

**WITH
CHRIST
ALIVE**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE RISEN CHRIST,
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
AND OUR JESUIT VOCATION**

INTRODUCTION

As Jesuits, we have been called to serve the Crucified and Risen Lord. Although now in glory, he is present in the suffering of the world for which he died. All our success in ministry is entirely dependent on the Risen Christ who calls and empowers us for his service under the banner of his Cross.

In the Easter Season we are invited to reappropriate our Jesuit vocation in the light of the Lord's Resurrection and through the prism of the early Church's experience in the Acts of the Apostles. Through the witness of the first Christians in Acts, Luke presents the major themes of the Christian life: call, conversion, baptism, formation of community, mission, preaching, expansion of the community, suffering, persecution, imprisonment and even martyrdom.

This booklet combines brief excerpts from the daily liturgical readings of the Easter Season with a series of brief readings from a wide spectrum of Jesuits, from St. Ignatius to contemporary Jesuits, including saints and scholars, pastors and preachers. In the form of letters, interviews, prayers and essays, these readings show us Jesuits reflecting on their life and vocation. Many of the readings witness to suffering and persecution and in this way they are very close to the story of the Acts of the Apostles. Our hope is that the presentation of the heroic witness of the Acts and of Jesuit history will deepen our own response to our Jesuit vocation and deepen our sense of mission.

As followers of Ignatius, and as companions of Jesus, a personal love and devotion to Jesus Christ becomes the first characteristic of our way of proceeding. Thus in many of the readings, the Jesuit witnesses speak of this prayerful, personal relationship. While there is little emphasis on the breadth of themes highlighted in recent General Congregations—for example, the vows, community life, formation, social analysis, or discernment—we do find Jesuit priests and brothers speaking from and about their experience as Jesuits. The hope is that their experience will encourage us to reflect upon and share our own experience of Jesuit life in the Spirit today.

In praying with these texts, one way to proceed might be to read the short excerpt from Acts or the Gospels, or read the entire liturgical passage. One might then turn to the readings from the Jesuit witness for the day and see what emerges. On some days, the excerpt from Acts might be the focus of our prayer; on another day the word and witness of the Jesuit may touch and challenge us. In either case, the reflection at some point should turn upon ourselves and our own experience of our Jesuit life and vocation. The same Lord, the same Spirit who spoke to the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, the same Lord and Spirit who guided Jesuits throughout the Society's history; guides and challenges every Jesuit today.

Much gratitude is owed to Fr. Joseph Costantino for his inspiration in suggesting the idea for this text and for his hard work and energy in seeing it through to completion. Thanks is due as well to Fr. J. Peter Schineller for his many helpful suggestions regarding Jesuit texts and the organization of the booklet.

The entire thrust of this booklet, in short, is to stir up in Jesuits today what St. Ignatius experienced in his time of convalescence in the family manor at Loyola:

They gave him a life of Christ and a collection of the lives of saints written in Spanish. By constantly reading these books he began to be attracted to what he found narrated there.... While reading the life of Christ our Lord or the lives of the saints, he would reflect and reason with himself "What if I should do what Saint Francis or Saint Dominic did?"

May this Easter Season fill our hearts with the same love for the Lord that molded St. Ignatius and the great company of Jesuits who have gone before us.

Kenneth J. Gavin, S.J. March 12, 1998
Anniversary of the Canonizations of Sts. Ignatius and Francis Xavier

J·H·S

I commend to you, Lord Jesus, the whole Society of Jesus—
our superiors and our subjects,
our old and our young,
our sound and our sick,
our ministries of body and soul—
may we be rightly governed to the glory of your name and
to the upbuilding of your Church.

T hrough you may we grow in our numbers and in our
service. May we know our vocation thoroughly, and knowing
it love it; and thus may all in the Society
serve your majesty worthily and faithfully;
cling to the commands and the counsels of
the Gospel;
and, united in the love of brothers,
feel your blessings on our provinces,
our schools, our missions, and all our
ministries.

M ay we be sober, simple, prudent, peaceable, and studious of solid vir-
tue: may our lives conform to the Name we bear and our deeds reflect the
vows we profess.

W e commend to you all the brothers who share our life
in the Society and all our companions and partners
who share our heritage and our vision.

W ith the Father and the Holy Spirit, we praise you forever. Amen.

St. Peter Canisius, S.J.

There is only one worthy ambition, to love God,
and as a reward of that love to grow in loving
Him.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

HE HAS RISEN AS HE SAID, ALLELUIA!

‘You need not be annoyed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified. He has been raised up; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. Go now and tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him just as he told you.’”

Mark 16:6-7

Recall the presence of the Risen Lord with you... . Tell him you believe he is present here to you... .

Reflect on the fact that he loves and accepts you just as you are now... . Take time out to sense his unconditional love for you as he looks at you lovingly and humbly.

Speak to Christ ... or just lovingly stay in silence and communicate with him beyond words.

The devotion to the Heart of Christ, so vigorous some years ago, so much on the decline today, would flourish once again if people would understand that it consists essentially in accepting Jesus Christ as love incarnate, as the manifestation of the unconditional love of God for us. Anyone who accepts this is bound to experience fruits beyond all his expectations in his own prayer life and in his apostolate. The great turning point in your life comes not when you realize that you love God but when you realize and fully accept the fact that God loves you unconditionally.

Anthony de Mello, S.J.

ENTHUSIASTIC WITNESSES

Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say. Jesus the Nazorean was a man whom God sent to you with miracles, wonders and signs as his credentials.... This is the Jesus God has raised up, and we are his witnesses.”

Acts 2:14,22,32

Look at it this way. We become Jesuits and continue to be Jesuits simply out of our enthusiasm for Jesus Christ, and from our desire to work for Him and for others. Jesus Christ is very faithful. He does not abandon those dedicated to his service. Jesus Christ lived two thousand years ago, but he still lives today in the Eucharist and in the depths of our hearts.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

YOU MUST REFORM

“What are we to do, brothers?” Peter answered: ‘You must reform and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was to you and your children that the promise was made, and to all those still far off whom the Lord our God calls.’

Acts 2:37-39

I beg of you, my Lord, to remove anything which separates me from you, and you from me.

Remove anything that makes me unworthy of your sight, your control, your reprehension; of your speech and conversation, of your benevolence and love.

Cast from me every evil that stands in the way of my seeing you, hearing, tasting, savoring, and touching you; fearing and being mindful of you; knowing, trusting, loving, and possessing you; being conscious of your presence and, as far as may be, enjoying you.

This is what I ask for myself and earnestly desire from you.
Amen.

Blessed Peter Faber, S.J.



WHAT I HAVE I GIVE YOU

Peter said: “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you! In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, walk!”

Acts 3:6

I have something to say to you. How can we go on with this? I didn't sleep last night and I think you would have suffered from insomnia as well had you seen what I saw. I was arriving at St. Ignatius late last night when a man stopped me. He was standing there in shirtsleeves in the freezing drizzle. He was thin as a rail and shaking with fever. The lamplight was sufficient to show me that his tonsils were inflamed. He had no place to sleep and he asked me for the price of a bed in a hostel. There are hundreds of men like this in Santiago and they are all our brothers, and that is no metaphor. Each one of these men is Christ, and what have we done for them? What has the Catholic Church in Chile done for these sons of hers who walk the streets in the rain and sleep in doorways in the cold nights of winter, their bodies found frozen in the early dawn. This sort of thing is happening in a Christian country. Tonight a beggar may die in the doorway of any of your houses. What stupid oxen we Catholics are, how lost in our dreaming, how untouched by the need for social solidarity! We are held back by the possibility of difficulties, obstacles and scandals.

St. Alberto Hurtado , S.J.

