

2019

The Emergence of a Lay Esprit de Corps: Inspirations, Tensions, Horizons

Christopher Pramuk
Regis University, cpramuk@regis.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), [Religious Education Commons](#), [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#), and the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pramuk, Christopher. "The Emergence of a Lay Esprit de Corps: Inspirations, Tensions, Horizons." *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 8, 2 (2019). doi:-.

This Scholarship is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly and Peer-Reviewed Journals at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

The Emergence of a Lay Esprit de Corps: Inspirations, Tensions, Horizons

Cover Page Footnote

This essay is dedicated in memoriam to Fr. Howard Gray, SJ, whom I never had the good fortune to meet, but whose impact on me and so many in the realm of Jesuit education and Ignatian spirituality continues to be immense.

The Emergence of a Lay *Esprit de Corps*: Inspirations, Tensions, Horizons

Christopher Pramuk
University Chair of Ignatian Thought and Imagination
Associate Professor of Theology
Regis University
cpramuk@regis.edu

Abstract

Likening the Ignatian tradition as embodied at Jesuit universities to a family photo album with many pages yet to be added, the author locates the “heart” of the Ignatian sensibility in the movements of freedom and spirit (inspiration) in the life of the community. There are no fixed entry points or criteria of inclusion and exclusion for Ignatian lay educators save a desire to share in the questions proper to all the university disciplines that pull us toward a horizon beyond ourselves. Nevertheless, a number of creative tensions endemic to Jesuit apostolic life from the beginning and also new challenges in the climate of American Catholic higher education threaten to unmoor Jesuit universities from their spiritual, mystical, and theological roots. The author explores the state of the question today as raised fruitfully by many others: How will lay faculty, staff, and administrators imagine the future of Jesuit higher education, and what resources can help them cultivate and sustain an authentically Ignatian and vibrantly lay *esprit de corps*?

Introduction

Those of us connected with Jesuit education often speak eloquently of values like care for the whole person and care for the institution and its mission. With this essay I would like to begin a bit further upstream and ask, what moves us to care at all? To care, of course, in the deepest sense of the word, implies not just an intellectual or philosophical commitment to certain principles, alignment with the philosophy and ideals of an institution, an admiration for its contribution to civic society, and so on, though all of these are significant and worthy reasons to attach oneself to one’s work. We speak of “unity of hearts and minds” because the Ignatian tradition from the beginning has something to do with an investment of the heart. In what follows I want to explore a number of creative tensions at the “heart” of Jesuit education as we move toward an uncharted future. By “we” I include Jesuits themselves, but the questions I raise here pertain especially to those many thousands of lay collaborators around the world connected to Jesuit apostolates, and in particular, to Jesuit higher education.

Whether one is an expert or a newcomer and relative novice in all things Jesuit, the key to an authentic sense of kinship within the Ignatian

tradition, I argue here, is the heart. In the Catholic and Ignatian mystical tradition, the heart is not just the emotions, though it includes emotion. In its deepest sense the heart refers to a person’s inner orientation, the core of their being, the totality of their response: intellect and emotion, imagination and desire.¹ From this vantage point, there are no fixed or *a priori* entry points into the Ignatian tradition; there is no litmus test or hierarchy of inclusion, not even a religious one, for becoming a “companion” or “collaborator” in Jesuit institutions of higher learning. For Jesuits and lay persons alike, the spark that sets our common vision aflame is freedom itself, personal and communal, sustained by grace, centered in the heart, and the desire to join our freedom with others in a story larger than ourselves.

And thus it *does* matter a great deal, I will suggest here, if our work in Jesuit education would be generative and joyful over the long haul, that we who are lay companions in the mission discover a genuine heart-connection to something, or someone, within the broad sweep of the Jesuit story. Initially this heart-connection to the Ignatian tradition may be little more than a rudimentary desire in search of inspiration, an image in search of a storyline. “Though I can’t explain it, I feel drawn to a deeper encounter, to

understand, to experience, to know more. Though I can't see where the path may lead, I feel at home here, I can picture myself and my work flourishing in this place."

When Heart Speaks to Heart (and when it doesn't)

In the hallway just outside my study at home is an old black-and-white photograph of me at age 5 or 6, sitting on the knee of my grandfather with whom I was very close as a child. Often when I pass the photograph, I reflexively kiss my hand and then touch my grandfather's heart. There is nothing magical about the photo. In no way am I under the illusion that the photograph is my grandfather. Rather the image connects me to a thousand memories of the love that passed between us, and which still passes between us, when I open myself to his presence. My grandfather, some forty years past his death, remains utterly attached to my heart. And, I dare to believe, vice versa. You could say the photo is a kind of "sacrament," mediating the grace of this man's presence to me as a child, and still today. For others, the picture will have no meaning, certainly nothing one could call "sacramental."²² Unless I find a way to connect you with him personally, the picture will remain more or less for you a picture of someone else's grandpa.

If, on the other hand, I can find some way to connect you with my grandfather, and if you are open even just a little to be so connected, the picture may become for you an authentic connecting point. The stories I've told my kids about my grandfather will endure long after I'm gone, I can believe with some confidence, because something in those stories now reverberates in their hearts, as he is now indelibly linked with their memories of me. The stories my wife tells about her grandmother, I am sure, reverberate in my kids similarly. *Cor ad cor loquitur*. Heart speaks to heart. And so, why not let's sit down over coffee and swap family histories? Who in your life has most shaped your identity, your sense of belonging in the world? What communities have done the same for you, perhaps for better and sometimes for worse? Here's the amazing thing: heart speaks to heart across generations, across racial and religious boundaries, across times and cultures. If you and I were to be thrown together

in some common project, and I have yet to know much about you, at some point it might be good to find the courage to ask each other these kinds of questions, to build connections of the heart.

It is no stretch to say that "the Ignatian tradition" is much like this: a burgeoning family photo album, covering 450 years and far more. Of course its pages reach back to Ignatius of Loyola and his companions, the first Jesuits, but then much further through the classic figures of the Christian mystical tradition (saints and others who shaped Ignatius' worldview), the Catholic intellectual tradition, the life of Jesus and his companions in the Gospels, the Jewish biblical memory of God, and so on. The point is, unless each of us involved with Jesuit education finds a way to connect with something or someone in the tradition that resonates in the heart—the realm of desire, commitment, imagination—the tradition will remain more or less a collection of *someone else's family photographs*. (Or worse, someone else's vacation photos—five or ten pictures I can handle, but beyond that you're going to lose me!) The "tradition," in other words, is not a collection of dead museum pieces, nor is it primarily a record of adherence to explicit beliefs, principles, and doctrines. It is an unruly *storybook*, a living tradition, sometimes beautiful and glorious, sometimes ugly and broken, with many pages yet to be added. Where do I see myself in those pages? Whose pictures are next to mine? How did I get pulled into the story? How might my distinctive gifts contribute to the unfolding chapters yet to come?

Something like this is going on when Jesuit universities invite new faculty and staff to participate in a mission onboarding process, or offer programs for mid-career and veteran faculty and staff that aim to inspire and cultivate deeper engagement with the Ignatian tradition. In my own case, I had never met a Jesuit nor had anything to do with Ignatian spirituality until my mid-twenties, when I was drawn in by the sheer magnetic force of two Jesuits I met at Regis University in the early 1990s. But I was also drawn in by lay staff and administrators whose institutional self-understanding was shifting dramatically toward the birth of something new. What I discovered at Regis thirty years ago was a community cut to the quick by the martyrdom of

the Jesuits at the University of Central America (UCA) in El Salvador, and subsequently committing itself in new ways—ways mostly foreign yet irresistible to my white, suburban, and relatively staid Catholic upbringing—to a faith that seeks to do justice.

