

Special Issue Reprint

The Theological Underpinnings of Ignatian Spirituality

From Historical Context to Contemporary Relevance

Edited by
Eduard López Hortelano

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The Theological Underpinnings of Ignatian Spirituality: From Historical Context to Contemporary Relevance

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Guest Editor

Eduard López Hortelano



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Guest Editor

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About the Editor

Eduard López Hortelano

Eduard López Hortelano is a Jesuit priest and Professor of Spiritual Theology at Comillas Pontifical University (Madrid, Spain), where he teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses and serves as Director of the Institute of Spirituality. He first studied Primary Education at the University of Barcelona before earning a Bachelor's degree in Humanities from Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). He entered the Society of Jesus and continued his theological formation at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome), where he obtained the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.). He subsequently completed the Licentiate in Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology at the Centre Sèvres (Jesuit Faculties of Paris), deepening his engagement with systematic theology and the intellectual tradition of the Society of Jesus.

During the 2013–2014 academic year, he completed the *Máster Ignatiana* at Comillas Pontifical University, specialising in the history, theology, and spirituality of the Ignatian tradition. In 2016, he was awarded his Ph.D. in Theology at the same institution with a dissertation examining the role of the imagination—particularly imaginative contemplation—in Ignatian spirituality. His doctoral research explored the theological, anthropological, and spiritual significance of the imaginative faculty within the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, contributing to a renewed understanding of Ignatian mystical theology.

His publications combine historical investigation with systematic theological reflection, addressing both the development of the Ignatian tradition and its relevance for contemporary theological and spiritual discourse. He has authored numerous scholarly articles and book chapters and regularly participates in international conferences dedicated to spirituality, theology, and the history of Christianity.

Preface

This volume explores the theological and historical vitality of Ignatian spirituality through studies of temporal coadjutors in the Society of Jesus, the significance of St Francis Borgia and St Aloysius Gonzaga, and St Anthony Mary Claret's reception of the Spiritual Exercises. By bringing themes into dialogue, it enriches current research through overlooked figures, forms of vocation, and patterns of reception that broaden the historical and theological understanding of the Ignatian tradition.

Eduard López Hortelano

Guest Editor

Article

The Spanish Aggiornamento of Ignatian Theology and Spirituality: Axes and Figures

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Abstract

This study examines the renewal of Ignatian spirituality from the Spanish school, emphasizing the contributions of General Pedro Arrupe during his eighteen-year tenure leading the Society of Jesus. Arrupe's vision prioritized deep interior experience over mere religious practices, advocating for a spirituality rooted in divine gift and surrender. His leadership inspired a return to the fundamental principles of Ignatian spirituality, marked by a profound sense of God's presence, self-offering, and a commitment to the apostolic mission. The research is organized around three main axes: textual and exegetical, historical and contextual, and systematic or dogmatic Ignatian theology. The first axis explores the contributions of scholars like Antonio María de Aldama and José Calveras, who emphasized returning to the original Ignatian texts and their exegetical significance. Their work highlighted the centrality of Christ, the spiritual exercises as a transformative tool, and the dynamic relationship between mission and identity within the Society. The second axis focuses on historical and contextual analysis, particularly through the work of Cándido de Dalmases, Ricardo García-Villoslada, and Jesús Iturrioz. These scholars reassessed Ignatius of Loyola's biography and historical influences, moving beyond hagiographical narratives to consider broader theological and social movements of the 16th century, such as Erasmus' humanism and the Catholic Reformation. The third axis, systematic Ignatian theology, is examined through figures like Pedro de Leturia and Ignacio Iparraguirre, who explored the doctrinal dimensions of Ignatius' writings. Key themes include the Christocentric nature of Ignatian spirituality, the role of discernment in governance, and the balance between mysticism and apostolic mission. This research underscores the ongoing relevance of Ignatian spirituality by contextualizing its renewal within historical, exegetical, and theological frameworks, demonstrating its adaptability and enduring significance in contemporary spiritual discourse.

Keywords: Ignatian spirituality; exegetical analysis; theological renewal

1. Introduction

Andrew Spira's *The Invention of the Self* (Spira 2020) offers a novel perspective on the emergence of the modern self within the framework of Western spirituality. He argues that, beginning with the Renaissance, an introspective and autonomous notion of the individual took shape—a vision that resonates profoundly with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). In these Exercises, a methodical structure is proposed so that the retreatant might examine his interiority, become aware of his deepest desires, and make decisions oriented toward following Christ. Thus, although composed in the sixteenth century, the *Exercises* contain elements that anticipate the modern subjectivity

Spira analyzes, such as the centrality of personal consciousness and interior freedom, to the point that one can speak of their synchronicity with an acute contemporary crisis of meaning, or the planetary-scale psychic epidemic, as Constantini and Pinkler have noted in the Spanish edition of Carl Gustav Jung's Black Books (Jung 2023, p. II). Certainly, St. Ignatius does not propose an abstract spirituality but one that is embodied and directed toward the transformation of the self through discernment, despite the limitations of such a spirituality (Estrada 2019). This process of self-knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means of uniting oneself more intimately with God. While introspection for Spira appears as the axis of modernity, for Ignatius it is integrated into a communal and ecclesial experience. In this way, Spira's thought allows us to reread the *Exercises* as a bridge between medieval spirituality and the emerging modernity.

During the twentieth century, the *Spiritual Exercises* were rediscovered by theologians, mystics, and educators as a key tool for renewing Christian spiritual life, particularly in the post-conciliar context. Well-known authors such as Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) saw in them a concrete path to a personal experience of God, in a time marked by secularization and institutional skepticism. In this context, Spira's reading of the self as an active interior construction finds resonance with Ignatian pedagogy, which insists that each person must assume freely and responsibly his or her own spiritual quest. The recovery of discernment, the personalization of faith, and the attention to the affective movements as signs of the Spirit are hallmarks of this renewal. The *Exercises* became a means of reconciling modernity and faith, reason and experience. Their language, deeply psychological and adaptable, facilitated their application outside strictly religious settings. For this reason, Ignatian spirituality proved crucial in responding to contemporary challenges, fostering a faith lived out of interior freedom. This renewal was not a betrayal of St. Ignatius's legacy but rather a return to its most dynamic and transformative sources.

The dialogue between Spira's ideas and the *Spiritual Exercises* helps us to understand why the twentieth century required a spirituality that placed the self at its center—not as an isolated entity, but as a subject in the process of conversion. St. Ignatius offers a path in which the self does not remain enclosed within itself but opens to transcendence through discernment. In this sense, Ignatian spirituality provides a synthesis between the modern subjectivity Spira describes and the theological orientation of Christianity. The Ignatian renewal of the twentieth century allowed many believers to recognize themselves in a faith that was personalized and critical, yet at the same time profoundly ecclesial. This integration is crucial today, in an age defined by quests for authenticity and meaning in the face of fractures in our world and in the human condition (Han 2021). Thus, Spira's work not only illuminates the past but also helps to interpret the ongoing relevance of the Ignatian method. The self-constructed within the *Exercises* is a self oriented toward mission, toward the other, toward the Kingdom. In this dynamism between introspection and sending, between freedom and surrender, lies the transformative force of contemporary Ignatian spirituality.

