent on Him, for He is the efficient, final, exemplary cause, and the ground of the material cause; indeed the total *raison d'etre* of my whole being. Therefore, He *has an absolute*, complete and necessary dominion over me. This idea of *total dependence* is the axis round which the whole Ignatian scheme turns.

d) *Therefore He is our end.* He can impose on us the norm of order, and our perfection will lie in our conforming ourselves to this norm.

The important thing to grasp is that God is our end. As for the way that end is attained – praise, reverence, service – these are but means whose concrete realization will depend on circumstances. If we do in fact recognize God as God, *Lord and Father*, we shall spontaneously pay Him the homage of our service and obedience. To glorify God will be the natural outcome of our attitude. (St. Th. 2, 2, q. 132, a. 2).

e) *He is our Father.* We have been created by Him as men. He alone loves us with a love that is complete, wholly sincere and absolutely effective, ever satisfying the desires of our heart, making Himself our beatitude, striving always for our *welfare*. He is ever ready with His grace: we have but to ask for it, and we shall be saved, enjoy perpetual happiness, and reach that state of perfection to which He calls us: "And by this means to save his soul".

3. Practical Consequences

1) Deep conviction of our absolute *dependence*.

2) An awareness of our *nothingness*. Everything we have, has been received; nothing is our own. Hence the need to eradicate all sentiments of proprietorship. We are perpetual *beggars* needing in all things the conserving and concurring power of God and His grace.

3) *It is wrong to submit* to what is not God, to what of itself is nothing, to passions, affections, or any other creature.

4) Hence the *unreasonableness and blindness of the senses*, which make God appear as nothing and creatures as everything. The true view of reality, which makes us see things as they really are and not as they merely appear, is the supernatural view.

5) And the *deceitfulness of the world*, which measures happiness by what of itself is fleeting and unsubstantial.

6) In a word, one is brought to a profound *sense of God*. It is in Him that things acquire their true value. He is the rule, weight and measure of all things.

4. Logical Consequences

1) If God is indeed the fullness of being and absolute Lord of all things, He must be the *norm of true order* that gives meaning to our lives. A thing is good in so far as it reflects His perfection and leads us to Him. All goodness thus proceeds from God: He is good by essence, all things else by participation. A thing is therefore good, ordered, in the measure in which it depends on God.

2) It is God's will that we ascend to Him by *means of creatures*. We are to make use of creatures as of a ladder that carries us to God. Creatures have a meaning for us only in so far as they lead us to God.

3) Creatures must be used as instruments. To make of them an end, to use them purely for the enjoyment they give, is unreasonable. The use of creatures may afford pleasure or pain; neither is an end in itself.

5. Some Applications of these Consequences

1) That which is human has value only in so far as it reflects God and leads us to Him. A *healthy humanism* should see the perfection of man as a function of God, as something given him by God.

2) All that we have has been given to us by God in order that *we may approach Him and bring others to Him*. Hence our responsibility to make good use of His gifts. We are the administrators of God; we may not bury the talents He has given us.

3) The disorder commonest in our lives consists in *making an end* of what should be merely a means. E.g. dedicating all our efforts to making money, or gaining a position in the world.

The remedy is to *change* back to a means what has become an end, with all the radical consequences that follow this inversion of values. Should God demand it, we must be ready to change a particular means for its opposite: poverty for riches. More often, however, He will simply demand a proper sense of values: that we be ready to go to God in pleasure or in pain, according to His most Holy Will, but determined never to make the pleasure or the effort an end in itself.

4) It is an *aberration* to use something for a purpose other than that for which it has been made: a magnetic needle for sewing; a pair of compasses for carving. It is therefore a misuse to apply my faculties to satisfy my ill-ordered affections, or the ill-ordered affections of others.

B) PRACTICE

1. Varying importance of the elements

1. One should carefully distinguish between:

a) *The Fundamental Truths*, engrained in the Principle and Foundation and suggested by it: God our Creator, the soul's dependence on God, the salvation and sanctification of the soul; and

b) The logical framework of St. Ignatius, with its deductions and the virtue of indifference.

c) The fundamental truths are for all. They are, indeed the basic truths of revelation.

d) The logical framework, in its most *ample development*, is not for those who aim at acquiring only the fruit of the First Week.

2. Hence it is important to know what is sought by each exercitant and to draw the conclusions of the Principle and Foundation accordingly. One *must give all and only what* each exercitant is capable of receiving.

a) All souls must reach a certain minimum level. This follows from the relation of the soul to God. They propose to avoid sin and save their souls, to follow God in whatever is commanded under pain of mortal sin.

This, while a valuable result for many souls, can scarcely be called the fruit of the Principle and Foundation.

b) Souls which aim higher will strive to fulfil God's will in smaller things by the total generous surrender of themselves to His service.

It is for the Retreat Master to see how far he can lead the exercitant. Let him not be over-timid: God gives Himself to souls in far greater measure than we incline to believe.

2. Ways of proposing the Principle and Foundation

a) *The immediate Preparation.*

1. Bring home to the retreatants the doubts, anxieties and disappointments which crowd their lives. Such a psychological *preparation* arouses interest, and from the start encourages serious reflection.

2. Show them that in the retreat they will be seeking just that which will satisfy their longings and dispel their restlessness.

3. Convince them that they will find *no remedy in themselves*, nor in any other created thing. What is created is essentially perishable: it cannot give the security it does not itself possess.

4. Show how *God alone* can provide the remedy and assistance they need. The centre of attention is thus shifted from the ego to God. The retreatant becomes interested in God, because he sees Him connected with his own welfare. God is the solution to his problems, for He possesses what he needs.

This is, of course, not a very perfect attitude; but it is a first step. It is not a definitive attitude, but only an initial one.

b) The Explanation itself:

1. *St. Ignatius wishes the matter to be "declared"*. Hence the Principle and Foundation is properly speaking not a meditation, though there is no harm in proposing it as such, provided that stress is not laid on exciting the affections. One can of course make use of the affections that are spontaneously aroused to drive home the truths pondered; but there should be no undue striving after pious affections, which distract the soul from the primary end of the consideration.

"All those discussions, occurring in some commentaries both written and oral, which treat of the end of man on theological and philosophical grounds, however valuable they may be in themselves, are out of place in a retreat. . . . The basic thesis of the Principle and Foundation is imprinted in human nature itself, which issues from the hand of God and is bound to Him by ties of total dependence and servitude. It is out of place to enquire into the ultimate end of God's creation, or even into man's final destiny. In a word, we are not dealing here with "de fine ultimo hominis", though many exegetes pose the question in this way" (Fr. Granero).

2. The way in which the exercitant is to find out what he desires (Dir.) must be *explained* to him. The retreatant must be taught to grasp in a personal way how the norm of order has to be put into practice by him, in the concrete circumstances of his everyday life. As long as this *personal synthesis* is not made, the norm will remain extrinsic and impersonal in the soul, but not assimilated by it. It will fail to exercise a vivifying influence.

3. With young people specially *comparisons and examples* help to bring home the truths of the Principle and Foundation.

a) One might begin with the *story of a martyrdom*. That of the Machabees would be appropriate, specially the words of the mother about the Creator. So too that of SS. Perpetua and Felicitas, or St. Maria Goretti.

Every martyrdom is the story of a conflict. The martyr, faced with a choice between God and creatures that seek to divert him from God, displays a heroic dependence on God. The conflict centres round mortal sin, but it is easy to pass from there to higher degrees of virtue.

b) Metaphors should illustrate our absolute and continuous dependence on God. As the branch depends on the tree, the lighted lamp on the electric current, the water on the fountain, the rays on the sun.

c) Passages from the Gospel and St. Paul:— The Parable of the Talents, (Mt. 25, 14-30), or of the Pounds (Lk. 19, 11-27); of the Faithful Steward (Mt. 24, 45-51), or the unfruitful Fig Tree (Lk. 13, 6-9).

In particular, for the use of creatures, all those passages of the Gospel that treat of the use of riches and the care God takes of creatures (Mt. 6, 25-33) or against scandal (Mk. 9, 42-47).

Valensin in his "*Initiation into the Spiritual Exercises*" explains with citations from Scripture how Jesus Christ is the foundation and the end. For St. Paul, refer to J. Levie's "La meditation fundaralente a la lumiere de Paul" *Nov. Rev. Theol.* 75 (1953) pp. 815-887. Of particular interest are: 1Cor. 4, 31 and 15, 24-28; Col. 1, 9-20.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Purpose.* The instructions should generally aim at two complementary ends:

a) They should guide the exercitant along the way of the Exercises, explaining what is necessary to make them well, and preparing him for the more important exercises, his Retreat Confession, his election of state.

b) They should give him the principle which will help him to persevere in his resolutions and develop a Christian mentality.

2. *Number.* Two instructions seem indicated for the first day, since the exercitants who have not yet become acclimatized need detailed explanations on the way of praying. Moreover, the understanding of the Principle and Foundation, which is meant to be pondered over during the day, is helped by such talks.

3. *Character.* They should be familiar, but not undignified. The tone should be conversational without giving the impression of improvisation. Neither should over-familiarity, which easily degenerates into want of seriousness and absence of control, be permitted.

With a less educated audience the dialogue method is often useful. Simple questions are put, and the listeners made to repeat what has just been explained. Thus the Retreat Master discovers how much has been really understood. The Question Box may also be of use.

4. *Subject Matter.* On how to make the Retreat well (a continuation of the preparatory talk); on prayer and examination of conscience; on the importance of personal effort; on the bearing of the Principle and Foundation on our daily lives; on what God means to us; on the role each one has to play in society.

IV. FIRST MEDITATION IN THE EVENING: INDIFFERENCE (SECOND PART OF THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION).

A) THEORY

1. Besides the logical conclusion deduced from the Principle and Foundation, there is a second conclusion also: that owing to our concupiscence we shall always experience real difficulty in attaining our end. Our fallen nature has small attraction for the supernatural. This is a fact, alas, bitter experience. Hence St. Ignatius: "Therefore, not because of the creatures *tantum quantum*, but because man's sensuality is continually urging him to use them in an ill-ordered way".

2. Indifference pertains to the will. It is the willed determination to use in every instance only that which is most conducive to our end.

It implies an effective renunciation of all that is not God, or does not lead to Him.

3. Psychologically indifference is not a static attitude. It is a state of dynamic equilibrium or balance between conflicting tensions. Like a coiled spring, the will retains all its energy and awaits only an orientation to spring vigorously into action. Indifference, therefore does not mean, to will nothing, but rather deliberately not to will anything so long as God's approval is not evident. It excludes preference based on reasons other than the will of God.

4. Indifference is quite compatible with adverse feelings and sensible repugnance. But St. Ignatius wishes our indifference to overflow into our sensibility also. Nothing violent can endure, and a soul that is continually battling against adverse feelings will not long persevere. This does not mean that the soul cannot react and perform isolated acts, such as joining a religious order, in the teeth of the most violent repugnance. But it is impossible to remain long indifferent in such conditions. Hence the effort of

St. Ignatius to eliminate all ill-ordered affections, or at least their active expression. The affections must support the will; that is why St. Ignatius at the end of the Principle and Foundation brings in the impulsive power of the will, "desiring".

5. In the intellect indifference presupposes a knowledge of the norm of order and a firm conviction of its necessity. But our concern here is not with the service of God and the salvation of our souls . . . ; it is with the *use of creatures*, as means given by God for the attaining of our end. As regards the end itself, there is obviously no room for indifference" (Calveras).

6. St. Ignatius notes:

a) We must *become* indifferent: evidently implying that it is difficult to be so.

b) We must be indifferent to *all created things*: evidently because we are here dealing with the most general of principles.

c) We must incline towards what is most repugnant: in order to achieve a balance. "Let him be disposed *to desire* the counsels rather than the precepts" (Dir. Aut. Ex. 779).

7. The conclusion of the Principle and Foundation

a) "*Desiring only*": This is the immediate conclusion of the fact that man has been created solely for God. Any other objective is necessarily ill-ordered, if it diverts him from his ultimate end.

b) A *further step* "is contained in the rule of *Tantum Quantum*. I must make use of things only in so far as they help me to reach my end. When in a particular instant I am helped by one thing rather than by another, I must prefer that which helps me more" (Calveras). Were I to use means less conducive to my end rather than others more conducive, this would imply that I reserve something for myself. This margin at my disposal is clearly not being directed towards the service of God, and thus violates the Principle and Foundation.

"To resolve beforehand to choose on every occasion that which most conduces to our end, . . . is the only truly effective disposition of mind. It is the disposition of men who are consistent, prompt and successful in their enterprises. This is the way we normally act when we intend to achieve something: we turn to the means at hand which lead us most efficaciously and rapidly to our goal" (Fr. Encinas).

A new element also comes into play: the 'logic of the heart'. It is impossible that we should be attracted by something, that we should

make it our highest ideal, and then not strive after it in the most efficacious way.

B) PRACTICE

1. *Psychological Preparation:*

a) Bring home to the retreatants the far-reaching *consequences that follow from the good or ill use of creatures* given us by God. Ill use means that we misjudge creatures, frustrate God's plan, impede the Redemption of Christ, go against the nature of things.

b) Make them realize the *beauty and harmony* of a life that is not the slave, but the master of every passing passion. Indifference is the talisman which gives this mastery and this happiness. It lifts man above the inclinations of the flesh and the vagaries of the imagination, so that he is not moved by self-interest or pleasure, and can assign to all things their true value.

c) Explain how the resistance offered by our unruly passions makes vigilance and a distrust of our own strength an *absolute necessity*. We tend to follow purely pragmatic norms: how to succeed, how to make money, how to enjoy ourselves, while the true basic norm of action remains forgotten.

Note

d) St. Ignatius does not now demand that we *make ourselves* indifferent. It is only at the time of the election that we are expected to be in this state. At present it is sufficient that we realize the need of becoming indifferent. The retreatant does not now have to eradicate any particular ill-ordered affection, or even commence the struggle against it. Nonetheless, Fr. La Palmet recommends "a firm purpose to make every endeavour on our part to attain this end" (Spir. Way. I. ch. 16).

e) Too much time must not be spent on the Principle and Foundation, but only so much as is necessary to ensure that the retreatant grasps the true norm of order, its *raison d'etre*, its connection with our end, so that he can integrate these principles into his life. St. Ignatius took sometimes two days to explain it.

We may say that it is a question of *intime penetrare quis ille sit finis* (Le Gaudier), or *ingenerare in mentem intimam ipsius finis notitiam ut moveamur ad illud efficaciter colendum* (Ceccotti). At the same time we must secure the *intelligentia exquisita omnimodaque penetratio* of this end (Ex. 1107).

2. *The Explanation itself:*

a) In Retreats for the young it may be wise to avoid using the name Principle and Foundation. But the content of the consideration, the norm of order and the implied inclination of our nature towards disorder, must be explained.

b) The retreatants should be convinced that they need to examine the motives of their actions, at least of the more important ones. All our actions must ultimately be regulated by the Principle and Foundation: and our attempts at regulating them should be systematic and planned. The old Directories insist strongly on this *practical* examination, by which inclinations contrary to indifference stand revealed, so that, keeping these in mind, we can fix the objectives on which the attack of the first week must be concentrated.

c) Four occasions of indifference are listed by St. Ignatius, by way of example. These and others should be applied by each retreatant to himself.

d) "It is difficult to divide an indivisible whole. None the less, in practice, it is both easy and convenient to break up the matter of the Principle and Foundation into parts" (Ponlevoy). In this division, however, the structure of the whole must not be lost sight of, nor the logical connection of the parts weakened. The Principle and Foundation is effective, only if one grasps its total synthesis in an organic way.

St. Ignatius suggests the following division: 1) The end; 2) the means; 3) "the difficulty in choosing this or that (means)" (Dir. Vitoria, Ex. 792).

e) To sum up. The retreatants must:—

- 1) Realize the inexorable logic of the Principle and Foundation.
- 2) Be convinced that it is a need.
- 3) Be initiated into a method of spiritual warfare which will be exercised throughout the Retreat.
- 4) Be shown the need for vigilance, distrust of self and great trust in grace.

An effective psychological means is the psychology of the "more", to show how, given our restless and unsatisfied minds and hearts, it is unwise to put limits to our striving and confine ourselves to what seems strictly necessary.

Note

f) The Principle and Foundation is re-echoed again and again throughout the Exercises, in the preparatory prayer which is nothing else than the Principle and Foundation applied to prayer. One asks for the grace of

being at the time of our meditation, in the proper disposition demanded by the Principle and Foundation.

g) *Passages from the Gospel*: The Agony in the Garden with its conquered repugnance is a very practical instance of indifference, (Mt. 26, 36-46; Mk. 14, 32-42; Lk. 22, 40-46; Jo. 18, 1-2). The attitude of the Blessed Virgin, when Gabriel announced the Incarnation to her is also a striking passage. Moreover it is a way of introducing Our Lady, an element of the spiritual life not to be overlooked, especially in dealing with young people (Lk. 1, 26-38).

V. SECOND MEDITATION IN THE EVENING TRIPLE SIN (Ex. 45-54)

1) This exercise should be given on the first day itself. It shows the disastrous effects of not making proper use of creatures and of not depending on God; it helps towards a deeper insight into the Principle and Foundation itself.

2) In this way, on the first day a *problem is* already proposed, and a salutary *restlessness* is created. The Principle and Foundation, in spite of efforts to make it practical, remains very theoretical for some people. Hence even on the first day there is need of something to excite their innermost feelings and move them deeply. This is well achieved with this meditation.

VI. OTHER EXERCISES

1) The Exercises do not consist merely of meditations and instructions. They embrace a large number of "spiritual activities" (Ex. 1). Some of these activities have a primary function, others a subsidiary one. They help the Director in one of his main objectives: to keep a tense atmosphere during the Exercises. Only thus will truths penetrate into the depths of the soul.

2) This calls for a direct and active participation of the Retreat Master in a multitude of short exercises, such as visits to the Blessed Sacrament, examinations, rosary. He can skilfully profit by these chances to insert a complementary thought, to suggest an idea, to repeat the same truths under another form, which will bring home better the central idea to be inculcated on that day.

3) The *personal initiative* of the Retreat Master plays an important part here. He must give the proper atmosphere to the minor exercises and know how to blend elasticity with the multiplicity and variety of suggestions.

1. The Morning Offering and the Exercises

This is the first act of the day often coming immediately before meditation. It gives the day its tone and colouring. A few words warm up the atmosphere and give the day its motto. Today: to recover the sense of God, to realize the meaning of God, the truth about myself.

Then the Morning Offering follows, in which the same formula should always be used: the Offering of the Apostleship of Prayer; a few basic prayers like the offering to Our Lady, the prayer to the Guardian Angel, the Angelus, the Our Father.

2. Mass

1) Active participation in the Mass during the Exercises should be aimed at.

2) Here are a few methods that may prove of use:

a) *Missa dialogata*. People accustomed to daily Mass may follow the Mass in their Missals, answer together with the acolytes, and recite the parts sung by the choir at High Mass.

b) Take this opportunity of explaining the Holy Mass in a devotional and graphic way. Let the retreatants derive from the Exercises the conviction that the Mass is the greatest act of Religion, and that they should therefore have an intense love for it, a vivid desire to assist or rather *to partake* in it, a real reluctance to miss it.

c) *Link with the Mass* the truths to be meditated each day. The four ends of the Mass lend themselves admirably to this: expiation in the First Week, adoration and thanksgiving on the last day. But do not put watertight compartments between one end and the other. This is a means of bringing out better the meaning of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

It may prove helpful to consider the different sections of the Mass. The preparatory one for the first week, the Offertory and Consecration for the second week, Holy Communion for the last day.

