

Seeing with the Heart: A Contemplative Form of Compassion

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[Abstract] There would be little disagreement over whether the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius provide the foundation for an authentic Ignatian spirituality. Yet there is a substantial divergence of opinion as to the *purpose* of those Spiritual Exercises, and St. Ignatius’ intention for offering them to those who seemed ready to undertake what may appear as a daunting process of spiritual transformation.

There is probably no single purpose or intention, but perhaps rather a cluster of goals that revolve around a unifying notion of “discernment”—which itself is a term rather diffuse in its interpretation. It sometimes involves “decision-making” or “election” (or more broadly, discerning God’s particular will); but it also encompasses learning to interpret interior movement (discernment of spirits), through a growing familiarity and deepening intimacy with God.

Emerging out of St. Ignatius’ own experience of mystical union with God, the Spiritual Exercises may also be seen as a structure for employing various methods of prayer to lead the Exercitant “to the threshold of contemplation:” that is, providing an occasion for the retreatant to experience the divine love that allows one to “see God in all things.”

It is this contemplative “seeing” that the paper seeks to explore more fully as the foundation for a maturing practice of authentic discernment—certainly, at the important moments of making life-choices; but also in the ordinary movement of daily living. In this sense, “seeing” is used metaphorically, and refers to a contemplation of God that awakens us to (and through) compassion. The experience and practice of mercy (or “compassion”) thus offers a contemplative basis for cultivating solidarity for the establishment of justice. Without this contemplative depth, our “option for the poor” and social ministries may become hollow ideals.

Keywords: Spiritual Exercises, Contemplation, Compassion, Solidarity, Justice

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“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*)

Introduction

In the process of offering spiritual and retreat direction over the years, I have been amazed by the number of persons who relate to me what I would identify as “mystical” encounters with God. Unfortunately,

the common notion of mysticism perhaps obscures those encounters: it is a word that is very often associated with visions, locutions, intense affectivity, and paranormal experiences.¹ It is hardly surprising: Among the great mystics of the Christian tradition, these phenomena are often recounted in great detail and are a natural source of fascination.

The danger, of course, is that these experiences can distract us from the essence of a mystical encounter, which I propose here is a form of union with God that goes beyond our natural human faculties—beyond emotion, image, understanding, or desire—and it does so precisely because of God’s absolute transcendence. Secondly, these extraordinary phenomena can place the fundamental purpose and goal of our human life outside the reach of those who genuinely seek God. The Carmelite, Ruth Burrows, in her work on John of the Cross, expresses the counter-position clearly:

Each of us by the very fact of being human is made for union with God. It is our nature to be thus. We have within ourselves, or rather we *are* ourselves, a potentiality for this union.²

Emerging out of St. Ignatius’ own union with God, the Spiritual Exercises may thus be seen as a structure for employing various methods of prayer to lead the Exercitant “to the threshold of

¹ Harvey Egan calls these “secondary mystical phenomena” in his work *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 21. He goes on to distinguish mysticism in the broad and strict senses; “ordinary grace” and “extraordinary grace;” “acquired” and “infused” contemplation. We will return to these latter distinctions subsequently.

² Ruth Burrows, *Ascent to Love* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1987), 19.

contemplation”³: that is, providing an occasion for the retreatant to “experience” union with the divine love that ultimately leads one to “seek God in all things.”⁴

The process of the deepening union with the divine creates the locus for a cluster of goals in the Spiritual Exercises that revolve around a unifying notion of “discernment”—a term which is rather diffuse in its interpretation. It sometimes involves “decision-making” or “election” (that is, discerning the particular will of God); but it also encompasses the interpretation of interior movement (discernment of spirits), through a growing familiarity and deepening intimacy with God. Such discernment, however, is always grounded in the ultimate mystery of our human purpose and goal, which is awakened contemplatively and given expression in our mission and ministries.