This swelling of the collective heart, as it were, a community newly experiencing and responding to the pain of the world, gave birth in 1991 to a new initiative at Regis called Romero House, an intentional faith community of students and an older Jesuit living in the Hispanic barrio of Northwest Denver. Living at Romero House was deeply formative for both me and my (then future) wife. To this day, Archbishop Romero and the UCA martyrs hold pride of place in the Regis family photo album. Add to these Pedro Arrupe, Dorothy Day, Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, and many others, and today one finds physical memorials for all of these witnesses—touchpoints for the heart, if you will, like my grandfather's photograph—across the campus.

Whose stories hold pride of place at other Jesuit institutions? Are their names and faces physically present in such a way that new and veteran colleagues alike, as well as visitors to our campuses, will take notice and perhaps be drawn in by their witness? For the vast majority of us, we become part of the Ignatian family tree not by circumstances of blood or birth, nor by ordination. We become lay collaborators by a kind of “adoption,” through the stories of ordinary and extraordinary people whose lives and labors attract us—not least, many non-Christians and others not officially recognized by the Catholic Church as “saints.” Indeed, it is striking how deeply and how often that communal enkindling of the heart includes colleagues who locate themselves within many and diverse religious traditions, or none at all. Yet by some movement of grace, these lay companions have found themselves drawn into the Ignatian story, and have increased its bounty immeasurably by their distinctive gifts.

It bears repeating: there is no singular entry point into the Ignatian tradition, no litmus test or hierarchy of inclusion. The spark that leaps from heart to heart and sets our common vision aflame is freedom itself, the yearning for life and love, justice and meaning, the desire to share in

questions, mediated by all the university disciplines, that pull us toward a horizon beyond ourselves, beyond the exigencies of “making a living” or launching a successful career. In Christian terms, this realm of desire and imagination is the realm of grace, the Holy Spirit, “the creative artist of our freedom as we move into the flow of life.”³ Here is the core meaning of “inspiration”: to be enlivened by spirit (and Spirit!) at the meeting point of multiple freedoms. And though each person will come into an understanding of the Ignatian tradition at different places in the journey, we learn by walking the path together, and yearning to know more.

A Diverse and Unruly Kinship

One of the first things I learned about the Ignatian family tree is its vast diversity. Gaze at the lives of Ignatius and his close friend Francis Xavier, for example, and you'll quickly discover that they were profoundly different personalities. Ignatius would be pressed by circumstances to become an administrator, of all things, and stuck in Rome, of all places, far from Jerusalem, the place he most wished to serve. Francis Xavier would find himself missioned to the Far East to encounter cultures beyond anything he could have imagined in the European Christian environs of his upbringing. No less than the first companions of Jesus, the first Jesuits were a diverse and unruly bunch.⁴ And thank God for it! Nevertheless they were joined together (we might say thrown together) by a certain unity of desire and purpose, by something—indeed someone, who is Jesus—that had seized their collective imaginations. The point is, “unity of hearts and minds” does not mean *uniformity* of hearts and minds. Authentic unity is not uniformity. As it was then, so it is now. Lay Ignatian educators who are Christian and Roman Catholic work alongside Muslims, Hindus and Jews, Buddhists, agnostics, atheists, and persons of every denomination and political persuasion, indeed, alongside colleagues from around the world.

In his remarks to the major superiors of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia, just a few months after his election as General of the Society, Fr. Arturo Sosa described the Jesuits “as an *intercultural* body that helps to challenge and enrich our own local cultures. Each one of us can contribute with his

own culture and experience, and in turn can receive from others. . . . The result is a universal sensitivity that transforms us into the image and likeness of God, a God who thrives on plurality and variety, in contrast with a globalization process that tries to create a uniform and standardized culture.”⁵ Implicit in Fr. Sosa’s remarks are pastoral and theological developments that found expression in the teachings of the Catholic Church at Vatican II, including the influential work of Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, among others. In the words of Rahner’s student, Johannes Baptist Metz, “For Rahner, God is a universal theme, a theme concerning all of humanity—or [God] simply is not a theme at all. God is never for him the private property of the Church, or of theology either. And not even of faith: the lightning flash of God is to be reckoned with on every human experiential and linguistic terrain.”⁶

This movement toward greater solidarity across boundaries is what Jesuit Fr. Greg Boyle calls “kinship,” a vision as expansive as the human imagination, as large as the heart that loves. In his bestselling account of working alongside gang members in Los Angeles, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Fr. Boyle dares us to locate ourselves in the places inhabited by the most marginalized. Not because we can “save” them, but because the view from where they stand offers the clearest picture of reality in our world today. Thus the marginalized become our teachers.

No daylight to separate us. Only kinship. Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. . . . with those who have had no voice.⁷

When you read Fr. Boyle’s books or hear him speak, you cannot help but ask some dangerous and beautiful questions. What would it look like to take as a first principle of Jesuit education a shared commitment to build “a community of kinship such that God might recognize it”?

Fr. Boyle himself has become a kind of icon for Jesuit education in the United States, a touchpoint for the heart by which to measure how we are doing in response to the signs of the times. How might we position our universities so as to help our students and one another, as he often says, “stand in awe at what the poor have to carry, rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it”? Paradoxically this *outward thrust* of the Jesuit mission—what Jesuit scholar and UCA martyr Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria described as the “social projection”⁸ of the university, and General Congregation 36 calls a “mission of reconciliation and justice”⁹—flows from the contemplative heart of Ignatian spirituality, an *interior disposition* rooted in practices of “attention, reverence, and devotion,”¹⁰ as the late Jesuit scholar and beloved spiritual teacher Fr. Howard Gray suggests.

All of this is to say that *cura personalis* is a flame of the heart that cannot be lit in a vacuum. It burns brightest in conversation, in networking and collaboration, in the sharing of stories that shape and inspire us. No less than the lives of Ignatius, Francis Xavier, and John Francis Regis, the twentieth century witness of towering Jesuits like Pedro Arrupe, Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, and Anthony De Mello—each quite different than the other—have fed and inspired my work in the classroom. Add to these many others, Christian and non-Christian, living and dead: Abraham Joshua Heschel, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, M. Shawn Copeland, James Baldwin, Thea Bowman, Thich Nhat Hanh.¹¹ My work as a theologian has been kindled by a bone-deep love for the Catholic Church and sometimes smothered near to dying by successive heart-rending disappointments with the church. The realms of music, poetry and the arts have increasingly informed my thinking, writing, and classroom teaching—a crucial element of the Jesuit *ratio studiorum* from the beginning.¹²

None of this is to downplay the importance of the intellectual or philosophical affinity one may feel with the Jesuit tradition. Rather, it is to locate the intellectual and even, if not especially, the ethical and justice-seeking orientation of our universities within the womb of something deeper: an attraction and commitment of the heart. Precisely how or by whom that interior spark is lit will vary as infinitely as the manifold personalities who live

and work in the orbit of Jesuit education. To say it in biblical and theological terms, the Ignatian instinct is to encounter and welcome others “where they are,” precisely because it is there, at the meeting point of freedom in relationship, that the Spirit of God—the same Spirit who animated the life of Jesus and his companions; the same Presence who accompanied the Israelites in the desert of their exile and liberation—beckons each person with their distinctive gifts into the life of the community. And thus new stories, new initiatives, new adventures appear in the family photo album. “No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual,” says Pope Francis, “but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community. God enters into this dynamic, this participation in the web of human relationships.”¹³

Here we come to the heart of things, and perhaps the root challenge faced by faculty, staff, and administrators alike in their daily work at Jesuit institutions. How to be and become “contemplatives in action” when schedules are so painfully full, with budgets so painfully squeezed, when so many programs compete for prestige and enrollment? How to make our institutions vehicles of justice and reconciliation when political polarization and cynicism—i.e., the collective atrophying of the heart—run so high, when public confidence in institutions (not least religious ones) seems to have reached new lows, when costs are accelerating and access to our universities risks being relegated more and more to the privileged few? What values should guide the administrator when the family tree, in order to survive, much less to thrive, requires significant pruning? Which programs to cut? Which colleagues—and sometimes, which friends—to let go? For colleagues at the losing end of school or program closures, to say nothing of adjunct or term faculty who struggle to support themselves and their families, the Jesuit values of *cura personalis* and unity of hearts and minds can feel, existentially, like a bad joke. Where and how to find inspiration—no less than the movement of the divine Spirit—in the really hard stuff?