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PROPHETIC PRIESTHOOD

You put to death the Author of life. But God raised him from the dead, and we are his witnesses. Moreover all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel onward, have announced the events of these days. You are the children of those prophets, are the heirs of the covenant God made with your fathers when he said to Abraham, ‘In your offspring, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him to you first to bless you by turning you from your evil ways.”

Acts 3:15, 24-26

What did Ignatius envisage as the Jesuit priesthood? A prophetic priesthood, one which was concerned to speak out the word of God in any way that it could be heard, assimilated, and incarnated within the social life of human beings, a priesthood which spoke with the religious experiences of human beings and—as did the prophets of the Old Testament—coupled this care for authentic belief with a concern for those in social misery: the ministry of the word, the ministries of interiority, the ministry to social misery. This is not an arbitrary collection of concerns. The preaching of the word very naturally tends to the ministries of interiority by which the word can be heard, and this tends very naturally to the ministries of justice through which it can be lived and shared with others in the historical living out of human life.... A Jesuit priest is ordained because he gives himself over to this call, because he is consecrated by the Church for this mission of the Church—a service of the word that gathers into its unity all the moments of his life.

Michael J. Buckley, S.J.

HOC UNO EST TANTUM NOMINE CERTA SALUS

“There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to mortals by which we are to be saved.”

Acts 4:12

The name is the Company of Jesus. Father Master Ignatius had so many visitations and signs of approval and confirmation of this name, that I heard him say he would feel to be acting against God’s will and offending him if he were to doubt of its fitness. When he was urged to change it, because some said we were taking Jesus for ourselves, and others gave other reasons, I remember him saying that even if all the members of the Society (or anyone else we are not obliged under sin to follow) judged otherwise, he would not give in on this; and since it is in the Constitutions that nothing may be done if just one objects, this name would not be changed during his lifetime. Father Master Ignatius has this unyielding assurance in the matters he knows through means superior than human ones. Then, nothing will make him budge.

Juan de Polanco, S.J.



WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND SEEN

“Surely we cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen.”

Acts 4:20

On the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, a great number of black people who had been seized from along the African rivers were put ashore from one very large vessel. We hurried out with two baskets full of oranges, lemons, sweet biscuits and all sorts of other things.... We had to force our way through the crowds till we reached the sick. There was a great number of them, lying on the damp earth, or rather in mud; but someone had formed the idea of making a heap of tiles and broken bricks in case the damp should be too much for them. This was all they had for a bed, all the more uncomfortable because they were naked without any covering at all.

Two of the black slaves were more dead than alive; they were already cold, and we could hardly feel any pulse in their veins. We got together some glowing embers on a fire, placed the dying men near them, and then threw aromatic spices on the fire. We had two bags of these spices, and used them all. Then with the help of our cloaks—for the slaves have none of their own, and it would have been a waste of time to ask their masters—we got them to inhale the vapours, which seemed to restore their warmth and vitality. You should have seen the expression of gratitude in their eyes!

In this way we spoke to them, not with word, but with deeds; and for people in their situation who were convinced that they had been brought there to be eaten, any other form of address would have been pointless. Then we sat or knelt beside them and washed their faces and bodies with wine; by such acts of kindness we tried to cheer them up, and performed for them all the natural services which are calculated to raise the spirits of the sick.

Then we began to instruct them for baptism. We first explained to them the wonderful effects of the sacrament on both body and soul ... we began to teach them at greater length concerning the one God who rewards and punishes each according to his deserts, and so on. We showed them a representation of Christ crucified above a baptismal font, into which the blood flowed from his wounds. Then we taught them to repeat after us the act of contrition in their own language.

St. Peter Claver, S.J.

Take care lest the children of the world
spend more care and attention on the transitory
things than you do on seeking those that are
eternal.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Jesus came and stood before them. “Peace be with you,” he said; then, to Thomas: “Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!” Thomas said in response, “My Lord and my God!”

John 20:26-28

The Jesus who is the center of our personal vocation and who is the center of consecrated life calls for a love relationship. We cannot relate to this Jesus as an abstract concept such as Wisdom, biblically authentic as its personification is. We cannot identify this Jesus with good actions which we perform in our religious mission: Jesus is more than some category of virtue enhancing human behavior. True, Jesus identifies with each person we serve or who serves us, but Jesus has his own identity and his own way of loving and of being loved. Jesus in our lives calls forth from us and from our religious congregation the a wed response of love he called forth from Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” The mission of our congregation is not identified with making this world a better place to live; our mission as consecrated people is so related to the Jesus of the Gospels that together we make present the actions of Christ. Because of the goodness of a real relationship with Jesus, both as individuals and as congregations, we experience that Jesus is the center of our consecrated life, the center of our life-in-mission.

David L. Fleming, S.J.



DIVINE POWER AT WORK

“Grant to your servants, even as they speak your words, complete assurance by stretching forth your hand in cures and signs and wonders to be worked in the name of Jesus, your holy Servant.” The place where they were gathered shook as they prayed. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God’s word with confidence.

Acts 4:29-31

Faith lifts you up and over to hope. Faith and hope lift you up and over to charity, to the Divine Power, to the Holy Spirit dwelling and working within you. All this opens the spiritual understanding of what it means to love God above all things and so to fulfill the first and highest law. To one who experiences the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit . . . all this is clear.

The Holy Spirit has given you the gift of union with Christ Jesus and his might. Use this gift assiduously, so that you may come to the spiritual insight that you are really understanding with his mind, choosing with his will, remembering with his memory, living and acting completely in Christ and not in yourself. To attain this perception in this life is to reach the highest perfection. It is really Divine Power at work. It brings an awesome sweetness.

Jerome Nadal, S.J.

KOINONIA

The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common.

Acts 4:32

I ask you also, dear brothers in Jesus Christ Our Lord and God, to make your selves open for His coming and His spiritual treasures. This openness come through purity of heart, true humility, a common mind among you all, a common desire, and peace within and without, which is what makes a dwelling place in your soul for the One who is called 'Prince of Peace,' enabling Him to be Lord within you. In short, my prayer is that you be completely united, indeed simply one entity, in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Ignatius Loyola, S.J.

If the Lord our God has separated us by these vast distances, we are still united by our awareness of these strong bonds that unite us in a single spirit and a common love, since, if I have judged aright, neither physical separation, nor estrangement, nor forgetfulness can have any meaning for those who love one another in the Lord. For it seems to me that we shall always sustain each other as we were ever wont to do before.

*St. Francis Xavier, S.J.
to St. Ignatius Loyola, S.J.*

DELIVERANCE

The high priest and all the supporters (that is, the party of the Sadducees), filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and threw them into the public jail. During the night, however, an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the jail, led them forth and said, “Go out now and take your place in the temple precincts and preach to the people all about this new life.”

Acts 5:17-20

About the 15th of August I was on the verge of despair. I was brutally beaten and then returned to my cell late in the evening. The guards accompanying me left me with these words: ‘You won’t sleep tonight. You can pray as much as you wish but no God or angel will come to deliver you. We, however, will sleep well and early tomorrow will be ready to work on you with renewed strength.’

How I recall that night when I asked God for death, for I could no longer continue. I found myself incapable of carrying such a cross and standing up against such violence. All night I struggled with God and wept before Him in my misery. But it was not yet morning when a deep peace enveloped me—light, courage, and great strength let me clearly see my duty, ‘to endure,’ and it brought me this hope, ‘you will endure.’

Alfred Delp, S.J.



THE DREAM AND ITS TESTIMONY

“He whom God has exalted at his right hand as ruler and savior is to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. We testify to this. So too does the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those that obey him.”