3) *Another method*:

First day: The Mass is the most *perfect embodiment of the Principle and Foundation*. Sacrifice always implies acknowledgement of our submission to God. With the Sacrifice of the Mass man achieves his end so perfectly, that even the Infinite God is not capable of receiving greater praise and glory, since the Victim offered is infinite. The Mass is, moreover, the great *means for our salvation and sanctification*.

Christ is the end of creation. The generosity of Christ's self-surrender at Mass should be the model of my generous correspondence to God.

Second day: The Mass and the *spirit of penance*. The gravity of sin which demands the sacrifice of Christ, Who becomes like sin, Who, as it were, clothes Himself with my sins. The Mass is the sacrifice of expiation and redemption. The whole Mass is imbued with the sentiment of humility; our attitude is that of sinners, of a victim: "Indignissimus", "miserere nobis", "parce nobis".

Third day: *Love of Christ in the Mass and union with Him*: "Per Ipsum, cum Ipso et in Ipso". Symbolism of the drops of water at the Offertory. Doctrine of our incorporation in Christ and of His mediation. Christ is not a stranger to me, but someone very intimate, who associates me with His redemptive work.

Fourth day: *The Mass, Sacrifice of Self-surrender*. The Mass is the surrender of Christ to His sacrifice according to His Father's will. My offering at the Offertory is divinised at the Consecration. If I do not offer and immolate myself with Christ, the sacrifice is not the sacrifice of the *whole* Christ. In Holy Communion the most perfect union is achieved, forming with Him one body.

Fifth day: *The Mass, the renewal of the Passion*. It is the same Victim that is offered up on Calvary and on the altar, namely, Jesus Christ; the same Blood of infinite value; the same Heart with the same internal dispositions of self-offering, prayer and sentiments; the same annihilation, now realized in the species of bread; the same infinite satisfaction for our sins; and it is mainly through the Mass that its infinite merit is applied to us.

3. In the dining room (breakfast, lunch, tea, and supper).

1. Grace before and after meals should be brief. Use the formula most commonly used in the country, in order that the retreatants may continue practising it in their homes. The Retreat Master should exhort them to keep up this practice in the future.

Note

A subsidiary aim of these Exercises is to renew the pious customs which Christian tradition planted in the life of our forefathers and which are gradually dying out. What has been said about grace before and after meals, may be applied to the "Angelus", the Morning Offering with the family, the prayers in common before retiring, the Rosary, night prayers.

2. During breakfast and tea the Retreat Master may read something short and thought-provoking, give notices or instructions, or have a book read, as at dinner and supper.

3. Young people are not accustomed to listen to reading during meals, and so unless the book be pleasant and captivating, it will not be followed with much interest. Those which suit the occasion best are *narrative or biographical*, lives of young saints and modern heroes, whose example show them the path they too must follow.

4. Rosary

Different methods can be employed to bring out its meaning:—

a) A short explanation of each mystery.

b) The system followed in the centres of the H.O.A.C. At their gatherings every member says the intention for which he wishes the Rosary to be recited.

c) Illustration of the different mysteries by making use of lantern slides. A collection of slides, one for each Hail Mary is available at "Bonne Presse", Paris.

It is well for the Retreat Master before the recitation of the Rosary to inflame his audience with a few words, placing the whole exercise in the atmosphere of the day, telling them to put themselves under the protection of Our Lady, and to ask for the graces proper to that day.

5. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament

Together with the Rosary and the evening meditation or at any more convenient time, a short Benediction bears much fruit. Appropriate prayers are read out, or a short fervent address addressed to them followed by a hymn.

6. Way of the Cross

This is one of the devotions which fits best into the Exercises, and which does great good. As with the other exercises, this should be performed with variety and earnestness. A verse sung between stations, a few words, a dialogue prayer often helps. It is easy to relate the matter of the day to the way of the Cross, insisting on certain basic ideas, and inciting the retreatants to generous resolutions. Care should be taken that they do not remain too long kneeling, since they soon become restless and lose something of their recollection and fervour. A

few minutes of silent prayer should be encouraged after every station or every few stations.

7. Reading

This is a subsidiary matter. The ideal would be to devote all the time left over from other exercises to personal activity and reflection; but sometimes reading in public may prove profitable.

The retreatant should find few books in his room. The following suffice: a Life of Christ, The Imitation of Christ, a Manual for the Retreatant (Alone with God). The Retreat Master ought to have in his room books on purity, election of state, character training, practices of piety, which he may lend to those who need them, whenever he judges this expedient.

When giving the preliminary instruction the Retreat Master may inform the retreatants that those who want books to read should come and see him. In this way those who are more distracted are given the opportunity of seeing him, as they stand in special need of this kind of help.

The Imitation of Christ (A. Kempis) is one of the books which sinks most deeply into the soul. There is an edition in which the book has been arranged according to the plan of the Exercises, by Hesper-Brucker; Madrid, 1893.

8. Final act before retiring

1) It is important that the moments preceding the night rest should be well employed. These moments may be given to a last visit to the Blessed Sacrament after supper and before retiring. Perhaps some free minutes may be allowed between supper and this exercise, in order that the retreatants may be more at ease, especially those who are accustomed to smoke at this time.

2) The visit may be protracted to *fifteen or twenty minutes*. It may even assume the form of a meditation. People are used to going late to bed, and they do not easily sleep at the early hour customary in Retreat Houses. Hence, the mind of the retreatant should be imbued with ideas he can assimilate during these hours, which are so conducive to recollection and concentration.

3) *For this exercise the following is suggested:*

a) A *summary* in short and pithy sentences of the key thoughts of the day. It may be a kind of brief repetition with short pauses, to allow the ideas to penetrate more deeply into the soul.

b) A *brief examen* indicating in the form of questions the duties to be performed, the fruit to be obtained and the attitude of mind to be cultivated. An examination on the keeping of the first *commandment* during the past life fits in well with the Principle and Foundation, and serves as a preparation for confession.

c) Colloquies with the Blessed Virgin and Jesus Christ, asking for graces and pardon, promising amendment and placing oneself under their protection. These should be accompanied with deep feeling and devotion.

d) *Night Prayers*. See Morning Prayers and grace at meals. Those prayers should be recited which are most common among the people. A prayer book may be suggested where such prayers are to be found, and facilities given to the retreatants to buy this prayer book.

e) Finally, one may give a simple and affective consideration, summing up the impressions of the day, and acting as a link with the morrow. On this first day the colloquy following the meditation on the Triple Sin may be explained: "What have I done for Christ, what am I doing for Christ, what must I do for Christ" (Ex.53), or perhaps a short reflection on Christ "nailed to the cross . . . for my sins"; or any other topic such as: the value of the soul, the goodness of God who gives me this chance of going over these truths, Divine Providence.

Let them make in their rooms a fervent colloquy before the Crucifix, kissing it and spending a short time in reflection. This may be done either at once, or a little later, immediately before going to bed. The late hour is most suited for this exercise. Others may be recommended to write down the impressions of the day. It is an easy way of making a repetition.

9. Taking down notes

This may be regarded as one of the exercises of the retreat, because it is a written repetition, a kind of diluted meditation.

A special time should be prescribed for this, and the retreatants told to write the ideas which have impressed them most deeply.

Sometimes those who do not know how to meditate and are much distracted may be recommended to jot down something during the meditation itself; let them try to put on paper the ideas which they remember from the Retreat Master's exposition, discontinuing their writing whenever they find

themselves aroused to devotion, in order to kneel down and speak to the Lord about these thoughts.

Questionnaires, which are a form of repetition, may also be used. Much depends on the Retreat Master; but these questionnaires may prove useful. They serve as a guide of the Retreat Master, a mirror which reflects clearly the course of the Retreat.

The matter for this first day could be: their general state of mind, their impressions and desires.

VII. REMARKS

1) St. Ignatius in the Principle and Foundation "with marvellous simplicity and wonderful mastery traces and solves the whole problem of humanity, of the entire man, of the supreme reason for his existence" (R. Vilarino).

2) In the light of the Principle and Foundation "the spiritual life is not just a bundle of truths which bear no connection with each other. It reaches to the root, to what is transcendent in man. The less significant aspects of man are ignored, so that he appears in the true light, in that which gives him ever new life: his dependence on God. There lies his true value, and this is the sap which develops the spiritual life organically" (E. Bominghaus). "The spiritual life acquires a new meaning in our eyes" (Segarra).

3) "It should be noted that *the whole of evangelical perfection* is contained in this foundation, and the desire and resolution to aim at this is regarded by St. Ignatius as a necessary requisite to enter into the Exercises" (Gagliardi).

4) The Principle and Foundation is a *compendium et formula parva* of the Exercises (Gagliardi).

5) "It is not a rare thing for the retreatant to feel himself turned completely upside-down (by the Principle and Foundation), but as a general rule it works out slowly. It is like a seed sown in the soul. It germinates by its own power, but needs time, and meanwhile one digs all around to eliminate the residues of sin. It gets its nourishment from the consideration of truths which are linked up with it" (Oraa).

6) St. Ignatius when speaking of the end of man enumerates explicitly only those elements, which he considered necessary for deducing the norm of order.

Others: the glory of God, one's own perfection, are implicitly included and are dealt with in other parts of the Exercises. In the ancient Directories these

other elements are sometimes mentioned with the Principle and Foundation, as in the Directory of Fr. Cordeses (Ex. 952).

7) In the Principle and Foundation a proper *direction and value* is given to things. In its light we judge of objects with the same criterion as God does.

8) The Principle and Foundation is a *complete philosophical and theological synthesis*: God is the beginning and end of every creature (causa efficiens, exemplaris, finalis); man is the king of the universe who ascends to God up the ladder of creatures, and being full of God, reflects Him and gives Him glory (St. Thomas: *Circulatio perfecta*. . .).

SECOND DAY

I. ORDER OF TIME

Morning Offering.

First Meditation: *Personal Sins*.

Mass, Breakfast, Free Time.

Second Meditation: *Repetition of the Personal Sins with the Triple Colloquy*.

Time for Reviewing the meditation and taking notes; Free Time.

Instruction: Occasions of sin. Doctrine about Sin. Purity. Commandments. Confession.

Lunch. Rest.

Stations of the Cross.

Third Meditation: *Hell, (or Death or the Effects of Sin)*.

Rosary and Benediction. Tea. Walk in silence.

Preparation for death during visit.

Fourth Meditation: *Death, (or Hell or judgement)*.

Time for Reviewing the meditation and taking notes.

Supper. Closing devotions and Examination of Conscience. Free Time.

Retire.

Note

1) In the morning meditations the important thing is to make a review of one's past sins, and in the evening to meditate on the basic truths of our Faith, showing the bearing they have on sin.

2) There is no objection to inserting the meditations on Death and Judgement before the one on Hell. In the XVI cent. this was done by such eminent Jesuits as Nadal. The Retreat Master must adjust the order to his hearers.

3) The meditations on the eternal truths are not absolutely necessary, but can hardly be omitted. Their function, though subsidiary, is of great importance.

4) Much matter has been proposed for the instructions. Not all those topics must necessarily be treated. This is merely a list, from which we should choose those points which suit our retreat group.

For the sake of greater clarity, before giving the commentary on each meditation, we shall give an overall view of the first week and of the tactics employed in it by St. Ignatius.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST WEEK

A) SCHEME

End: To detest all disorder (sin: greatest disorder) in order to uproot it.

Steps: 1) *Knowledge* of this disorder (objective basis).

a) In others . . .
(*Angels (Ex. 50)*)
(*First Parents (Ex. 51)*)
(*Other Men*)
(*Christ Crucified*)

(*Malice*) (Against man's very essence)
(Against God: it frustrates His purpose)
(Against Jesus Christ: it renders
Redemption useless)

b) In itself

(Ugliness) (Monstrous)
(Without proper functions)
(Corpse (abscess))

c) In me: Now the knowledge of this disorder must be brought to bear on my own sins (Exs. 56, 63).

d) Confirmation: Through its effects: Death.

Judgement.
Hell.

2) *Excite a feeling of detestation.* "Shame and confusion" (Ex. 48).

a) The effect of realizing the ugliness and the malice of sin.

b) Repetitions, summaries, colloquies, should all be directed to the same end: to create a kind of phobia for sin.

c) We must try to identify ourselves as much as possible with sin.

d) Let our sins be placed in contrast with God's action and the love of Jesus Christ.

e) Create an instinctive repugnance for whatever is sinful.

3) *Amendment* is the effect of this detestation: an unhesitating recoil from sin.

B) FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME

1. End of the First Week

"Contrition, sorrow, tears for one's sins (Ex. 4) ; hatred of sin – as being the greatest possible disorder – of the disorder of my actions and of natural and worldly standards (Ex. 63).

"Stir up compunction in the soul, which should last for several days, in order to purify and cleanse one's soul of sin, and thus prepare it for the coming weeks" (Dir. Cordeses: Ex. 958).

2. Steps for the attainment of this end

In the Principle and Foundation the exercitant has come to know the theoretical rule which should govern his actions. The work now lies in the adjustment of his real life to that rule.

As a first step, a plan of operations is traced out, for uprooting whatever disorder lies in the way of true progress, since disorder stands in direct opposition to the Principle and Foundation.

The plan comprises *three well-defined parts*, which have for their respective objects, *the intellectual, the affective and the volitional* parts of the soul: to know, to detest and to reform oneself. These three acts of the intellect and will are not merely concerned with the sphere of mortal sin, but also with that of venial sin and all ill-ordered affections, as well as with the principles and vanity of the world.

St. Ignatrus is preoccupied with the *entire* man, with all his faculties, tendencies and acts, according to the general principle of orientating our whole being towards our last end which is God (Exs. 21, 23). The following weeks have the same object in view: to know, to love, to imitate Our Lord (Ex. 104), and in the Contemplation to obtain Love: to know, love and to serve God (Ex. 233).

3. First part of the plan: That I may fully understand the disorder

This part is realized in the:

III. MEDITATION ON THE TRIPLE SIN

(*FIRST DAY, FOURTH MEDITATION*)

A) THEORY

1) This meditation presupposes the following principle:

Only God knows the true magnitude and gravity of the disorder, because sin is "secundum quid infinitum", an offence against God Himself. Therefore in the last analysis it transcends the infinite capacity of man.

Hence, the *procedure for realizing the malice of sin* will be to see how God regards it and how He has punished it. In this way we shall realize what sin deserves, at least on account of its intrinsic malice. I say *at least*; For God being infinitely just cannot punish sin more than it deserves, but being infinitely merciful, can mitigate its punishment. From the punishments He attaches to it, we deduce its wickedness and malice.

2) In order to make us realize its true and objective malice, St. Ignatius employs two stratagems:

a) He studies the disorder in others: the angels, our first parents, another human person. By thus centring the problem on others, we shall not allow ourselves to be influenced by personal motives; self-love will have no place in our reasoning.

Note

This is the procedure commonly followed in the key-meditations when it is a question of *knowing* something: the Kingdom of Christ, the Three Classes' of Men, the second way of the Third Time for Election.

It is a *mode of procedure* which is applied all through the Exercises. An understanding of it introduces us more fully into the method of St. Ignatius.

b) He bids us consider *one sin at a time*.

c) At the same time the exercitant is brought *ever closer to the core of the problem*, as St. Ignatius gradually sets before him actors with which he is intimately concerned. He is presented with the picture of the sin of the angels; with them he shares the nature of a creature. He is shown that of Adam and Eve, who besides being creatures are human beings. Next he sees another human person exactly like himself, not like Adam who as endowed with a privileged position. Finally, he contemplates Christ Our Lord, Who is not only a creature and man – despite His being God, – but Who has taken upon Himself the sins committed by the *exercitant*.

d) There should be no shirking conclusions by pleading aggravating circumstances, which might lessen the terrible punishments which the exercitant has deserved. The punishment must be grasped as springing *from sin itself*, "from the ugliness and malice of each and every mortal sin in itself, even if it were not forbidden", and not from extraneous circumstances.

Thus the conclusion fundamental to the whole argument, is drawn, that a man might *with perfect justice* be condemned for *one mortal sin alone*.

Note

St. Ignatius dwells mainly on mortal sin. His aim is to go to the sources of the disorder. There lies the key to success. By eliminating the cause, the effect will disappear.

This method serves also other disorders, and should be applied to them as the condition of the exercitant requires. St. Ignatius teaches us how to proceed in one point in order that we may apply the same methods to other needs of the soul. The Saint acts similarly in the "Triple Colloquy of the Third Exercise (Ex. 63).

3) This basis being laid, we are made to realize the nature of disorder *itself*.

The consequences of sin are considered. St. Ignatius traces the main *characteristics of disorder*:

1.) Sin is of its nature an abuse of our free will (Ex. 50).

a) By giving in to *pride* and by denying obedience and reverence to Our Creator and Lord (Ex. 50). It is an act of rebellion.

b) By going against the *command* of God (Ex. 51).

c) And against His infinite *Goodness* (Ex. 52).

2) Such disorder has these consequences:

a) It caused the death of the Son of God.

b) God is forced to withdraw from a soul that abandons Him in this way, and the soul is changed "from grace into malice" (Ex. 50).

c) The soul deprived of grace and of supernatural life is changed into a corpse, the body into a prison, creatures are transformed into beasts, the world becomes a place of exile and suffering (Ex. 47).

B) PRACTICE

1) This meditation does not require much adaptation. It is sufficient to develop the central ideas so clearly indicated by the Saint himself: As Fr. Oraa points out: "Instead of abstract reasoning which would only touch the surface of the soul St. Ignatius places before the exercitant's eyes as in a vivid picture, true authentic facts, which have caused such terrible and pitiful results".

2) The effectiveness of the picture is seen in all these results put together, so that the soul may remain deeply impressed by the frightful *disasters*, which have befallen creation due *to one sin alone*, in order that it may realize why sin is the only true evil. The real meaning of sin must be rediscovered. Retreat Masters, therefore, should not dilute or divide the meditation into parts, as sometimes they are tempted to do, on account of the great amount of matter contained in it.

3) It ought to be connected with the Principle and Foundation, showing the radical difference in approach, as is expressly done by St. Ignatius (Ex. 50).

There:

Here:

order,
God's glory,
heaven,
creatures as means,
the soul free,
man as king,
God as end.

The result:
well-being.

disorder,
sin,
hell,
creatures as end,
the soul in bonds,
man as a slave,
passions as end.

The result:
an overwhelming
series of evils.

In this way we get a clear picture of the sad consequences which follow from deviating from our end as well as from lack of indifference. These evils have their root in the fact that we are easily bewitched by the appearances of things.

IV. FIRST MEDITATION (SECOND DAY)

PERSONAL SINS

An interior knowledge of the disorder which has been hitherto under consideration – the next step in St. Ignatius' plan, is realized mainly in this meditation. The exercitant has dwelt in an objective way on the disorder considered *in itself* and as found in others, isolating it from any personal relation to himself, in order that self-love may not obscure the clear perception of reality. The next step will be to consider how much of all that evil is found in himself. It is the beginning of a concrete personal application.

Thus he becomes aware of his disorders, and at the same time tries to arouse a deep aversion for them.