To say it another way, the emphasis on heart-centered commitment is all very well for Jesuits, whose lives in community and vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience more or less secure the

conditions for the possibility of more contemplative and, frankly, more available round-the-clock modes of being. But can, and should, analogous conditions be met for lay folks? This is not to suggest that Jesuits are not also very busy people, nor that all Jesuits have realized a healthy integration of contemplation and action. Far from it. Still, if something like an Ignatian style of service and leadership is going to endure into the future, it remains essential to confront the unique challenges faced by non-Jesuits, lay staff, faculty, and administrators to whom the Jesuits are, and have been for many years, attempting to pass the torch.¹⁴

Tensions and Disruptions: *Cura Personalis* vs. *Cura Apostolica*

In an illuminating article on the multivalent meaning of *cura personalis*, Jesuit Fr. Bart Geger highlights the many ways that the tension and sometimes the rift between *cura personalis* (care for the whole person) and *cura apostolica* (care for the mission of the institution) can erupt in the daily life of an administrator.¹⁵ One hears that tension boiled down in the useful, if somewhat heartless, cliché, “No margin, No mission.” With barely concealed understatement, Geger observes that administrators at Jesuit schools “are not immune from [harsh] evaluations from faculty and students. When they make unpopular decisions to reduce numbers of employees, or deny funding, or close departments, they are often accused, publicly or in whispered corridors, of being paternalistic, or nearsighted, or hypocritical about the mission.... When administrators do their jobs well, they cannot count on praise, but when they are perceived to err, they can be assured of criticism.”¹⁶ Acknowledging the sometimes impossible choices faced by administrators, Geger cites one of the more painful events in the recent history of Regis University following the economic crash of 2008, when the university “announced the termination and voluntary early-retirement of dozens of employees.” A few days later, “white crosses were found planted in the grass of the quadrangle,” one for every employee let go, and on each cross was painted an accusatory question: “How Ought We To Live?”¹⁷

Though I was not at Regis at the time and I don't know all the circumstances, I am inclined to agree with Geger's conclusion: "Such denunciations of administrators, no matter how motivated by genuine sympathy for others, are unworthy of Jesuit institutions, and a violation of the very Ignatian principles that are claimed to be at stake."¹⁸ To say it another way, care for the person and care for the mission and flourishing of the institution are two sides of a single, yet often painfully complex, fabric. As difficult as it can be to keep these values in healthy balance, as painful as it is when one value seems to override the other, we must take care not to drive a wedge between them, or cede the ground to colleagues, or institutional narratives, that would do so.¹⁹

The principle challenge for administrators on this front, it seems to me, is finding ever more creative and generous ways to empower colleagues under one's charge both to understand and exercise their particular power and responsibility within this dynamic of *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. This implies the sincere and sustained commitment to creating a leadership culture of transparency and information-sharing, hospitality and dialogue toward genuine communal discernment: in a word, the careful building of trust and collaboration. To cultivate such practices from a position of leadership and oversight is to regularly open up the photo album, scour its pages, and ask, "Who can I call on to help me discern the way forward? Who is being left out of the conversation, and how can I draw them in?"²⁰

The alternative—and perhaps the great temptation of the overworked administrator—is to build up a kind of protective shell around the heart. "Damned if I do and damned if I don't, so, I simply *won't*." In the case of deans, for example, I can imagine an internal dialogue of the heart that goes something like this: "I can't invest all my energies in the personal needs of every faculty member, nor, frankly, in the enlightenment of board members and vice presidents above me, when I'm already losing sleep over how to keep the department or program afloat. There's only so much *cura* in my tank, and if folks can't meet me half way in good faith, there's a point at which I'll have to make the tough decisions on my own."

In anecdotes shared by AJCU Education Deans during a retreat held recently at Regis University, what struck me so strongly among their greatest reported challenges was not the relentless demands on their time and energies so much as the personal anguish of trying to reconcile competing value systems. As one dean reported:

The larger ethical challenge is being in a situation where instrumental ends (like rankings and money) are important, but where these ends conflict with mission in some cases. We all have unproductive older faculty, for example, and how hard should we push to replace them? We'd like to recruit faculty who bring status, but often that means bringing narcissism as well. I remain optimistic that we can maintain our mission while also recruiting excellent faculty and doing well, but it's a challenge.²¹

And another:

One of the challenging issues I face is the decline in Master's enrollment. In fact, the Education school was a cash cow through its teacher education program, and we are still a net contributor to the university. But the institution just sees the decline in numbers, and that creates pressure on us.

And another:

We rightfully pat ourselves on the back for all we are doing to serve disadvantaged populations, but are we doing enough? This speaks to the tension between the so-called business model or bottom line approach our institutions are adopting versus the existential mission question of "Why? Why a Jesuit education?" This also speaks to the challenge that the Father General Sosa posed in Spain, calling on Jesuit Universities to engage in collective discernment and reconciliation.²²

Of course, Jesuit universities are far from alone in navigating the tension between the "so-called business model" and the "existential mission

question” of “Why?” Recently a special interest group of the Catholic Theological Society of America described the forces and rapid changes reshaping American higher education today as a “quiet metamorphosis” from which Catholic colleges and universities (and theology departments) are not immune:

[These forces] include: the pervasive influence of corporate models; the eclipse of reasoned debate in the public sphere; shrinking core requirements and an expanding corps of contingent faculty; demographic shifts; diversity and access; mounting student debt; the pressures of accreditation, rankings, and assessment; and the ever-growing divide between resource-rich research universities and smaller schools struggling to maintain enrollment. On the one hand, these changes reveal the complicity of higher education in contributing to economic inequality, political polarization, and institutionalized injustice. On the other hand, as academic theologians, we act in the hope that our teaching, research, and writing—in other words, our university work—can contribute to the transformation of our deeply divided and violent world.²³

In the midst of such a polarized and rapidly shifting landscape—and when the physical presence and future sponsorship of Jesuits can no longer be taken for granted—what will move lay collaborators to care and sustain them to *keep caring* when the stakes are so high?²⁴ If caring is a function of the heart, and heart-centered leadership arises, as Fr. Gray advises, from regular contemplative practices of attention, reverence and devotion, what resources can help to inspire and sustain lay companions in the Jesuit mission over the long haul?