From this perspective, the present study focuses on the way in which the category of experience emerges as a privileged path for recovering and renewing *ignacianidad* (*ignacianity*) in the twentieth century, within a Spanish context of spiritual authenticity and theological renewal. Within this framework, it is argued that the Christology of the *Spiritual Exercises* functions as the keystone, since it articulates Ignatian spiritual dynamism with the centrality of following Christ, thus shaping the believer's identity. Building on this core, the study analyzes the contributions of seven Spanish Jesuit authors—Aldama, Calveras, Dalmases, García-Villoslada, Iturrioz, Leturia, and Iparraguirre—who, from different perspectives, profoundly enriched the understanding and transmission of Ignatian spirituality. These authors are organized around three complementary approaches: the textual or

exegetical, centered on philological and hermeneutical fidelity to the foundational texts; the historical or contextual, which situates the *Exercises* and the figure of Ignatius within their cultural and institutional development; and the systematic or dogmatic, which seeks to integrate Ignatian intuition into a coherent and contemporary theological framework. Taken together, the study aims to show how the interplay of experience (*cognitio Dei experimentalis*)—in other words, from our perspective, the attempt to describe the experience of God (*Erfahrung*, in German) (García Gutiérrez 2023, p. 56)—Christology, and diverse academic approaches constitutes a fertile itinerary for the renewal of Ignatian spirituality in dialogue with the demands of contemporary thought.

2. The Inner Experience as a Way of Reclaiming Ignatian Identity

Undoubtedly, to begin by examining the most distinctive marks of the renewal of Ignatian spirituality within the Spanish school necessarily means taking as a point of departure the magisterium of Superior General Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991). His eighteen years of apostolic governance of the Society, up until his resignation in 1983, profoundly contributed to the depth, fidelity, and renewal of Ignatian spirituality in the post-conciliar era. However, it is important to keep certain considerations in mind from the outset of our analysis, for the complexity of the contemporary world—together with the succession of conflicts and crises of every kind throughout the twentieth century—reveals the most fundamental crisis: the crisis of faith.

The adage *Vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit* (“Called or not called, God will be present”), recorded by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his *Collectanea adagiorum*, originates from the Oracle of Delphi and encapsulates a theological and anthropological intuition of profound spiritual resonance. When Carl Gustav Jung had this ancient proverb inscribed above the doorway of his home in Küsnacht in 1908, it acquired renewed meaning within the framework of depth psychology (Jung 2023, p. 19). For Jung, the phrase symbolized the inescapable presence of the divine within the human soul, even when rational consciousness seeks to deny or ignore it. The adage expresses that the spiritual dimension does not depend on explicit invocation but dwells within interiority as a constitutive reality of being. Thus, it reveals that the experience of God is not an external imposition but an inner event arising from the unconscious and from the dialogue with mystery (Frohlich 2023). In this sense, the maxim embodies a vision of spirituality as an existential and transformative experience, wherein the divine manifests both in conscious seeking and in the silent depths of the soul.

2.1. Spiritual Experience

Certainly, spirituality cannot be lived merely through devotions, external imitations, or religious contexts that define religiosity. Depth is one of its essential marks. Pedro Arrupe situates spirituality in gift and self-surrender (far removed from voluntarism or mere effectiveness): the surrender to God. This is clearly perceptible in two fundamental moments that we might call his own Cardoner (cf. *Au* 30). The first occurs at the beginning of his vocation: “Usted se acordará tal vez de que, cuando en Valkenburg y en Marneffe planeábamos soñando [...] aquellos planes de moral, medicinas, psiquiatría y no sé cuántas cosas más [...] Ahora es todo lo contrario: no planeo, pero estoy convencido de que estoy en el puesto al que Dios me ha destinado [...] Planeo solamente un proyecto: el de echarme en manos de Cristo y que Él me lleve” (Iglesias 2005, p. 24).¹ The second, similar in tone, takes place at his farewell as Superior General after eighteen years of apostolic governance, when his physical strength was limited: “Yo me siento, más que nunca en las manos de Dios. Eso es lo que he deseado toda mi vida, desde joven” (García 2013a, p. 135).²

When Pius XII (1947) declared that objective piety (the prayer of the Church) could not be separated from subjective piety (personal prayer), the idea was recovered that prayer—whether meditation, contemplation, or any vocal form—constituted a personal preparation (*presidia militiae christianae*) for living intensely the mystery of faith, particularly the Eucharist. Therefore, it is intrinsic to existence that both dimensions (personal and communal) be reciprocal in the spiritual journey and that from their interaction arises what we now call interior experience. According to Waaijmann (2002), Arrupe should be placed within the spiritual phase that interprets spirituality through the concept of experience. The understanding of the spiritual life has passed through various stages. The first corresponds to the mystical stage of the seventeenth century, which led to the ascetical reaction a century later. The third, more theological, characterizes the nineteenth century. However, Pedro Arrupe anticipates what the Second Vatican Council would later emphasize: understanding the human being within his own existence (GS nn. 12–13) and recognizing the interdependence and relational nature of humankind as part of God’s salvific design (GS n. 23).

In this sense, when Arrupe approaches spirituality according to the Ignatian way, he departs from the preconiliar worldview that conceived it as a detachment from the world and a battleground to be fought (a “spiritual struggle” against temptation). Rather, the essence of spirituality lies in language (how the experience of God is articulated) and time (from where it is lived). From this perspective, the world reveals a spiritual dignity in tension toward the fullness of the Kingdom. A first milestone is that spiritual life is situated within a mystical perspective (as opposed to the scholastic one), where reflection on Christian life seeks to *taste* God and immerse oneself in the mystery. From this it follows that Arrupe’s Ignatian perspective is not confined to concepts or ideas; his way of living and transmitting spiritual experience pertains to a mysticism as an exercise of love and a mode of knowing God—where to contemplate Him is to see Him, and to see Him is to know Him.

Undoubtedly, the mystical experience is placed above asceticism. Gift and self-surrender are the conditions of possibility for a renewed and *aggiornata* Christian spirituality. They constitute the *principle and foundation* that Arrupe initiated for himself and for the entire Society, stemming from a practical logic that would even lead him to transform the novitiate into a field hospital: “Y Él allí, en el sagrario, contemplándolo todo y esperando nuestra invitación para que tomase parte en la obra de reconstruirlo todo. . . Salí de la capilla y la decisión fue inmediata. Haríamos de la casa un hospital” (Arrupe 1965, p. 176).³ Within this framework of interest in spirituality, his contribution acquires particular relevance for two reasons. First, because it would lead to a renewal of the spirituality of the Society of Jesus. Second, because he would extend it into a dynamic and a fundamental, practical, and existential attitude characterized as a way of life encompassing all dimensions: God, humanity, death, history, suffering, and injustice.