The encounter with God, and the transformation of the human person by God’s love, have been variously described in both Christianity and other mystical traditions as “conversion,” “awakening,” “enlightenment,” among others. Our focus here is neither the method of meditation that best precipitates our spiritual transformation, nor the conditions or causes of that transformation.⁵ Rather, we explore the

³ Alexandre Brou and William Young, trans., *Ignatian Methods of Prayer* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1949), 3. I will return to examine more closely the notion of contemplation subsequently.

⁴ John W. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), III, c. I, n. 26.

⁵ After much time devoting himself to severe penances and long periods of prayer, St. Ignatius “awakens” on the bank of the river Cardonner apparently without “prior cause.” Ruth Burrows would suggest, too, that St. John of the Cross distinguishes the “active night” and “passive night” in order to clarify what part our own efforts contribute to union with the Beloved, and how God alone can ultimately effect this union. Burrows, *Ascent to Love*, 22-23.

effect of that encounter on our interpretation of a world which we now “see” in a new way—an awareness of God’s transcendent love permeating the movement of creation and history.

It is this contemplative “seeing” that the paper seeks to explore more fully as the foundation for a maturing practice of authentic discernment—certainly, at the important moments of making life-choices; but also in the ordinary movement of our daily lives, and specifically the transformation of society. In this sense, “seeing” is used metaphorically, and refers to a contemplation of God that awakens us to (and through) compassion. The experience and practice of mercy (or “compassion”) thus offers a contemplative basis for cultivating solidarity for the establishment of justice. Without this contemplative depth, our “option for the poor” and social ministries may become hollow ideals.

1. Faith and Justice

For well over a century, the Catholic Church has promulgated a wide body of “social” teachings, covering many and diverse topics of social concern. Not always received favourably by those who are challenged by their conclusions, even within its own membership, the Church’s social teaching effectively rejects the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the secular, religion and society.

The World Synod of Bishops in 1971 expressed this in a very emphatic way:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.⁶

Although the Synod's statement seemed controversial to some, it flowed rather naturally out of Vatican Council II's teaching in *Gaudium et spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World),⁷ which in some ways *defined* the Church in relationship to the full reality of our world. It is rooted in our fundamental belief in the mystery of the Incarnation as an expression of God's love for creation. It is a conviction that God is active and labouring in the continuing work of creation and the unfolding of salvation history.

For those who are familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the union of the spiritual and secular should be immediately obvious throughout the process of the Exercises: perhaps more explicitly in the contemplation on the Incarnation⁸ and in the final "Contemplation to Attain the Love of God;"⁹ but also as the ultimate movement towards the goal of "seeking God in all things," and the

⁶ World Synod of Bishops, Second Ordinary General Assembly, "The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World" (1971), n. 6, accessed 10 May 2020:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_19711130_giustizia_po.html.

⁷ Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1975), 903-1001.

⁸ Louis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), nn. 101-109.

⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, nn. 230-237.

priority given to the various methods of discernment integral for living out the Spiritual Exercises in daily life.¹⁰

The articulation of the mission of the Society of Jesus at its Thirty-Second General Congregation in 1975 as “...the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement”¹¹ was certainly revolutionary in the sense that it generated new forms of social ministries. In another sense, however, it merely recovered and expressed in a new way St. Ignatius’ mystical illumination of the immanence of God and His labour in creation and history.¹² The Decree was “radical,” not in the sense that it broke with the past, but rather that it was deeply “rooted” in the well-established contemplative charism of the Society of Jesus.

Twenty years later, however, at its Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, the Society of Jesus felt a need to clarify further the relationship of faith and justice:

The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith. The

¹⁰ Particularly the various forms of the Examen of Consciousness.

¹¹ In *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), General Congregation 32, Section I, Decree 4, “Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice,” 298 [48].