Acts 5:31-32

Once or twice in 450 years we have made the dream come true; in the Paraguay reductions, in the battle against Jansenism, in John Carroll's Georgetown, in the Vatican Council's canonization of the work of John Courtney Murray. The dream came swiftly true for the six men teaching in El Salvador who died last November because they fought for human dignity. It also comes true for most Jesuits, I think, in quiet classrooms and corridors where, by being ourselves, we bear witness to how many strange tools a patient God can make use of. Jesuits share the Christian insight that only for God is truth a noun. For the rest of us it's an achingly unclosing verb.

Let me tell one last story, this time a personal one. Almost 30 years ago one of the great Jesuits of my time, Edwin Cuffe, S.J., sat with me on a baking night near Poughkeepsie, N.Y., where we were both teaching a summer course to young Jesuits. The only antidote to the heat of the evening was a cold beer, and indeed we applied the medicine several times. In the course of settling the world's other problems, we came to the conclusion that the most interesting enterprise on the earth was the Church, and that probably its liveliest corner was the religious order we both shared.

Timothy Healy, S.J.

JOY AMIDST STRIFE

The Sanhedrin called in the apostles and had them whipped. They ordered them not to speak again about the name of Jesus, and afterward dismissed them. The apostles for their part left the Sanhedrin full of joy that they had been judged worthy of ill-treatment for the sake of the Name. Day after day, both in the temple and at home, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Messiah.

Acts 5:40-42

Meanwhile, by night and day, we confirm our souls by exercises of piety, we chastise our bodies by scourging, haircloths, and other like mortifications; and what constitutes our greatest consolation, we minister at the altar daily. And it has surely been by a special providence of God, that vestments and other requisites for the holy sacrifices were introduced unseen by the guards, after we had been at first for several months deprived of them and unable to refresh ourselves with that heavenly bread of angels.

For my own part I am overjoyed at this special benefit of God, accomplishing the desire which chiefly brought me hither, and I esteem it above the splendor of all fleeting dignities. And justly for St. Paul, after being once imprisoned triumphed more in the glory of his chains and bonds, than in his very apostleship, calling himself 'Bound in the Lord.' I blush for shame when I think how by no merit of mine, I have obtained this great grace; how God, having before so many holy persons who have cultivated this vineyard with such admirable zeal, has cast his eyes on me, the last of all in the gifts of nature and merit.

I, who can aver that I now begin to be a disciple of Christ amid the greatest pain and confinement of prison, even when my strength seemed failing from hunger alone, I was always refreshed by such delights of consolation, that I deemed all my 'Sufferings undergone in the divine service richly rewarded. Were I still to pass several years in this dungeon, the time would seem to me short in my intense desire of suffering for His love, who so lavishly rewards the labors of this life and makes even torture itself sweet and desirable. Yet God is to be served chiefly for himself alone, for He is the fountain of all goodness, and merits all our devotion without any hope of reward.

St. Charles Spinola, S.J.

FURTHERING GOD’S PLAN AND KINGDOM

The word of God continued to spread, while at the same time the number of the disciples in Jerusalem enormously increased.

Acts 6:7

It is frequently remarked that there is no particular form of prayer peculiar to the Society. I have never been able to understand this. It has always seemed to me that all Jesuit prayer, in all its modes, is prayer of the governance of God. What we do is respond to God’s grace and open ourselves to His action as He uses us to further His plan for His kingdom. The consolation of the prayer is not in the prayer itself but in the way in which we are supported in the mission or the work that is given us.

What I am trying to communicate here is expressed in the formula found in Hevenesí’s *Sparks from Ignatius*. It is popularly known in its somewhat heretical form, “Pray as though everything depends on God, act as though everything depends on you.” Hevenesí’s formula avoids the heresy and expresses the Ignatian insight: “Trust in God, but with the awareness that, if the work is to be done, you will have to do it; give yourself to the work, but in the knowledge that, if it will be accomplished, it is God who will do it.”

Robert Harvanek, S.J.



Lord, what do I desire except You. What could I
wish for besides You?

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

KNOWING HIM

Then they recounted what had happened on the road and how they had come to know him in the breaking of bread.

Luke 24:35

But the more basic explanation of my contentment and happiness in the Jesuit way of life is spiritual. Slowly—ever so slowly—over the fifty-seven years of my life as a Jesuit, I have been coming to experience in a most modest yet gradually deepening way the companionship of Christ.

It is at Mass especially that Christ's presence has been becoming real for me. In my early years as a priest and before that as a scholastic, there were occasional moments of realization that the Christ of Gethsemane, of Calvary, and of that first Easter morning was actually on the altar before us. Slowly—distressingly slowly—this awareness has gradually become more pronounced, especially in the moments following the consecration.

Along with this growing awareness of the living and loving Christ in the Mass, there is experienced a growing closeness to him in and out of prayer outside the Holy Sacrifice. Under these circumstances prayer ceases to be simply a duty to be discharged. One feels drawn to prayer—or rather to Christ who may be found in it.

As the sense of Christ's closeness becomes more continuous, one experiences deep personal fulfillment; but also an ever increasing amazement. Faith calmly accepts, but it is a cause of endless wonder to mind and heart that Christ continually seeks us out in such a personal and intimate fashion. Gradually—again with maddening slowness—one senses a lessening of disquiet over the inevitable frustrations, disappointments, and trials of our human condition.

The ideal of the novitiate then is not entirely beyond realization. In time, we Jesuits do approach in some measurable degree the Society's ideal and become gratefully conscious of Christ's continuing companionship. As my years multiply, the thought of death occurs with frequency, but with little if any disquiet of soul. One is increasingly sustained by and finds deep satisfaction in the guarantee of our Catholic faith that the growing sense of Christ's presence that we now experience is but the merest suggestion of the eternal intimacy with Christ that is awaiting us.

James F. Maguire, S.J.

THE POWER OF GRACE

Stephen, filled with grace and power, worked great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 6:8

For two days now I have experienced a great desire to be a martyr and to endure all the torments the martyrs suffered.

Jesus, my Lord and Savior, what can I give you in return for all the favors you have first conferred on me? I will take from your hand the cup of your sufferings and call on your name. I vow before your eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, before your most holy Mother and her most chaste spouse, before the angels, apostles and martyrs, before my blessed fathers Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier—in truth I vow to you, Jesus my Savior, that as far as I have the strength I will never fail to accept the grace of martyrdom, if some day you in your infinite mercy should offer it to me, your most unworthy servant.

I bind myself in this way so that for the rest of my life I will have neither permission nor freedom to refuse opportunities of dying and shedding my blood for you, unless at a particular juncture I should consider it more suitable for your glory to act otherwise at that time. Further, I bind myself to this so that, on receiving the blow of death, I shall accept it from your hands with the fullest delight and joy of spirit. For this reason, my beloved Jesus, and because of the surging joy which moves me, here and now I offer my blood and body and life. May I die only for you, if you will grant me this grace, since you willingly died for me. Let me so live that you may grant me the gift of such a happy death. In this way, my God and Savior, I will take from your hand the cup of your sufferings and call on your name: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!

My God, it grieves me greatly that you are not known, that in this savage wilderness all have not been converted to you, that sin has not been driven from it. My God, even if all the brutal tortures which prisoners in this region must endure should fall on me, I offer myself most willingly to them and I alone shall suffer them all.

St. John de Brebeuf, S.J.

INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT

As Stephen was being stoned he could be heard praying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And with that he died.

Acts 7:59-60

The crosses were set in place. Father Pasio and Father Rodriguez took turns encouraging the victims. Their steadfast behavior was wonderful to see. The Father Bursar stood motionless, his eyes turned heavenward. Brother Martin gave thanks to God's goodness by singing psalms. Again and again he repeated: "Into your hands, Lord, I entrust my life." Brother Francis Branco also thanked God in a loud voice. Brother Consalvo in a very loud voice kept saying the Our Father and Hail Mary.