This surrender is only possible when it arises from the center of God within the life of the subject. Perhaps this image anticipates what Rahner would later expect from a mystical Christianity—one not primarily understood through political or sociological categories. For this reason, the Lord’s disposition must be the center, “que busquemos constantemente qué podemos hacer en su mayor servicio, y lo realicemos lo mejor posible, con amor, desprendidos de todo. Que tengamos un sentido muy personal de Dios” (García 2013a, p. 136).⁴ The Ignatian tradition, following the path marked by the *Spiritual Exercises*, begins with the *Principle and Foundation* (SpEx 23)—that is, the recovery of God’s centrality as Creator and Lord; and if this is so, then the human person is a creature who must refer all things to Him in order to order one’s life rightly. Interior life is the point of departure: “Mi posición ante el Señor ha de ser de humildad y agradecimiento profundísimos. El puesto

para el que Él me ha elegido exige una pureza de alma extraordinaria” (Arrupe 2002, p. 69).⁵

2.2. Christology and Spirituality

Arrupe recovers the Christological value of Ignatian spirituality to the point of affirming: “Jesucristo está en el sagrario realmente. Él, el Salvador del mundo, el Rey de la creación, la Cabeza de la Iglesia y de la Compañía. Él está ahí y me habla, me dirige” (Arrupe 2002, p. 71).⁶ The Christian experience is defined by its personal nature. This personal dimension is characterized by a love for Christ that is both exclusive and unique. To a certain extent, all human affections are subordinated to this primacy of love to which Ignatian spirituality constantly returns, since “al fin y al cabo, lo único que queda es Jesucristo [...], que me ha de orientar y ayudar siempre, aun en las circunstancias más difíciles y en las incomprendiones más dolorosas” (Ibid.).⁷

Ignatian spirituality finds its absolute center in the figure of Jesus Christ—not only as an object of contemplation, but also as a model of life and a criterion for discernment. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Saint Ignatius proposes a direct, affective, and committed relationship with Christ, especially with his humanity. From the contemplation on the Incarnation to the Passion, the exercitant is invited to know the Lord inwardly, in order to love and follow him more deeply.

This centrality is not merely doctrinal but profoundly existential: Christ becomes a companion on the journey and the point of reference for all decisions. Following Jesus entails embracing his way of life, his vision of the world, his preferential option for the poor, and his radical obedience to the Father. Through this process, the person gradually shapes his or her own *modo de proceder* according to that of Christ. Thus, Ignatian spirituality seeks not merely to form believing Christians, but disciples who live with Christ and like Christ. This centrality of Jesus is also expressed in mission, understood not as activism but as participation in God’s redemptive work. Ignatius conceives the Christian life as a concrete response to the call of Christ the King, who summons all to collaborate in the transformation of the world. For this reason, Ignatian discernment is neither neutral nor self-referential: it always seeks to identify how and where Christ can be followed more faithfully. Christ is not merely a spiritual teacher but the ultimate horizon of meaning and the measure of love. The relationship with Him is cultivated in prayer but verified in action. Thus, the Christ of Ignatian spirituality is not only the Crucified One but also the Risen One—He who sends, consoles, and walks with us. This integrative and dynamic vision makes Jesus the beating heart of the entire Ignatian experience, in which contemplation and commitment are united in a life transformed by the love of God.

In Ignatian spirituality, the spiritual process undergoes a significant inversion in relation to traditional frameworks of Christian life, in which the ascetical preceded and prepared the mystical. Whereas in classical currents the purification of the soul—through renunciation, sacrifice, and mastery of the passions—constituted the necessary threshold for attaining mystical states of union with God, Saint Ignatius proposes an inverse itinerary: the mystical experience, understood as a personal and immediate encounter with Christ, takes place at the beginning of the spiritual journey, and from it flows an ascetical life as an active and committed response.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the foundational moment is the loving contemplation of the person of Jesus, especially in the mysteries of his public life and his Passion. This contemplation awakens an interior movement oriented toward discipleship and personal transformation. Such a foundational experience of received love gives rise to an ascetical dynamic not grounded in obligation or voluntarist effort, but in the desire to configure one’s own life according to that of Christ.

This shift carries far-reaching theological and anthropological implications. First, it recognizes that the spiritual subject is not self-constructed through renunciation but is instead formed by the gratuitous experience of divine love. The initial mystical experience—as gift, illumination, and attraction to Christ—establishes the affective and motivational center of the Christian life, while ascesis emerges as its logical consequence: a concrete exercise of love and freedom in response to that experience.

In this sense, discernment—the key of Ignatian spirituality—functions not as a mechanism of self-control but as a means of interiorly converting the grace experienced into concrete choices of life, service, and self-giving. Thus, the Ignatian process does not eliminate the ascetical dimension but radically reinterprets it: it is not a path of perfection aimed at reaching God, but the way in which one lives—coherently and freely—the reality of having been reached by Him. This inversion, which moves from the mystical to the ascetical, enables a more integrated, affective, and incarnate spirituality—one profoundly attuned to contemporary sensibility.

3. Main Currents and Spanish Authors of the Twentieth Century

The table under analysis (Table 1) brings together seven prominent members of the Society of Jesus (Aldama, Calveras, Dalmases, García-Villoslada, Iturrioz, Leturia and Iparraguirre) and details both their bibliographical output and the research areas in which each specialized. Although heterogeneous, this grouping allows certain lines of convergence to be drawn among their respective trajectories. In the case of Antonio M. de Aldama, his work analyzes on interpreting the “Formula of the Institute,” which constitutes the normative core of the Jesuit order and establishes its fundamental structure. His commentary not only contextualizes the sources and development of this document but also delves into its significance for Ignatian life. In this way, the interest in the theological and constitutional foundations of the Society emerges as one of the keys to the overall picture.

Table 1. Spanish authors and approaches.

Author	Publications	Focus
Aldama	>20	Structure and Theology
Calveras	15–20	Editing sources
Dalmases	>25	Editing sources
García-Villoslada	10–15	Biography
Iturrioz	10–12	Pastoral Ministry
Leturia	15–20	History of Society of Jesus
Iparraguirre	>30	Systematic analysis

Conversely, Calveras and Dalmases are distinguished by primarily philological and editorial work. Both participated in the critical edition of the *Exercitia Spiritualia Sancti Ignatii de Loyola*, published in the series *Monumenta Historiae Societatis Iesu* (Sabau 2010). The importance of their work lies in the recovery and authentication of documents that are essential for understanding the earliest Ignatian texts and, thereby, the genesis of Jesuit spirituality. In a different register, Ricardo García Villoslada offered a biographical approach through his *San Ignacio de Loyola: Nueva biografía*, published in 1986 and regarded by various scholars as the most comprehensive biography of the Society’s founder. The hagiographic character of this text, issued in Madrid by the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, reveals the combination of historical rigor and literary sensitivity with which the figure of Ignatius of Loyola is treated.