¹² St. Ignatius offers his own brief descriptions of those “experiences” in Joseph N. Tylenda, *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 36-39. Over a year in Manresa, he had several moments of mystical illumination concerning the mysteries of the Trinity, creation, the Eucharist, the humanity of Christ, as well as a more general “awakening” to all of the mysteries of the faith. A closer examination of these illuminative experiences offers fresh insights into the purpose, focus and structure of the Spiritual Exercises that he developed subsequently.

integrating principle of our mission is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom.¹³

Distinguishing the “aim” and the “integrating principle” of the mission certainly developed the way in which we should understand justice as an “absolute requirement of faith” as it was earlier expressed. More importantly, perhaps, was the recognition that the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of justice is part of the contemplative path that unifies an interior journey with the work of social transformation:

The Society continues to insist on the promotion of justice. Why? Because it corresponds to our very spirituality...¹⁴

Yet fundamental issues and questions remained. What is the relationship between spirituality centres and social action centres? In what way does one’s personal faith journey (manifested in the contemplative focus of the Exercises) animate the diverse forms of ministry? How does the social dimension of the service of faith shape the ministry of a teacher, a pastor, a spiritual director, or a human rights advocate?

¹³ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 34, 1995, Decree 2, “Servants of Christ’s Mission,” 527 [39].

¹⁴ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 34, 1995, Decree 3, “Our Mission and Justice,” 535 [73]. Using the language of “personal conversion” (Decree 3, p. 534 [66]) and speaking of the creation of “communities of solidarity” (Decree 3, p. 534 [68]) gave a spiritual and pastoral character to what may have otherwise seemed a mere moral imperative to some. The promotion of justice was becoming more explicitly grounded in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and the movement of interiority.

The original question of the relationship between faith and justice had significantly broadened: it had introduced nuanced distinctions involving the social dimension and social ministries; it had proposed principles of integration in mission; and it had sought greater spiritual depth in the discussion concerning strategies for social and environmental transformation.

By the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation in 2008, the discussion of the mission of the Society of Jesus had taken on a character that would have been familiar even to the first generation of Jesuits:

Being and doing; contemplation and action; prayer and prophetic living; being completely united with Christ and completely inserted into the world with him as an apostolic body...[W]e cannot abandon this creative polarity, since it marks the essence of our lives as contemplatives in action, companions of Christ sent into the world.¹⁵

If we take a closer look at the process of St. Ignatius’s deepening conversion throughout his lifetime, however, with its progressive moments of illumination and mystical union, we see it culminate in the simplicity of his charism: seeking and finding God in all things. It is the gradual synthesis of both the absolute transcendence and radical immanence of God; of St. Ignatius’ encounter with God’s inconceivable mercy, and a movement of compassion flowing from the “graces” that shape his heart and mission.

¹⁵ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 35, 2008, Decree 2, “A Fire that Kindles other Fires,” 736 [26-27].

It is my suggestion, then, that the Spiritual Exercises offer us a glimpse of St. Ignatius' own journey, while inviting us to enter the mystery he himself encountered. However creative the polarities of being and doing, contemplation and action, prayer and prophetic living may be, it is the mystical path that we share with St. Ignatius that discloses the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of justice—conceptually at times, but also profoundly in the praxis of our ministries.

2. Love and Solidarity

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
(1 John 4:8, NRSV)

The encounter with God's love and mercy, the response of gratitude and love, and the union of mind and heart with God incarnate in Christ for the mission with Him: it is these that constitute the fundamental movement of the Spiritual Exercises. St. Ignatius begins with the "consideration" of the purpose and goal of our created being ("The Principle and Foundation") and ends with the contemplative savouring of all the graces received in the period of silent enclosure ("Contemplation to Attain the Love of God"). The entire process, however, is pervaded by various methods that lead us to an encounter of God's love in creation and salvation history, so that our lives (and mission) might become an image of that love.