Our brother, Paul Miki, saw himself standing now in the noblest pulpit he had ever filled. To his "congregation" he began by proclaiming himself a Japanese and a Jesuit. He was dying for the Gospel he preached. He gave thanks to God for this wonderful blessing and he ended his "sermon" with these words: "As I come to this supreme moment of my life, I am sure none of you would suppose I want to deceive you. And so I tell you plainly: there is no way to be saved except the Christian way. My religion teaches me to pardon my enemies and all who have offended me. I do gladly pardon the Emperor and all who have sought my death. I beg them to seek baptism and be Christians themselves."

Then he looked at his comrades and began to encourage them in their final struggle. Joy glowed in all their faces, and in Louis' most of all. When a Christian in the crowd cried out to him that he would soon be in heaven, his hands, his whole body strained upward with such joy that every eye was fixed on him.

Then, according to Japanese custom, the four executioners began to unsheathe their spears. At this dreadful sight, all the Christians cried out, "Jesus, Mary!" And the storm of anguished weeping then rose to batter the very skies. The executioners killed them one by one. One thrust of the spear, then a second blow. It was over in a very short time.

*From an account of the martyrdom of Saint Paul Miki, S.J.,
and his companions, by a contemporary writer.*

PROCLAIMING THE MESSIAH

The members of the church who had been dispersed went about preaching the word. Philip, for example, went down to the town of Samaria and there proclaimed the Messiah. Without exception, the crowds that heard Philip and saw the miracles he performed attended closely to what he had to say. There were many who had unclean spirits, which came out shrieking loudly. Many others were paralytics or cripples, and these were cured.

Acts 8:4-7

We have visited the villages of the new converts who accepted the Christian religion a few years ago. . . . I have not stopped since the day I arrived. I conscientiously made the rounds of the villages. I bathed in the sacred waters all the children who had not yet been baptized. . . . The older children would not let me say my Office or eat or sleep until I taught them one prayer or another. Then I began to understand: “The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

I could not refuse so devout a request without failing in devotion myself. I taught them, first the confession of faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; then the Apostles’ Creed, the Our Father and Hail Mary. I noticed among them persons of great intelligence. If only someone could educate them in the Christian way of life, have no doubt that they would make excellent Christians.

Many people hereabouts are not becoming Christians for one reason only: there is nobody to make them Christians. Again and again I have thought of going round the universities of Europe, especially Paris, and everywhere crying out like a madman, riveting the attention of those with more learning than charity: “What a tragedy: how many souls are being shut out of heaven and falling into hell, thanks to you!”

I wish they would work as hard at this as they do at their books, and so settle their account with God for their learning and the talents entrusted to them. This thought would certainly stir most of them to meditate on spiritual realities, to listen actively to what God is saying to them. They would forget their own desires, their human affair, and give themselves over entirely to God’s will and his choice. They would cry out with all their heart: Lord, I am here! What do you want me to do? Send me anywhere you like—even to India!

Saint Francis Xavier, S.J.

SEARCHING FOR GOD

The eunuch said to Philip, “Tell me, if you will, of whom the prophet says this—himself or someone else?” Philip launched out ... telling him the good news of Jesus. As they moved along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, there is some water right there. What is to keep me from being baptized?” He ordered the carriage stopped, and Philip went down into the water with the eunuch and baptized him.

Acts 8:34-38

Anyone who truly and conscientiously searches for God will surely find him. It sometimes happens that God will visit a faithful servant here on earth with his tangible grace as a reward and sign that he is well pleased with him. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the heart of this happy man is flooded by a stream of rapturous ecstasy. For a few moments the soul feels as if drowned in a sea of indescribable euphoria. That is a small example of what awaits man’s soul in the Kingdom of Eternal Light.

Blessed Rupert Mayer, S.J.

CONVERSION

As Saul traveled along and was approaching Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed about him. He fell to the ground and at the same time heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, sir?” he asked. The voice answered, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Get up and go into the city, where you will be told what to do.”

Acts 9:3-6

St. Ignatius’ conversion was essentially his discovery of the greatest and most attractive of all leaders, our Lord Jesus Christ. Ignatius expressed with great ardor this desire “to be placed with Jesus.”... Both the desire and the thirst also formed, I think, a twofold component which was the most profound, general, constant, and predominant characteristic in the spirituality of his followers. That trait can be expressed thus: to be with Christ—in order to serve Him.... From this point of view, it is beyond all doubt that for the Jesuits, as for Ignatius, the center of their spiritual life is truly in that devotion to Christ.

Joseph deGuibert, S.J.



PEACE AND PROGRESS, PRAYER AND WORKS

Throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria the church was at peace. It was being built up and was making steady progress in the fear of the Lord; at the same time it enjoyed the increased consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:31

He who in spirit is seeking God through his good works will find Him later in prayer better than if he had not engaged in these good works. I mean, this is what frequently happens. If we seek God above all in prayer, we find Him later in the good works. Therefore he who seeks and finds the spirit of Christ in works progresses in a manner much more solid than he who occupies himself only with prayer. I might even say that one who possesses Christ through the practice of good works and one who possesses Him in prayer are like one who possesses Him in fact and one who possesses Him in affection.

Blessed Peter Faber, S.J.

It is not enough for me to serve God. All hearts
must love Him and all tongues bless Him.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 10:11

The whole of Ignatius’ stance and vision is centered on the person of Christ. ... The saving action of God must be continued after the example of Jesus Christ, the Man for Others. We are called to model our lives on Jesus, who shares our lot and becomes for us, way, truth and life—Jesus who shares his ministry with even clumsy fishermen—who has compassion on the multitude and feeds the hungry, gives sight to the blind—who is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep—who forgives even his executioners and returns with the fullness of life and the gift of Easter peace—“What think you of Christ Jesus?”—“Who do you say that I am?”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

ACCEPTING THE WORD OF GOD

The apostles and the brothers heard that Gentiles, too, had accepted the word of God.

Acts 11:1

And touching our Societie, be it known to you that we have made a league—all the Jesuits in the world, whose succession and multitude must overreach all the practices of England—cheerfully to carry the cross you shall lay upon us, and never to despair your recovery while we have a man left to enjoy your Tyburn, or to be racked with your torments, or consumed with your prisons. The expense is reckoned; the enterprise is begun; it is of God, it cannot be withstood. So the faith was planted; so it must be restored.

St. Edmund Campion, S.J.



PLACED WITH CHRIST

On his arrival, Barnabas rejoiced to see the evidence of God's favor. He encouraged them all to remain faithful in their commitment to the Lord.... It was in Antioch that the disciples were called Christians for the first time.

Acts 11:23, 26

I feel sorry for those who despise religious discipline as a ponderous and unbearable yoke, because misguided by vain and childish fear they flee from the inconveniences of evangelical poverty, taken up by the Apostles and the first Christians. Similarly they completely reject the yoke of religious obedience, which is better than all sacrifices, and, hindered by their own judgement, they recoil from the laborious struggle that spiritual people have to wage between spirit and body. For no athlete of Christ and no real spiritual person will be crowned without efforts.

St. Peter Canisius, S.J.



CALLED AND SET APART

On one occasion, while they were engaged in the liturgy of the Lord and were fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them: “Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me to do the work for which I have called them.” Then, after they had fasted and prayed, they imposed hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2-3

After twenty—three years inside the Soviet Union, fifteen of them spent in Soviet prisons or the prison camps of Siberia—!have been asked... “How did you manage to survive?”... To me, the answer is simple and I can say quite simply: Divine Providence. But how can I explain it?

I don’t just mean that God took care of me. I mean that He called me to, prepared me for, then protected me during those years in Siberia. I am convinced of that; but then, it is my life and I have experienced His hand at every turning.