In addition to these profiles, the table mentions Iturrioz and Leturia, whose research complements the pastoral and historical dimensions of the topic. Iturrioz focused on

pastoral praxis and spiritual accompaniment, offering an applied perspective directed at the daily life of those undertaking the Exercises. Leturia, for his part, addressed the history of the Society with particular emphasis on its Franciscan roots; in one of his essays, reissued in 2021, he notes that Ignatius adopted from that tradition the practice of poverty, devotion to the name of Jesus and the contemplation of God in all things. Finally, Ignacio Iparraguirre stands out for his exhaustive research on the Spiritual Exercises: he was recognized as a specialist in their history and produced a trilogy analyzing their practice during Ignatius's lifetime, their subsequent development up to the promulgation of the Directory and their systematic evolution during the seventeenth century (Begheyn 2019). From the overall comparison it emerges that, although the number of publications per author ranges between ten and thirty, each contributes to a coherent corpus that combines doctrinal analysis, source editing, biography and pastoral work. This mosaic of approaches illustrates the richness and complementarity of Jesuit historiography, in which the recovery of texts, historical context and systematic analysis coexist to offer a comprehensive understanding of the identity and mission of the Society of Jesus.

3.1. Textual and Exegetical Axis

Antonio M.^a de Aldama (1908–2005) undertook the 1962 edition of the *Institutum Societatis Iesu* documents and produced a purely exegetical commentary on the *Formula* and the *Constitutions*. His intent was none other than to elucidate the distinctive way of life proper to the Jesuits: “Las apreciaciones de los autores se refieren más a la organización de la Compañía en general y a su actividad que al libro mismo de las Constituciones ignacianas” (de Aldama 1981, p. 30).⁸ Thus, began a “dry” return to the sources as a means of presenting the *Constitutions* and the *Formula* as expressions of religious life. In this endeavor, Aldama moves beyond the regulatory framework that had, until then, been the most common perspective, toward a more spiritual or animating interpretation, recovering the Institute's more missional dimension: from “missions” in the plural to *mission* in the singular: “Lo que aquí pretendemos hacer, es un comentario exegético. Intentamos solo investigar lo que realmente quiso decir san Ignacio en cada uno de los pasajes que estudiamos. Para lograrlo nos servimos principalmente del método crítico [...] Sin embargo, además de estudiar la palabra, el texto mismo de las Constituciones, acudimos también a los hechos históricos con una mira ambiciosa a dar algo del Sitz im Leben” (de Aldama 1973, p. vi).⁹

The Christological value of spirituality is recovered, stemming from the same sources—identity and mission. Following Christ entails poverty and humility. First, it emphasizes evangelical poverty; second, its apostolic or missionary projection (edifying one's neighbor); and third, Aldama stresses its ascetical dimension (poverty distances one from greed, leading to a happy and pure life). In this regard, the *Spiritual Exercises* are both source and soul:

“Los Ejercicios son fuente—ciertamente instrumental—[...] de aquellos dones interiores que unen el instrumento de Dios con la mano divina, de los cuales habla san Ignacio en el n.2 de la Parte décima (Co 813) [...] Diríamos en otros términos que los Ejercicios son el instrumento de que se sirve la Compañía para formar al sujeto de las Constituciones, que es el jesuita, el cual ha de ser un hombre espiritual; y en este sentido con razón se pueden llamar ‘alma’ de las Constituciones” (de Aldama 1976, p. 135).¹⁰

Thus, the *Exercises* are understood as the mediating means through which the Society shapes the Jesuit—its subject—as a spiritual man; in this sense, they may rightly be called the “soul” of the *Constitutions*. However, there was also a measure of reserve in certain circles. Some critical voices (O'Leary 2012; Worcester 2008; Mooney 2009)—particularly from more existential or pastoral perspectives—argued that Aldama's excessive systemati-

zation risked reducing the spiritual experience to overly rational frameworks, insufficiently attentive to the flexibility required in individual accompaniment. Others observed that, by focusing so strongly on structure (O'Reilly 2016), his approach could at times relegate to the background the affective and experiential dimension that Saint Ignatius himself so deeply valued. Despite these critiques, Aldama was widely recognized as one of the principal figures behind the modern rediscovery of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and his work continues to be fundamental to contemporary Ignatian formation.

Furthermore, he stands as a forerunner in the study of Ignatian spirituality from an interdisciplinary perspective: “Sería más importante buscar las fuentes que la inspiraron [...] Estudios semejantes deberían ser llevados a cabo desde otros puntos de vista, como la patrística, la literatura teológica medieval, la ascética, la legislación canónica y religiosa [...]” (de Aldama 1977, pp. 12–13).¹¹ In this way, Aldama anticipated later approaches that would integrate historical, theological, and spiritual disciplines in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of Ignatian sources and inspiration.

In this context, José Calveras (1890–1964) must also be situated, as he produced a textual commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*, allowing the mystical perspective (not as a phenomenon) to enter his hermeneutical approach through the meaning and significance of Ignatian language: Calveras, *un tiempo sublime*. This Jesuit is profoundly linked to the first half of the twentieth century, an era characterized by a search for interiority and originality that sought to bring forth what was most genuine and expressive: “Un hombre que marcó una época” (Rambla Blanch 2013), a man who marked an era. Such was Calveras’s task in his studies on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius. Hence the adjective *sublime*, for future generations received his legacy, expanded it, and deepened it.

He played a central role in the renewal of Ignatian spirituality through his exhaustive study of the historical and contextual sources. As a historian and expert on Saint Ignatius, Calveras undertook a meticulous investigation of original documents, letters, diaries, and testimonies from the founder’s first companions, offering a more vivid and precise understanding of the spiritual and human environment in which the Ignatian work was conceived. His scholarly labor remarkably contributed to dismantling ahistorical or rigid interpretations, restoring to the *Exercises* their character as a vital, adaptable, and profoundly relational process.

By emphasizing the importance of accompaniment, the exercitant’s freedom, and the centrality of discernment, Calveras helped recover key elements that had been obscured by moralistic or manualist readings. His approach also illuminated the affective and dynamic dimension of the Ignatian spiritual journey, enabling numerous formators and spiritual directors to apply the *Exercises* in diverse contexts—beyond the cloister or the intensive retreat. He was a forerunner of the pastoral and contextual rereading that would flourish in the post conciliar period, influencing generations of Jesuits and laypeople devoted to spirituality. Although not always the most systematic thinker, his fidelity to the sources and his passion for Saint Ignatius profoundly shaped the Ignatian renewal of the twentieth century.