In the first place, to state what seems both obvious and elusive, for colleagues at every level of the university it begins with feeding the spiritual wellsprings of one’s own life. Be it through prayer or hiking, listening to music or gardening, reading scripture or writing poetry, playing with one’s kids or turning off the phone

and settling into a movie with one’s partner, if we are not intentional about regular practices of attention, reverence and devotion—staying alive and centered and present to ourselves, to God, and to others—we risk extinguishing the very fire that animates an Ignatian style of leadership and vocation. Almost 40 years ago, Fr. General Pedro Arrupe, S.J., often called the “second founder” of the Jesuits, expressed this concern in a remarkable essay written just a few years before his death:

I sometimes wonder if the lack of proportion between the generous efforts [toward justice and social transformation] that the Society has made in recent years and the slowness with which the hoped-for inner renewal and adaptation [of the Society] to the needs of today . . . isn’t due in great part to the fact that our zeal for brave, new undertakings has overshadowed our theological-spiritual efforts to discover and live the dynamic and content of our Founder’s inner itinerary, which leads . . . to the service of the Church and help of souls.²⁵

Here is Arrupe near the end of his life, wondering if the Jesuit zeal for activism and social justice (inspired greatly by his own leadership) doesn’t risk overshadowing the dynamic of spiritual transformation that was the wellspring from which Ignatius and his companions drew their energy, vitality and vision. As Arrupe’s witness suggests, Jesuits themselves can and ought to be at the forefront of advocating for institutional structures supporting lay spiritual formation and a healthy work-life balance for their lay colleagues.²⁶

But there is a second point, perhaps less obvious, at the heart of an Ignatian sensibility, which has to do with regarding one’s work not only as a job, but as a vocation, a vocation fulfilled in mutuality with others. While the demands of institutional leadership and of the many responsibilities borne by the typical faculty member might seem to make the commitment to regular contemplative practices nearly impossible, Ignatius wanted his fellow Jesuits and their lay collaborators to understand “that they could attain contemplation precisely through their work.”²⁷ This seems to me a crucial and often overlooked point, and it has to

do in part with the group or communal dynamic of the Ignatian apostolic impulse from its very beginnings.

The Emergence and Cultivation of a Lay *Esprit de Corps*

When the famed Catholic monk and spiritual writer Thomas Merton aimed a gentle but critical barb at “all the busy Jesuits”²⁸ in his autobiography, he was signaling one of the real dangers and temptations that Jesuits and their associates face in the spiritual life. If the Benedictine and monastic school of spirituality to which Merton belonged risks overemphasizing solitude, stability, and prayer at the expense of social solidarity, mobility, and action in the world, the Jesuits and all who work in their orbit risk the opposite imbalance, sacrificing stability and prayer for never-ceasing engagement and activism. Significantly, however, both traditions insist on the centrality of community and spiritual friendship as the womb from which fruitful and loving action in the world arise. The “and” that joins “contemplation and action” in the Christian mystical tradition finds its dynamism for Ignatius in his insistence that it really is possible to attain to contemplation *through* our work, *so long as we are not left alone or entirely to our own devices in doing so*.

While his friend Peter Favre famously described Ignatius as a contemplative in action, Ignatius was not able to be and become so in a social vacuum. He had an intimate community of friends and spiritual companions, indeed, many lay associates and confidantes, to support his prayerfully-infused work every step of the way.²⁹ In truth, Merton’s Benedictine tradition insists on the same integration of contemplation and action in its millennia-old juxtaposition of *ora et labora*, prayer and work, and always in the supportive womb of community. Both traditions happily converge on the idea that in all things the Christian should aim toward accomplishing one’s work in a spirit of prayerfulness, aware that our labors, whether corporate or solitary, may be all for naught if not carried out in a spirit of attention, reverence, and devotion. For both traditions the interior heart-flame of “cura” is not lit in a vacuum, nor can it be kept burning without generously sustained, communal, institutional support.³⁰

Listen again to Fr. Howard Gray as he describes how “unity of hearts and minds” has actually been realized for Jesuits in their work as educators and administrators across the centuries:

The early Jesuit educators were mentors, fulfilling what Ignatius in the Constitutions would characterize as sound learning, the ability to communicate that knowledge [in the classroom, yes, but also] through the example of one’s life. . . . What the Jesuit mass numbers of the past provided was an *esprit de corps*, a lifestyle that centered on the institution, a common vocabulary and shared symbols. Their way of proceeding dramatized a union of minds and hearts that were focused on the student.³¹

This *esprit de corps* among Jesuits was strikingly evident at the recent General Congregation 36 in Rome, as hundreds of Jesuit delegates from around the world gathered to discern the Society’s future and elect a new Father General of the order. Here in one corner, there in another, individual Jesuits spent hours talking with one another face-to-face, in a very intentional process known as the *murmurationes*, or spiritual conversations. No decision would be made by the assembly, no vote would be taken, prior to these one on one conversations. Each Jesuit was expected to seek out those he did not already know; even more, he was expected to seek out and listen deeply, intentionally, contemplatively, to those peers *whom he knew to hold a different perspective than his own*. As an Indian Jesuit would later describe his experience of GC 36, “shared work requires mutual affection,” and “everything [about the meeting] helped toward that end: the leisurely walk back to the communities, the rest between sessions, the events outside the meeting hall, the outings to share a pizza, etc.”³² *Shared work requires mutual affection*: again, heart speaks to heart. Thus the spirit alights in the work of the community.

Whereas the Benedictine vows of silence and stability render the individual monk beholden to the authority of and regular spiritual conversation with his or her superior (typically the abbot), the Ignatian path insists that we, Jesuits and laypersons alike, discover our distinctive gifts and

the communal way forward through conversation with many and diverse others with whom we are bound together in a common task, all for the “the greater glory of God.” Again, as Fr. Gray notes, the very nature of Jesuit life in community, both structured and set free by the religious vows, lends itself to such *esprit de corps* and communal discernment through tension and transforming internal conflict. The Jesuit formation process alone—typically ten years of study, teaching, and spiritual formation prior to ordination, and often 5-10 years further before final vows—is the envy and awe of many. But to what extent is it possible for lay collaborators to realize an analogous dynamic?

In a 2004 address to the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (now the Jesuit Schools Network), Fr. Gray addressed this question directly. Speaking to lay teachers and administrators from Jesuit high schools around the country, he outlined both an opportunity and a challenge looking to the future. “The lay apostolate in Ignatian education needs to accept a new mission to develop its own *esprit de corps*, a lifestyle that supports the mentoring vocation of an Ignatian lay educator, and a way of speaking of its spirituality and mission that reflects lay identity.”³³ Fr. Gray, I think, gets it exactly right. If there is an *esprit de corps* now emerging among lay educators and leaders, it cannot and need not look and feel the same as it has among Jesuits themselves for almost 500 years. What will it look and feel like? What processes must be undertaken for lay collaborators to imagine their way together into the future? Of course we won’t know the answers to such questions about the future until we begin imagining it together, and initiating processes responsive to the particular needs of each institution. We make the path by walking it. But surely a few initial signposts for lay collaborators have begun to emerge.

To begin, as suggested above, a lay *esprit de corps* will have to find ways to account more holistically and generously for the lives of lay professionals with families and spouses, children and elders with special needs, all coming together, of course, from diverse disciplinary, cultural, and religious backgrounds. These manifold, often thoroughly secular realms of lay life are not “extracurricular” or “add-ons” to the work of lay companions; they

are realms of inspiration and grace in which laypersons “live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) No other constituency has raised this point with greater force, consistency, and clarity than have women across the AJCU network.

In a remarkable article published twenty years ago, Catholic feminist theologian Susan Ross considers General Congregation 34’s 1995 statement on “The Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society.”³⁴ While praising the statement’s principal recommendation that “all Jesuits listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women,” Ross wonders whether the “profound conversion” implied in the Society’s stated commitment to making “solidarity with women” truly integral to the mission is forthcoming. Drawing from her many years of experience teaching and working with Jesuit colleagues at Loyola University of Chicago, Ross identifies four concrete areas in Jesuit higher education that call out for development and transformation: teaching and research, administration, social life, and liturgy—realms in which an “active readiness for relationship” with their women colleagues might cultivate the kind of solidarity among Jesuits that GC 34 places at the heart of mission. If too little attention has been paid to the 1995 statement on women and the Jesuits, Ross’s proposal, written with clear love for the Society and for Jesuit higher education, charts a hopeful path forward.