On that path of spiritual awakening, St. Ignatius offers a means of discerning genuine love by the interpretation of our interior movement. His description of "consolation" is instructive in this regard:

I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord...It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears that move to love of God...Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and love, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.¹⁶

There is much in this description of consolation that warrants our attention, not least of which is his consistent reference to the love of God: it is the "end" that facilitates the discernment of interior movement. It is a common enough error to identify consolation with "good feelings;" or conversely, desolation with "bad feelings." For St. Ignatius, our thoughts, emotions, and desires may be important interior movements experienced in our prayer, but they are subject to discernment in light of the divine love that constitutes genuine consolation.¹⁷ We can be deceived as much by our own spurious reasoning, as we can be by the "false consolation" of the evil spirit.¹⁸

This may account for the affective ambiguity that is often experienced in meditation. A retreatant once recounted her experience

¹⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 142 [n.316].

¹⁷ George E. Ganss cautions against the facile identification of good feelings with consolation and suggests that "...consolation always includes a tendency toward an increase in charity." *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), n.148: 192-193. Rather than distinguishing "non-spiritual consolation" and "spiritual consolation" as he does, however, I would propose that consolation as Ignatius understood it is characterized by a discernment of interior movements that is always considered through the lens of divine love and union.

¹⁸ This is clearly explained by St. Ignatius in his "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits" suitable for the second week of the Exercises. See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, [especially nn.332 and 336].

of tears in prayer. When the director asked if they were tears of joy or sadness, she responded: “They were neither tears of joy, nor sadness. It was as though my heart was so full of love, it overflowed through my eyes.” In the same way, Ignatius’ understanding of consolation facilitates the interpretation of aridity in prayer, or even darkness: that is, psychological phenomena may not have much bearing on the discernment of interior movement.

Placing love at the centre of discernment also helps us to understand how our human faculties, the methods of prayer that we engage, and the goal of contemplation are all related to the mystical awareness of God in all things. Pope Francis described this in terms of the Biblical use of the “heart” metaphor:

In the Bible, the heart is the core of the human person, where all his or her different dimensions intersect: body and spirit, interiority and openness to the world and to others, intellect, will and affectivity. If the heart is capable of holding all these dimensions together, it is because it is where we become open to truth and love, where we let them touch us and deeply transform us.¹⁹

The difficulty, of course, is identifying the interior movements that bring clarity to the notion of love itself. In popular discourse and culture, love is often identified with affection, desires, and an attraction to an “other.” Certainly, these phenomena can be important, particularly for the establishment of a relationship. For those that have encountered

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, (2013, n.26), accessed 30 May 2020: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html.

and cultivated a deeper and more mature love, however, feelings and attraction diminish in importance as a relationship undergoes various “seasons.” At times, too, these “experiences” can even be the tools for manipulation, exploitation, and the antithesis of love. Our emotions and desires require discernment.

Genuine or authentic love, by contrast, is a process (over time, in a variety of circumstances) of deepening union with the “other,” involving elements of intimacy, sacrifice, and surrender. It is the mutual gift of self to the other that unites the two as one. This is at the heart of St. Ignatius’ understanding of consolation, informs the movement of the Spiritual Exercises as a whole, and explicates his notion of contemplation.

The interior movement, then, that is of primary interest to St. Ignatius are those which participate in the dynamic of love: that is, they reflect the movement from self-absorption and self-centredness (characteristic of desolation) to the awareness and union with the “other.” While there are, no doubt, many others that are important, three interior movements seem prominent in St. Ignatius’ Exercises: contrition,²⁰ gratitude and compassion. Each may be expressed in the intellect, will and affectivity, but they cannot be reduced to the content of those expressions.

²⁰ John English explains well the discernment of “tears” in the First Week, which may be self-centred, rather than an indication of genuine contrition. *Spiritual Freedom* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995), 74. I would add the important distinction of the notions of guilt and contrition: the former is focused on the emotional response that may be largely self-concerned; the latter an awareness of the wound I have inflicted upon the beloved.

What is common to all three of these “impulses of the soul” is that each one, in its own unique way, represents a movement of self to the other: self-forgetfulness, as well as the awareness and embrace of the other. They are all dimensions of love.