Fifty-nine articles form his corpus, most of them published in the journal *Manresa*, except for three that appeared in *Miscelánea Comillas*, *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, and *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*. His work (2017) seeks to return to the charismatic sources—or those that inspired the Ignatian text. Thus, emerge the testimonies of Nadal, Laínez, Polanco, and Ribadeneira, close collaborators of Ignatius of Loyola; likewise, the experience of the *Cardoner*, which Ignatius regarded as one of the foundational sources for the subsequent development of the Ignatian text.

Moreover, his *Cuestiones doctrinales y técnicas* aim at uncovering the core of the *Exercises*: The Ignatian spiritual system, the question of love as a theological virtue, orientation toward

Christ, disordered attachments, and the will of God. A significant portion of his work consists of the group of articles titled *Tecnicismos* (1926), which revolve around the notions of disordered affections and indifference. This central section concludes with the more philological analyses that Calveras—by virtue of his academic training and professional formation—carried out: the vocabulary of the *Exercises* and the exegesis of the text. Finally, in the third section, *Concreciones pedagógicas*, he addresses the art of giving the *Exercises*, or the proper manner to be observed by the one who directs them.

The scholarly reception of José Calveras's oeuvre was marked by considerable appreciation, particularly within the Society of Jesus and among academic and historiographical circles devoted to Ignatian studies. His philological and contextual approach to Saint Ignatius of Loyola and to the early Jesuits was regarded as pioneering insofar as it sought to recover the spiritual and anthropological depth of the founder beyond the devotional or institutional stereotypes that had come to dominate post-Tridentine representations. Calveras's meticulous engagement with the primary sources revealed a sustained effort to restore the *Spiritual Exercises* to their original vitality, liberating them from the rigid interpretative frameworks that had accumulated over successive centuries of pedagogical and theological mediation. In this respect, his work anticipated and, to some extent, undergirded the spiritual and pastoral renewal later promoted by the Society of Jesus in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

Nonetheless, Calveras's contributions were not exempt from critical reservation. Certain sectors received his historical orientation with circumspection (Prosperi 2015; García de Castro 2016), fearing that an emphasis on contextualization might attenuate the normative or theological authority of the established Ignatian tradition. Moreover, the erudite rather than systematic or pedagogical nature of his writings limited their immediate impact on pastoral praxis, even as they exercised a profound influence within formative and academic milieus.

Those circles that regarded Calveras's work with some degree of hesitation generally stemmed from more traditional currents within Ignatian spirituality and theology, particularly those formed under the influence of the *manualist* and *neo-scholastic* paradigms that dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and persisted, with varying degrees of adaptation, well into the mid-twentieth century. Such perspectives favored a more codified and prescriptive reading of the *Spiritual Exercises*, articulated around fixed schemes of "principles and means," and often viewed with suspicion any historical approach that might relativize their universal application or call into question the stability of inherited structures. Their apprehension extended also to what they perceived as an excessive *historization*, which risked portraying Saint Ignatius merely as a man of his own epoch, without sufficiently highlighting the *transhistorical* and doctrinal dimensions of his spirituality.

Even so, Calveras's research laid a formidable foundation for subsequent Jesuit scholars—most notably Aldama and Iparraguirre—who would articulate more systematic interpretations of the *Exercises* while remaining indebted to his historical insights. Taken as a whole, Calveras stands as an indispensable reference point for any rigorous comprehension of Ignatian spirituality, whose reception, while diverse in tone, was ultimately characterized by intellectual respect and enduring fruitfulness.

3.2. Historical and Contextual Axis

Under the guidance of Cándido de Dalmases (1906–1987), the biography of Ignatius of Loyola (*Fontes Narrativi* and *Fontes Documentales*) was revisited through new historical contributions and a renewed engagement with the sixteenth-century context, in contrast to earlier hagiographic tendencies: "La bibliografía ignaciana se va enriqueciendo año tras año con decenas de nuevos títulos. Para ir acercándonos a esa meta se ofrecen dos

caminos: dedicar monografías especiales a las varias partes de su vida o a los aspectos de su personalidad y repetir los ensayos de una biografía total” (de Dalmases 1979, p. xii).¹²

Dalmases, a twentieth-century Catalan Jesuit and historian, played a pivotal role in the renewal of Ignatian spirituality through his rigorous historical, philological, and theological research on the origins of the Society of Jesus and on the figure of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. His scholarly work is distinguished by a critical and penetrating reading of the Ignatian sources—particularly the *Constitutions*, the *Letters*, and the *Spiritual Diary*—texts which Dalmases not only edited with exemplary academic precision but also interpreted with remarkable theological sensitivity. In contrast to the normative or overly systematic readings characteristic of the neo-scholastic period, Dalmases proposed a recovery of the spiritual and pastoral dynamism of Ignatius, emphasizing the flexibility, discernment, and incarnational nature of his spirituality.

He was among the principal advocates of a more historical and less idealized understanding of the Jesuit founder, without thereby diminishing the depth of his spiritual experience. Moreover, his active participation in the rediscovery of the Ignatian sources helped consolidate the post conciliar renewal of the Society, promoting a “return to the sources” as a hermeneutical criterion for pastoral and spiritual aggiornamento. Although his work did not focus exclusively on the *Spiritual Exercises*, his research proved crucial for understanding the context, evolution, and pedagogical intention underlying Ignatian spirituality.

As with other Jesuits devoted to historical scholarship, however, certain pastoral and formative sectors regarded his work as overly academic, arguing that its high degree of erudition did not always translate into immediate applications for spiritual practice or the accompaniment of the *Exercises*. Likewise, in some conservative contexts, his critical and demythologizing portrayal of Ignatius—as a man of flesh and blood, marked by inner tensions and spiritual growth—was met with discomfort, as it challenged idealized or hagiographic representations (Endean 1987; O’Reilly 2020). Nonetheless, such reservations were comparatively minor in view of the broad recognition accorded to his scholarly and spiritual contribution (Maryks 2014).

In this line, Ricardo García-Villoslada (1900–1991) must also be situated. His figure helps us to understand the sixteenth century as a source: Ignatius, Erasmus, and Lutheranism. That is to say, the sources are not only textual but also historical, encompassing the spiritual movements (Franciscan Observance and *alumbradismo*) that situate Ignatius of Loyola within a specific time and place. To comprehend Ignatius’s figure, García-Villoslada studies the milieu of Erasmus and Lutheranism. In this sense, he distances himself from the historiographical commonplace that portrays the Society of Jesus and Ignatius as the standard-bearers of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. To that end, he advances a new and gradually accepted idea: The Catholic Reformation. As he writes, “no es justo contrarreformizar demasiado a Ignacio de Loyola, pues conserva no pocos elementos pretridentinos y murió dos años antes que Carlos V y casi siete antes de que se concluyera el concilio de Trento” (García-Villoslada 1965, p. 282).¹³ He was particularly interested in emphasizing the universality of the human conception, the ecclesial relationships embodied by historical figures such as Caraffa, and the apostolic and missionary spirit of the Society of Jesus.