As Fr. Gray suggests, Jesuits have modelled a “habit of being” inspired by the Gospel: that the very meaning of being made “in the image and likeness of God” is to grow into and fully realize, as Jesus fully realized, our latent capacity and freedom for love. But if by “love” we mean a fully incarnational, embodied, and concrete love, love not in the abstract, then surely the experience and leadership of women promises to transform Jesuit higher education in ways both challenging and beautiful that have yet to be imagined. This is where the genius of the Ignatian way of proceeding meets the revolutionary forces of freedom and imagination, spirit and desire, in lay folks themselves, and especially in women.³⁵

Without question, more and more lay collaborators—persons of every gender, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic and religious identity—will continue to desire spiritual formation while

having precious little time or disposable financial resources to realize such a yearning. It has to be acknowledged, and celebrated, that the AJCU member institutions have come a long way in addressing the needs of lay staff, faculty, and administrators, in a relatively short time, and with the commitment of considerable financial and human resources. But where are our networks and particular institutions still falling short?³⁶ If the Jesuit numbers of the past embodied the unity of *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica* in the lives of Jesuits themselves, how will our way of proceeding as lay persons—those pages in the photo album yet to be imagined—dramatize a union of minds and hearts toward analogous (or wholly new!) Gospel-haunted ends? How to build something more like the Reign of God in our particular corners of the universe, in our neighborhoods, cities, and global apostolates, as lay persons formed in the Ignatian vision rooted in an intimate, experiential knowledge of a God who loves us in all things?³⁷

Let us not underestimate the challenge and the invitation embedded in such questions. My own bias is that without taking care to cultivate what I have just called an “experiential knowledge” of God, as Ignatius came to know God—a loving and merciful Creator who draws radically near to us in all things; a palpable and personal Presence or Spirit who sustains and empowers human freedom in history, consummately in the histories of Jesus of Nazareth and all the prophets and saints—the Ignatian spirit risks ceding to a collection of abstract “Jesuit values”³⁸ or categorical talking points—which is to say, about as exciting as somebody else’s family vacation pictures. Absent an experiential or heart-centered link to core elements of Ignatian mysticism—cultivated in countless pilgrims, Christian and non-Christian, lay and religious alike, through participation in and adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises—the Jesuit tradition risks breaking loose from its deepest moorings, its root memory and experience of God, precisely as the Society of Jesus.³⁹

From Inspirations to New Horizons: A Memory of the Future

I began this essay with an appeal to the heart, linked closely to inspiration, the “spark” that emerges at the meeting point of multiple freedoms, setting our common vision aflame. I have suggested that lacking some personal heart-connection to the Ignatian tradition, the appeal to a “common vision” risks becoming, at best, what John Henry Newman called a (merely) notional assent to abstract principles, as in “Jesuit values.” Or worse, a complacent appeal to Jesuit values can functionally be reduced to the rehearsal of marketing slogans, transactional signifiers in an all-pervasive commodity culture. By contrast, what Newman called *real assent* is rooted in the heart, the realm of desire and experience, memory and imagination.⁴⁰ Whether the spark of “realization” alights all at once or more likely in the slow-paced convergence of multiple experiences, relationships, and encounters, to feel oneself being drawn, sacramentally, as it were, into the larger Ignatian story is to participate in a communion larger than oneself, a shared horizon that includes the living with whom we work every day, and even the dead. What keeps the Ignatian imagination earthbound, concrete, pluriform, and often, it has to be said, quite messy, is its commitment to seek and discover God “in all things,” to understand and respond to the world as we encounter it concretely, through and beyond the university disciplines.⁴¹ And this implies discernment.

Perhaps the jewel in the crown of an emergent lay *esprit de corps* and a crucial measure of its authenticity will be the intentionality with which we who are lay companions in the Jesuit mission cultivate the discernment of spirits, a capacity within each of us to understand reality and to responsibly judge when and under what conditions a particular way forward is more or less likely to contribute to personal, institutional, and societal flourishing.⁴² In our research and teaching, administrating and oversight, it means learning to read the signs of the times and “to discern what is the voice of the Holy Spirit of God and what is the voice of a spirit that is counter to God’s Spirit.”⁴³ It means navigating the way forward together, each contributing to the mission of the university with our distinctive gifts. The creative tension between *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*

finds its spark and sometimes its greatest challenges in the spaces between personal and communal discernment. In the context of lay leadership of Jesuit institutions, the difference between creative tension and painful impasse will depend all the more on contemplative practices akin to the *murmurationes*: active listening, mutual dialogue, and shared visioning.

To conclude, the metaphor of the family photo album works well enough so long as we remember that we are talking about a tradition that is still very much on pilgrimage, with many more pages, God willing, yet to be added. And what binds the pages together is not uniformity but a certain unity or resonance of vision that flows from heart to heart. Not just a record of the past, the Ignatian tradition is also, so to speak, a memory of the future, an experiential wisdom that is always adapting, imagining new forms, and moving toward a horizon of what might yet be. Indeed, adaptation was not just permitted by Ignatius, he insisted upon it.⁴⁴ In other words, not to adapt the Spiritual Exercises and their application to diverse audiences would be to betray the very spirit (and Spirit!) at the heart of Ignatius's memory and experience of God.⁴⁵ Not to initiate new processes, not to create new forms and structures fitting to the cultivation of a healthy work-life balance and a properly lay *esprit de corps*, would constitute a similar betrayal.

And this is where memory, for Ignatius, is closely linked to imagination. We remember the past not so as to mimic or slavishly reproduce the way things have been done but to provide imaginative signposts, touchpoints for the heart, if you will, toward an emerging future. The Jesuit and lay cloud of witnesses give us courage to initiate by their example what might yet be. We are a "pilgrim"⁴⁶ community, called to help midwife the birth of something truly new in history.

Jesus called it the Reign of God; Martin Luther King, Jr., called it Beloved Community; Fr. Greg Boyle calls it a "community of kinship such that God might recognize it," a "circle of compassion" so expansive "that the margins themselves will be erased." Buddhists call it "Interbeing," or "Non-dualism," the realization of the essential interrelatedness or unity-in-diversity of all things, and a commitment to take each step "enlightened" by this primordial truth. The Jewish tradition calls it *tikkun olam*, the repairing of the world, "the rescuing to make good of what is left of this smashed world."⁴⁷ Across all the great religious traditions, the wellspring of *tikkun olam* is empathy and compassion, a fierce and *fiercely public* commitment that seeks justice and flourishing for all peoples. How will *we* imagine it, name it, and build it toward the future? And how will our imaginings be different, as they must be, from those of the first Jesuits?

For many fruitful decades, the AJCU and its member schools have cultivated an emergent lay *esprit de corps* under the inspiration of the global Society of Jesus's commitment to collaboration and communal discernment in response to the signs of the times. These efforts are truly something to celebrate. And yet, as Father General Adolfo Nicolas challenged Jesuit educators from around the world in his landmark 2010 address in Mexico City, there are new forms and new ways of responding to our beautiful but broken world that have yet to be imagined.⁴⁸ The spark that sets our common vision aflame is freedom, God's own desire for the world set alight in us. Whatever the future may hold for Jesuit education, let it be built from the spark of friendship, collaboration, and communal discernment, a deep listening that leads to kinship of the heart.⁴⁹

Notes

¹David L. Fleming, S.J., *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 13-15.