Our focus here is compassion. Often confused with “feeling for” another, genuine compassion is more accurately understood, in the spiritual sense, as “union with” another. In that sense, compassion is sometimes even used synonymously with the notion of mercy, and very broadly as love itself.²¹ While compassion may have an affective dimension, it goes well beyond an emotional response.²² In the Gospels, Jesus is described at times as “moved with compassion” (Luke 7:13; 10:30; Matthew 14:14), which is clearly much more than a passing emotional response. As the incarnate compassion of God himself, Jesus’ encounters are characterised by a union with the heart of the other, sharing their joy and pain, healing and transforming them in the centre of their being.

Following the graces of contrition and gratitude of the First Week, then, when the Exercitant touches intimately the mercy of God in the awareness of sin (cosmic, social, and personal), St. Ignatius leads us in the Second Week to a contemplation of God’s compassion: in the Incarnation, as an expression of the mercy of the Trinity, and in the life and ministry of the Christ. As we grow in that “interior knowledge” of

²¹ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, (2015, n. 8), accessed 16 June 2020: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html.

²² The emotional response of the Good Samaritan, for example, who was moved to compassion for the wounded traveller, is not the most important element of the story, as much his awareness of the man and the selfless spontaneity of his merciful care.

Jesus, our contemplation becomes increasingly intimate and “suffused with love.”²³

The various dimensions of love, that is, the union of self with the other, are woven into the invitation of the Second Week to greater intimacy and discipleship.²⁴ Three important moments of this love manifest themselves in the movement of the Second Week: “Seeing” the other (The Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ²⁵); “Desiring” the other (The Meditation on Two Standards²⁶); and “Choosing” the other in freedom (The Meditation on the Three Classes of Persons.²⁷ In this way, the “election” or decision-making process is part of a deepening discernment of God’s love.²⁸

The dynamic of love that manifests itself in the moments of seeing, desiring, and choosing the other always involves the underlying transformative movement of love from self to the other. The Spiritual Exercises cultivates the solitude and silence of enclosure so that in the depths of prayer we might encounter God’s love, unite ourselves to the heart of the compassionate Christ, and open ourselves to discern God’s

²³ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [104], 56; and n.65, p.163.

²⁴ “...that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely.” Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [104], 56.

²⁵ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [91-100], 53-55.

²⁶ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [136-148], 65-67.

²⁷ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [149-157], 68-69.

²⁸ It is hardly surprising, then, that St. Ignatius offers as a conclusion for the Second Week material the “consideration” of the “Three Degrees of Humility” or the “Three Kinds of Love.” Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [165-168], 72 - 73. Ganss offers insight into the tradition that unites humility and love in note 86 (pp.173-175). Most importantly, he alludes here to the way in which this Exercise pervades the entire course of the Exercises. I would add that the desire for this perfect love of Christ becomes an important moment of transition from the contemplation of Christ’s compassion (the Second Week) to an intimate sharing of his passion, death and resurrection, which is the compassion we seek as a grace in the Third and Fourth Weeks.

Spirit in the life of God's people, so that we might become agents of transformation and healing in the world.

In the Jesuits' Thirty-Sixth General Congregation, the relationship of our personal conversion to social transformation is strongly stated:

For us Jesuits, compassion is action, an action discerned together. Yet we know that there is no authentic familiarity with God if we do not allow ourselves to be moved to compassion and action by an encounter with the Christ who is revealed in the suffering, vulnerable faces of people, indeed in the suffering of creation.²⁹

Nevertheless, the converse would be equally true: there is no genuine (or "discerned") compassion for the suffering of humanity and creation without the intimacy with God that comes through our contemplative union. Our ministries of service, advocacy, development, and empowerment are animated and made effective in God's love. Compassionate action on behalf of justice flows out of our contemplative union with the heart of Christ; our contemplation is deepened by the discernment of God's presence in the suffering and vulnerability of our world.³⁰

²⁹ *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017), Decree 1, "Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice," 21 [20].