This Jesuit, historian, and theologian, played a pivotal role in the renewal of Ignatian spirituality through his biographical and theological approach to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, particularly through his monumental work *San Ignacio de Loyola. Nueva biografía*, published in 1986. This work marked a turning point in Ignatian studies by offering a rigorous yet accessible synthesis based on exhaustive research of primary historical sources, including the *Autobiography*, *Constitutions*, *Spiritual Diary*, and Ignatius’s correspondence. Villoslada

presented a profoundly human, dynamic, and evolving image of Ignatius, moving away from traditional hagiographies and showing how his spirituality emerged from a vital process of searching, suffering, discernment, and fidelity. This approach contributed to a more existential understanding of Ignatian spirituality, in which the subject does not begin from prior perfection but is transformed through personal encounter with Christ and apostolic commitment. Moreover, his work significantly influenced the formation of Jesuits and laypersons, consolidating a vision of the founder that integrated history, psychology, and theology.

The biography of Saint Ignatius of Loyola written by Ricardo García-Villoslada and the one later produced by Enrique García Hernán (García Hernán 2013) represent two distinct—complementary yet contrasting—approaches to the study of the founder of the Society of Jesus, each with significant implications for the understanding and renewal of Ignatian spirituality. Villoslada, drawing on his Jesuit and theological formation, composed a biography deeply engaged with Ignatius’s spiritual legacy. His interpretation is critically grounded in the sources but still marked by an edifying and theological intention. His narrative retains a certain apologetic tone, emphasizing the inner coherence of Ignatius as saint, founder, and spiritual guide, seeking a synthesis that would illuminate contemporary spirituality without undermining fidelity to the Ignatian ideal. Although methodologically rigorous, his approach remains within the Jesuit tradition of presenting Ignatius as a normative model of Christian and religious life. García Hernán does not attempt to systematize a spirituality but rather to portray a plural, ambiguous, and at times contradictory Ignatius—a historical figure in transformation. From this standpoint, Ignatius appears not as an idealized saint but as a person marked by tensions, errors, emotions, and social networks, whose spirituality is forged in dialogue (and conflict) with his context.

Finally, the last representative of this historical axis, Jesús Iturrioz (1909–1998), examined the relationship between the founder and what was founded: Ignatius and the Society. This figure is of exceptional importance. His studies—*Años juveniles* (Iturrioz 1981), for example—tend to demythologize the figure of Ignatius across his different historical stages, particularly that of the founder: “Es menester borrar en absoluto la imagen, tantas veces puesta de relieve, de un Íñigo fundador: el autoritario que dicta un código jurídico, impuesto a la Compañía; un estratega que planifica sobre mapas acciones que luego tratará de desarrollar en el campo real del apostolado; el solitario místico que, aislado en sus *camerette* de La Strada, redacta entre místicos arrebatos un documento más místico que de gobierno” (Iturrioz 1977, p. 110).¹⁴ From this line of inquiry emerge significant theological and spiritual elements: the name of the Society, Christ as the head of this Institute, the *principio y fundamento* of the Society, and the meaning of the fourth vow and of obedience.

3.3. Ignatian and Systematic or Dogmatic Axis

To conclude this section, we turn our attention to two figures who represent this more dogmatic axis. Pedro de Leturia (1891–1955) advances an initial Ignatian systematic theology through his *Estudios I* (de Leturia 1957a) and *II* (de Leturia 1957b), relating them to the *Autobiography* and the *Constitutions*. From a textual perspective, his approach moves toward the internal logic of the *Spiritual Exercises*—that is, toward an exploration of the Ignatian spiritual process itself. Some authors share the view that Pedro de Leturia represented a “Roman-centered” and ecclesiologically controlled reading of Ignatian spirituality, emphasizing its obedience to Rome and its theological orthodoxy (Heiding 2012). More recent currents—particularly those inspired by studies such as those of O’Reilly and Maryks—advocate for a contextual, experiential, and mystical rereading of Ignatius of Loyola, in which the saint’s interior process and personal historicity carry greater weight than his institutional integration within the Society of Jesus.

What aspects define a more distinctive Ignatian dogmatics within Christian spirituality? Pedro de Leturia and Ignacio Iparraguirre, both twentieth-century Jesuits and historians, occupied a central place in consolidating a rigorous Ignatian systematics by addressing, with erudition and critical method, the foundational sources of Saint Ignatius of Loyola's spirituality and thought.

Leturia, a specialist in the history of the Society of Jesus and its missions, contributed to contextualizing the missionary and apostolic dynamism of the Ignatian charism within the global processes of the sixteenth century, emphasizing the indissoluble link between contemplation and action. His archival and documentary work laid the foundation for subsequent studies, offering a broad understanding of mission as a constitutive dimension of the Ignatian spirit.

Ignacio Iparraguirre (1911–1973), on the other hand, stood out for his monumental work *Historia de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio* (Iparraguirre 1946, 1955), in which—through meticulous research into manuscript sources, versions, and historical uses of the *Spiritual Exercises*—he established a solid and nuanced systematization of the Ignatian spiritual itinerary. His work enabled the discernment of interpretative layers that had accumulated over the original text and proposed a reading that combined historical fidelity with theological applicability. Both authors helped shape what may be called a scientifically grounded Ignatian theology, serving both Jesuit formation and post conciliar spiritual renewal by providing tools for an integral, critical, and updated understanding of Saint Ignatius's legacy.

What are the defining characteristics of this Ignatian system?

First, Christocentrism grounded in the humanity of Christ: “San Ignacio se detiene largamente en la humanidad de Jesucristo, la presenta al ejercitante como objeto de contemplaciones y aplicaciones de sentidos; pero creemos que esto es siempre en su mente un primer paso, un proceso que no puede culminar sino en esferas más trascendentes” (Iparraguirre 1958, p. 44).¹⁵

Second, the dynamism of spiritual processes, based on discernment as a form of spiritual and apostolic governance: “A la Compañía no le da formas fijas, sino actitudes móviles; no ministerios específicos determinados, sino principios que han de ser actuados funcionalmente” (Iparraguirre 1968, p. 284).¹⁶

A third aspect concerns the recovery of the theological root of Ignatius's actions: “El tiempo actual nos ha capacitado para comprender a san Ignacio de manera más auténtica y real, porque nos lo ha situado en la posición justa, nos lo ha proyectado en el tiempo en que se movía. San Ignacio se formó y trabajó en un momento histórico similar al de hoy, tiempo de inter-épocas, de paso de generaciones, de renovación de estructuras, de retorno a las fuentes, de renacimiento. Ha hecho falta vivir esa realidad para comprender cómo era necesaria esta dimensión existencialista, temporal y dinámica” (Iparraguirre 1968, pp. 283–84).¹⁷

Fourth, the demythologization of intellectualism in favor of an affective Ignatius—an affirmation of mystical experience as both source and motor of spiritual dynamism.