I had decided I was going to be a Jesuit, so one morning I caught the train to New York without telling anyone. Somehow, I found my way to the office of the Jesuit Provincial. The brother in charge of the door told me the Provincial wasn’t in. I wouldn’t tell him what I wanted; I just asked when the Provincial would be back. He said the Provincial would return that evening, and I asked if I could see him. The brother shrugged his shoulders and I left.

At 7:30 I returned to the Provincial’s residence and asked if he had returned. The brother told me to take a seat in the parlor. About eight o’clock, Father Kelly, the Provincial, came into the parlor and asked me what it was all about. I told him who I was, and that I wanted to be a Jesuit. He looked at me for a moment, then sat down. He wanted to know about my parents. I told him I was twenty-four years of age and the decision was mine to make. Then I reminded him of St. Stanislaus’ walk from Warsaw to Rome to see the Jesuit Provincial there. Father Kelly just stared at me, so I rushed on, trying to explain why I wanted to be a Jesuit....

Father Kelly returned to tell me things would probably work out all right, but that I should go home and wait for his answer.... It was more than joy—it was a deep and soul-satisfying peace. It was something more, too, than just the quiet and release from tension that follows the settling of any emotional problem—it was a positive and deep-seated happiness akin to the feeling of belonging or of having reached safe harbor, but deeper than that and a gift of God.

Walter Ciszek, S.J.

GO AND SPEAK HIS NAME

They continued to travel on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath day they entered the synagogue and sat down. Paul arose, motioned to them for silence, and began: Fellow Israelites and you others who reverence our God, listen to what I have to say!

Acts 13:14,16

I find God largely in and through the Bible. Most of my academic, spiritual, and pastoral life revolves around the Bible. It is for me the most important way to come to know, love, and serve God.

My love for the Bible goes back a long way. I stutter. I always have, and I guess I always will. As a young boy I read in a newspaper that Moses stuttered. I looked it up in the Bible, and sure enough in Exodus 4:10 Moses says to God: "I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." But I found much more in Exodus 3-4. It is the story of God's self-revelation to Moses at Mount Horeb. It tells about the burning bush, the suffering of God's people Israel in Egypt, the revelation of the special divine name ("I am who I am"), God's promise of liberation from slavery, Moses' miraculous powers, and God's call to Moses to speak on God's behalf. I read that story over and over, and it gradually worked upon me so that it has shaped my religious consciousness to this day. As a boy of ten or eleven years of age I found God in the Bible, and I have continued to do so ever since.

The God of the Bible is the God of Jesus Christ. I experience this God in and through the Bible and my life. It is my privilege as a Jesuit priest to study and teach Scripture, to proclaim and preach God's word, and to celebrate the Church's liturgies (which are largely cast in the language of the Bible). In the midst of these wonderful activities (which are my greatest joy), I occasionally stutter. And this brings me back to where my spiritual journey with the Bible began. Though I am slow of speech and tongue like Moses, I still hear the words of Exodus 4:11-12: "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak."

Daniel Harrington, S.J.

ANNOUNCE THE GOOD NEWS

‘We ourselves announce to you the good news that what God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, in raising up Jesus, according to what is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my son; this day I have begotten you.’”

Acts 13:32-33

May the comfort and grace of the Holy Spirit be yours for ever, most honored lady. Your letter found me lingering still in this region of the dead, but now I must rouse myself to make my way on to heaven at last and to praise God for ever in the land of the living; indeed I had hoped that before this time my journey there would have been over. If charity, as Saint Paul says, means to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who are glad, then, dearest mother, you shall rejoice exceedingly that God .in his grace and his love for you is showing me the path to true happiness, and assuring me that I shall never lose him.

The divine goodness, most honored lady, is a fathomless and shoreless ocean, and I confess that when I plunge my mind into thought of this it is carried a way by the immensity and feels quite lost and bewildered there. In return for my short and feeble labors, God is calling me to eternal rest; his voice from heaven invites me to the infinite bliss I have sought so languidly, and promises me this reward for the tears I have so seldom shed. Take care above all things, most honored lady, not to insult God’s boundless loving kindness; you would certainly do this if you mourned as dead one living face to face with God, one whose prayers can bring you in your troubles more powerful aid than they ever could on earth. And our parting will not be for long; we shall see each other again in heaven; we shall be united with our Savior; there we shall praise him with heart and soul, sing of his mercies for ever, and enjoy eternal happiness. When he takes away what he once lent us, his purpose is to store our treasure elsewhere more safely and bestow on us those very blessings that we ourselves would most choose to have.

I write all this with the one desire that you and all my family may consider my departure a joy and favor and that you especially may speed with a mother’s blessing my passage across the waters till I reach the shore to which all hopes belong. I write the more willingly because I have no clearer way of expressing the love and respect I owe you as your son.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, S.J.

FILLED WITH JOY

Some of the Jews stirred up their influential women sympathizers and the leading men of the town, and in that way got a persecution started against Paul and Barnabas. The Jews finally expelled them from their territory. So the two shook the dust from their feet in protest and went on to Iconium. The disciples could not but be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:50-52

Hence, all frontier ministries have to be saturated with the spirit of the One who breathes a joyous promise of victory from the Cross of apparent failure where he is exalted in glory; this faith guarantees a sense of humour in an otherwise harsh situation. Jesuits without a sense of humour—without the ability to laugh at themselves as much as at the failures and foibles of the church—cannot be in the frontier. This is the meaning of hope which accompanies faith in every life of love.

The holy Jesuit whom Ignatius defined as a mortified Jesuit [rather than as a mere praying Jesuit] is therefore a crucified man full of hope and humour. He alone is qualified to be at the frontier. When he asks himself the Triple Question of the First Week, he should have before him the medieval artist's "Crucified Christ with the smiling face" (which makes Christ say: I have done it! It is accomplished!), an image still preserved in the Cistercian Monastery in Lerins. Another sculpture of the same genre can be seen at the Xavier Castle. In this smile of the crucified one "lies" the non-existent boundary between the Third and the Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual exercises!

Aloysius Pieris, S.J.

Nothing is more pleasant than to love God,
provided this love moves you to undergo many
tribulations.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

ON BEING PRUNED AND TRIMMED

“I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield.”

John 15:1-2

My deepest moments of intimacy with the Lord have always been in the struggle to remain available to him, faithful in moments of darkness, defeat, frustration, weariness, in the big and small rebellions of every day when I have tried to impose my wisdom and my ways. I continue to find him more intimately when he proves stronger in the daily demands for availability and service than in times of prayer. I find God more sensibly in the things of every day which require effort and surrender of self than in times of formal prayer which are often ‘empty’ and dry, lived in faith and the natural feeling of wasting time. Ignatius’ note in the ‘Exercises’ which can appear cold and negative has become positive for me and an experience of ‘devotion’: ‘For everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will and self-interests, the more progress one will make’. The Lord’s companion, Peter, discovered this, and with him I too can only say, ‘To whom should I go? You have the words of eternal life, and I believe. I know that you are the Holy One of God’.

Cecil McGarry, S. J.

GOD'S PLAN

“In past ages he let the Gentiles go their way. Yet in bestowing his benefits, he has not hidden himself completely, without a clue. From the heavens he sends down rain and rich harvests; your spirits he fills with food and delight.”

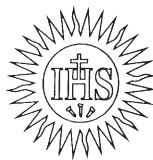
Acts 14:16-17

The Jesuit seeks not only to imitate Jesus Christ; he seeks also to *Christify* the world, to contribute, in the small measure of his powers and of the grace with which God calls him, to the realization of the plan of God, who wishes “to recapitulate all things in Christ.”