A) THE SECOND PART OF THE PLAN: TO EXCITE THE FEELING OF DETESTATION OF SIN

1) From these two elements, a strong conviction of evil, and the fact that one is full of it, will spontaneously flow the horror and detestation of one's own sins. This new perspective of sin is bound to produce "great, overwhelming sorrow and tears" (Ex. 55). *Detestation of sin springs from the knowledge of its malice* and ugliness. Evil is instinctively repelling and detestable. To

bring about such sentiments St. Ignatius wants us to share and feel its own disorder as much as possible, till a kind of "phobia" is formed.

The more the exercitant considers the disorder as something which concerns him personally and intimately, the easier it will be to develop this internal disposition.

2) *Detestation for sin is the chief Ignatian aim for the First Week.* The soul that acquires a deep and true detestation, a "shame and confusion for one's self" (Ex. 48), will be unable to remain long in sin; it will be truly sorry for it.

3) St. Ignatius only suggests thoughts to show the "ugliness and malice of sin". The Reflexion ought to be done by the retreatant himself. He is told "to review his sins, dwelling on their ugliness and malice", in order that this feeling may sink deeper into his soul.

Whenever there is question of the affections of the soul, the work ought to be as personal as possible. Otherwise no lasting result will be produced. Whatever is rigid and imposed will remain artificial, and deprive the affections of the soul of that spontaneity which should be theirs.

4) Assembling the *motives* which have been indicated, we draw the following conclusions:

a) *Sin destroys the plan God has had for us from all eternity.* Sin is as deadly as a bomb; more so, for it destroys not just a human life, a work of art or a city, but something which has constituted God's delight, namely, the supernatural life of the soul.

b) *It is monstrous.* It goes against the most fundamental relation of man, viz., his relation with God. The creature takes upon itself functions proper to its Creator and Lord. It becomes like a state governed by madmen, for where sin reigns, the passions gain control over man in opposition to reason.

c) It leaves a man *maimed in every organ and limb, and without functions of his own.* He has lost grace which is, as it were, the blood of the soul. Though he may work or make sacrifices, he cannot merit grace. It is as if he were deprived of feet and hands. He cannot hold supernatural grace, nor move in any way through the supernatural world (Exs. 47, 53, 58, 60).

d) A consequence of this lack of life is that a soul in the state of sin is little better than a *corpse*. From her a death-stench rises as from an "abscess". It is not strange that from such a depraved and corrupted being many moral and physical ills should flow to infect the world, itself already full of sinners, and that it should call down the divine horror and indignation (Exs. 50, 58, 60).

e) Moreover it makes Christ's redemption fruitless and causes its partial failure.

Scriptural basis: In this line of thought on the malice of sin, Holy Scripture can offer us great help. Fr. Ubillos has gathered in the fifth meditation (review of sins) the main themes. Here are some of them:

Ruin (Ex.18, 30) ; poison (Ps. 13, 3) ; putrid matter (Eccl. 19, 3) ; leprosy (Deut. 17, 8) ; worm (Is. 66, 24); corruption (Rom. 8, 21) ; everlasting death (Eccl. 15, 18) ; source of perpetual anxiety (Is. 57, 21.; Deut. 15,65); loss of liberty (Jo. 8, 34).

5) In order to make this picture more vivid, St. Ignatius wishes us to realize how vile and small is the being who dares to commit sin, and places his smallness over against other creatures, on an ever increasing scale: living creatures, men, saints, angels (Exs. 58-60).

Note

In the five points of this second exercise the three powers of the soul are developed in three distinct parts.

In the first point, a review of one's own sins is the task assigned to the memory. The second, third and fourth points are the work of the understanding. In the second point we are told what has to "be dwelt upon" and considered, namely, the deformity and malice of each sin. Now, sin is an offence of man against God. In order to realize what sin is, to bring out the meaning of this definition, it is necessary to view both its extremes: who man is and who God is. This is the matter of the third and fourth points (Exs. 58-59). The fifth point consists of acts of the will: admiration and sorrow. Finally, the sixth proposes the colloquy.

B) PRACTICE

1) Throughout the entire First Week two attitudes are in the main adopted by those who give retreats. The first is a menacing one, assumed in order to instil fear. Its purpose is profoundly to shake the exercitant, so that he may make a thorough general confession, and (if need be) bring to an end a series of sacrilegious confessions.

The other attitude is one of calm dispassionateness. These Retreat Masters prefer to convince; they know that fear obscures the intellect. They aim at deeply convincing the exercitant that sin is the only true evil, and that the motives under consideration have a bearing upon his life after the Retreat. It is not merely, nor even mainly, a question of being sorry for past sins and

making a good confession; it is a matter of avoiding future falls. There are Directories of the XVI century which advocate the practice of making the confession before the Exercises.

The Retreat Master must judge from the dispositions of the exercitants what course to follow. Generally a prudent combination of both attitudes will be most fruitful. Sometimes an initial shaking-up is to be recommended, followed by calm reflection, so that the advantages of both approaches may be obtained.

In any case, one has to curtail worries, scruples, nervous reactions, which not only do not favour, but positively hinder the fruit of the First Week,

2) This meditation is meant for everybody. “Nullus est vel gravissimus *peccator* qui per hanc (hebdomadam) non possit purgari, nec tam *sanctus*, qui aliqua saltem levium peccatorum et causarum ac radicem emendatione non indiget” (Gagliardi).

3) When one deals with pious persons, one may lay stress on the need of making up for past sins, on the possibility of future sins, ("perseverance is a grace which no one can merit"), above all on sins of the souls entrusted to each one. These souls form a kind of spiritual unit with the retreatant, to whose generosity God in His mysterious providence has adapted His efficacious graces.

4) Another *incentive to zeal* is to realize that to save souls is the most beneficent occupation of mankind, because thus the most profound and harmful of evils is banished.

V. SECOND MEDITATION (SECOND DAY):

REPETITION ON SINS

A) GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1) This detestation – the focus of this morning's work – is *produced and strengthened* in the repetitions and summaries. The leisurely assimilation of these ideas must necessarily leave in the soul a residue of hatred and love.

2) This hatred is fomented especially in the *colloquies*. St. Ignatius puts in the form of colloquies the more difficult desiderata, for which a special grace of God is needed. They are graces which should be asked for with insistence, because there is nothing more important at this moment than to be steeped in shame of oneself. The rooting out of inclinations is obtained by planting their opposite affections.

3) As detestation is the most essential grace of the First Week, it is put in the form of a colloquy. The object in view is divided into three parts, and to each of them a colloquy is assigned. The Triple Colloquy, (Ex. 63) in which the entire fruit of the first week is condensed, should be explained in detail and made fervently by the exercitant, who should devote a long time to it. A well-prepared exposition of these colloquies may serve as the basis of this second meditation-repetition.

4) The *interior knowledge* for which one asks is that which normally produces a change of affection, in this case to one of detestation for sin. Frequent falls into sin suppose that there is an attraction to it. If the Lord transforms this attraction into aversion, the disposition in the soul is changed, and there will no longer be an incitement to sin, but to virtue.

5) *Of my sins*: Even after repentance a continued attachment to sin remains in my heart. This attraction which I have to neutralize has been left by *my own* sins, not those of others. These, since I have not committed them, may be presumed to attract me less.

6) The same thing must be said of the *disorder of my actions*. Feeling a real disgust for whatever withdraws me from the norm of right order, I should regulate my life in conformity with the right norm; realizing the causes of my disorder, I should drive them from my soul.

7) One cause of this disorder is the influence exerted by the maxims of those whose norm of life is worldly comfort. For this reason the third grace we are told to pray for is an intimate knowledge of "the world", i.e. of this worldly atmosphere in so far as it turns us away from the Principle and Foundation. The essence of worldliness lies in the striving after vanity and enjoyment. It leads to pride and sensuality.

8) These worldly maxims, when examined in the light of the true norm of order, the Principle and Foundation, appear "vain" and futile. They do not help us to reach our end; they are hollow, without any spiritual substance; if they find expression in our own behaviour they become springs of disorder. The world is the antithesis of the Principle and Foundation.

PRACTICE

1) The Retreat Master must find a way to give the soul this intimate knowledge and detestation, as they are of the utmost importance and are the fundamental fruit to be obtained. There is no need to worry too much about variety, as long as the truths *sink deeply and become personal*. For this reason, the exercitant should be encouraged to make these colloquies well.

2) Full advantage should be taken of the colloquies to bring out the meaning of Our Lord's crucifixion and the *protection of the Blessed Virgin*. One may build up the whole repetition on these two themes: what sin meant to Jesus Christ and to Our Lady; what they did and they are doing from heaven in order to extirpate it. The purpose of their whole life was to promote grace and eliminate sin.

3) Some Retreat Masters speak of *venial sin*, tepidity, occasions of sin and similar themes. The explanations of these meditations will be found, in the commentators. But the main thing is detestation for sin, which is not obtained by much exposition, but by fervent colloquies and the realization of the malice and deformity of sin. This day should be given to the repetition of the same truth under different forms, rather than to a series of beautiful considerations.

4) *The Penitential Psalms* and the Gospel offer appropriate expressions, which can be used as acts and affections, and which often pierce the soul like darts. The Lenten liturgical prayers are also helpful.

VI. INSTRUCTION FOR THE SECOND DAY

1) It may serve as a *complement to the repetition*. It may take the form of a practical description of the main snares set by our enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh.

2) One may also speak on *occasions of sin, proximate and remote*, explaining that to place oneself freely in a proximate occasion of sin constitutes already a sin in itself.

3) Another theme proper to this day is the virtue of purity.

VII. MEDITATIONS OF THE EVENING

(SECOND DAY): ETERNAL TRUTHS

1) St. Ignatius develops only the meditation on Hell. But from the beginning of the Society it became customary to add, before or after the meditation on hell those on death and judgement. In the note added to n. 71 in the *Vulgate* these are expressly mentioned:

"If he who gives the Exercises should deem it conducive to the good of the exercitants to add other meditations, such as death and other punishments of sin, judgement etc., he should not think he is forbidden to do so, even though they are not mentioned here expressly".

2) These meditations are *subordinate* to the meditations on sin. Their purpose is to *emphasize* the malice contained in sin.

3) A link between these three meditations is found in the *Three Colloquies*. The meditation on death is well suited to create detestation for the world; also the last judgement, in which we see the destruction awaiting everything worldly and created.

The particular judgement too throws light on the disorder of our actions. All of these should create a deep detestation for sin.

"This *knowledge of the world*, which is the foundation and motive for our detesting and withdrawing from the things of this world, is acquired to a great extent by means of the meditation on death; and this is the reason why it must be given in this place" (La Palma, book I, ch. 23).

"He who considers himself as *dead* has evicted and closed the door to all the occasions which might trouble him from outside and make him fall" (La Palma, book I, ch. 23).

4) In retreats given to good pious young men, particularly if they belong to the higher social class, it is advisable to link the meditation on death with the Three Colloquies. Their chief difficulties often lie in the attractions of the world and the fascination of creatures. For this reason a powerful influence may be exercised by insisting throughout the whole evening on the true nature of the world and of creatures. Their true reality is so different from their attractive appearances. With these retreatants the consideration of hell would follow.

5) On the other hand when dealing with *sinners*, hell produces a powerful impression, and for this reason it should be proposed as soon as possible and afterwards insisted upon in repetitions and colloquies.

6) As regards the *meditation on death*, Fr. Arellano proposes the following methods:

"Descriptive method: to follow as in a kind of vision the whole process of dying from the moment of falling sick up to the burial and the 'pulvis, cinis, nihil'.

"Evangelical method: according to the teaching of the Master.

"Classical method: certainty of death – uncertainties of death: when, where, how – lessons of death. . . .

"Ascetical method: the 'quotidie morior', 'mortui estis, et vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo', 'Christo confixus sum cruci'..... 'To die to the world, to ourselves, to self-love and to live only for God'."

The liturgical method: could be added making use of the different parts of the Mass of the dead, mainly the prayers, the sequence "Dies Irae" and the beautiful prefaces (cf. R. Plus: La messe le plus beau sujet de meditation, 27-33).

7) The meditation on *judgement* may be given the orientation which St. Ignatius speaks of in the Election, applying what the Saint says to the whole of life:–

"Viewing and considering how I shall find myself on the day of judgement, to think how I shall then wish to have decided in regard to the present matter; and the rule which I should then wish to have observed, I will now observe, that I may then find myself full of joy and gladness" (Ex. 187).

Profitable use may also be made of the Gospel: the parable of the talents (Mt. 25, 14-30), the foolish virgins (Mt. 25, 1-13), the bad steward (Mt. 25, 45-51; Lk. 12, 42-48), those invited without wearing the nuptial dress (Mt. 22, 2-14), chapters 24 and 25 of St. Matthew.

8) There are also *secondary fruits* which may be profitably drawn from the consideration of the eternal truths, such as: holy fear of God (hell): loss of all fear for creatures (particular judgement); the truth of the divine judgement; the transcendence of the Principle and Foundation, seeing that on the day of the last judgement the Principle and Foundation will be the criterion for the judgement of every man; divine justice is judging continuously the seventy persons that die every minute; the sentence passed is just and of eternal value. (These considerations are valuable for those who complain about the differences between the well-being of the wicked and the sufferings of the good); dangerous occasions of sin; preparation for confession; the realization that those who are mistaken are not we, but those who mock at the good (judgement).

9) The meditation on *hell* can be variously presented. St. Ignatius proposes a meditation employing the physical senses (Ex. 65), in order that the "*poena sensus*" may engender a greater hatred and that thorough detestation to which the Saint wishes to lead the exercitant, in order to uproot his ill-ordered affections.

But normally one should not omit the "*poena damni*" with the divine curse, which is the fundamental pain and is capable of producing a deep and lasting impression.

At the same time – as indicated by St. Ignatius in the colloquy (Ex. 71) – one should arouse vivid sentiments of *gratitude and trust* in the mercy of Jesus Christ, and show how Jesus Christ, crucified, has preserved and freed me from hell.

This approach to Christ at this juncture is one of the most Ignatian traits of this meditation and prepares the way for the Second Week.

A complementary end which may be proposed in retreats to chosen youths is zeal for souls. A powerful stimulus to arouse this feeling will be "to recall to memory the souls that are in hell" (Ex. 71) and to see how by the grace of God we are able to save so many souls from so horrible an evil.

VIII. OTHER EXERCISES

Besides the suggestions given for the first day, the following may be noted:

1. Prayers for the dying or preparation for death

In one of the evening visits or during Benediction, the pious practice of "preparation for death", so traditional and fruitful in its effects, is very appropriate. The prayers for the dying, read out with a short commentary, are often very moving. The retreatants should come to know the value of such a precious exercise and prepare themselves henceforth for this decisive moment.

Some add with profit a brief commentary on the prayers and rites of Extreme Unction.

2. Final Exercise before retiring

In this exercise special stress should be laid on the act of perfect contrition.

Seldom will they be in a better disposition to make it than today. Teach the exercitants to make it, not just by reciting a formula verbally, but from the heart; encourage them to make it every night before going to bed. This act will be for more than one the key to heaven.

During the examination of conscience care should be taken to review those commandments which the retreatants may have transgressed more often: the 4th, 6th and 7th. This is an immediate preparation for confession.

3. Contact with the Retreat Master

The Retreat Master should not fail to visit all the retreatants during these first two days. Thus he learns their problems, and sees their dispositions and the difficulties they encounter.

He should not be discouraged by the fact that not all will confide in him. Let him concentrate on those whom he finds more responsive and generous. He should deal with the others with extreme delicacy and tact, not wishing to

violate the sanctuary of the soul. He must endeavour to win their confidence gradually,

4. Questionnaire

This evening is a good time for a questionnaire. Many who will not reveal themselves in speech do so more easily in writing.

In this questionnaire two types of questions may be proposed:

a) On the *manner of making the Exercises*, impressions received, difficulties encountered; is the exercitant satisfied; does he reflect. . . . Rather than asking many questions, it is preferable to choose one or two worded in such a way that the exercitant may dwell longer on them; and better than stereotyped questions, are those which the Director himself proposes, to suit each man's need. The Retreat Master himself at the end of the instructions often dictates two or three questions to be answered at any time after lunch or in the evening.

b) On the *personal problems of the retreatant*, but delicately and tactfully.

Fr. Arellano proposes two or three questions to follow the meditation on hell:—

"If I am condemned one day, what will it be for? What may become the cause of my damnation? What is it that may lead me to hell?"

THIRD DAY

I. ORDER OF TIME

Morning Offering.

First Meditation: *Judgement (Hell or repetition on Sins)*.

Mass, Breakfast, Free Time.

Second Meditation: *God's Mercy*.

Time for Reviewing the meditation and taking notes; Free Time.

Instruction on *Confession*.

Lunch, Rest.

Confessions.

The remaining exercises of the evening as far as confessions allow.

Act of thanksgiving for the confession.

Meditation after Confession: The *Kingdom of Christ*.

Supper. Last act and examination of Conscience.

Preparation for Communion. Retire.

(The detailed order of time will depend on the confessions, the number of confessors, the time needed for confessions).

II. FIRST MEDITATION (THIRD DAY):

LAST JUDGEMENT

1) The Retreat Master determines the most suitable order for the meditations on the eternal truths.

2) If the *meditation on hell is placed last*, it will help some to make their confession with greater sincerity and sorrow. The colloquy of this meditation (Ex. 71) is intimately connected with the Second Week; hence, if another meditation comes after this one, the colloquy in question should be repeated at the end.

3) The meditation *on the Last Judgement*, if placed at the end of the First Week, has the advantage of serving as a repetition of the whole week.

The *Divine Judge* appears in His infinite majesty, and judges according to the rule of the Principle and Foundation: the reckoning of each and every one of our sins: the punishment which they have merited: hell: death is presupposed.

4) When dealing with the reckoning of sins at judgement, *an examination of conscience* may be made as a direct preparation for confession, with particular insistence on the integrity and sincerity required for confession.

III. SECOND MEDITATION (THIRD DAY):

MERCY OF GOD

1) This meditation is a development of the colloquy of mercy which St. Ignatius places at the end of the meditations on hell (Ex. 71).

2) Psychologically, it comes at a most suitable moment. The meditations of the First Week tend to depress the soul; hence the danger of the exercitant believing that on account of his former bad behaviour, he cannot aim at holiness.

3) He must be convinced that the Lord has not only forgiven him everything (this is fundamental and the lack of this conviction destroys that peace which is a necessary prerequisite for firm resolutions), but that, whatever the past

may have been, the Lord will not fail to call him to His service, to great intimacy and holiness.

4) With this end in view the picture of the good and merciful Jesus is placed before the retreatant; the Jesus who has no other desire than our happiness, and who is constantly calling us to a higher degree of holiness.

5) One of the following methods may be followed:—

a) A *general view* of Jesus' mercy: how He bears with the sinner, how He awaits his return, seeks him, favours him.

b) A *double picture* may be presented: first, the parables of mercy, the lost sheep, prodigal son, (Lk. 15, 1-32); Jesus showing compassion to sinners and granting them forgiveness.

c) The selection of one concrete instance, wherein all the love of Jesus is seen, is often very effective. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15, 11-32), of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10, 25-37), of the Good Shepherd (Jo. 10, 11-19); the story of Peter's fall and conversion. (Mk. 14, 60-72; Mt. 26, 69-75; Lk. 22, 55-62; Jo. 18, 15-18, 25, 27) (This is very effective in the case of priests and religious); the conversion of the Good Thief (Lk. 23, 39-43); Mary Magdalene (Ex. 282; Lk. 7, 36-50), the adulteress (Jo. 8, 1-11): All these strike home.

d) The great O.T. figures Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon, provide a fund of admirable material!