Finally, the *Exercises* move from a state of perfectionism toward an integral Christianity or apostolic mission entrusted by God to the exercitant. This entails a recovery of the Ignatian character of the *Exercises*, which Iparraguirre does not locate in terminology or technicalities, but in their style, mode, and order. Notably, in *Fuentes y estudios* (Iparraguirre 1956, pp. 23–26), he clearly describes the principal deformations: affective (merely emotional, like that of the *alumbrados*), intellectualist and rationalist, anti-mystical, individualistic, and overly methodical.

4. Discussion

The adaptation and personalization of the Ignatian spirit that animates the process of the *Spiritual Exercises* in its various modalities foreseen in the *Annotations* was undertaken by Ignacio Iglesias (1925–2009), who placed particular emphasis on the union between prayer and mission or commitment. He distinguished himself by his ability to reinterpret Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* from a deeply pastoral and contemporary perspective. Through work (García 2013b), Iglesias promoted a living reading of the Ignatian charism, centered on the personal experience of God and on spiritual accompaniment. His approach—more existential than scholastic—contributed undeniably to the renewal of Ignatian spirituality, especially after the Second Vatican Council, by emphasizing discernment as the axis of Christian life and creative fidelity to the original text of Saint Ignatius. In a context of secularization and cultural change, Iglesias helped adapt the Ignatian method to the challenges of the modern world, without sacrificing its rigor or theological depth.

It is, however, worth highlighting the last major commentary on the *Exercises* by Santiago Arzubialde (2009). This monumental work studies the *Exercises* within the parameters of the spiritual tradition, the patristic heritage, and the framework of Systematic Spiritual Theology. From two methodologically distinct perspectives, both represent significant and complementary contributions to the renewal of Ignatian spirituality in the twentieth century. Iglesias belongs to a pastoral and formative tradition that seeks to make the spiritual experience of the *Exercises* accessible to concrete persons in contemporary and often lay contexts. His works exhibit a narrative, direct, and pedagogical style, marked by a desire for the practical aggiornamento of the Ignatian method rather than historical or systematic analysis. His language, free from technicalities, enables a wide audience to live and understand the Ignatian spiritual experience, with clear emphasis on personal discernment, the interiorization of the Gospel, and spiritual accompaniment.

Arzubialde, by contrast, belongs to the academic sphere, producing work oriented toward the theological, philosophical, and historical grounding of Ignatian thought. As a scholar, he developed a rigorous and wide-ranging scientific corpus, most notably *Los Ejercicios Espirituales de san Ignacio*. He combines solid textual and philological criticism with a systematic interpretation of the anthropological, Christological, and ecclesiological horizons of Ignatian spirituality. In his view, Ignatian renewal lies not so much in pastoral simplification or adaptation, but in the hermeneutical clarification of the method's foundations—particularly the discernment of spirits and the theological structure of the *Exercises*. Whereas Iglesias represents a charismatic and pastoral renewal focused on the concrete applicability of the Ignatian itinerary, Arzubialde embodies a scientific renewal, seeking to anchor Ignatian spirituality in a critically informed, historically grounded, and theologically articulated understanding. The convergence between the two provides a more complete vision of the Ignatian legacy: one that is lived (Iglesias) and one that is understood (Arzubialde), thus fulfilling the dual demand for vital and intellectual fidelity to the charism of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

In the recent history of Ignatian spirituality, a generation of scholars stands out for systematizing the legacy of twentieth-century Jesuit authors. Antonio M. de Aldama is considered the most influential author in the study of the *Constitutions* (Pudhicherry 2012). First, Santiago Arzubialde moves in continuity with the tradition of Calveras and Dalmases. In addition to co-editing with Jesús Corella a meticulous edition of the *Constitutions of Ignatius of Loyola* (1993), he delivered in 2006 the lecture “*La herencia Calveras Dalmases en la tradición española de los Ejercicios del siglo XX en la perspectiva pneumatológica actual*”. Arzubialde explicitly acknowledges that the philological methods of Calveras and Dalmases made it possible to reconstruct the redactional itinerary of the *Exercises*, and he argues that this heritage must be read in light of the action of the Spirit. His own research on the

Formula of the Institute shows how Aldama, Iparraguirre, and others forged the substratum upon which contemporary readings can build; at the same time, he emphasizes the need to reinterpret the *Constitutions* in light of Vatican II and pneumatological discernment.

Second, José García de Castro has focused on the epistolary and the *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius of Loyola. His doctoral thesis (García de Castro 1999) explores linguistic and lexical aspects of the *Diario espiritual*, and subsequent articles have interpreted the grace of “devoción” as a criterion of authenticity in the Ignatian experience (Staab 2024). In this recent study, Staab notes that García de Castro holds that *devoción* is an exceptional grace that enables Ignatius to recognize the presence of God. Moreover, in his works on Ignatian mysticism and culture, García de Castro draws on the biography by Ricardo García-Villoslada—considered the most complete on Ignatius—and on the factual rigor of Dalmases’s biography, thus integrating into his historical reflection the legacy of these authors.

Third, Javier Melloni has contributed to the intercultural reception of the *Exercises*. In his book *Los Ejercicios de san Ignacio y las tradiciones de Oriente* (2013), he compares the *Exercises* with traditions such as Yoga and Zen. An analysis by Jacques Scheuer underscores that his study focuses on three spiritual paths—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity—whose common goal is the transformation of the person; Melloni insists that these three paths are initiatory or mystagogical rather than merely speculative exercises (Scheuer 2022). Although he does not dwell on Spanish commentators, his reading presupposes the reliability of the Ignatian text established by Calveras and Dalmases and benefits from the historical exposition of the *Exercises* by Iparraguirre. His hermeneutical approach, centered on spiritual dynamics and interreligious dialogue, thus broadens the horizon of reception of these sources beyond the Western world.