³⁰ For those who have undergone the Spiritual Exercises more than once, the experience of the 30 days can be significantly different each time. The on-going practice of meditation in the interim, the wisdom that comes with life experience, and the richness of our relationships afford a new breadth and depth to the movement of the Exercises. My personal experience of many years of insertion, life and ministry among the most marginal in Jamaica, for example, allowed a

The notion of “solidarity” that is used with such great frequency in the Church’s social teaching (as well as in Jesuit documents) is helpful for bringing conceptual unity to the interior and social dimensions of love. Just as the movement of “self to other” provides clarity for distinguishing consolation and refines our understanding of consolation beyond affect; so too do the features of “seeing, desiring, and choosing” nuance the commitment to social transformation.

“Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44, NRSV) When Jesus asks this question of Simon the Pharisee as a woman of ill-repute came to express her love, we might assume that he uses the question rhetorically in order to introduce the subsequent lesson. Yet perhaps the question needs an answer. Simon does not “see” the woman: he is distracted by her reputation, and by his own sense of self-righteousness. The story not only instructs us in the process of conversion of the woman, but also provides an occasion for Jesus to challenge the “blindness” of social exclusion. Jesus “sees” the woman. He contemplates her in a movement of unity. His compassion for her is perfected by the “sight” that is fundamentally contemplative.³¹ Given Simon’s prior doubts about Jesus’ prophetic identity, Jesus ironically demonstrates not only his ability to know her heart, but prophetically penetrates the truth of her social reality. In this way, he provides a remedy for her personal healing, as well as offering a path to social reconciliation.

new way for me to enter into the graces of the Exercises when I was given a second opportunity to engage them in a 30-day retreat.

³¹ “Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul.” Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, (2015, n. 14).

Like compassion, then, solidarity involves far more than passing feelings of pity, or indignation about injustice. Solidarity involves a fundamental conversion that allows us to contemplate our neighbour, as they truly are, and not merely as they appear to be (or what we would want them to be). It is contemplatively discerned and realised tangibly in the community.³² Our contemplation opens us to forms of compassionate action, and our insertion in the genuine community (in all its poverty) intensifies our interior life. Genuine solidarity is constituted by the union of hearts that forms communities of justice, and it is contemplative in its essence.

3. A Contemplative Life of Compassion

[Contemplation is] life itself, fully awake, fully active, and fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness, and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source. (Thomas Merton)³³

“To seek and find God in all things” is the heart of St. Ignatius’ mysticism, or perhaps of mysticism more generally. The simplicity of love prescinds from any dichotomy of the interior life and our social

³² It is in this way that the path of a deepening path of interiority and the manifold of ministries are united in a movement of contemplative compassion. This is true as much in personal relationships as it is in our work for structural transformation.

³³ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Boston and London: Shambala, 2003), 1.

reality. In his description of a Jesuit as a “contemplative in action,” it was unfortunate that Jerome Nadal’s phrase would later give rise to a polarisation of contemplation and action. He clearly intended to unite the two, so that there might be a “rejection of both a disembodied spiritualism and a professional secularized activism.”³⁴

Part of the difficulty, however, is that the word “contemplation” tends to be used in many different senses. In its most common usage, it refers generically to various forms of meditation. St. Ignatius uses the term to refer both to a method of meditation (as distinguished from other methods) that involves the use of imagination; as well as to a moment of mystical union that infuses the beloved with a loving gaze of the lover. The imaginative method of prayer merely leads us to the threshold of contemplation, which unites the lover and beloved.

It is this second sense of St. Ignatius, as a moment of divine union, that clarifies the intention of Jerome Nadal: The one who is united with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, is an instrument of the divine love that brings reconciliation to the world, as the justice of the Kingdom. It is compassion and solidarity that unites us to the other, as part of the divine desire for the establishment of genuine community.