IV. INSTRUCTION FOR THE THIRD DAY

1) Confession will be the subject demanding special treatment on this day. The necessary requirements for a good confession should be carefully explained, taking into account the state and piety of the retreatant.

2) This is the right time to raise the question of the general confession for which the retreatant is preparing himself, commenting on the advantages which St. Ignatius attaches to this (Ex. 44).

3) Practical advice should be given as regards the preparation for and method of making a general confession.

V. OTHER EXERCISES

1. Confession

The most important exercise of this day is the confession. All the other practices are subordinated to this exercise.

a) *Time.* In most retreats, it is necessary not to delay confession till the last day, but to fix it for the third day (in retreats of four days, the second day).

There are good reasons for this:

1. The chief aim of the Exercises is "to order one's life", to arrange one's future rightly. But until the confession has been made, the mind of the retreatant is not disposed to reflect on anything else. Confession is a weight that oppresses the soul. The minimum time demanded for this all-important exercise is two days.

2. It may happen that even after confession the soul does not enjoy complete peace, especially in the case of young men who have not been living in a state of grace for a long time. They often feel that something has been left out, that the confessor has not understood them properly, in spite of the advice given them, they are not at ease unless they are allowed to speak out what is troubling them. Now, if the confession has been left for the last day, these young people have no further opportunity of speaking with the Father to whom they have confessed. They may not dare to expose their worries to another priest, and are thus in danger of committing sacrilege.

3. Holy Communion after the retreat confession is extraordinarily consoling. On the fourth day they can communicate with peace and devotion, without the hurry and distractions of the journey home. Throughout the day they taste the supernatural joy of living in a state of grace. On the following day the same Communion is repeated, and confirms them in their state of peace and joy.

4. Thus they approach the problems of election, not merely in a better psychological disposition, but in a state of grace. Our Lord is undoubtedly more constrained to impart to them His lights and inspirations. One who enjoys peace of soul responds more readily to the call of the King in the Kingdom of Christ.

5. The objection that after confession tension is released and dissipation begins, is unreal, especially if the Second Week is properly conducted. We shall speak in a moment of the release of tension. But if we succeed in arousing their interest in the personality of Jesus Christ, and in making them realize the importance of the two following days, an interest is created which not seldom is greater than that of the First Week, where the accent was on sins. Now it is a question of determining their future.

b) *Preparation.* This is of great importance.

1. On the one hand, confession should be prepared for *gradually and from the beginning*. In the meditation on Sin, sorrow is aroused, and the retreatants are

asked to make acts of sorrow; in the meditation on judgement, sincerity is insisted upon; in the colloquies, sorrow is again emphasized, together with the purpose of amendment: in the meditation on the Divine mercy, the retreatants conceive a deep confidence in Jesus Christ and those who represent Him; at night, the examination for confession is made. Thus one comes to the time for the instruction on confession with all the requisite elements already there. Nothing remains but to show how to gather up the seeds of the past days.

2. On the other hand, *worry about confession must be dispelled*, else it becomes such an oppression to the soul, that no motives sink in. That peace of mind is lacking which is necessary to understand, observe and reflect.

3. The general confession of the retreat is truly profitable when it is the *spontaneous result* of the "sap" injected into the soul during these days. Otherwise, it is artificial. The thoughts on the malice of sin and its dreadful consequences must needs produce a very great impression on the soul. From this springs a desire for confession, in order to make one's peace with God and remove the evils occasioned by sin. There should be no worry about confession until the time comes when it is asked for spontaneously.

4. It follows that the *general* confession should normally not take place until the end of the First Week. Otherwise retreatants will constantly wish to desire to repeat it, with all the inconveniences this entails. Those who are used to frequent communion may, if they so desire, start with their ordinary confession.

c) During Confession.

1. It is preferable to have it made in the rooms occupied by the retreatants themselves, rather than in the Retreat Master's room or in the Chapel. There are good reasons for this procedure:—

a) Queues are avoided. There is no waiting for one's turn, which, on account of nervous strain, often leads to dissipation, impatience and distractions.

b) Nobody knows how long the confession of another has lasted. This is a great obstacle to some, especially when they know each other, and may even be the cause of haste and nervousness.

c) A man's own room offers a better atmosphere for *recollection* and homeliness; the retreatant can express himself freely, and even make his confession in the form of a dialogue.

d) After confession they *remain* in the same atmosphere without meeting others, thus avoiding a dangerous occasion of dissipation.

2. If this procedure is adopted, they must be told beforehand the time when the confessor will come. For this purpose a broad margin should be indicated, avoiding as far as possible delays which might lead to impatience.
3. One should try to get *a large number of confessors* and leave freedom of choice to the exercitant. Let him choose his confessor beforehand, or at least say that anyone will suit him. The confessors are then told beforehand, who will confess to them.
4. Every means should be employed to have all the exercitants make their confession *the same evening*. When confessors are few, this may not always be feasible; nevertheless it should be aimed at. The other exercises are subordinated to this. Sometimes the first meditation and other exercises may have to be cancelled. It is desirable that up to the time of confession, all should remain in their rooms. If there is an assistant, he may conduct devotional exercises such as the Stations of the Cross, or a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. But at such exercises only those should be present who have already made their confession.
5. *The confessor* must inspire confidence and show great patience and calm. He must give the impression that he is not in a hurry, that all his time is at the disposal of his penitent, as if there were nobody else for confession. The retreatant in his retreat confession intends, not only to acquire the grace of the Sacrament, but to close a chapter in his life, and have the satisfaction of having settled everything well.

The task of the confessor is not primarily to instruct or exhort. Enough is said on these topics during the day. He must appease and pacify, leave the conscience of his penitent in a state of perfect certainty, with all doubts and anxieties allayed.

d) After Confession:

1. One should recommend beforehand *recollection* and silence for the rest of the evening. In the instruction emphasize this point. A very powerful motive is to bind them to strict silence during these hours as an act of atonement for their sins, a sign of their good dispositions, and a guarantee that they are men and are serious about the whole matter.
2. Before confession one insists on this, relaxation after confession may spoil the whole retreat, none the less, after confession one should not attach too much importance to passing words (long conversations are quite a different matter), which often spring from the joy that fills their hearts.
3. The most effective remedy to overcome this psychological release of tension is to keep them occupied with something that can hold their attention.

For this reason we advise that the meditation on Christ's call be given this same evening. This will enkindle in their souls an ideal which may transform their lives. At this psychological moment, with the soul in the state of grace, they are swept along by love of our Blessed Lord. If this is achieved the retreat is set along its proper path. But if they are left as they were, energy is wasted, fervour is diminished, and it is difficult for them to settle down again. We think this so important that, when there is no other solution, we put back the hour of going to bed and use the exercise at night after supper to propose to them the call of the Eternal King.

2. Act of thanksgiving

It should be made either before the Blessed Sacrament exposed or during another visit to Our Lord. It should be a brief but deeply-felt thanksgiving for the immense gift of confession.

The retreatants should foster interior recollection during these moments and strive to value better the act which they have performed. This will fill them with interior confidence and a greater realization of the mercy of Christ. Sometimes one may even ask for and read publicly the impressions of the retreatants themselves. This should, of course, be done outside the chapel. If done, let it be with all seriousness, without comment and only when there is certainty of success. The remarks should be brief, heartfelt and simple. It is preferable for the Retreat Master to read out the impressions written by the retreatants. This procedure has its difficulties, but can be very effective.

3. Final exercise before retiring

1. There is no objection to lengthening it, even transforming it into a Holy Hour. In this case the act of thanksgiving could take place then. On this day the retreatants retire later than usual, so as to avoid occasions of dissipation. This longer night prayer may be taken as an act of penance.

2. The thoughts should be focussed on the following day. They should dwell particularly on Our Lord's mercy.

3. The *examination of conscience* ought to be short.

4. The main task is preparing for Communion on the morrow. A desire for this should be fostered, perhaps, by means of spiritual Communions – this is a suitable occasion to teach them this practice. Affections may be suggested, and an explanation given of the significance of this act: it is, as it were, the final seal on the promise of perpetual friendship and intimacy with Jesus; it is

a response to His call, a combining of the answer to the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ and Holy Communion.

VI. SYNTHESIS OF THE FRUIT OF THE FIRST WEEK

This is the moment for the Retreat Master to consider the fruit which he desires to obtain from his retreatants, in order to examine his methods and see whether he has failed in any point.

The ends to be achieved in the First Week may be thus summarised:

- 1) *Knowledge* of oneself and one's own disorders: "*internam animae nostrae faciem cognoscere*" (Le Gaudier).
- 2) *Shame* and confusion and detestation of all disorder.
- 3) *Purification* of the soul (Ex. 32).
- 4) *Amendment of one's life*, which takes one to the very root of the disorder (Ex. 63).

As these fruits are obtained gradually, the soul is at the same time filled with love and gratitude to Christ crucified, her Deliverer and Creator (Exs. 53, 71), and the chief virtues gradually take possession of the soul (Ex. 327).

There is another *end which is more hidden*: to prepare the soul for the work of the following weeks. The aim of many of the Exercises is not fully obtained during these days. They are seeds that reach their full growth in the following weeks.

To this last end is directed:

- 1) The endeavour to elicit resolutions to do something great for Christ (Ex.53).
- 2) The presentation of Christ as Redeemer; recalling His coming into this world and His death in order to deliver us from hell (Ex. 71) .
- 3) The stirring-up, in the retreatant, of the desire to be grateful to his Saviour (Ex. 71).
- 4) The general amendment and right ordering of life, which will take a more concrete shape later on (Exs. 61, 63).

VII. MEDITATION AFTER CONFESSION: KINGDOM OF CHRIST

With this meditation we enter a new world, which St. Ignatius calls the "Second Week", different in character from all that preceded it. Let us first explain the tactics employed by St. Ignatius in this Second Week, and the dispositions in which the retreatant finds himself.

VIII. ENTRANCE INTO THE SECOND WEEK

1. Connection with the First Week and with the general object

a) The exercitant is *permeated with the thought of God*. He has realized that God alone can be the object of his love. A true *sense of sin* fills his soul. He has seen that, though he has experienced its attraction, sin is the only evil.

In order to rid himself of this attraction, he has asked for a detestation of whatever is not God and does not lead him to God.

b) Through this detesting and uprooting of whatever is ill-ordered, *a void has been created* in the heart. But the craving of the human heart for love cannot remain unsatisfied. So St. Ignatius, in place of the feeble and deceitful love of creatures, presents love in its true expression, for the Person of *Jesus Christ*.

It is He who satisfies the soul's longings as no one else ever will, and in Him man discovers the summit of all perfection.

c) *In other words:*

1. The retreatant is *convinced* that a life of sin is horrible and evil. Christ will show him a life that is good and beautiful. There is no one more perfect than Jesus Christ, no one who can show a more perfect way. The highest possible perfection in practice comes to mean the following of Christ.

To follow Jesus, then, is *the norm of right order*, the practical realization of the ideal contained in the Principle and Foundation.

"The more closely we are united to Christ the better shall we attain our last end" (Gil Gz. Davila). And no one achieved this last end better than Jesus Christ.

Following Christ is the same as living the Principle and Foundation, with all the advantage practice has over theory.

2. The retreatant's *heart* is filled with an abhorrence of every disorder, and is burning with the desire to find the person in whom his thirst for love may be fulfilled. Jesus Christ alone gives him the water that satisfies, because from Him flow "streams of living water" (cf. Jo. 4, 13 and 7, 38).

3. The retreatant's *will* is full of desire to do something great. Now he finds in Christ the answer to the words: "What shall I do for Christ" (Ex.53).

2. Drawing closer to Christ gradually and progressively

St. Ignatius now *discloses* the programme which he has been preparing carefully and already slowly unfolding. It is time to reap what was sown all along the First Week. Jesus Christ was presented, first as from a distance, then more closely, until this moment of revelation.

There is a *gradual shift from the divine to the more human aspects* of Our Lord, which touch the retreatant deeply.

a) First Christ appears as *Creator* (Ex. 13), even in the Principle and Foundation, for one of the characteristics of St. Ignatius is to call Jesus Christ Creator. Cf. Deliberation on poverty: "seeing the Son of the Blessed Virgin, our Creator".

b) Then successively, as *Lord* (Exs. 53, 71), *Eternal Life* (Ex. 53), *Redeemer* (Exs. 53, 71), *Son of the Blessed Virgin* (Ex. 63), *Our Intercessor with the Father* (Ex. 63), full "of boundless pity and mercy" (Ex. 71), *Our Supreme Benefactor*, who did not allow me to fall into hell (Ex. 71), and has died on a Cross for me (Ex. 53), terribly offended against in hell (Ex. 67), in spite of His goodness and mercy.

c) St. Ignatius places before me what Jesus Christ has done for man and particularly for "me": He who was "eternal life" lowered himself more and more until he came to "temporal death" (Ex. 53).

d) The retreatant is ready to start *corresponding* with our Lord's graces; this is indicated in the words, "What must I do for Christ?" He considers Him as model, master, father, head, his all, in order to know Him, love Him, follow Him and, as far as possible, become one with Him. Thus he gradually imbibes His views and his desires, all of them finding their final culmination in the Contemplation for Obtaining Love.

Note

This *progressive assimilation* of Christ fills the understanding, will and heart of the retreatant, and gives the right orientation to his life. In this way he obtains the end at which this spiritual war aims, for Jesus is the true life of the soul, which He communicates to all those who approach Him.

St. Ignatius henceforth centres everything around Jesus Christ. And as *knowledge and love are vital acts*, the assimilation of Jesus Christ necessarily

follows. The unvarying petition is "To ask for an interior knowledge. ... that I may love and follow Him better" (Ex. 104).

Jesus Christ offers this new life:

1. By His *doctrine*: "His words are eternal life" (Jo. 6, 69).
2. By His *example*: "He who follows me . . . shall possess the light which is life" (Jo. 8, 12).
3. By His *person*: "Whosoever sees the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life" (Jo. 6, 40).

The aim of St. Ignatius in the 2nd Week, i.e. to know and love the person and doctrine of the Redeemer and to follow Him, is an assimilation of the life of Jesus Christ.

3. Psychological preparation for the meditation

a) St. Ignatius has a practical aim in view. He arranges as it were, an interview with Him. He wishes to impress upon the retreatant that this is an interview of great importance for the whole of his future life; not a short conversation, or effort to please Him, but an attempt to *settle the problems* of his soul. On these moments his future may depend.

b) The First Week has been a *remote preparation*. The retreatant has learnt what within him displeases the Lord, what he must rid himself of if he wants to appear before Him, what must be removed if he wishes to please the Lord and enjoy his intimacy.

c) St. Ignatius wishes him now to realize Who calls him, His greatness and His power.

This is *most necessary*. We are so used to the fact that God loves us and takes an interest in us, that we do not give this a second thought. It seems natural to us, and we even take it ill when the Lord appears to abandon us, as if He had a duty to look after us. We fail to realize the *miracle* contained in this love, the abyss that lies between His greatness and our littleness. As a result we act negligently with Him and do not make proper use of the treasure we possess.

The realization of Christ's greatness is obtained by comparing Him with someone in which greatness may be easily perceived: with an earthly king (Ex. 92) . He is above all the kings (Ex. 95).

d) The retreatant must become conscious of his own capabilities. He is in danger of regarding himself as a great sinner, as too weak to do anything great for Our Lord. He may serve Him from afar perhaps, but can surely

never be Christ's collaborator, His close friend. For this reason the first part of the meditation is dedicated to a purely human warfare. In war a simple villager who joins the army can, with his confreres, perform heroic deeds, save his country, free it from the enemy.

This is the disposition which should be fostered in the soul before its meeting with Jesus Christ. His own capacity for greatness must be set before the retreatant; he can do *great things* for Jesus Christ, and consequently Our Lord may call him for great enterprises, regardless of what he may have been.

e) St. Ignatius here follows the method which has already been pointed out in the meditation of the Triple Sin, and will be repeated in the Three Classes of Men. Before placing the retreatant in direct contact with Christ, he teaches him through a parable. The man can thus examine coolly and with dispassionate mind the nature of this call, its characteristics, its advantages. Let him consider:

1. First Christ's *general* call during his preaching (Ex. 91).
2. Then His call to *the whole world* (Ex. 95).
3. Next the calling of *each man in particular* (Ex. 95). Let him reflect on the answer of the Apostles, of so many saints, of the director there before him.
4. St. Ignatius does not indicate what the retreatant's answer should be, but asks what would be the answer of "all those who have judgement and reason . . . who wish to distinguish themselves". (Everything is worded in the third person plural).

f) The retreatant thus realizes:

1. The greatness and goodness of the Person who has made the call.
2. The justice and nobleness of the cause.
3. The decisive part he himself can play in this conquest.
4. Consequently the cowardice of not answering the call, and his serious responsibility.

4. Function of the Parable

a) From what has just been said one clearly grasps the object of the parable, namely, to prepare the retreatant psychologically for an understanding of the greatness of Christ and the surpassing worth of His call.

b) This is a means, which "may help". Therefore, like all means it should be used only in so far as it helps; it must always lead us to the second part, to clarify the truth contained therein.

c) The parable helps "to move the will and make it realize how greatly Christ surpasses the King of the parable" (Iglesias).

d) This parable has been criticised as reflecting the mentality of chivalry which produces no impression nowadays. It is said that it was composed for the XVI century, not for today, and that it no longer serves its purpose:

1. It is for the Director to judge how to use or adapt it to present-day life. We believe that not infrequently the military element is exaggerated, and an imperialistic mentality quite foreign to the mind of St. Ignatius suggested.

Remember that the word "kingdom" employed by the Saint is taken straight from the Gospel; indeed, this is one of the meditations which reflects clearly the mind and atmosphere of the Gospel.

The composition of place is taken from the Gospel; it is an echo of St. Matthew's sentence: "Jesus went about all their cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Mt. 9, 35).

The whole meditation is "a compendium of the Gospel" (Oleza), "it is a summary of the life and work of Our Lord of the mission entrusted to Him by the Eternal Father" (Gil Gonzalez Davila; Ex. 917). It summarizes the thought of Our Lord in an image chosen by Christ Himself as the framework of His main parables: "Evangelium regni" an entirely Catholic concept "belonging to every people and every age" (Oleza).

St. Ignatius here *extracts from the Gospel the quintessence* of Christ's programme of perfection.

2. Presented in this light, the concept of the Kingdom offers less difficulty to the modern mind. The parable in itself is military in concept – though St. Ignatius has avoided such words as weapons and soldiers. But the reason has already been stated: it is to serve as an encouragement to so many who think that they can do nothing for Jesus Christ.

3. Others propose the parable in an *indirect way*: let the retreatant imagine the impression which would be produced in the XVI cent. by such a call, as if he were seeing a film unroll itself before his eyes. This method may prove valuable for cultured people.

4. Others change the figure of the temporal king to that of the *Roman Pontiff*, who himself summons the retreatant to a great enterprise. They believe that nowadays the Pope represents in the eyes of many those powers

which in the XVI cent. were vested in the emperor. Actually, the qualities attributed by St. Ignatius to the "temporal King" are all found in the Roman Pontiff: a human king . . . (Ex. 92).

5. Others see in the temporal king today's popular *leaders* and stress the enthusiasm which they rouse in their followers, who are devoted to them.

6. To decide which course to adopt, one must bear in mind the requisite *conditions* for the parable to fulfil its purpose.