Our whole vision of things, of our possibilities and aspirations, ought to take account of this; otherwise, we will be fearful and lose courage in the face of a world which, after having felt itself immensely great and powerful by the unfolding of its science and technology, finds itself often helpless to realize love and justice. The believing Christian has the consciousness of being immensely strong, by the grace of God that lives in him, and capable of following the infinite example of love given him by the whole life of Jesus Christ.

And as we know by faith, grace is destined to culminate, after death and beyond all the bounds of human life, in the vision of God, in which finally will be revealed also what we are, in love without limits and without selfishness. God will be all in all, and we shall realize ourselves in him, the Total Christ attained in plenitude.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.



THE NECESSITY OF TRIALS

Paul and Barnabas gave their disciples reassurances, and encouraged them to persevere in the faith with this instruction: ‘We must undergo many trials if we are to enter into the reign of God.’

Acts 14:21-22

Whoever wishes to accomplish these spiritual works of the Society needs to be on the cross, that is, on the mortification of the cross. (1) To feel the cross of Christ. (2) To grieve at not suffering. (3) A cross when there is no cross. (4) To feel the cross with my life, for not having given it for Christ. It is madness to believe that without the cross, without hardship, without suffering, we can accomplish the type of spiritual works our Society aims at.

St. Francis Borgia, S.J.

Seeing therefore that all our troubles, penalties, restraints, and afflictions are but means to remind us of our state and the dangers of our profession, and but seeds of eternal glory, how much soever they may seem covered and corrupted here on earth, let us solace ourselves in hope of our joyful harvest. We are but pilgrims here; we have no place of abode, but seek a future place of rest. If the way had been filled with pleasures, with true delights, we should easily have been drawn aside in our journey towards heaven, attracted and withheld by the pleasant view and desire of these allurements. God hath therefore made our journey tedious, uncomfortable and distressing, that we may hasten to our repose, and swiftly run over the course of this life.

St. Robert Southwell, S.J.

ON RESOLVING CONFLICT

Some men came down to Antioch from Judea and began to teach the brothers: ‘ Unless you are circumcised according to Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved. ‘ This created dissension and much controversy between them and Paul and Barnabas. Finally it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some other should go up to see the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question.’

Acts 15:1-2

To be perfectly honest, it would be hard for me to get through the day without reflecting on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius has two key meditations in the Exercises and one of them is the two standards. Ignatius talks about life as a struggle between good and evil. He says, “Let’s not be naive, we can’t be good unless we really struggle against evil.” It’s not just like buying apples rather than oranges. He says, “Know that there is a power of evil out there, there’s a strategy of evil and that strategy is basically a strategy of greed and lust for power. Jesus has another strategy, and that strategy is a strategy of poverty and solidarity. It’s a strategy of downward mobility.” Not that everybody has to live in misery, by any means, but Ignatius argues that typically the enemy will try to undo us by getting us to have too many things and to think of ourselves too highly. The best strategy to avoid the pitfalls is one of humility and humble service and solidarity with the poor. I find that Ignatius is right.

His other great meditation is the meditation on the reign of God, the idea that God really is at work in the world and has a project, and the project is that we all live more humanly and in community. That we enjoy the fullness of life. It seems to me that this walking in solidarity, this taking one’s place among the people is where one gets a glimpse of that reign of God, that hope, that project of God. It’s where we see God working in the world.

Those are the two key meditations that help me get through the day.

Dean Brackley, S.J.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST

After much discussion, Peter took the floor and said to the apostles and the elders: “Brothers, you know well enough that from the early days God selected me from your number to be the one from whose lips the Gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe. God, who reads the hearts of men, showed his approval by granting the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us. He made no distinction between them and us, but purified their hearts by means of faith also. Our belief is that we are saved by the favor of the Lord Jesus and so are they.”

Acts 15:7-9, 11

The special quality of the commitment to which Christ calls His Society...consists in saying “yes” to the promotion of justice in saying a personal “yes” to the Incarnate Word. For it is through participation in the mystery of His cross and His paschal glory that His reign of justice and peace comes about. And it is this personal adherence to Christ—going far beyond a simple assent to the ethical values promoted by the Gospel and by the teaching of the Church—which grounds the union of minds and hearts in a Society which bears His Name, and roots our fidelity to this Society in a love prepared for ordeals, not in a shallow, passing feeling. It is this personal adherence to Christ which makes us grow into oneness with a Church which, despite so many appearances and near proof to the contrary, is a “communion of love in Christ.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.



BE GENTLE

“It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary.”

Acts 15:28

Above all seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, an aid that is readily given for those who earnestly pray for it. When hearing confessions be mild and gentle. Never permit yourselves to speak sharply or show repugnance, no matter how uncouth the penitent. Let us take care not to become bored with this sublime and sacred task, we who represent Christ taking away the sins of the world. Let us take care that no sinner who comes to confession (that source of so much good), who kneels before us to be tried, exhorted and judged, faces an ordeal when he approaches us, the vicars of the gentle Christ. Let us beware of acting the haughty disdainful pharisee, or the angry impatient judge. In fine let us do our utmost to ensure that every penitent leaving the confessional will freely return there.

Blessed Peter Faber, S.J.



SENT TO BEGIN A NEW MISSION

Paul had a vision. A man of Macedonia stood before him and invited him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After this vision, we immediately made efforts to get across to Macedonia, concluding that God had summoned us to proclaim the good news there.

Acts 16:9-10

I do not know what it is to enter Paradise, but this I know, it would be difficult to experience in this world a joy more excessive and more overflowing than I felt when I set my foot in New France and celebrated my first Mass here at Quebec on the Feast of the Visitation (July 2nd). I assure you it was indeed a day of the visitation of the goodness of God and Our Lady. I felt as though it were a Christmas day for me and I was able to be born again to a new life, and a life in God.

St. Isaac Jogues, S.J.



If you wish to advance in the love of God speak
of it. Spiritual conversations are to charity what
the wind is to the flame.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

“If you love me and obey the commands I give you, I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always: the Spirit of truth.”

John 14:15-17

Men crucified to the world, and to whom the world itself is crucified, such would the rule of our life have us to be. New men, I say, who have put off their affections to put on Christ; dead to themselves to live to justice; who with St. Paul in labors, in sleepless nights, in fastings, in innocence, in knowledge, in long suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth, show themselves ministers of God; and by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, by good success finally, and by ill success, press forward with great strides to their heavenly country, and by all means possible and with all zeal urge on others also, ever looking to God's greater glory. This is the sum and aim of our institute.

St. Ignatius Loyola, S.J.

THE MINISTRY OF CONVERSATION

We put out to sea from Troas and set a course straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis; from there we went to Philippi, a leading city in the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. On the sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the bank of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women who were gathered there. One who listened was a woman named Lydia. The Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying.

Acts 16:11-14

Simple, friendly and informal conversations were the earliest and chief means that Ignatius employed in helping people. Right from his conversion in 1521 he wanted, to use his own words, “to help souls.” The way he started was to talk to people, men and women, young and old, about the things that really mattered to them and to him. Such simple talk, such conversation, was the beginning of the life and works of the Society of Jesus.

The term “conversation” in its most obvious sense means to talk with someone and, by so doing, to exchange sentiments, observations, opinions and ideas. Ignatius had that meaning in mind, but he also intended the older and more inclusive meaning of turning towards someone: to live with, keep company with and even to help oneself and the other person toward new experiences and new interpretations of them.

The Society in its members has carried on a great variety of such conversations. Among them, to cite but a few general areas, have been conversations with the secular world in all its variety, with other religious groups, both Christian and non-Christian, with the tradition and practices and personalities of its own Church, with itself among each generation of its own members and, finally, with the Lord.

John Padberg, S.J.