²In traditional Catholic theological terms, a "sacrament" is both a "sign and instrument of God's grace," and the term "sacramental" (both adjective and noun) refers to something that mediates an encounter with the mystery of divine-human

presence. My grandfather's photo is (a) "sacramental" insofar as it operates for me as both a "sign" (pointing to) *and* an instrument (mediating a "real presence") of grace. For the Catholic sacramental imagination, the dead are not dead; in our remembrance and in the telling of their stories we are joined in communion with their accompanying presence. The Disney/Pixar film *Coco* (2017), centered on the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead, captures this mystery and

Catholic sensibility in a wonderfully imaginative and poignant way.

³ Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., *The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003), 134. “This is the zone of the inner word,” Gallagher continues, “the prereligious presence of God in each of us.” Thus, more important than clarity of ideas, doctrinal precision, or even ethical and moral norms—all crucial, to be sure—people today, says Gallagher, “need to feel themselves part of a larger Story” (136).

⁴ See the classic study by John O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University, 1995). If one’s interests lean more toward spirituality than history, resources by both Jesuit and lay authors are extensive. A few include James Martin, S.J., *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (HarperOne, 2012); Margaret Silf, *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Kevin F. Burke, S.J., and Eileen Burke-Sullivan, *The Ignatian Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2009); *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola, 2008); Kevin O’Brien, S.J., *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008).

⁵ Arturo Sosa, S.J., Remarks to the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA), February 23, 2017.

⁶ Johannes Baptist Metz, “Karl Rahner’s Struggle for the Theological Dignity of Humankind,” in *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1998), 109.

⁷ Gregory Boyle, S.J., *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 190.

⁸ For a powerful interpretation of Fr. Ellacuria’s vision of the university and with sensitivity to the North American social context, see Dean Brackley, S.J., *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

⁹ General Congregation 36, *Decree 1* (Rome, October 2–November 12, 2016), <http://jesuits.org/gc?PAGE=DTN-20170215020206>.

¹⁰ Howard Gray, S.J., “Ignatius the Spiritual Administrator,” filmed October 12, 2011 at John Carroll University, University Heights, OH, video, 18:44 <https://vimeo.com/channels/186344/30467533>, from [10:00] forward. This is one of a treasure trove of conferences by Fr. Gray and other Jesuit and lay teachers resourced by the Ignatian Colleagues Program at John Carroll University. This segment is especially apt for persons tasked with administration, understood as “oversight that is true to the charisma, and efficiency that allows it to be effective for other people.” Authenticity, integrity and pure (i.e., truthful, unalloyed) intention are key to an Ignatian style of leadership. “We’re not trying to replicate the mechanics of the way Ignatius went about administration, but rather the spirit, or the vitality, or the energy, or what we might call the ‘charism’, the gift to organize this operation so that the collectivity of

the Society of Jesus can be authentic, truthful, in the way it goes about its work.”

¹¹ For a more extensive personal and theological exploration of the revolutionary developments in US and global Roman Catholic theology in the last fifty years, see Christopher Pramuk, “Proximity, Disruption and Grace: Notes for a Pedagogy of Racial Justice and Reconciliation,” in *You Say You Want a Revolution? 1968–2018 in Theological Perspective*, the annual publication of the College Theology Society, ed. Susie Paulik Babka, Elena Procario Foley, Sandra Yocum (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 135–57; Christopher Pramuk, *Hope Sings, So Beautiful: Graced Encounters Across the Color Line* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

¹² *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773*, eds. John W. O’Malley, S.J., Gavin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006); Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago: Loyola, 2004), especially chapter 2. Also Christopher Pramuk, *The Artist Alive: Explorations in Music, Art and Theology* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2019), a book based on my experience using music and the arts in the Jesuit high school and university classroom.

¹³ Anthony Spadaro, S.J., “A Big Heart Open to God: Interview with Pope Francis,” *America*, September 20, 2013, 15–38. It bears noting that Pope Francis is history’s first Jesuit pope, and his teaching and ministry reflect the deeply relational spirituality and emphasis on person-to-person encounter that I emphasize here.

¹⁴ See, for example, former Fr. General Adolfo Nicolás’s landmark address in Mexico City, April 23, 2010, “Depth, Universality and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” http://www.sjweb.info/documents/ansj/100423_Mexico%20City_Higher%20Education%20Today_ENG.pdf; and more recently, Fr. General Arturo Sosa, S.J., “On Cooperation with the Laity” (address, Croatia, March 26, 2019), <https://sjcuria.global/en/speeches>.

¹⁵ Barton T. Geger, S.J., “*Cura Personalis*: Some Ignatian Inspirations,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 3, no.2 (2014): 6–20. Many of the tensions and “disruptions” I describe below are treated with much greater historical depth and practical application in Geger’s article. The addition of Fr. Howard Gray’s and my own insights on the theme of a lay *esprit de corps* I hope may serve to supplement Geger’s reflections, which remain immensely valuable.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Geger links an Ignatian understanding of *cura personalis* to “Presupposition 22” at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises—that whenever possible we should “presume the intelligence and goodwill” of others, even if not especially those who disappoint us. “In the case of administrators, it obliges us to concede, grudgingly at times, that most of the choices they face are more complex than we would like to believe” (14).

¹⁹ See Stephanie J. Russell, “*Cura Apostolica* Revisited,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 56, (2019): 2-6; John Topel, S.J., “A New Vision for *Cura Apostolica*,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 56 (2019): 9-10. Citing Jesuit historian John Padberg, S.J., Russell underscores the organic link between *cura apostolica* and *cura personalis* from the beginning: “‘*Cura apostolica*,’ [says Padberg], ‘was never about building up institutions. It was and is about seeing ‘the work’ as the people engaged in it and the people served by it.’ While we need the practical means to sustain and grow our institutions, our core work is flesh and blood, not bricks and bitmaps” (4).

²⁰ See Arturo Sosa, S.J., “Taking the Risk: Making Discernment Central,” Address to the Discerning Leadership Program, October 28, 2019, which concludes with concrete recommendations for engaging the “new frontier” of “discernment in common.” <https://sjcuria.global/en/more-speeches/838-taking-the-risk-making-discernment-central>.

²¹ This excerpt and the following are taken from informal narratives provided to the author by AJCU Education Deans in advance of their 2018 gathering at Regis University.

²² In his address to the International Association of Jesuit Universities, July 12, 2018, Loyola, Spain, Fr. General Sosa described the university as “a formidable space to put into practice the mission received from and inspired by the Gospel, to determinedly promote social justice and environmental sustainability through dialogue with cultures and religions. . . . [I]ntellectual work is apostolate when it is carried out in the open, not locked in a cabinet or within the comfort of its own certainties. . . . Being loyal to our tradition means creatively responding to the signs of the times.” For similar themes, see also “Why Do We Jesuits Want to Participate in University Life?” at the University of Zagreb, March 22, 2019. “Educating people for world citizenship—which opposes the tendency to create a monocultural global space—means recognising diversity as a constitutive dimension of a full human life. In this sense, the Society considers accompanying the formation of all young people, but especially those who decide to serve in politics, to be one of the greatest contributions we can make to improve the situation of human societies around the world.” Both speeches at <https://sjcuria.global/en/speeches>.

²³ Edward P. Hahnenberg and Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, from a draft proposal to CTSA membership, July 15, 2019. Used with permission.