Here is a summary of them according to Fr. Monier-Vinard:

a) It should be a visible symbol that creates in the retreatant a vivid *realization* of what Christ is and the debt one owes to Him.

b) It must be a symbol that deeply *impresses* and strongly attracts.

c) It should be developed in such a way that the *second part becomes a "must"*, a necessary consequence of the first. The "yes" of the first part must needs find its echo in the second.

5. The Application to the Eternal King

a) The long preparation that has preceded the presentation of the "King" to the retreatant, indicates the *importance* which St. Ignatius attaches to this passage.

It has already been indicated how in Jesus Christ we find the *practical realization of the norm of order*. He as God is the norm of right order, He as man most perfectly executes it.

This consideration, then, becomes a *second Principle and Foundation*, in which one places in full Christological light the theological doctrine of the first Principle and Foundation. "*That which most leads us, for example, is nothing else than the faithful following, the perfect imitation of Christ*" (Moran).

b) The meaning of the meditation can be reduced to a simple, pregnant sentence: *Christ calls me to live His life*.

We reflect, therefore:– 1) *Who* is the person who makes this appeal? 2) To what is He calling me? 3) *Consequence*: dishonour and disgrace in not answering His call.

c) *Who is calling*: This is one of the points of the Exercises that demands careful preparation on the part of the Director. The retreatant must be shown Jesus Who seeks him, is solicitous for him, offers him happiness. The true Christ of the Gospel, who is in heaven and in the soul of the just, must be set before him. One must reveal His greatness and His personal charm. He is

powerful enough to exercise command over life and nature; yet *so good* that the sick and needy flock to Him for cure. He possesses the most *complete and perfect human character*: His intellect is the most powerful, His will the strongest, His heart the most delicate ever known; so that even humanly speaking, He is the person most to be desired.

d) *To what does He call?* "To come with Me" (Ex. 95). He does not specify yet the concrete conditions of the enterprise. This will be done later, all through the Second Week. Now it is a question of *working with Jesus Christ*, of following Him in order to merit a victory (Ex. 95). Hence, the call is to something supernatural, important, which implies work, but which the retreatant can always do, and which will lead him to victory.

In the First Week his soul was shown the emptiness of the world (Ex. 63). This enterprise is of a totally different nature, more constructive and demanding. Thus the retreatant, though unaware of all the details, is none the less sure that he will not be disappointed. He realizes that the work consists in *accompanying Jesus Christ*, his Benefactor, the Merciful One. The enterprise embodies "all the sentiments of well-ordered affections": the Principle and Foundation, the love of Jesus Christ.

e) *Consequences*: St. Ignatius does not here propose anything concrete, *just enthusiasm* for Jesus Christ, longing for conquest, desire of self-surrender. Let the retreatant resolve to live like Jesus Christ. Later he will see what this implies:

1. But St. Ignatius, who is always practical, wishes to avoid *illusions*. He therefore indicates the more serious obstacles to this following of Christ, and wishes the retreatant to take means to avoid them.

The most important obstacle is: *one's own worldly self-love*. Therefore the first prerequisite to following Christ will be to battle "against his own sensuality and against his carnal and worldly love".

2. To follow Jesus already appears as something opposed to i) the following of the world, and ii) the following of one's self-love; it is something that demands work and struggle.

3. This following must start with a battling *against one's own carnal love*. This is the purpose of the offering. It is like enlisting in Christ's army, getting oneself enrolled.

4. Thus an intimate relationship is established between Jesus Christ and the retreatant. Jesus begins to arouse new interest. The exercitant remains bound to Christ.

5. The idea that Christ, my Father, my Life, my All, *has enemies* (Ex. 95), and that I can defeat them and offer them to Christ as hostages is a very efficacious thought.

6. Realize that you are following Christ who is at present still conquering souls for His Father. The Christ of St. Ignatius is not a mere historical memory, but the risen Christ, Who today continues His work of redemption (Danielou: Asc. Myst. Rev. 26, 1950, 7). He is the Head of the Church, His Mystical Body, Who in many of His members has not yet entered into the glory of His Father (Ex. 95).

IX. FOURTH MEDITATION (THIRD DAY):

INCARNATION

a) As has already been indicated, this meditation will be given if confessions allow this. If the majority of the retreatants have not yet finished their confession, it is preferable to omit it, and keep the rest busy with spiritual reading, Stations of the Cross or some similar exercise, especially if there is someone to conduct these.

b) The Incarnation stresses the ideas contained in the consideration on the Eternal King. Here we have the *first conquest*: the Blessed Virgin; the enterprise for which she is chosen is: to co-operate in the redemption; the conditions laid down: willingness, faithfulness, surrender, purity; the *answer* of Our Lady to the divine plan.

c) Christ here shows *His preferences* (an essential point for those who have decided to follow him): *abnegation and humility*.

"Being the first meditation on Christ's life it is of the utmost importance that the retreatant should be well impressed by his contact with the Lord and imbibe the atmosphere and spirit of the Gospel, thus allowing himself to be more and more won by the person of Jesus Christ" (Arellano: Adaptation).

d) This is an occasion to show the *value of purity*. At this virginal contact with the Blessed Virgin after the retreatants' confession and their generous response to Christ, the Retreat Master may help them to feel, for the first time perhaps the fragrance and beauty of this virtue.

FOURTH DAY

1. ORDER OF TIME

Morning Offering.

First Contemplation: *Nativity*.

Mass, Breakfast, Free Time.

Second Contemplation: *Nazareth and the Lost Child*.

Time for examen and taking of notes. Free Time.

Instruction: *Election and Reform*.

Lunch. Rest.

Way of the Cross.

Third Meditation: *Two Standards*.

Rosary and Benediction. Tea, Walk in silence.

Fourth Meditation: *Classes of Men and Degrees of Humility*.

Time for examen and making of the Election.

Supper. Free Time.

Holy Hour: *Agony in the Garden*. Retire.

II. CONTEMPLATIONS FOR THE MORNING

(FOURTH DAY): INFANCY OF OUR LORD

1. Its connection with the consideration of the Eternal King

I. After the presentation and calling of Christ the retreatant remains:

a) *Dazzled*, as it were, hypnotized by Christ. He cannot fully persuade himself that Christ really is what he has seen Him to be.

b) *Encouraged*. He has at last found the person who understands him, who is going to make him happy and transform his life.

c) *Compelled* to correspond, through motives of gratitude, nobility, justice.

d) *Decided* to answer Christ's calling in some way or other.

e) *Ashamed* of his past behaviour. Shame fills him with confusion, and spurs him to be more faithful in the future.

f) *Full of desires and longings* which have produced in the soul an atmosphere of tension not yet fully released.

g) *Afraid* of the demands which he foresees his answer will entail: work, struggle.

2. *At this moment* the retreatant *needs*:

a) To be prepared for the demands that ensue from his following of Christ.

First demand of the life of grace: to eliminate sin.

Second demand of the Principle and Foundation: to eliminate inordinate affections.

Third demand of Jesus Christ: to eliminate self-love, self-will and self-interest.

b) To be given a psychological stimulus to encourage him. The one chosen by St. Ignatius is the charm of the Person of Jesus Christ, familiarity with Him. This is the aim he has in mind in the contemplations of the Infancy.

2. Function of the Contemplation of Our Lord's Infancy

1. *To fill the soul with Christ.* Only a passionate love for Christ will give the necessary strength to live with Him. St. Ignatius wants us to experience that charm and affection which transforms everything that bears any relation to Him, causing us to see it in a light radiant with love.

2. For this purpose Christ is presented *most lovable and charming*. To the charm of Christ is added the attraction possessed by every child. This attraction gradually leads to a fusion with His person, tastes and ideals, so that the love of Jesus Christ becomes the means by which the soul is moved to desire a life of poverty and humility, since these virtues are closely woven into the life of Christ, and are intimately bound up with His Person.

3. The Kingdom of Christ has bound the intellect with heroic resolutions; it is time *now to bind the heart* to Christ with ties of love and devotion.

4. St. Ignatius reserves for this moment *the most attractive notes* of his whole book. He bids that the meditation at midnight be dropped. He wants the retreatant, filled with intense interior sweetness, to feel at ease and exclaim "Bonum est nos hic esse". *Force of these tactics.* Once this love and attraction for Jesus Christ has taken root in the heart:

a) it purifies the heart more easily. When love does not rule, the old trunk of inordinate affections must be cut down, branch by branch. The fire of Christ's love burns right down to the roots themselves.

b) it enlightens the mind. Love makes us see everything from the point of view of the beloved.

c) it directs the great energies of enthusiasm and love towards this ideal.

3. Steps towards this gradual union

- a) Not to be deaf to His call (Ex. 91).
- b) Will to imitate Him in everything (Ex. 98).
- c) Deep knowledge of the Lord, considering what He has done for me (Exs. 104, 105).
- d) To love and follow Him (Ex. 104).
- e) "To follow *more closely* Him who has *thus* become Incarnate" (109).
- f) Knowledge of the *true life* shown by Him, which is rendered still more visible when set in opposition to the falsehood and death of His enemies (Ex. 139).
- g) To be divested of one's self-love, self-will, and self-interest (Ex. 189).
- h) To be intimately united with Him in the struggle against one's own carnal and worldly love, even asking to undergo all injuries and reproaches (Exs. 97, 155, 157).

This *penetration* into the most intimate being of Christ reaches its perfection in the Third and Fourth Week. Here we begin to enter into His intimacy and to savour His sweetness (Ex. 124).

4. The method for this progressive union: Contemplation

- a) In order to achieve this affective identity St. Ignatius proposes a method of prayer which is more affective: contemplation with application of the senses (Exs. 111-126).
- b) Contemplation is concerned with an event which is represented as present, though it may have happened centuries ago; and the retreatant takes an active and real part. He is placed in the company of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and relives the incidents of their lives. "In this way love and boundless trust are spontaneously engendered together with a delightful intimacy. Christ enters more and more into our hearts, and we become more and more Christ-like" (E. Hernandez).
- c) Therefore we treasure up each look, each word, each gesture, each heart-beat of the Holy Family.
- d) The contemplation in the repetitions becomes "more intuitive, more quiet, more intimate, more delightful" (J. Moran).
- e) *Colloquies* are the most beautiful flower of prayer and should never be omitted. They are particularly indicated in contemplation. By means of them we draw nearer to, and achieve intimacy with, Jesus Christ. "In them the soul expresses its feelings at ease under the motion of the Holy Spirit" (J. Moran).

"This is a time when one converses with Our Lord face to face, heart to heart, soul to soul, expressing one's feelings, making reparation or asking for favours as circumstances and grace demand" (F. Hernandez).

f) *The application of the senses* is a still more simple form of prayer. The soul by means of its interior senses penetrates in a deep, personal way into the mysteries. The mind plays its part with the senses and the imagination, making intuitive acts analogous to those of the imagination. The official Directory explains this as form of prayer, a kind of presence of the event or of the persons, which arouse in us a taste and love for them. According to Fr. La Palma, it is a perfect form of contemplation, in which the soul rises above itself and above its senses, begets a feeling towards spiritual things as if it saw them or heard them, relishes them as if it really tasted them, takes delight and comfort in them as if it were inhaling them, and embraces and kisses places that are far away as if it were actually touching them". It is according to the definition of Fr. Marechal, "The intuitive perception of immaterial objects by means of the understanding" (J. Marechal: Coll. Bibl. Ex. 3).

5. How to present the Mysteries of the Infancy

a) A whole morning should be given to this subject, in order that the retreatant may grow in love of Jesus Christ; as Fr. Gil Gz. Davila says, "in order to *acquire familiarity* with the Eternal Word Incarnate, by keeping Him company, hearing Him, serving Him, paying reverence to Him as one's Lord, elder Brother, and Entire Good" (Ex. 919).

This is the *main fruit*. It is more important than moral lessons, which may be drawn, but which remain on a lower plane. If the heart loves Jesus Christ, it will desire what He desires; and all this will crystallize in concrete resolutions.

b) The scenes that appeal most are the *Incarnation, the Nativity, Nazareth*. The Director must decide how to propose them. The meditation on the Nativity in the morning before Mass is an excellent preparation for Communion.

c) If time is short we may take two mysteries for the second contemplation: Nazareth and the Finding of the Child Jesus.

These contemplations serve as preparation for the Election (Ex. 135). The contemplation of Nazareth offers us a chance of describing the life of a model family and the happiness of married life; it emphasizes the lesson of renunciation and detachment given by the Child Jesus; indicates the

excellence and happiness of religious life, and the sacrifices which Our Lord demands from His chosen ones.

d) The contemplation of Nazareth stresses another important point for the Election: a right evaluation of the supernatural. Young people are often ready to take heroic and generous resolutions. They love adventure, but they do not understand the value of the monotonous and the ordinary. They believe that such a life is not generous, but mean and "ordinary". This thought may keep them back from a priestly or religious vocation, which appears devoid of external glamour.

They must be made to understand that to live the life of Jesus means to *live a life of grace* in the most perfect way. There was nothing in Our Lady more pleasing to God than her fidelity to grace.

This lesson is best taught at Nazareth: "the mystery of common and ordinary life", through which Jesus redeemed the world.

A difficult yet necessary lesson to learn before entering upon the Election is to grasp the value of living a life like Jesus, apparently so concealed and hidden, in reality the life of a zealous seeker of souls.

III. INSTRUCTION (FOURTH DAY):

VOCATION, ELECTION OF A STATE OF LIFE, REFORM

This is the most suitable day to treat this important theme. The last day is too late, as the approaching end is a source of distraction. One night is needed to let the ideas settle down and mature. The Election is dealt with later.

IV. EVENING MEDITATIONS (FOURTH DAY): THE STANDARDS AND THREE CLASSES OF MEN

This day is divided into two dissimilar parts. The morning meditations appeal to *the affections* in order to arouse in the exercitant enthusiasm for the adorable Person of Jesus Christ.

The evening meditations *are hard and dry*, for they remain on the purely intellectual level of cold reasoning. This is the last preparation for the decisive moment of the Election.

1. From affection for the Person of Jesus to affection for His tastes and principles

a) It is easy to *kindle a spark of love* and enthusiasm for Christ's Person, but it is difficult to keep it alight when one comes to know the demands of Jesus.

b) St. Ignatius wishes this love for Christ's Person to *develop* into a love for His likings, criteria and demands.

c) This is achieved gradually. The different aspects of the life of Jesus are considered, and those scenes which show the price He had to pay for our redemption, how much He suffered. Thus the retreatant gradually *assimilates Christ's mind*.

d) These meditations make him ever better disposed, *stir the inner* recesses of his soul, and give him greater facility in adopting His spirit and life.

e) This *growing familiarity with the criteria of Jesus Christ* gradually *disposes the soul to aim at what is most perfect*; as a consequence, ever higher demands are made on the soul:

1. *An increase in the intensity of affection:*

a) To offer oneself: "I wish and I desire".

Enthusiasm is here in its initial stage. St. Ignatius starts correctly from what is more difficult and proceeds to what is less hard. In its first enthusiasm and fervour the soul is attracted by what is hardest; but later when it is a question of putting resolutions into practice, we must move from the easier to the more difficult.

b) To ask "Him to obtain for me the grace ... to be received . . ." (Ex. 14).

c) To ask, though it be repugnant (Ex. 157).

2. *The object becomes ever more real and concrete:*

There is a progressive descent from theory to practice. The criteria of Christ gradually find their objects in real life; His maxims and ideals are realized concretely and by degrees.

The process is as follows:

a) *A first general disposition in the abstract*. The object is not specified: in everything (Ex. 98).

b) A particular disposition in things that are ordinary and *possible* (Hidden Life of Christ).

c) A particular disposition in things that are *possible but difficult* (Standards).

d) A particular disposition in things that are *possible but difficult and repugnant* (Three Classes of Men, Third Degree of Humility).

e) A particular disposition in things that are real (Election and Reform).

"Let him try to bend his will to what is most perfect" (Miron). "The disposition which is demanded from the retreatant is that he should aim at what is most perfect, if God gives him the necessary grace for it" (Gil Gonzalez Davila).

The soul by *its increasing generosity in desiring* what is perfect reaches at least the Second Degree of Humility. Thus St. Ignatius brings the retreatant to the dispositions which are necessary for the Election and for loving and serving Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mediocrity and routine are thus shaken off, and the soul grows accustomed to *taking the offensive* against the enemy, to a continuous effort in doing the "oppositum per diametrum" and in waging war for the growth of its spiritual life.

2. Revision of criteria in the light of Christ's principles

a) The retreatant is psychologically ready. He wishes to follow the desires of Jesus. In the mysteries of His life he contemplates His mode of action, His criteria, His way of redeeming souls and fulfilling His mission.

b) Now is the time for the retreatant to *compare his criteria with those of Christ*, because in the criteria of Christ he will find the true norm of right behaviour. If he does not adjust himself to them, he will not succeed; his election will not be a correct and well ordered one.

c) First he must recognize Christ's criteria. There as in a mirror he will see the rightness or eccentricity of his own.

d) St. Ignatius in the Two Standards unmasks *the criteria that are contrary to Christ*. He describes the intentions and mentality of Satan, the antithesis of Christ.

e) Next, by considering and assimilating Christ's plan and purpose, the retreatant disposes himself *to enter upon the way of perfection* (Ex. 135). The dispositions required of the soul to reach perfection are those of Christ. Here then is the way in which we must dispose ourselves, namely, seeing "the intention of Christ".

f) This process does not remain on the theoretical level; it comes down to the practical. St. Ignatius is careful to see that the work done hitherto is not ruined by inexperience or deceit. Hence the most *common dangers* are indicated.

This is done in three of the most important meditations of the Exercises:

The Two Standards deals with difficulties belonging to the *mind*.

The Three Classes of Men – those of the *will*.

The Three Degrees of Humility – those of the *heart*.

3. Plan of the Meditation on the Two Standards

a) St. Ignatius wishes, then, to remove a dangerous obstacle to a successful Election, viz., that the exercitant *be deceived* about the right orientation for his life. Hence he shows the *right criteria for Election*, namely, those of Jesus Christ. For if a man base his Election on wrong criteria, thinking that to be right which in reality is wrong, he will be deceived miserably in spite of his good will.

b) Thus he sums up "in brief and concise formulae the principles of perfection, the fundamental points of Jesus' programme and the colours of His standard" (Calcagno).

c) This meditation is similar in its technique of contrast to the meditation on the Kingdom. It is quite true that "the consideration of the tactics of the wicked chief helps us to contemplate the intentions of the supreme and true captain".

The first part is *a preparation* for the second. It is an explanation of Satan's criteria and tactics, so that in opposition to them we may better understand those of Christ. The retreatant is warned against the *deceits and snares* of Satan, the great enemy of Jesus Christ and the one who endeavours to conceal and falsify the intentions of Jesus Christ.

d) In the meditation on *the Kingdom* we saw how the following of Christ was opposed to a life of self-love, sensuality and worldliness. Now we see how such a life is in *manifest contradiction* to Satan.

e) St. Ignatius wants *the following points firmly fixed in the soul*.

1. Satan's tactics are based on deceit. Therefore let the retreatant be on his guard when something occurs to him different from that which Jesus Christ chose for Himself, i.e. honours, riches. These may be good and even necessary; but he should examine and see whether any snare of the devil lies hidden therein.

2. *Christ's tactics are based on truth*. He proposes the truth bluntly, not concealing its difficulties, leaving the advantages in the background.