To be contemplative is not the same as engaging in a method of meditation, even if the latter is presupposed. It is not only an interior

³⁴ Peter Hans Kolvenbach, “Jerome Nadal: Fifth Centenary of his Birth,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* (XXXVIII, 3/2007), 10, accessed 15 June 2020: <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/cis/pdfenglish/200711602en.pdf>. Fr. Kolvenbach goes on to suggest that “Father Nadal presents the familiarity with God of a companion of Jesus as a circular movement which finds its origin in the movement of the Spirit, passes through our heart, and is fulfilled in a concrete apostolic commitment to return to its source in God.” (12).

activity, it is a discernment of the presence of God in all things that transforms our perception, orients our desires, informs our decision-making, and animates our ministries. As such, the Spiritual Exercises do not conclude at the end of the retreat, but rather open the retreatant to a lifelong process of deepening contemplation.

The place and purpose of the “Contemplation to Attain Love” is instructive in this regard. As the final contemplation of the Exercises, and given its character, George Ganss has good grounds to propose that its primary function is to “build a bridge for intensive spiritual living in everyday life after the Exercises have ended.”³⁵ It is at once a review of all that has been received in the Four Weeks, a contemplative gaze of the Lover and Beloved, as well as an Exercise that St. Ignatius perhaps intended to be practised regularly to dispose us to the grace of union with God’s love. The “Contemplation to Attain Love” completes the Spiritual Exercises in one sense, but also provides a path for an on-going, deepening awareness of Christ’s compassion in us that expresses itself as solidarity and the desire for justice.³⁶

In the Spiritual Exercises, we awaken to the love of God that infuses all creation, and we begin to “see with the heart.”

³⁵ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, note 120, 184.

³⁶ Here we return to the earlier reference to the common distinction of “acquired” and “infused” contemplation (note 1). The Exercises are not mechanical: St. Ignatius is clear that the grace of the “Third Degree of Humility” is one that cannot be acquired. In the same way, he proposes Exercises that dispose us to the unitive mystical experience but acknowledges that the gift of that union cannot be manufactured. It is as spontaneous and “without cause” as his own experiences in Manresa. The Spiritual Exercises do not presume to effect the mystical graces of divine union, and the “Contemplation to Attain Love” continues the invitation to deeper awareness, compassion and solidarity.

〔摘要〕人們對於聖依納爵神操是否為真正的依納爵靈修奠定了基礎，沒有多大的分歧。然而，對於神操的**目的**，以及聖依納爵（St. Ignatius）意圖將它們提供給那些似乎準備好進行一種可能令人生畏的靈性轉化過程的人，大家的意見分歧卻很大。

可能沒有單一的目的或意圖，反而可能是一組目標圍繞著一個統一的「分辨」概念，而分辨這個詞本身的解釋是相當鬆散。它有時涉及「決定」或「選擇」（或更廣義地說，是辨別天主的特殊意願）；但它也包括通過與天主與日俱增的熟悉和親密關係來學習闡釋內心的運動（辨別神類）。

神操是聖依納爵從自己與主的神秘結合的經歷中產生出來，它也可以看作是一種採用各種祈禱方法引領操練者「進入默觀門檻」的結構；也就是說，它為靜修者提供一個時機去體驗天主的愛，使他們能夠「在一切事物中看見天主」。

本文正是通過這種默觀的「觀照」來作更全面的探索，以此作為日漸成熟的真正分辨的實踐基礎——當然，是在作出人生選擇的重要時刻；也在日常生活中的平凡運動中。從這個意義上，「觀照」作為隱喻，指的是對上主的默觀，它喚醒（並通過）我們的同情心。因此，憐憫（或「同情」）的經驗和實踐為培養建立正義的團結提供了默觀的基礎。沒有這種默觀的深度，我們的「優先關愛窮人」和社會牧職可能成為空洞的理想。

關鍵詞：神操、默觀、同情心、團結、正義