²⁴ The question of sponsorship or patronage is an important and complex one for Jesuit and Catholic mission-based universities, reflecting fiscal challenges pervasive in US higher education but varying according to the sponsoring religious body and locality of the institution in question. The recent decision by the Jesuits to withdraw their sponsorship from Wheeling (Jesuit) University in West Virginia (Catholic News Service, April 24, 2019) has sent shock waves through the AJCU network, now down from 28 to 27 institutions. For the often tenuous relationship of support (“patronage”) or its lack between the US Catholic Bishops and Catholic academic theologians, see Massimo Faggioli and Michael Hollerich, “The Future of Catholic Theology: An Exchange,”

Commonweal, May 18, 2018, 7-11. As constitutively *Catholic* institutions, notwithstanding wishes or claims to the contrary, Jesuit schools do not have the luxury of opting out of vexatious questions related to the broader crisis of identity and belonging in the US Catholic Church—even if, as Hollerich notes, many US Bishops seem less than interested in dialogue or consultation with lay Catholics and lay Catholic theologians. “If the church doesn’t want what I know, and students won’t enroll in my classes as free electives so that I can satisfy the budgetary buzzards, where do I belong? I’m not at all sure. I’m a trained historian of Christianity with multiple teaching and research competencies, someone who first of all loves scholarship for its own sake. But I also have an unofficial role as a keeper of the historical conscience of a church prone to amnesia on sensitive subjects.”

²⁵ See Pedro Arrupe, S.J., “The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism” (1980), in *The Spiritual Legacy of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* (Rome: Jesuit Curia, 1985), 87-143, at 136. Lest Arrupe’s concern to keep Ignatius’s “inner itinerary” at the forefront of Jesuit works be misunderstood as a kind of Christian proselytism in disguise, we should remember that Arrupe—and more recently, Fr. General Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.—held a profound love and respect for the East, for Japan in particular, and the wisdom of Buddhism that saturates Japanese culture. Asked in a recent interview about his love for Japan, Fr. Nicolás emphasizes the Buddhist roots of Japanese culture, among other cultural strengths, including musical sensitivity. By contrast to the Western preoccupation with Truth, most Asiatic religions, he observes, “are religions or spiritualities of the Way. It’s significant for us Jesuits that—if I understand rightly—St. Ignatius was more interested in the Way, that is in how to grow and be transformed into Christ, than in other things.” Perhaps Jesuit mission, he concludes, needs a new language, a language of wisdom informed by the East, “which is the fruit of an open and incomplete thought and of a faith which knows how recognize the Lord where he makes himself found, not where we habitually look for him.” See Antonio Spadaro, S.J., “Interview with Fr. Adolfo Nicolás,” in *Jesuits: Yearbook of the Society of Jesus*, 2018, ed. Patrick Mulemi (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2017), 54-59.

²⁶ See Geger, “Cura Personalis,” 10-12, which offers pragmatic guidelines, some provided by Ignatius himself, for seeking balance, spiritual rejuvenation, and preventing burnout. Geger firmly disavows the frequently misunderstood and harmful notion of the “Magis” as “doing more.” “Teachers should not be told that ‘never resting content’ or ‘doing more’ is emblematic of the Jesuit mission. For Ignatius, it was always a matter of *what* Jesuits were doing, not *how much* they were doing, which is why discernment was so important.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948), 268.

²⁹ It is significant that Ignatius came into the spiritual insights that would take form in the Spiritual Exercises as a layperson, before he was ordained, and before the formal founding of the Society of Jesus. By distinction from the monastic and mendicant orders, the Ignatian tradition emphasizes a

spirituality for people immersed and active in the world, lay and religious. See David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1990). Just as “a single melody or line of music can appear in a variety of different forms,” Ignatian spirituality “is the original melody; Jesuit spirituality is one particular form or arrangement in which it has appeared. . . . You do not have to be a Jesuit to live Ignatian spirituality. On the contrary . . . what Ignatius has to offer as a way of being a disciple of Jesus is applicable to many forms of Christian life, whether lay, religious or ordained” (3-4).

³⁰ See William A. Barry, S.J. and Robert G. Doherty, S.J., *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (New York: Paulist, 2002). Frs. Barry and Doherty center each chapter of their book on creative tensions at the heart of “the Jesuit way.” In other words, the difficulty of navigating competing and sometimes conflicting or divergent values *is not a new problem but is a mark of the Ignatian project from the beginning*. As a Catholic theologian, I might add that the Jesuit willingness to occupy the “frontier” spaces of new thought often stands in notable contrast to an ecclesial hierarchical culture that is often uncomfortable with ambiguity and liminality. As noted above (n. 25), whereas Western Christianity (and here we can add Evangelical Protestant Christianity in the US) emphasizes “the Truth,” Ignatius and his companions were “more interested in ‘the Way,’” which implies searching, listening, reappraising, adapting; in short, a certain comfort with discomfort. Also very helpful on this point is the AJCU document, “Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Self-Evaluation Instrument,” which identifies seven distinctive characteristics of Jesuit universities, and the “tensions” and “challenges” arising from each. Accessible at <http://www.ajcunet.edu/mission-documents>.

³¹ Howard Gray, S.J., “Cura apostolica” (keynote, *Jesuit Secondary Education Association Conference, John Carroll University, University Heights, OH, June 23, 2004*). In his remarks to the major superiors of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (n. 5 above), Fr. General Sosa also addressed the tension between *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. “We are not owners of the mission; neither are we owners of the missionaries in the field. We are their servants exercising *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica* . . . Each one of you has been missioned to maintain this tension between *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. Ignatius was conscious of this complexity and tension.”

³² Hyacinthe Loua, S.J., “Re-reading my experience of GC 36,” in *Jesuits: Yearbook of the Society of Jesus*, 2018, ed. Patrick Mulemi (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2017): 63-66. Compare the practice of the *murmurationes* at GC 36 to Pope Francis’s emphasis on discernment: “The style of the Society is not shaped by discussion, but by discernment, which of course presupposes discussion as part of the process. The mystical dimension of discernment never defines its edges and does not complete the thought. The Jesuit must be a person whose thought is incomplete, in the sense of open-ended thinking.” Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God.” A similarly open and non-coercive style seems to mark the original spirit of the Society from the beginning—of course there are significant and tragic historical exceptions. “We don’t preach [to people],” Ignatius once replied in response to a query from a priest, “but we speak about things of God with certain people in an informal way, such as after a

meal with some people who invite us.” Geger, “*Cura Personalis*,” 20, n. 56.

³³ Howard Gray, keynote address to the JSEA.

³⁴ Susan A. Ross, “The Jesuits and Women: Reflections on the 34th General Congregation’s Statement on Women in Church and Civil Society,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 16 (Fall 1999): 20-28. I’m grateful to my colleague Kari Kloos at Regis University for pointing me to this invaluable resource.

³⁵ More recent resources include Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino, eds., *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Fordham University, 2012); Emma Winters, “Transforming Society: Meet the Women Who Run Jesuit Universities,” *America*, May 27, 2019, 26-31; Margo J. Heydt, “Solving the Mystery of Decree 14: Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society,” *Conversations: On Jesuit Higher Education*, September 15, 2015, at <http://www.conversationsmagazine.org/web-features/2015/12/27/solving-the-mystery-of-decree-14-jesuits-and-the-situation-of-women-in-church-and-civil-society>.

³⁶ Much of the present vitality in cultivating a *lay esprit de corps* is emerging not only in universities but in Jesuit retreat centers, parishes, and high schools, through the training of new generations of lay leaders of the Spiritual Exercises. For an inspiring look at this development, including partnerships between Ignatian spirituality centers and Jesuit educational institutions, see Claire Peterson, “Discerning Spirits: Lay Leaders of the Spiritual Exercises,” *Jesuits Central and Southern*, Summer 2019, 16-19, <http://jesuitscentralsouthern.org/publications>.