3. "*What are in concrete the deceits of the devil*" (Ex. 139).

4. He must *find out the means* to guard himself against them in order to imitate the true captain (Ex. 139).

f) *This doctrine is not new.* "The opposed tactics of Satan and Jesus Christ constitute a *summary* of the conclusions to which we have been led in the First Week by the study of the world and its disorder and in the Second Week by the mysteries of the Divine Infancy" (Pinard de la Boullaye).

g) The criteria and teachings of Jesus are pictured in a *few vivid strokes*; His tactics are pointed out with precision. This is what the soul needs at this moment preceding the Election.

h) Thus just and *exact criteria are obtained*. The correct understanding of the tactics of both chieftains is a motive for the will to acquire that perfect indifference which is so important. The retreatant is cautioned to be on his guard against the deceits of the devil.

i) The *ideal fruit* is "a *supernatural instinct* which suspects and avoids honours, riches, independence" (E. Hernandez), because they are the powerful allies of Satan, for "at all levels of the spiritual life it is precisely in the field of material and spiritual riches, of honour, pride and humility, that the decisive battle takes place" (De Guibert).

4. Practical hints on the Meditation of the Two Standards

a) In practice, to adapt this meditation to our retreatants, we must clearly understand that its force lies:

1. In the *antagonism* of the captains and of their respective tactics. It is not advisable, e.g. for lack of time, to divide this meditation, and separate the two parts. They mutually throw light on and complement each other.

Nor should one *lose oneself into too many details*. This is a real danger on account of the full development of the matter, and the many comparisons which lend themselves to many considerations. These tend to cloak the radical antagonism which is the core of the whole meditation.

2. In the atmosphere in which St. Ignatius has enveloped this meditation. It is *the only meditation of military character*, because its purpose is the creation in the retreatant of a spirit of *enterprise*, of attack. It is not enough to follow the current nor to stand on the defensive in order to obtain indifference.

3. In the *clear perception* of principles. The question here is not so much to root out pride and the other allies of Satan, as to realize, that *these criteria of Satan should have no place at the Election*.

We are not concerned here whether these criteria have already become deeply-rooted habits or not; if they have struck deep roots in the heart, they will not cloud the mind in its clear perception of truth.

There is an analogy here with indifference in the Principle and Foundation. We did not then aim at becoming indifferent so much as seeing the need of this. But there is a difference also. Then we were at the beginning of the Exercises, whereas now we are already entering upon the Election, when these criteria will have to be applied. Still, we can distinguish in theory two different stages: the understanding of these criteria, and the putting them into practice.

St. Ignatius appeals here to the *understanding*, and adopts the method he uses in such cases. He lets us see the whole problem develop *in others*. We hear Satan's speech to the devils, and Christ's exhortation to His disciples. The retreatant contemplates the reactions in Christ's friends and in His enemies, and applies to himself the fruit of all this.

b) It may be effective to lay stress on the *disloyalty* of the devil who endeavours to deceive, and to picture Christ *sincere and loyal*, always ready to give us the grace to solve our difficulties; the devil abandons us when we are helpless and in need, showing us the roses and hiding the thorns.

c) It may be well to consider step by step the character, strategy and characteristics of Christ in contrast to those of Satan.

Devil

- 1) *Universal influence*: all under his domain.
- 2) *Tactics*: to deceive: "nets and chains" (Ex. 142); "Fire and smoke" (Ex. 140).
- 3) *Gradation* in his deceitful action: begins by small things and ends "in all the vices" (Ex. 142).
- 4) *Enemy* in the fight: he fights, lays snares, wages war.
- 5) *Alliance with the world* and self-love: "Vain honour of the world" (Ex. 142).
- 6) *Criteria*: to excel, enjoyment,

Jesus Christ

- 1) *Universal influence*: perfection in any state of life.
- 2) *Sincerity*, open truth (Ex. 146).
- 3) *Gradation* in imitating Him: He gives grace for whatever He asks: "if He should desire to choose them" (Ex. 146).
- 4) *Friend*: He wants to draw us to Him: "beautiful and attractive". Always ready to help (Exs. 144, 145).
- 5) *Opposed to the world* and to self-love: "against worldly honour" (Ex. 146).
- 6) *Criteria*: Poverty,

riches.

humiliation.

d) These fundamental truths should be clearly grasped by the retreatant. But skill is required in proposing them, because the criterion of humiliation and reproaches seems to go against the modern concept of personality.

e) Hence it must be made clear that the aim is not to destroy personality, but to eliminate what is *ill-ordered* in personality, namely, the desire of becoming the centre and lord of creation. True personality reaches its perfection only in its dependence on God.

f) God wishes to *elevate our personality* and unite it intimately to His own. He desires us to be a reflection of Himself, and for this it is necessary that we empty ourselves of our worldly way of thinking and judging. St. Ignatius urges this as a condition, without which this elevation and purification of our personality is impossible.

g) It will help to read the *passages of the Gospel* on which this meditation is based. They bring home to us the criteria of Jesus Christ. St. Ignatius has collected here the quintessence of the Gospel, and presents it arrestingly to the retreatant. But the Gospel remains the source.

h) In the contemplations of Our Lord's life, the mind should attend mainly to His principles and His intentions. A repetition of the Beatitudes is recommended (Mt. 5, 1-12; Lk. 6, 20-23), as this is the essence of the Sermon on the Mount. The preaching of Jesus after the promise of the Primacy to Peter at Capharnaum (Mt. 16, 21-28; Mk. 8, 31-39; Lk. 9, 22-27) is also very enlightening.

i) In retreats to young men who are not yet prepared for their Election and are of a lower spiritual standard, the stark conclusions of this meditation should not be too much insisted on. This meditation may even be postponed to a future retreat, when they will be able to face their Election properly. None the less, St. Ignatius' meditation possesses much dramatic power. It may very well be proposed even to retreatants of a lower spiritual level, the descriptions being made very graphic, and the tactics depicted in a vivid and striking way.

5. Meditation on the Three Classes of Men (Ex. 149).

a) After the control of the intellect comes *the control of the will*. St. Ignatius now aims at removing the *second obstacle*, lest the will prove too weak to put into practice the doctrine of Christ, and be afraid of taking the decisive step.

Hence before bringing the retreatant to the Election, he proceeds to test the man's sincerity and integrity.

b) According to his usual strategy, St. Ignatius again allows the retreatant to examine *in others* what is required for a good Election. In all calmness he must weigh the matter, and determine to which group he belongs. Another plausible title for this meditation could have been: "The attachment which the Classes of men have for the sum acquired, helps me to review my own attachment".

c) This meditation is a test of the firmness of our resolutions, and reveals whether they still conceal attachment to earthly things: "ut iuxta eas (classes) examinemus et cognoscamus affectum nostrum maiorem vel minorem erga res mundanas" (Dir. Miron, n. 7).

d) The meditations on the Kingdom and on the Standards have two distinct parts. Here also we find two divisions; the first is preparatory and dwells on the Three Classes of Men, the second is an application to *our own personal affections*; the whole meditation revolves around the problem of *personal attachments*. In the composition of place the Classes of Men are not even mentioned, just as in the meditation on the Kingdom, the temporal king did not appear. "I must see myself". The petition here is also very personal: "of my soul" (Ex. 152).

e) I must examine in what frame of mind I approach the Election. Is it with a firm and generous will, or do I put conditions to God? St. Ignatius writes: "to see how I stand . . ." (Ex. 151) namely, my dispositions, the impediments, affections, attractions I have towards the Thing acquired, the indifference with which I regard it.

f) The consideration on the Classes is the *soul* of the Election; it sets before me the state of perfection. The *matter* of the Election *comes afterwards*; "In which actual state shall I practise perfection?" This is less difficult, presupposing the interior disposition of generosity. Without this one is sure to miss the mark in the Election.

g) St. Ignatius dwells again on the poverty mentioned in the meditation of the Standards. This virtue is a first step towards both Election and perfection. It is a turning-point at which many lose heart. The *highest spiritual poverty* must be embraced if a man wants to enter upon the way of perfection, whatever his state of life may be. Spiritual poverty is not chosen here; it has been chosen already in the meditation on the Kingdom, when we decided to embrace a life of perfection.

h) The approach to actual poverty is different. St. Ignatius urges that if the retreatant is not indifferent or if he feels any contrary inclination, he should ask

for poverty again and again, if such be God's will. This is the way to root out this disordered affection (Ex. 157). The importance of this is shown by the stress the Saint lays on the repetition which he prescribes (Ex. 159).

6. Practice and adaptation of the meditation on the Classes of Men

Note

The word "couple" employed by St. Ignatius has no hidden meaning. It is a generic term, used in the XV and XVI cent. in speaking of an indefinite person, Titius or Caius. Today we speak of a "class of men".

a) *It is essential* from the outset to set before the exercitant the real difficulty, the source whence the impediment arises. Let him analyse how he reacts towards the difficult renunciation which the Lord demands from him, or how much this would cost him if the Lord did demand it. Thus the retreatant can judge his affections and test his will.

b) One may propose either St. Ignatius' Three Classes of Men, or the modification of the *three sick men*, given in the official Directory (Chap. 29 n. 7). (Three men desire to recover their health. The first keeps postponing his treatment; the second one wants only certain remedies excluding others; the third one places himself unconditionally at the disposal of the doctor). Other examples may also be used.

c) The Retreat Master should appeal to the *sincerity* and truthfulness of the retreatant, qualities which are highly appreciated nowadays. The retreatant should loyally place before Our Lord that which he finds so difficult to do or to give up. This will reveal to the soul its own true disposition.

d) This meditation is *subsidiary*. It supposes an impediment which stands between the retreatant and perfection. It may have been written in Paris, where St. Ignatius met retreatants who were too strongly attached to ecclesiastical benefices, and who were deceiving themselves in trying to bring God into their lives when God demanded from them a total renunciation. Hence, this meditation may be omitted in the case of a man not subject to any inordinate affection but totally indifferent; he is already properly disposed to enter upon the Election.

e) If there is a definite impediment, such as attachment to a creature or to a life of riches, the effect of the meditation is at once perceptible to the retreatant. It may be compared to a cyst that is cut off, or to a surgical operation whose salutary effect is clear to everyone. If the obstacle is less perceptible (weakness, a lack of determination, discouragement), the result is

also less evident; think of a long and gradual healing. But in either case, the problem must be faced, because an inordinate affection blocks the man's way.

f) St. Ignatius looks at the man's weak points, for there lies the real difficulty. It is by conquering here that we are set on the right path. *Those points* in which the will shows lack of courage are vital:—

1. He is not determined to use the means he has (Ex. 153).
2. He wishes to keep the attachment at all cost (Ex. 154).

g) *Evangelical background*. Here too the Gospel scenes help greatly. Fr. Valensin proposes the following:

1. First couple: The rich young man who does not make up his mind to leave wealth and possessions to follow Jesus (Mk. 10, 17-22).
2. Second couple: Those who having been invited to the great supper refuse to come excusing themselves in various ways (Lk. 14, 16-24).
3. Third couple: Zacchaeus (Lk. 19, 1-10).

The vocation of one of the apostles would serve as example for the third couple; but the story of Zacchaeus has the advantage that he did not have to abandon his home in order to follow Our Lord. This allays the suspicion that the Director wants to induce his retreatants to embrace religious life, which would make them less willing to accept his doctrine. At times the example of the apostles may be preferable.

Fr. Llanos suggests the following:

1. First couple: The attitude *of the multitude* towards Jesus. They follow Him as long as they profit by it and receive favours from Him. They abandon Him at the hour of His passion.
2. Second couple: Attitude of the *Pharisees*. They put conditions to their following of Our Lord. They want to bring Jesus to their own way of thinking.
3. Third couple: The final and definite stand of the *Apostles*.

7. The Three Ways of Humility (Ex. 165168).

a) One obstacle remains to be conquered: the *heart*. Logically speaking, once we possess the right criteria and a firm will, nothing else is wanting. St. Ignatius knows however that it is difficult to persevere against a strong repugnance. Hence he seeks affective support for the will.

b) Our repugnance must be counterbalanced. By implanting in the heart an *attachment to Christ* strong enough to overcome the attraction of creatures. We must strive to be *well affected* to the true doctrine of Christ.

St. Ignatius strives to close all loop-holes by which the exercitant might escape at this decisive point, if faced with the obligation to choose something repugnant.

c) In order to influence the affections, he wants this consideration "to be made at intervals throughout the day" (Ex. 164). Affections require a slow, gentle and imperceptible absorbing. It is like playing with and fondling some pet idea. It frequently happens that in this atmosphere one strikes the first sparks of great resolutions and the soul becomes gradually deeply inflamed. A remark, a look, a colloquy – the means employed are immaterial – may trigger an interior enthusiasm for the true doctrine of Christ. *We strive that He may remain ever bound to the soul by true love and attachment.*

d) In previous meditations the Saint has linked *perfection* with *the Person of Christ*, presenting the life of perfection as a gift from the Lord to his chosen ones. Now he sums up Christ's call in such a way as to arouse in the soul a *powerful attraction for His Person*. All this is now concrete and actual, since we now know what this call implies.

e) He proposes a *compendium* of the rules of holiness, *complete, precise*, yet fascinating: Jesus Christ. This is inherent implicitly in the Principle and Foundation: but for the explicit *synthesis*, to the laws of creation (Principle and Foundation) broken by sin (1st Week), God's new plan of salvation and glory is now added. The final criterion in the choice and use of creatures is Christ Himself, as He appears to us now in His most intimate and appealing manifestation.

The text itself reveals an effort to synthesize these two plans of salvation.

Note

Humility. The word is here to be understood, not in the sense given to it since the 16th century, but rather as St. Thomas or St. Bernard understood it, viz. subjection and subordination to God without rising "above that which has been prescribed for each one, according to the Divine ordinance" (S. Th. II, II, 161, 162) ; cf. St. Bernard: P. L. 183, 610.

This dependence on God makes us realize our own littleness, our nothingness in God's presence. Exterior subordination, unless lived also interiorly and with love, is not that true humility which dependence on God's will implies.

8. Tactics to be employed in order to obtain this new affectionate attachment to the true doctrine of Christ

a) Time being short, it is difficult to give a full meditation to this consideration. Moreover the wish of St. Ignatius is that it be "considered from time to time all day long". These thoughts may be inserted in the meditations of the Three Couples or in any other contemplation of Our Lord's life, or may serve as matter for a second supplementary talk in the evening.

b) Let us make a synthesis of St. Ignatius' mind in order to realize the practical bearing of this doctrine:

1. The First Mode calls for a complete and *absolute detachment*: "I would not seriously entertain the thought" (Ex. 165) from *whatever stands in the way of my duty*. This detachment is a necessary step towards attachment to the law of God. An attraction must be created for whatever God has commanded under pain of mortal sin.

As in the meditation of the Three Classes, emphasis is laid on the *subjective dispositions* of the person in question rather than on the object. I must foster in myself a determination rather to die than transgress any commandment of God. To obtain this, an attraction for God's law must be fostered. This is indeed no small fruit, even if it were the only one obtained by some retreatants. There is question here of an irrevocable decision, for there is no room for the slightest doubt. Love alone can cause such firmness. Here we have a synthesis of the First Week in the light of love. This decision is the outcome of all the motives mentioned hitherto, considered in this new light of love.

2. The Second Mode demands a total and *absolute detachment: from all creatures* and from life itself.

Our attachment to the service of God is conditioned by this detachment (Ex. 166).

Here we have a summary of the Second Week in the light of love. It is a concrete application of the Principle and Foundation. We here find once more that unswerving attitude to whatever bears the stamp of God's will.

3. The Third Mode demands that same complete detachment from whatever is *alien to Christ's* life and example. This entails a personal and positive *attachment to Jesus Christ* (Ex. 167).

St. Ignatius stresses "whatever offers greater difficulty and is more humiliating," because if we become attached to poverty and reproaches, the rest will be easy.

He expressly says "the better to imitate Christ Our Lord and to be more like Him", he wishes "poverty with Christ poor. . . ." Note that at first the Person of Christ is the object of our consideration, and only afterwards we fix our attention on His poverty, reproaches and other insults. These are chosen only in relation to Our Lord.

A strong attachment to Christ engenders in us an attachment to whatever is connected with Him; and so, we are drawn to follow Christ's way of acting, viz. to choose whatever demands of us greater generosity and heroism.

c) The sublime spiritual doctrine contained in the Three Modes of Humility is very different from the "minimum" required by St. Ignatius for the Election. Fr. Meschler writes: "The 3rd Mode of Humility is the most sublime degree of holiness; it is that divine madness proper to Christianity and its greatest saints, the true and most perfect imitation of Christ".

For the Election, the Second Mode of Humility is sufficient.

It is also quite a different thing to have acquired this perfect indifference as a habitual disposition and constant attitude in all the events of life, and to obtain it just for the time of the Election. The former is the final fruit of the Exercises; it is holiness itself; it cannot be imposed on the retreatant as a necessary demand. The latter is a necessary condition which can be obtained with God's grace within the Exercises.

d) Blessed Claude de La Colombiere sums up admirably in his Spiritual Retreat the motives that induced him wholeheartedly to embrace the Third Degree of Humility:

1. God has loved me too well for me to spare myself henceforth in His service.
2. When I see how little I am and can do for God's glory by employing myself entirely in His service, I am ashamed at the mere thought of depriving Him of anything.
3. There would be no safety for me in any half-measures.
4. Only those who have given themselves to God unreservedly can expect to die without anxiety.
5. They alone lead a peaceful and tranquil life.

6. In order to do much for God, one must be completely His. However little you keep back, you will be unfit to do great things for others.

7. In this state one maintains a lively faith and a firm hope, one prays to God confidently, and one infallibly obtains what one requests.

e) For other examples of saints who have desired to obtain, or have actually lived the Third Degree of Humility, see H. Pinard de la Boullaye, 'Exercises Spirit.' 1, pages 191-199.

f) "Even if the chance of suffering insults and injuries is remote, we must not fail, as St. Ignatius teaches us, to include these in our love for Christ: for he who burns with such love will draw comfort and spiritual profit by exercising himself in thoughts and desires of great things in the service of Christ. We should not omit the Triple Colloquy because we do not feel such desires; on the contrary, then it is that we must insist more thereon.

"Such a practice is to be recommended all the more when that to which we feel repugnance, is exactly what Our Lord asks of us" (Encinas).

V. ELECTION OR REFORM

1. All the Exercises hitherto have served as a preparation for the Election

a) In the Kingdom of Christ the retreatant has already chosen to follow Christ, to live His life, *to live the life of perfection*.

b) He has become conscious of a mission; he has a mission which he can and must realize for Christ. This thought has set in motion the great twin-engines of *generosity* and *responsibility*.

c) The contemplations of the Infancy of Jesus have made him feel a *strong attraction for Our Lord*; and in the contemplations of Our Lord's life, Christ with His standards and outlook has penetrated his innermost being, He has come to realize the supremacy of the supernatural.

d) The meditation on the *Two Standards* has left imprinted on the retreatant's soul certain definite conclusions:—

1. I am called by Christ to a life of perfection, whatever be the state of life He has chosen for me.

2. There is *only one* true doctrine leading to perfection; it is the one taught by Jesus Christ and is contained in the Eight Beatitudes.