THE BONDS OF LOVE

While Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as their fellow prisoners listened, a severe earthquake suddenly shook the place rocking the prison to its foundations. Immediately all the doors flew open and everyone's chains were pulled loose.

Acts 16:25-26

On 19 December 1947, they arrested me and charged me with provoking unrest and with propaganda against the government. I lived in solitary confinement for 17 years and for many more in forced labour.

On Christmas night that year (how could I forget?) they dragged me from that place and put me in another lavatory on the second floor of the prison. They forced me to strip and hung me up with a rope passed under my arms. I was naked and could barely touch the ground with the tips of my toes. I felt my body slowly and inexorably failing me. The cold gradually crept up on my limbs and when it reached my breast and my heart was about to give in, I gave a desperate cry. My torturers arrived; they pulled me down and kicked me all over. That night, in that place and in the solitude of that first torture, I experienced the real meaning of the Incarnation and the Cross.

But in this suffering I had beside me and within me the comforting presence of the Lord Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. At times his support was something I can only call 'extraordinary/' so great was the joy and comfort he communicated to me. But I have never felt resentment for those who, humanly speaking, robbed me of my life. After my release, I happened to meet one of my torturers in the street: I took pity on him; I went towards him and embraced him.

They released me in the 1989 amnesty. I was 79 years old.

This was my experience as a priest throughout these years. It is a very unusual experience compared to that of many priests, but certainly not unique. There are thousands of priests who have been persecuted in their lives because of the priesthood of Christ. Their experiences differ but they are united by love. The priest is first and foremost someone who lives in order to love. To love Christ and to love everyone in Him, in all life's circumstances, to the point of giving up his life.

Everything can be taken from us, but no one can wrench from our hearts our love for Jesus or our love for our brothers and sisters.

Anton Luli, S.J.

THE SEARCH FOR GOD

“Men of Athens, I note that in every respect you are scrupulously religious. As I walked around looking at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, ‘To a God Unknown.’ Now, what you are thus worshipping in ignorance I intend to make known to you.”

Acts 17:22-23

“You would not be searching for me unless you had already found me,” as Pascal suggests. In this sentence, the question posed already contains an answer of a sort. The question brings to mind an experience of a famous abbot in the Middle Ages. I see myself more or less in his story. This abbot used to speak very well, every morning to his monks, on finding God, on searching for God, on encountering God. He carried on until the day on which a monk dared to ask him if he himself had ever encountered God. After a bit of embarrassed silence, the abbot frankly admitted he never had a vision or a one-on-one meeting with God. Nothing surprising about that, since God Himself had said to Moses, “You cannot see my face” (Exodus 33:20). But this very same God taught Moses that he could see His back as He passed across his path. “You will see me pass.” And thus, looking back over the length and breadth of his life the abbot could see for himself the passage of God.

For the One, who wishes to write together with each of us our individual history, comes and abides to live life with us—often despite us. Without these respectful, but definitive passages of God, our life would not now be what it is. In this sense, it is less a matter of searching for God than of allowing oneself to be found by Him in all of life’s situations, where He does not cease to pass and where he allows Himself to be recognized once He has really passed: “You will see my back.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.



WITNESSING IN THE SPIRIT

While they were with him they asked, "Lord, are you going to restore the rule to Israel now?" His answer was: "The exact time it is not yours to know. The Father has reserved that to himself. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth." No sooner had he said this than he was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took him from their sight.

Acts 1:6-9

I guess I'll be thankful when these cares have been taken out of my hands. I will thank God for having mixed me up for a number of years with, and for having blessed me with the knowledge and appreciation of, so many families involved in these difficult situations, and with the support of my dear brothers in the Society of Jesus, and my sisters throughout the Church, and with generous benefactors who have kept my hand open all these days, and who have encouraged me so that my heart is unafraid, and who have enabled me to stay as an image of Christ doing good amongst the people.

Then, in my dream of the Last Day, Our Lord will come back and reward us for having, by his grace, straightened the world out, and having the poor competent, and the rich thoughtful, and the well-protected kindly and generous and involved, and the educated enthralled with the kingdom of God, and the spiritual able to perceive him in such a way as to make him visible to us.

I'm very grateful to God for having put me here and for maintaining me here through the grace and love of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the health and spirit and strength of the Holy Spirit and the grace he works in the whole Church. I am ready at any time to surrender myself to the arms of my heavenly Father. And when God lets me into heaven, I think I'll ask to go off in a corner somewhere for half an hour and sit down and cry because the strain is off, the work is done, and I haven't been unfaithful or disloyal, all these needs that I have known are in the hands of Providence and I don't have to worry any longer who's at the door, whose breadbox is empty, whose baby is sick, whose house is shaken and discouraged, and whose children can't read.

Horace McKenna, S.J.

COURAGE IN DIFFICULT TIMES

When Paul was in Corinth one night in a vision the Lord said to him: “Do not be afraid. Go on speaking and do not be silenced, for I am with you. No one will attack you or harm you. There are many of my people in this city.”

Acts 18:9

One last point I would like to discuss with you is the unrest many of you feel with regard to the future. There are times when all of us ask ourselves what will happen tomorrow. Do not let this unrest discourage you, no more than the seeming uselessness of your efforts that can at times make the day look dark. You must realize that the present difficulties are signs of the times, events through which God speaks to us. His ways of pursuing His work can at times be quite disconcerting. Let this unrest and this obscurity help you to make an effort at reflection and imagination—but do it calmly. Let it stimulate you, for it is the light and strength of the Holy Spirit which we need most of all. Above all else, let it be for you an occasion to deepen profoundly your faith and your hope.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.



DEDICATION TO CHRIST

Apollos was a man full of spiritual fervor. He spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only of John's baptism.

Acts 18:25

Many will ask how a modern man can still remain or become a Jesuit. The reply to such a question can only be the very personal one of each Jesuit. I would like to give my own reply to that question in all simplicity even though it may sound somewhat pious.

I still see around me living in many of my companions a readiness for disinterested service carried out in silence, a readiness for prayer, for abandonment to the incomprehensibility of God, for the calm acceptance of death in whatever form it may come, for total dedication to the following of Christ crucified.

And so for me, in the final analysis it is no great matter what credit in the history of culture or of the Church goes to a line of men with a spirit like that, nor does it matter to me if a similar spirit is found in other groups, named or nameless.

The fact is that the spirit exists here. I think of brothers that I myself have known—of my friend, Alfred Delp, who with hands chained signed his declaration of final membership in the Society; of one who in a village in India that is unknown to Indian intellectuals helps poor people to dig their wells; of another who for long hours in the confessional listens to the pain and torment of ordinary people who are far more complex than they appear on the surface. I think of one who in Barcelona is beaten by police along with his students without the satisfaction of actually being a revolutionary and savoring its glory; of one who assists daily in the hospital at the bedside of death until that unique event becomes for him a dull routine; of the one who in prison must proclaim over and over again the message of the Gospel with never a token of gratitude, who is more appreciated for the handout of cigarettes than for the words of the Good News he brings; of the one who with difficulty and without any clear evidence of success plods away at the task of awakening in just a few men and women a small spark of faith, of hope and of charity.

Karl Rahner, S.J.

God loves me, He loves me much more than I
love myself.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

GROWING IN CHRIST

“To them I have revealed your name, and I will continue to reveal it so that your love for me may live in them, and I may live in them.”

John 17:26

The greater humanity becomes, the more humanity becomes united, with consciousness of, and master of, its potentialities, the more beautiful creation will be, the more perfect adoration will become, and the more Christ will find, for mystical extensions, a body worthy of resurrection.... The star for which the world is waiting ... is necessarily Christ himself, in whom we hope.