³⁷ One of the elements that sets the Ignatian vision apart theologically is the radical scope of its presumption of God’s presence “in all things.” Rooted in Ignatius’s own spiritual journey and the biblical-mystical tradition in which he was formed, it is a memory and experience of God’s indwelling Presence/Spirit in all creation, discernible in the movements of the human spirit (i.e., freedom), even in those who do not overtly confess the name of God, nor look to Jesus Christ as the preeminent sacrament (i.e., touchpoint for the heart) of the divine Presence. For a lucid example of the capacious Ignatian theological imagination at the frontiers of faith, culture, and science, see Dennis Hamm, “Reading Hopkins after Hubble: The Durability of Ignatian Creation Spirituality,” *Horizons* 41, no. 2 (2014): 275-95. From the vantage point of Jesuits in the global south, and especially the “crucified peoples” of the world, see Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008). The recently promulgated “Universal Apostolic Preferences” detail the global Society’s pastoral-spiritual-theological vision for the future, shaped in no small part by the leadership of Pope Francis and his emphasis on the plight of refugees, the poor, and the environmental crisis. See <https://jesuits.global/en/uap/introduction>.

³⁸ I’m indebted to my colleague Dan Justin at Regis University for his development of this line of thought in

several recent conference presentations, not yet published, including “An Incomplete Nihilism? ‘Values Talk’ and the Death of God in Catholic Higher Education,” given at “The Idea of the Catholic University in the 21st Century,” Loyola Marymount University, March, 15, 2018.

³⁹ It is significant that the very first of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences (n. 37 above) is “Showing the Way to God” through the Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian practice of discernment. Once again the life of Arrupe is instructive here. In Arrupe, the integral link between faith and action for justice in the world is linked to a *particular kind of mysticism*, a “mysticism of open eyes,” as Kevin Burke, S.J., powerfully describes it, borrowing from German theologian Johann Baptist Metz. Kevin Burke, “Introduction: A Mysticism of Open Eyes,” in *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings*, ed. Kevin F. Burke (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 15-38.

⁴⁰ A 19th century English convert to Catholicism, Newman developed his seminal ideas around epistemology and the “theology of the religious imagination” in John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1979), a work of enormous impact in Catholic theology during the 20th century, and for Jesuit theologians in particular. Newman’s *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1982) likewise continues to shape how Catholics navigate difficult questions about the role of the Catholic university in a pluralist, secular, modern, and postmodern cultural environment.

⁴¹ Few have said this more clearly than Fr. Nicolás in his Mexico City address (n. 14 above): “[The Ignatian imagination] involves a profound engagement with the real, a refusal to let go until one goes beneath the surface. . . . The starting point, then, will always be what is real: what is materially, concretely thought to be there; the world as we encounter it; the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels themselves; a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing. We start there. We don’t run away from there. And then Ignatius guides us and students of Jesuit education, as he did his retreatants, to enter into the depths of that reality. Beyond what can be perceived most immediately, he leads one to see the hidden presence and action of God in what is seen, touched, smelt, felt. And that encounter with what is deepest changes the person” (4).

⁴² The idea of “flourishing” expresses the inherent end (or *telos*) of life at both the personal-individual level and within the whole human-planetary community. Spiritual discernment involves measuring whether and to what extent a particular choice or path will lead toward common flourishing, in Ignatian terms, toward the greater glory of God, or what Catholic social teaching calls the common good. “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the life community, it is wrong when it tends to do otherwise.” Aldo Leopold, cited in Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit* (Notre Dame, IN: St. Mary’s College, 1993), 67.

⁴³ Monika K. Hellwig, “Finding God in All Things: A Spirituality for Today,” in George W. Traub, S.J., ed., *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 50–58, at

51. From an Ignatian standpoint, the gravest danger to human flourishing is not necessarily sin or failure, an inevitable part of the human journey, but getting stuck both personally and corporately in unhealthy choices and patterns, becoming trapped in false scripts, unable to learn or receive God’s love and mercy, to cultivate life-giving relationships, and thus turn away from self-centered or damaging ways so as to grow more deeply into the freedom for love.

⁴⁴ See Gray, “Ignatius the Spiritual Administrator,” n. 10 above, with emphasis on adapting to the concrete circumstances of each institution, locality, program, department, always in light of the mission and the particular challenges, needs, and resources at hand.

⁴⁵ This is a delicate point, theologically, and not without controversy among Jesuits themselves. To what extent can an “Ignatian” sensibility be authentically shared by non-Christians? While it is true that Jesus cannot be the object of “real” religious assent (Newman) or participatory faith for those who have little contact with the Gospel or the Church, this does not mean Jesus’ life and teachings (or Jesuit values, by extension) cannot function as a norm or “touchpoint for the heart” for non-Christians. For Christians and Catholics, of course, and certainly for Ignatius and his companions through the Spiritual Exercises, the person of Jesus is our consummate norm, giving shape and imaginative content to the Christian vision of human flourishing in relation to God. Yet the New Testament and the Christian mystical tradition also point through the risen and cosmic Christ, sacramentally, as it were, toward the universality of God’s presence in all creation, for example, in the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, where all hear the Good News “in his own native language” (Acts 2:6). Just as the New Testament makes no sense extracted from the Jewish revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christ-centered, incarnational dynamism of the Exercises is enfolded within a Creation- and Spirit-centered vision, as in the First Principle and Foundation and in the Fourth Week. For a masterful translation (i.e., inculturation) of Ignatian spirituality for diverse audiences in a contemporary ecumenical, evolutionary, secular, and historically conscious horizon, see Roger Haight, S.J., *Christian Spirituality for Seekers: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012). Owing much to Rahner’s theology of grace, Haight’s interpretation of the Exercises is decidedly Creation- and Spirit-centered.

⁴⁶ “The Pilgrim” is the name by which Ignatius refers to himself in his Autobiography, but it also functions as a broad metaphor for his sense of the spiritual life. Literally to be a “companion of Jesus” is to walk the road with him, share bread with him, imagine and plan the next stage of the journey with him, take one’s rest in his company at the end of the day. A pilgrim spirituality is a hallmark of Pope Francis’s teachings, affirming the ecclesiology of Vatican II, in which the church is described as a “pilgrim People of God” (*Lumen Gentium*, nos. 6, 8, 14, 48). With such imagery the Council Fathers sought to recover a sense of the ongoing drama and still-unfolding journey of the divine-human relationship in history as expressed in Scripture.

⁴⁷ George Steiner, “To Speak of Walter Benjamin,” in *Benjamin Studies: Perception and Experience in Modernity*, ed. Helga

Geyer-Ryan, Paul Koopman, Klaas Yntema (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 13–23, at 22.

⁴⁸ Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., “Depth, Universality and Learned Ministry,” n. 14 above, especially Nicolás’s concluding remarks (emphasis added below), in which he asks his audience to imagine themselves “not as presidents or CEOs of large institutions, or administrators or academics, but *as co-founders of a new religious group*, discerning God’s call to you as an apostolic body in the Church. In this globalized world, with all its lights and shadows, would—or how would—running all these universities still be the best way we can respond to the mission of the Church and the needs of the world? Or perhaps, the question should be: What kind of universities, with what emphases and what directions, would we run, if we were re-founding the Society of Jesus in today’s world? . . . [Because] I think every generation has to re-create

the faith, they have to re-create the journey, they have to re-create the institutions. This is not only a good desire. *If we lose the ability to re-create, we have lost the spirit.*”

⁴⁹ Fr. Gray’s discussion of the practices of attention, reverence, and devotion in light of his personal experience with students in the LGBTQ community at Georgetown University is itself a poignant and powerful example of heart-centered contemplative leadership and companionship with young people in the context of Jesuit education. See “Ignatius the Spiritual Administrator,” from about [17:00] forward. I would like to dedicate this essay *in memoriam* to Fr. Howard Gray, S.J., whom I never had the good fortune to meet, but whose impact on me and so many in the realm of Jesuit education and Ignatian spirituality continues to be immense.