3. Whenever I find in myself *an attachment to riches*, honours, pleasure, I am bound by one of Satan's chains.

4. I must give up in actual fact riches, honours, pleasures, if this be a necessary means to break this chain (Casanovas), or if I am called by His Divine Majesty to a state of perfection; but all should ask for the highest spiritual poverty (Ex. 147).

e) The retreatant has weighed Christ's *standards* as opposed to those of Satan, has seen how interested the enemy is in winning us over, and consequently the *need of opposing* him strenuously. He has brought his will under control and has endeavoured to root out whatever affection stands in opposition to the Principle and Foundation, or at least not to allow it to influence his resolution.

f) *Summing up*: 1. His *intellect* is convinced that:

a) God is his end and the Giver of true happiness. Perfection consists in tending towards God.

b) The practice of a life of perfection is identified with the following of Jesus. Here he finds the practical norm of all his actions.

c) The world, the flesh, the devil and self-love are his enemies and lie in ambush. He must fight them.

d) Christ will grant him any grace he asks for, even if he aims at something heroic. Divine Omnipotence will never fail him.

2. His *will* is strengthened with the irrevocable decision of following a *life* of perfection, whatever be the difficulties that stand in his way. He is, therefore, ready to die rather than to give up this way of life.

3. *His heart* burns with a strong affection for the Person of Jesus Christ.

This is the picture which the soul of the retreatant ought to present at the moment of the Election.

2. Necessary requirements for the Election

a) For most boys this is an overwhelming problem, on which their whole future depends. Yet not all are properly prepared to make the Election. They must be *indifferent*. Here lies the difficulty.

b) Is it possible to obtain indifference in five days? Sufficient indifference, yes. Remember, the retreatant is not asked to make his attachment disappear, but to ensure that this attachment *does not influence* his Election.

c) Fr. Gagliardi writes: "Ad electionem status faciendam non est necessarium ut homo sit summe in vitiorum purgatione et virtutum illuminatione perfectus, sed *ut hoc desideret, hoc proponat . . .*"

d) The Exercises are not *disconnected from a man's previous life*. A fervent Catholic life before the retreat is the best psychological preparation for the Election. A young man of good moral life, who goes to the sacraments frequently, who has made it a habit to examine his conscience and even to meditate (such retreatants are not few in number) will not find it difficult to acquire the necessary indifference.

e) Whatever his previous life may have been, his confessor, counsellor or Spiritual Father can prepare the young man for the retreat by suggesting to him these pious practices and by sowing in his heart ideas of generosity, abnegation, surrender, love for Christ, value of the supernatural and desire for the apostolate.

f) To acquire the right dispositions is more difficult for one who has led a spiritually careless and sinful life. However, nothing is impossible with God.

g) The closer the retreatant's disposition comes to that described, the better will he be prepared for his Election.

3. The Election

a) In a retreat restricted to the First Week – even though some mysteries of the life and Passion of Our Lord be added – there is no question of any Election. The proper preparation is wanting. The necessary steps which should precede the Election have not been made.

b) In most retreats to young men who have had a good religious training, it is vital to tackle this problem. Many of them have come precisely with this purpose in mind. As long as this problem remains unsolved they will not be able to find God in their lives, nor base their existence on its proper foundation; they will not achieve the end of the Exercises.

c) The difficulty does not lie so much in making the Election, as in the *method* of doing this. If the Election itself raises difficulties it is because the method proposed was not suited to the retreatant.

d) The *first and preliminary method* of introducing the Election is meant for those whose preparation is somewhat deficient. It uses the tactics adopted by St. Ignatius in the meditations of the Temporal King and the Three Classes of Men.

The problem is proposed as if it concerned a *third party*: "those who wish to follow Christ in all earnestness, think seriously of the state *of life* in which they can follow Him best". Thus, dispassionately they are led to realize that a problem exists for which a solution must be found. This thought remains like a seed in the soul, and bears fruit later on. This retreat thus serves as a preparation for a future retreat, in which a solution of the Election-problem will be aimed at.

e) *Another method* consists in explaining the whole doctrine of the Election and its fundamental principles. This can serve as a *guiding rule for the whole of life*. This method is chiefly for people who have already chosen their state of life, priests, religious, married people. These rules contain very practical norms to be used all during life, when elections of lesser moment have to be made. Thus we teach the habit of bringing God into every action.

f) When dealing with the religious or priestly vocation, this should be described as a gift of God to His most intimate friends, as a token of predilection to those whom He chooses.

g) The subject of the priesthood and of the different states of perfection come in naturally when we speak of giving life a proper orientation, of seeking the best way to use their God-given qualities.

h) St. Ignatius' counsel in the Exercises is always to aim at what is *more perfect*. It is obvious that perfection may be reached in any state of life. St. Ignatius says this, when he confirms the retreatant in his resolution of living a life of perfection after the example of Jesus (Ex. 135, 145). The question here is to determine *in what circumstances* this life of perfection can be lived *more intensely*.

In the Principle and Foundation the retreatant has been told to aim "at that which most leads him to the end" (Ex. 23), before the picture of Christ "hanging on the Cross he sees what he ought to do for Christ" (Ex. 53); he has realized the need of "acting against his own sensuality and his carnal and worldly love" (Ex. 97); he has been made to ask for that for which he feels greater repugnance (Ex. 157); he is told to choose, out of love for Jesus Christ, that which is poorest and to be accounted a good-for-nothing and a fool (Ex. 167).

This is the background into which we must fit the Election. We must be careful not to move backwards and abandon this Ignatian spirit of *total generosity*.

i) The Director himself must exemplify the indifference which he asks of the retreatants, not *moving* them within the retreat to any state or mode of living, but "keeping steady midway, like the beam of a balance, he should

allow the Creator to work directly on the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord" (Ex. 15).

j) A thorough reform of one's past life should be stressed, and particular stress laid upon a man's duty towards God, even with those who do not feel themselves called to the priesthood or the religious life. All must be persuaded that they can and should do great things for Christ in their own particular sphere, i.e. that they have a mission to fulfil.

4. Theory of the Election (Ex. 169-189)

We now propose briefly the Ignatian process of Election. This will make the Director's task easier, and indicate what his instruction should contain and what he should aim at in this matter.

a) The "preamble" or "introduction" is vitally important.

Fr. Gil Gonzalez Davila says: "Nothing is more difficult in the Exercises than to know how to proceed correctly in this question of the Election, nor is there any other matter where greater dexterity in spiritual direction is needed" (Ex. 920).

b) *The Matter for the Election* (Ex. 170).

It is clear that only something good can be matter for Election. If a previous bad Election cannot be changed, things must be set right within the state of life already chosen. In the case of good Elections, the task is to lead them to such heights of perfection as their state of life renders possible.

The four steps proposed by St. Ignatius are the following:

1. Should I choose a life of precept or of evangelical counsel?
2. "If a life of evangelical counsel, should it be in or outside religious life?"
3. "If in religious life, in which Order?"
4. "When should this decision be carried out?" "Our Father warns us to proceed in an orderly manner point by point" (Gil Gonzalez Davila, Ex. 922).

c) *The actual Election* takes place at one of the Three "Times" given below. Here "Time" means a particular spiritual disposition of the soul. Such a "Time" cannot be chosen at will; it is given by God.

First "Time" (Ex. 175).

This is extraordinary and supernatural. It would be "illuminism" to expect from God a sudden *uncaused* attraction; it is not illuminism to accept such a gift from God and, having accepted, to follow it.

This "Time" has arrived when an interior movement gives us, without reasoning or reflexion, an absolute conviction that it is God who is acting.

This may come to us independently, or even in spite of our will; but God's sovereign action is often linked with some previous disposition of our own.

This "Time" usually presupposes a greater purification, a more intimate identification with God. But there are no limitations to God's action. He chooses whenever and whomsoever He pleases.

"The Exercises are the most apt preparation for the Election. And St. Ignatius proposes it only when he believes the retreatant has reached the Third Degree of Humility" (Casanovas).

The First "Time" comprises then:

- 1) direct action on the part of God;
- 2) the certainty on the part of the soul, without the shadow of doubt, that such action is from God;
- 3) complete docility on the part of the soul.

Second "Time" (Ex. 176).

1) *Consolation* is the basis of this 2nd "Time" (Ex. 316). Without having experienced consolation or desolation, it is useless to expect good results at this "Time". Consolation is like the voice of God heard deep down in the soul.

2) Fr. Cordeses describes the way of putting it into practice:—

"Putting ourselves in prayer before God, let us place before our eyes the path of the evangelical counsels, without looking for reasons on either side, and let us wait to see whether we feel in ourselves any movements of consolation or desolation.

For God is sometimes wont to enlighten the soul and give it a strong feeling that a particular state of life is suitable for it to the exclusion of all others; and thus He inflames the soul and consoles it when it thinks of embracing that state; or on the contrary He fills it with desolation and confusion when it thinks of the opposite. The same method should be followed with regard to the life of precept" (Ex. 967).

3) How the decision will come in practice depends on the experience one has of the graces of consolation. A prerequisite is intimacy with God, acquired at least during the Exercises, which has taught us to recognize God's desires and preferences. This way of Election is often a long and delicate process which calls for great prudence and judgement.

4) This was, as is well known, the method preferred by St. Ignatius, who used it widely in his own life. He employs it in many points of the Exercises, e.g. the use of penances (Ex. 89), food (Ex. 213), distribution of alms (Ex. 344). The retreatant oscillates now in one direction, now in the other until he reaches the moment when he feels "Our Lord gives him more signs of His Divine Will, as a man who presents different dishes of food to his prince in order to discover which one finds favour with him" (Directory of St. Ignatius, Ex. 781).

Third "Time" (Ex. 177).

1) This method aims at finding the will of God by means of our rational faculties. St. Ignatius wisely puts it in the third place, i.e. to be used only if God has not manifested His will directly. If we are already *certain* of God's will it is meaningless to look further.

2) But if we are still ignorant of our true vocation, or have doubts about it, then we may profitably have recourse to this method, using "our natural powers freely and quietly".

3) This presupposes a "certain balance of tendencies" (Polanco, Ex. 820), or better, an *inclination towards the more perfect*. This is the best guarantee that no disordered affection remains.

4) The guiding motives must be *supernatural*, e.g. those given by the "Two Standards". The man must be moved by a true right intention, such as the Principle and Foundation calls for. St. Ignatius stresses this in his exposition of this Third "Time" (Ex. 179).

5) There are two ways of applying this method:

a) The first (Exs. 178-183) presupposes *perfect indifference*. One reflects on the pros and cons, one analyzes and examines the advantages offered by both alternatives.

The sole end in view must be "to praise Our Lord and to save my soul" (Ex. 181). The points given constitute a meditation of the three powers of the soul.

b) The second is "*more affective*" (Exs. 184-187). It is particularly recommended when there is an inordinate affection to be straightened out,

and in the case of persons of lower spiritual level. The rules are four points of an Ignatian contemplation. Against a merely apparent "good" which moves the soul the wrong way we oppose a true "good" that counteracts the first. As a result of a love of God that is deeply felt and influences our conscious life, an affective power is produced in our soul which creates a state of mind in which the disorderly affections exercise no influence. Thus our affective life undergoes a gradual *transformation*. The urges which formerly moved us to evil now turn a man's psychic energies to that which is good.

This method proposes thoughts easily grasped and of great emotional power, capable of giving the correct orientation. It is easy to imagine oneself at the hour of death or judgement, and to transfer to those moments the motives of our decisions.

VI. OTHER EXERCISES

1. In General

In all the public spiritual exercises of the day visits to the Bl. Sacrament, Way of the Cross, Benediction – we beg Our Lord in a special way to illumine the minds of all facing this decision. Some special prayers suited to this occasion may be recited. The *Veni Creator* may be sung either at Benediction or during a visit. These means make the retreatants realize the importance of the Election, giving it an atmosphere of reflection and seriousness.

2. Time for the Election or Reform of Life

On the other days some time was given to the taking of notes. Today in the evening a special time should be assigned to the making of the Election. In spite of this, many will put it off till the following day. They find it too early; but at least this fixing of a time forces them to face the problem and jot down something. Thus the motives have time to sink deeper into the soul, and the night's rest crystallizes them.

3. Contact with the Director

Today is the chief day for consultation. This should be organized. Most probably not all the retreatants can be attended to. In former visits the Director will have noticed some who profit much by these private talks, on

account of their good qualities, problems, confidence with the Director, spiritual affinity with Him. Others are facing the problem of priestly or religious vocation. These two types of people should be attended to first; the others only in so far as time permits and charity requires.

4. Holy Hour

Talks should be given today on the Passion of Our Lord. *This is very efficacious in the quest of perfect indifference.* Few remain unmoved at the sight of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives. The retreatant is, after all, undergoing an experience similar to that of Our Lord in the Garden, Whom he contemplates immersed in those mysterious repugnances of His human nature. All this makes the figure of Jesus Christ particularly winning, and engenders in the soul that current of affection and enthusiasm so much sought after by St. Ignatius.

If the Passion is left for the last day, the impression produced is much less deep, owing to the restlessness caused by the approaching end of the retreat. The night is an excellent time for the impressions to settle down.

The crowded time-table here presents a serious difficulty. There are already too many items to permit the insertion of a contemplation on the Passion. One way of solving this difficulty is to turn the last evening exercise into a Holy Hour, lengthening it and separating it from supper by a short period of free time. This makes a deep impression on the retreatants, and is an excellent occasion for generous resolutions to mature. The quiet of the night, the vivid impressions of the day, the contemplation of the Agony of Our Lord, all help extraordinarily to make this prayer devout and fruitful.

The retreatants may at will continue their prayer in their rooms, and those who feel moved to write down their election, may do so before retiring.

VII. PARALLELISM BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND WEEK

First Week

1. To *know* the disorder:

in others (angels . . .)

in itself.

in me.

2. To *detest* the disorder so as to make purification easier.

3. To *bring about* – a reform of life:

a) Resolution of leading a more ordered life.

b) Confession and other means in order to persevere in God's service and to prevent any disorder from creeping in.

Second Week

1. To *know* Christ as the norm of right order:

in others (the call of the Apostles).

in Himself (The Temporal King, the Two Standards, meditations on the Gospel).

in me (how He calls me).

2. To *love* Christ and to be identified with Him so as to make imitation of Him easier.

3. To *imitate* Christ and thus to *bring about* the right ordering of one's life:

a) To desire always what is most perfect.

b) Meditation in order to prevent any residue of inordinate affection from creeping into the Election or Reform of life, so as to live henceforward serving God in the most perfect manner possible.

FIFTH DAY

I. ORDER OF TIME

Morning Offering.

First Contemplation: On *the Passion*.

Mass, Breakfast, Free Time.

Second Contemplation: On *the Passion*.

Time for examen and taking of notes, (or for the Election).

Instruction: *Perseverance*.

Lunch. Rest.

Way of the Cross.

Third Contemplation: *Jesus Christ the Comforter, Reward*.

Rosary and Benediction. Tea. Walk in Silence.

Fourth Contemplation: *Heaven. Contemplation to Obtain Love*.

Time for examen and summing up the resolutions.

Supper. Final Act of Thanksgiving.

If desired, the instruction may be given in the afternoon, and the morning time used for the Stations of the Cross, for a longer period of prayer, note-taking, or the Election.

II. CONTEMPLATION FOR THE MORNING (FIFTH DAY): PASSION OF OUR LORD

Special care should be given to the contemplations of the Passion proposed by St. Ignatius for the Third Week, and to the end which we aim at during this week.

The contemplations on the Passion are particularly fruitful and efficacious. Normally they should not be omitted. Their aim here is to confirm in the retreatant the fruit acquired during the First and Second Weeks: i.e. detestation of sin, love for Christ, generosity in answering His call, complete indifference.

The specific aim of the Third Week as given in the book of the Exercises can be obtained only with great difficulty in these abridged retreats.

III. END OF THE THIRD WEEK

1. Gradual increase of freedom and spiritual simplification suggested by St. Ignatius

a) *We are already entering into the unitive way.* St. Ignatius shows a profound respect for God and the working of His grace, and recedes into the background as soon as God takes possession of the soul. All his efforts have been directed to the *preparation* of the soul for this union. Once God takes possession of a soul, man's action is reduced to the minimum.

b) For this reason, as he advances in the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius gives fewer notes and directions. The retreatant is in less need of a guide as he draws nearer to God.

c) This is also the reason why the Saint is less detailed now in the points of meditation. *He gives the text great elasticity and depth*, as can be seen in the last point of the Contemplation to Obtain Love.

Thus the soul is able to discover in these last stages what it needs in its ascent to God. At this high level not all travel the same path, hence there is less need of method and instruction.

d) His points, then, admit of *various interpretations*, all perhaps true in theory, but only one acceptable in practice, viz., that which the soul needs at this particular moment. These concise observations reveal a profound respect for the working of grace, and a great knowledge of the personal and loving respect of God's dealings with the soul.

e) *The Director also is less trammelled*. His wider experience has made him familiar with the Ignatian method, and he no longer needs detailed directives in order to plumb the meaning of the different exercises.

f) The Director is presumed to have sounded the depths of the Ignatian technique.

Here we cannot meditate or reflect too much. This is the highest point, the summit. A good many things may still remain shrouded in mist. But every time we come back to the text in reading or meditation, new vistas open up before us.

2. A few indications regarding the fruit of the Third Week

a) The spiritual fruit aimed at in the Second Week is "to shake ourselves free from self-love, self-will and self-interest" (Ex. 189). This is a necessary condition in order to *enter into the love, will and interest of Jesus*.

b) This intimate identification with Jesus is achieved by stages. The first step is to unite ourselves with Our Lord in His sorrows and sufferings, *to be nailed mystically to the Cross with Christ*.

c) The way to bring about this disposition, in which we make our own whatever belongs to Christ, is to *experience as our own the sufferings He had to undergo*. The reaction is most natural. Every noble heart knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of his friend, especially if the latter suffers for his sake.

d) Our ideal should be to experience sorrow, not merely as our own or exclusively as Christ's own, but both *as Christ's and our sorrow*. This will make us feel the sorrow which He felt, and thus renew and "fulfil" His Passion in ourselves, His living members.

e) We see in suffering a means of consoling Our Lord, wishing, if it were possible, to lessen the pain He underwent in His Passion. ("Whatever we suffer for the good of our neighbour, we suffer in the place of Christ, who would have had to undergo the same pain, if He were still living among us") (La Palma, book III, chap. 13). As a result a yearning for suffering is kindled in our souls, because we realize its immense utility. We experience what the saints call "*the sweetness of the Cross*" and we gladly accept our suffering. This spurs the will on to overcome its tendency to flee from suffering.

f) *Suffering is also a creature of God*. Well-ordered love does not consider here the outward appearance, namely, what is unpleasant and troublesome in suffering, but its true inner nature, namely that it is an image of God and can lead to His greater glory. Suffering leads us to glorify God, because it is a necessary atonement for our sins, and a remedy against concupiscence. It is, therefore, to be regarded by the soul as a *gift from God*.

The outcome of a proper grasp of these truths is a genuine "*love of the Cross*". The Cross appears as something precious in itself. Not as an evil to be tolerated; we now see in it "Jesus Christ Crucified".

The same technique is employed here as in the 1st Week to bring about a detestation of sin.