The universal Christ ... is none other than the authentic expression of the Christ of the gospel. Christ, renewed, it is true, by contact with the modern world, but at the same time, CHRIST BECOME EVEN GREATER in order still to remain the same Christ.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.



GROWTH IN GRACE

In Ephesus, Paul found some disciples to whom he put the question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They answered, “We have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Well, how were you baptized?” he persisted. They replied, “With the baptism of John.” Paul then explained, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He used to tell the people about the one who would come after him in whom they were to believe—that is Jesus.”

Acts 19:1-4

The latter years are a time when we simply allow ourselves to become more familiar with God and His saints in heaven. We should let ourselves grow closer to that source of life, that ocean of love, toward which we are inexorably moving, just as the waterborne traveller on a great river begins to scent the first tang of the mighty sea to which the current is noiselessly carrying him. It means talking much to God: to our Father in Heaven, to His Son, our Redeemer, to the Holy Spirit, who is our invisible and ever-working companion, and to Christ’s Blessed Mother Mary.

We don’t delude ourselves. Our minds may wander more readily in the later years. Troublesome memories of the past may obtrude, if we don’t banish them at their first appearance. We may even forget prayers we used to know by heart.

But the main thing is that prayer becomes more and more a part of the texture of our lives. We dwell a little longer in meditating. We spend a little longer time in a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. We refer things to God more naturally and frequently. We do much praying for the Church, for the See of Peter, for all the body of faithful, for souls akin to us outside the visible Church, for so many great intentions. In our later years we become more conscious that we do not pray alone. The Church is praying with us and in us—the whole Mystical Body of Christ.

John LaFarge, S.J.

TESTIMONIAL TO GRACE

“I put no value on my life if only I can finish my race and complete the service to which I have been assigned by the Lord Jesus, bearing witness to the gospel of God’s grace.”

Acts 20:24

When I entered the Catholic Church I made a venture that appeared foolhardy in the eyes of most of my family and friends. As a vowed religious, I took up a career that would make no sense unless the Catholic faith were true. If the Kingdom is the pearl of great price, the treasure buried in the field, one should be prepared to give up everything else to acquire it. It has always seemed to me that if God is God, his honor and glory must be the first priority. Although I cannot rival the generous dedication of Sts. Paul and Ignatius of Loyola, I am, like them, content to be employed in the service of Christ and the gospel, whether in sickness or in health, in good repute or ill repute. I am immeasurably grateful for the years in which the Lord has permitted me to serve him in a society that bears as its motto: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*. I trust that his grace will not fail me, and that I will not fail his grace, in the years to come.

Avery Dulles, S.J.



I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE

Paul spoke to the elders of the church of Ephesus: “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have served both my needs and those of my companions. I have always pointed out to you that it is by such hard work that you must help the weak. You need to recall the words of the Lord Jesus himself, who said, “There is more happiness in giving than receiving.”

Acts 20:34-35

A while ago I was praying in the Cenacle with the disciples, and in the prayer I was present at the washing of feet. Well, Jesus came to me and knelt before me. To me it was like a revelation, something even more important than the cross. We say the crucifixion is the ultimate expression of God’s love. Yet I was more affected by God’s, well, grovelling at my feet. ... We speak so glibly, facilely, about how much God loves us. But then God gives us the experience in prayer. He makes himself our slave, kneels at our feet, to win our love. I know that if I were there, he would have done it. The gift of prayer is the gift of emotional insight into what God means for us in his Son.

And that scene says everything for me. “You’ve seen what I did, and you appreciated it,” Jesus says in St. John. “Now do the same for others.” It must have meant so much to John. In one of his letters he even says that if you say you love God but don’t love your neighbor, then you’re a liar.

John “Waterbury” Kelley, S.J.



I SHALL BE WITH YOU

The Lord appeared at Paul's side and said: "Keep up your courage! Just as you have given testimony to me here in Jerusalem, so must you do in Rome."

Acts 23:11

When father Ignatius came to Rome with fathers Faber and Lainez, while he was praying, Christ appeared to him in a vision carrying the cross; and as God the Father placed Ignatius with Christ in his service, he said: 'I shall be with you' (Ego vobiscum ero), by which he clearly meant that he chose us to be companions of Jesus. And this is a special grace granted to the Society by God. For this we must realize that, while Christ who rose from the dead dies no more, he still continues to suffer and bear his cross in his members. It is to this therefore that God the Father calls us, so that in this company we may follow Jesus, each one carrying his own cross, suffering for Christ; and we ought to find courage and comfort in this thought that we follow Christ, having been made his companions through the cross. For what else did Christ want or have in this world but labours, persecutions and the cross for the glory of God the Father and the salvation of all of us? Let us also therefore wish for the same, risking if necessary our lives for the salvation of our brothers and sisters.

Jerome Nadal, S.J.



ALIVE IN CHRIST

The accusers differed with him over issues in their own religion, and about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul claimed is alive.

Acts 25:19

Jesus, you are the only and true Friend; not only do you participate in all my sufferings but you take them on yourself and know the secret of how to change them into joy for me. You listen to me kindly and when I tell you my afflictions you never fail to sweeten them.

I find you everywhere, you never go away, and if I am obliged to change dwellings I find you everywhere I go. You do not suffer from boredom when you listen to me, nor are you ever weary of doing me good.

If I love you, I am sure of receiving your love; you do not need my belongings nor are you impoverished by giving me yours.

Even though I am a poor man, nobody (however noble, intelligent or holy) can steal your friendship from me. Death itself, which divides all friends, will reunite me with you.

No adversity of age or chance will succeed in drawing you away from me; on the contrary, I will never so fully enjoy your presence and you will never be as close to me as when everything seems to conspire against me.

Only you, with wonderful patience, can bear with my faults. Even if my unfaithfulness and ingratitude offend you, they do not prevent you from always being ready, if only I want it, to grant me your grace and your love.

St. Claude de la Colombiere, S.J

CHRIST OUR ASSURANCE

For two full years Paul stayed on in his rented lodgings, welcoming all who came to him. With full assurance, and without any hindrance whatever, he preached the reign of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 28:30-31

How is it that billions of stars can fly the heavens more speedily than light? Because an all-powerful Christ gives them being. Not once for all, but continuously, day after day. How is it that over four thousand varieties of roses can grow and perfume our earth? Because an imaginative Christ gives them life. How is it that your long-haired Labrador can look hungrily at you, hear your faintest whistle, lay paws on your shoulders? Because a sensitive Christ gives it senses. How is it that you can shape an idea, construct the Capitol, transplant a human heart? Because a still human Christ gives you intelligence. How can you believe that the Son of God died a bloody death for you, how can you confidently expect to live for ever, how can you give yourself unreservedly to God and to your sisters and brothers? Because a living Christ infuses faith in you, fills your flesh with hope, inflames your very bones with a unique love not of this world.

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.

I prefer the servants of God to stand out
in virtue rather than in number,
and to be distinguished more by deeds
than by an honorable name.

Scintillæ Ignatianæ

BOLDNESS IN THE SPIRIT

When the day of Pentecost came it found the brethren gathered in one place. Suddenly from up in the sky there came a noise like a strong, driving wind which was heard all through the house where they were seated. Tongues as of fire appeared which parted and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompted them.

Acts 2:1-4

To a young man who wishes
to be a Jesuit, I would say:

“Stay at home
if this idea makes you unsettled
or nervous.

Do not come to us if you love
the Church like a stepmother,
rather than a mother;
Do not come if you think that in
so doing you will be doing the
Society of Jesus a favor.

Come if serving Christ is at the
very center of your life.

Come if you have broad and
sufficiently strong shoulders,
Come if you have an open spirit,
a reasonably open mind
and a heart larger than the world.

Come if you know how to tell a
joke and can laugh with others
and . . . on occasions you can laugh
at yourself.”

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

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