3. The Contemplations on the Passion

a) The Director should choose those contemplations which he finds most suited to his retreatants. He should not strive to cover the whole history of the Passion, though he may do so, sometimes, with much profit. Usually a deeper impression will be produced by dwelling longer on certain passages (the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crucifixion), or by the consideration of particular aspects (the bodily pain, the interior sufferings, the love of Jesus, the contempt He suffers). Our attention should be drawn to the *Sacred Figure of the Redeemer* more than to the tragic circumstances *surrounding Him*, which sometimes tend to dominate the picture. This is an obstacle to a serene and peaceful contemplation of the suffering Jesus.

b) We should stress the end of the Third Week, namely: to *regard Christ's sorrow* both as His and our own sorrow. This is St. Ignatius' explicit aim in

the 6th point: "reflect how He suffers all this on account of my sins" (Ex. 196).

c) Hence we should strive, as it were, to make *ourselves present to Jesus*. We should keep Him company, reflect that our sorrows relieve His intense pain; to suffer for Him is our means of sharing in His Passion and of corresponding with His love.

"The exercitant should act as though present at the mystery *actually going on*: as though all this had been accomplished *solely on his account*, in accordance with the Apostolic formula: "He loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2, 20). "The soul should look upon herself, as though she herself were the cause of such awful pain and shame suffered by the Son of God" (Official Directory, chap. 35, n. 3).

d) The election, the "mission" of my life should be reviewed in this new light of our Lord's Passion, i.e. as a means of making up what is wanting to Christ's Passion", of being a co-redeemer. This thought stimulates us to a complete self-surrender to Christ, and gives us strength to put our election into practice.

e) We ought not to lose sight of Christ's *sufferings in His Mystical Body*, the Church. We are now in a position to console Him, by making reparation, and by completing His work in re-ordering our lives.

IV. INSTRUCTION (FIFTH DAY):

PERSEVERANCE

a) This instruction may be left for the afternoon, in order to give the retreatants sufficient time to complete their Election. Instead, a fruitful exercise is the Way of the Cross, or the reading of the Passion with a short commentary. These, if done with unction, influence the soul very effectively by stirring up affections and emotions.

b) The subject of the instruction should be perseverance. We should not give a long list of counsels which only confuse the retreatants, but rather aim at *summarizing the key sentiments* of the Exercises.

c) Everything can be summed up in one main piece of advice: *the frequent reception of the Sacraments*. These contain both the life of grace, and the most efficacious helps to live according to it.

d) Other useful *recommendations are*: a fixed spiritual director: a daily pious practice, such as the Rosary in honour of the Blessed Virgin, the sanctification of the surrounding in which one lives (family, occupation,) by one's example and activity.

e) It is not enough to suggest pious practices or devotions. These practices are only the fruit of the interior vivifying sap. During the Exercises the retreatant has conceived an ardent desire of doing great things for Christ; he is drawn to that by a *powerful inner urge*. This interior urge must be continuously nourished the whole year round, lest disgust and inertia set in and the pious practices be completely abandoned.

f) An excellent suggestion is, to synthesize the *key ideas* of these days in a few short and vigorous phrases which can reawake the affections conceived during the Retreat. These phrases ought to be renewed and assimilated throughout the year, in order to maintain vivid and fresh the retreat-spirit that gave them birth.

V. CONTEMPLATIONS IN THE EVENING (FIFTH DAY):

MATTER OF THE FOURTH WEEK

What has been said about the liberty St. Ignatius allows in the Third Week, about the progressive simplification, conciseness and elasticity of the text, and about the impossibility of attaining fully the aim in view, in such abridged Retreats, must be kept in mind here. The Fourth Week is a prolongation of the Third. Both aim at the same thing, namely, an ever greater compenetration with Jesus Christ, the path being that of sorrow in the Third Week, and of joy in the Fourth.

Here we cannot come down to details. We are at the end, and everything depends on how things have proceeded so far, on a thousand and one imponderable circumstances to be examined on the spot by the Director himself.

The choice of the matter therefore depends upon his judgement. We shall add some remarks about the aim of the Fourth Week, which, remember, cannot as a general rule be obtained in these short Retreats.

1. Remarks regarding the End of the Fourth Week

a) In this week the identifying of one's love, inclinations and interest with the love and interests of the Saviour, which was begun in the Third Week, is brought to *completion*. "Everything is directed to inflaming the heart with divine Love" (Ex. 886).

b) The way of joy is higher, purer but more difficult, than that of pain. It is easier to share sincerely in the sorrows of the sufferer *than* in the joy of the victor. The serene sky of joy is easily tarnished by self-love and envy, for to rejoice at the triumph of another means often to recognize the success of

another where we ourselves have failed. Hence we realize how complete is the identification of two persons who are bound together in a perfect unity of love, joy and triumph.

c) This identification is accomplished *when so close a union of interests* between Christ and the soul has been reached that the soul is totally absorbed in Him.

"This interchange of goods is nothing else *than being in love and acting for love*. The lover makes his own all the joys and sorrows of the beloved, rejoicing in them or suffering from them, even as the other rejoices and suffers" (La Palma).

d) We therefore *"rejoice intensely at the triumph and joy of Our Lord"* (Ex. 221). We cast down all limits to generosity, and establish formal friendship with God by the mutual exchange of all that belongs to us, even of what is most intimate and personal, our liberty (Ex. 234).

e) We also gather from this week *a boundless trust in Jesus, Our Consoler*: He has taken upon Himself "the role of consoling: just as friends are wont to comfort one another" (Ex. 224).

f) Such a role *on the part* of Jesus is in keeping *with the state of soul in which the exercitant finds himself*. After a full month of intense application, the resulting fatigue mixed with fear on account of the commitments undertaken, might give rise to feelings of dejection and depression.

Jesus comes to meet us in all His tenderness and Divine gladness; it is natural for us to *abandon ourselves trustfully* to that Heart, strong and tender, which deals with the Apostles with almost maternal delicacy and is beating with the same tenderness for us today.

g) *This joy of the Lord* its consoler finds a profound echo in the purified soul. The soul rejoices intensely and disinterestedly as if this joy were her own, because it is the joy of Him who is everything to her.

2. Subject matter for the contemplations of the last evening

a) A great *variety of topics* can be offered as subject matter for this contemplation. Here are a few of them: the remaining scenes of Our Lord's Passion; the solitude of the Blessed Virgin; the Heart of Jesus; the life of grace which His Passion has merited for us; the great favour of giving us the Church that came forth from His Heart; heaven, the final goal of His redemptive work.

b) Whatever be the topic chosen, it ought to be proposed in an *atmosphere of consolation and triumph*. God has perhaps demanded great sacrifices

from the retreatant. He must therefore be persuaded that this renunciation will lead him to final victory. God does not deceive; on the contrary, He gives a hundredfold in true happiness. After the struggle of these days the retreatant is in great need of such consoling truths.

c) These contemplations have a bearing on the Election, on indifference, on one's vocation. They are a source of strength to endure hardship; they confirm the decision of the will, and remove any fear that may have been produced in the soul reflecting on the important step it has taken. The soul can always count on God's promise and power.

d) The matter of these contemplations is the *glorious life of Our Lord*. This best follows the mind of St. Ignatius, and best suits the aim of infusing comfort and courage. We contemplate Jesus Christ consoling those who have shared in the labours and troubles of His earthly life, even those who have failed Him and had almost given up hope, the Apostles and St. Peter. This office is performed in the most varied circumstances: in moments of confusion (St. Peter), of despondency (disciples of Emmaus), of inaction and perplexity (the disciples in the Cenacle), of crisis (St. Thomas), and of warm intimacy, when He confers on them their great powers, reveals to them His sublime secrets, and makes them His everlasting promises.

VI. LAST CONTEMPLATION:

TO OBTAIN LOVE

1. Purpose and brief analysis of the Contemplation to Obtain Love

a) St. Ignatius repeats here *the whole sweep of the Exercises*, setting it in a wider background and thus affording broader perspectives.

b) This contemplation forms a kind of *concrete synthesis* which may serve in a simplified and concise form as an ideal to be used in daily life.

c) During the Exercises one has promised to serve God. In daily life it is a question of keeping one's word; since very often there is no time to revive interior dispositions by long considerations, one runs the risk of forgetting one's resolutions.

d) To meet this difficulty, St. Ignatius provides *here in a highly condensed form the very kernel of the Exercises*. From this angle, the present contemplation is *a bridge* linking the Retreat with everyday life.

e) The formula given by St. Ignatius is very simple, yet very practical. He wants to show that perfection is within the reach of everyone, that it can be

practised *in daily life in* the most ordinary occupations. The secret lies in applying to daily life, which often appears so commonplace, the concentrated strength of the Exercises. In this way, the faithful observance of one's duties will imperceptibly draw one closer to God.

f) The duties performed, one's daily work, can be transformed into love, and thus illustrate the *identity of service and love*. Love, it is true, does not consist in deeds, for it is an immanent act elicited by the will. But it drives the lover to do things for the beloved, to give to the beloved whatever he can give. Hence in one sense love does consist in deeds; "it consists in the mutual communication of the two parties" (Ex. 231), or, as La Palma puts it, it consists "in loving and in doing things out of love".

g) The actions of ordinary life done purely for God are a form of love. It is not the work, but the disposition of mind and heart which counts; such actions are but the consequence of this identity between service and love. "Action, far from being an obstacle to union with God, is rather a great help to it" (Gagliardi).

"It is very essential to grasp that the true *strength of the union with God lies in deeds and* not in intellectual speculations about these things".

"The strength of the union lies mainly in the will, not in so far as it depends on the speculation of the intellect, but in so far as it has *the power of commanding and carrying out any work for the love of God*, of coming forward and offering to God Himself all that it owns. Add to this the desire of conversing in every action with God present in the soul, and of transforming its whole self into Him".

"To act with this determination is in practice to be united with God: by this total surrender of one's will to God's love, a *true and radical transformation of man in God is brought about*, an ecstasy, not of the mind but of the will, of the whole man".

"For love is more excellent and efficacious when expressed by the will in deeds, than when confined to pure abstract speculation" (Gagliardi).

h) One's daily work, at times so trivial, done for God: this is the channel *into which* St. Ignatius directs the current of spiritual energy which bursts forth from the soul during these days of intimate contact with God. The exercitant is thus habitually in the disposition of serving God entirely, of knowing and accomplishing God's will perfectly at every moment, and of loving Him intensely. *His life is an uninterrupted act of love because it is uninterrupted service*.

i) This is the only answer worth giving to the friendship which God offers. Through this "*exchange of love*" realized in mutual self-giving, a *formal friendship* with God is established, which later is lived out in ordinary life. It is necessary, however, that in reality "His friendship be enough", which "implies that one should not seek the satisfaction of the heart elsewhere, and should with all diligence seek His presence, both active and passive" (Calveras).

j) A soul which has reached this point has achieved a *radical ordering of its self-love*, shifting to God the whole weight of its will and love.

2. Synthesis of the Contemplation to Obtain Love

a) In the points of the contemplation St. Ignatius shows how this ideal is realized; he bids his man serve and love God in every event of life, or – which is the same – *love Him by serving Him and serve Him by loving Him*.

b) The way of realizing this loving service is here summarized: *We serve and love God in all things* (Ex. 233):

1. *Effectively: by fulfilling His will – a life of service.*

In order to urge the retreatant to this generous answer, St. Ignatius places before his eyes an impressive picture of God's effective love for each and every creature. God almost seems to exhaust Himself, if that were possible, in generous self-giving, in that "giving and communicating . . . what He has" (Ex. 231). Whatever exists is a gift from God (Ex. 234).

Faced with such overwhelming goodness on the part of God, the retreatant cannot *correspond* to it by merely offering creatures. For these are God's gifts, and to offer them is pure and simple restitution, due to Him. The retreatant must offer something truly his own – though the result of a sublime act of divine love – that is, his own self, *his liberty*.

"We can give God some things, which, in a certain sense, He does not possess. God *lacks many things* which we owe Him, namely: the honour we deprive Him of, the obedience we refuse Him. . . . We can, therefore, make Him the gift of our honour and well-being even at the cost of our health and comfort. There was something wanting to the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which must be fulfilled by our sufferings. . . ." (La Palma).

"Take, O Lord, and receive", this is the wonderful and *generous oblation*, the crown of the Spiritual Exercises.

2. *Affectively*: God proves His love for us, not only by the fact of giving us everything we have, but also by the *manner* in which He communicates these gifts to us. It is a manifestation of His tender love for us.

a) God comes personally to deliver His gifts to us, for He is *present* in all of them. Nay more, He dwells within us; He is like *a friend* who longs to be with the one He loves. We should, therefore, respond to this indwelling by walking always in His presence and seeking His company as frequently as possible.

b) Not only is God present in me, but He is *unceasingly labouring for me*. In each of His gifts we discover His Divine Love at work. God is above all *a Father*; only a father works disinterestedly and without respite for somebody else.

In order *to correspond to* God's uninterrupted work in me, I will place myself at the service of God and labour for Him, attributing to Him all the good I discover in creatures, for they are all God's handiwork.

c) One step further: In every creature we discover a *reflection* of His divine perfection. We have been fashioned to His image and likeness, and through grace we share in His divine nature. The soul is merged in God, identified with Him, as the red-hot iron in the fire, as the sponge in the sea, as the beloved in the lover. This union of the soul with God may be likened to the love which betrothed bear to each other. In its fullness it is known as mystical union. To describe this state, the great mystics had recourse to the metaphor of spiritual marriage.

We reach here the summit of the spiritual life. St. Ignatius deliberately uses expressions pregnant with meaning and covering a large field of ideas, so that the soul may find in them an echo of its own state.

This is the *perfect union* of the soul which, purified of all its dross, has recaptured the right perspective of the world, and now comes back through Jesus to taste the sweet embrace of the heavenly Father and to be united to Him in an ecstasy of love.

The soul's *answer* to God will vary according to the divine graces which it has received, loving Him in all creatures, ascending from them up to Him, stopping at none of them, discovering in all of them His footprints, in such a way that this pale reflection of His infinite perfections may draw us forcibly to Him as if to a magnet.

3. This contemplation helps to *put into practice the Principle and Foundation*. It is the completion of that first beginning there. *Principium and Contemplatio* are intimately linked with and complete each other.

The contemplation helps us to *praise* God, by showing us His works and His wonders; to *reverence* Him, by showing us God present in all things; to *serve* Him, by showing God helping us to reach our end. It helps us to understand *indifference* by showing God as the fountain-head whence flows all truth, goodness and beauty; for these are participations of God. "Every good gift and every perfect endowment is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jac. 1, 17).

4. The Contemplation to Obtain Love "is truly a summary not only of all the Spiritual Exercises but of perfection itself" (Le Gaudier).

3. Way of exposing and adapting the Contemplation to Obtain Love

1. This contemplation needs to be carefully adapted to the retreatants. It consists of some of the most important truths of our faith, set in frame of ideas so rich and sublime that not everybody is capable of grasping its full meaning.

2. What has been said of the Principle and Foundation holds good here; one must give the retreatants as much as, and *only as much as*, they can grasp.

3. At this stage the main task is to bridge the gap between the warm atmosphere of the retreat and the cold reality of everyday life. This is the problem which the retreatant must face squarely.

4. This contemplation, then, should be proposed as the fundamental approach by which the retreatant's daily life, his home, work, profession become the materials for his sanctification.

5. We should not aim at new ideas, but at *applying to practical* life those already absorbed. Hence, dwell on the fundamental thoughts of the retreat showing *how everything is God's gift*, repeating some of the ideas of the Principle and Foundation and the Kingdom of Christ, which are so intimately connected with this contemplation.

6. Speak, too, of Devotion to the S. Heart and to Our Lady. The Blessed Virgin was the creature that lived most perfectly the Contemplation to Obtain Love. There is a parallel between her "Ecce ancilla Domini" and our "Take, O Lord, and receive". The other points of the contemplation describe her uninterrupted presence of God, her work for her Son and Lord, and that sublime union with God unsurpassed by any other mystic. She can be presented as the mediatrix who obtains all these graces for us, as the bridge between God and us, as mother and protectress in the new life which we are going to begin. Jesus as man, too, fulfils this contemplation perfectly.

7. The whole contemplation is based on love. Young people should be taken step by step from the love their friends, parents and brothers feel for them and that which they feel for others, to God's love for them and their love for God.

8. Here is an occasion to speak of the *life of grace* and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The *Ascension of Our Lord*, too, can serve us as composition of place; from the height to which Our Lord ascends we get a bird's-eye view of the overwhelming number of benefits He has conferred on us.

9. The evening meditation may sometimes be *on Our Lord's Passion*, and in this case the Retreat ends on Calvary at the foot of the Cross, or before the Sacred Heart or Our Lady in her sorrowful solitude. Even then we should bring in the ideas of the Contemplation to Obtain Love, within the frame of the Passion. The last impression must be one of hope, encouragement, certainty of victory, and courage for the struggle of every day.

VII. OTHER EXERCISES

1. General atmosphere of the Exercises

In order to keep the exercises of this last day in the proper atmosphere one must remember the *psychological disposition* of the retreatants. We shall find in them on this day:

"A feeling of relief in view of the approaching end.

A kind of nervous impatience to break the silence.

Serious concern about their Election of state and their resolutions.

Perhaps some regret, because this time of peace is coming to an end" (Arellano).

Hence we strive to foster *tranquillity* of soul and *encouragement*, speak of the election and the resolutions taken, *synthesize* what has been meditated, make concrete resolutions that have remained vague and general. The dominant feeling should be one of peace and security.

Such ought to be the graces the exercitant asks for in today's visits to Our Lord. He should be given longer time to meditate in his room, to reflect on and review the lights and resolutions of the Retreat.

2. Offering of one's election and resolutions

This takes place either during the Eucharistic exercise of the evening or on the next morning before Mass. It makes a deep impression on all. Each one

goes up personally to the altar and puts into the hands of the Retreat Master, or directly on the altar, a paper with his election, resolutions and petitions. The papers may be left the whole night close to the tabernacle, or at the feet of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and taken back the next morning after Mass. This brings home God's interest in and protection over the resolutions.

Sometimes it is more practicable to have each one sign his name on a sheet of paper laid close to the altar. Both Our Lady and the retreatant are acquainted with the resolutions this signature implies. The paper is left the whole night on the altar.

Lest anyone should excuse himself saying that he has not had sufficient time to complete his reform of life, they may be given the hour before lunch to do so. The time is, on the other hand, quite suitable as they have just been through the contemplations on the Passion.

3. Meeting the Retreat Master

A last interview with the Retreat Master is desirable, in order to settle details and give the final touch to the work of these days. It should not be left for the last moment, lest the problems be dealt with in a hurry and the interview becomes a mere formality just to bid farewell. The Retreat Master ought to visit in time those who need it most, and those who have experienced more intensely the movements of the Holy Spirit. Then he proceeds to the others, following the order he deems most fit. Otherwise there is the danger of group meetings, and consequently of losing time in useless and protracted talks.

A few general questions often prove useful on this last day: "What impression has the Retreat made on you?" "What have you liked or disliked most?" "What is your opinion about these days?" The idea is to give the men a last chance of opening their hearts and speaking freely.

4. Final Act of Thanksgiving

The last exercise ought to be an act of thanksgiving. The Director dwells on some of the thoughts contained in the Contemplation to Obtain Love. He comments on the prayer "Take, Lord, and receive", conducts a Holy Hour, gives the retreatants a motto for life, and places them under the protection of the Blessed Virgin.

It is often well to prolong this little service so that the exercitants retire late to their rooms and thus avoid occasions of noise and disturbance. The Exercises themselves end only on the following day after Mass; otherwise, much of the fruit may be lost. Young men in a state of nervous tension easily

lapse into excessive exuberance. On the morrow each one goes his own way, and the tension is relaxed in a natural and peaceful manner.

A.M.D.G.