5. Conclusions

The research highlights that the resurgence of Ignatian spirituality in Spain is grounded in the introspection of the modern self and the centrality of interior experience. Following Andrew Spira’s theses on the invention of the self, it becomes evident that the *Spiritual Exercises* provide a structure for examining one’s own interiority, discerning desires, and orienting decisions towards following Christ. This introspection, far from being an end in itself, is integrated into the ecclesial community and oriented towards mission, articulating inner freedom with self-giving to others. The twentieth century rediscovered the *Exercises* as a bridge between modernity and faith, fostering a synthesis between modern subjectivity and Christian theology. Consequently, Ignatian renewal responded to the contemporary crisis of meaning by promoting a personalized, critical, and ecclesial faith. This movement relied on the category of experience, combined with Christology, as the keystone for updating Ignatian identity. Additionally, the leadership of Pedro Arrupe was emphasized; he situated spirituality in the self-gift to God and the mystical experience as the starting point, distancing himself from external devotions. His writings highlight that spiritual life must integrate personal and communal dimensions, recovering the centrality of God and interiority as the driving forces of Christian transformation.

The second axis of conclusions concerns the diversity of approaches that renewed the *Exercises* through academic and pastoral contributions. The study examines Aldama, Calveras, Dalmases, García-Villoslada, Iturrioz, Leturia, and Iparraguirre who promoted the recovery of sources, historical contextualization, and theological systematization. Antonio M. de Aldama stood out for his exegetical commentary on the *Formula* and the *Constitutions*, recovering Ignatius’s original intent and underscoring the mystagogical dimension of the spiritual process. José Calveras, for his part, offered a philological approach that restored the freshness of the *Exercises*, emphasizing the freedom of the exercitant and

the centrality of discernment. His research recovered testimonies from the first Jesuits and provided pedagogical concreteness for guiding the Exercises. Other authors, such as Dalmases and García-Villoslada, focused on biography and history, while Leturia and Iturrioz addressed the pastoral dimension and spirituality in everyday life. The conjunction of these works forms a coherent corpus that integrates doctrinal analysis, edition of sources, biography, and praxis, evidencing the richness and complementarity of Jesuit historiography. Together, these perspectives show that the twentieth-century Ignatian renewal was not monolithic but the result of a dialogue between academic rigor and pastoral sensitivity, capable of responding to contemporary challenges and articulating interior experience with mission.

The study shows clear limitations by restricting itself almost exclusively to Spanish authors, without assessing how their contributions were received on other continents or considering the work of non-Spanish scholars. The return to the sources of the Exercises promoted by José Calveras and Cándido de Dalmases produced critical editions that became international references. However, translations into French by Maurice Giuliani and other vernacular versions sometimes obscured nuances of the original text, so the Spanish authors were not always understood in their richness. This linguistic limitation influenced the diffusion of works such as those of Aldama or Calveras in America and Asia, where audiences accessed translations of the Exercises rather than the exegetical studies. Dalmases himself warned that to interpret Ignatius's thought fully it was essential to consult the Spanish text, since the author's mind is found in what he himself wrote. Outside the Spanish-speaking world, figures like American George Ganss translated and commented on the Exercises but rarely engaged with the full span of Spanish scholarship. In France, by contrast, a school emerged that approached Ignatian spirituality from phenomenological and sociological perspectives: Michel de Certeau combined psychoanalysis, sociology and semiotics in his investigations and taught religious anthropology in California and at the École Pratique des Hautes Études; his work, marked by the Ignatian "optimism" and the conviction that the world is God's house, reinterpreted the Exercises through everyday life and social commitment. Other French thinkers, such as Gaston Fessard with his dialectic of the *Spiritual Exercises*, offered philosophical readings that hardly interact with the Spanish tradition. The next research step could compare the historical-critical and Christological approach of the Spanish school with the phenomenological and sociological orientation of the French school, analyzing how the interpretation of Ignatian experience and the "self" varies according to methodology. Such a contrast would allow an evaluation of the global reception of Ignatian studies, shed light on the cultural mediations in their diffusion and propose a synthesis combining Spanish textual rigor with French existential sensitivity.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

- Au *Acta Patris Ignatii scripta a P. Lud. González da Câmara 1553–1555. Fontes Narrativi*, vol. 1, Rome 1943: 354–507.
- SpEx *Spiritual Exercises. Exercitia Spiritualia. Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 100, Rome 1969.
- Co *Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús. Monumenta Constitutionum II*, vol. 64, Rome 1936.
- GS *Gaudium et Spes. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world*, on December 7, 1965. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 1025–1120.

Notes

- 1 “You may perhaps remember that, when we were in Valkenburg and Marneffe, we dreamed as we planned [...] those projects on morality, medicine, psychiatry, and I do not know how many other things [...] Now it is quite the opposite: I make no plans, but I am convinced that I am in the place to which God has destined me [...] I plan only one project: to surrender myself into the hands of Christ and let Him lead me”.
- 2 “I feel myself, more than ever, in the hands of God. That is what I have desired all my life, since my youth”.
- 3 “And there He was, in the tabernacle, contemplating everything and waiting for our invitation to take part in the work of rebuilding it all. . . I left the chapel, and the decision was immediate: we would turn the house into a hospital”.
- 4 “May we constantly seek what we can do for His greater service, and carry it out as best as possible, with love and detachment from all things. May we have a deeply personal sense of God”.
- 5 “My attitude before the Lord must be one of profound humility and gratitude. The position for which He has chosen me demands an extraordinary purity of soul”.
- 6 “Jesus Christ is truly present in the tabernacle—He, the Savior of the world, the King of creation, the Head of the Church and of the Society. He is there, and He speaks to me, He guides me”.
- 7 “After all, the only one who remains is Jesus Christ [...], who must always guide and help me, even in the most difficult circumstances and the most painful misunderstandings”.
- 8 “The observations made by the authors refer more to the organization and activity of the Society as a whole than to the Ignatian *Constitutions* themselves”.
- 9 “What we aim to do here is an exegetical commentary. Our only intention is to investigate what Saint Ignatius actually meant in each of the passages we study. To this end, we rely primarily on the critical method [...] However, in addition to examining the words and the text of the *Constitutions* themselves, we also turn to historical events, with the ambitious purpose of providing something of the *Sitz im Leben*”.
- 10 “The *Spiritual Exercises* are a source—certainly an instrumental one—[...] of those interior gifts that unite God’s instrument with the divine hand, of which Saint Ignatius speaks in no. 2 of Part Ten (*Const.* 813) [...] In other words, we might say that the *Exercises* are the instrument employed by the Society to form the subject of the *Constitutions*—the Jesuit—who must be a spiritual man; and in this sense, they may rightly be called the ‘soul’ of the *Constitutions*”.
- 11 “It would be even more important to seek the sources that inspired it [...] Similar studies should be undertaken from other perspectives, such as patristics, medieval theological literature, asceticism, and canonical and religious legislation [...]”.
- 12 “Ignatian bibliography continues to grow year after year with dozens of new titles. To move closer to that goal, two paths are offered: to devote specialized monographs to the various stages of his life or to specific aspects of his personality, and to continue attempting comprehensive biographical studies.
- 13 “It is not fair to over-Counter-Reform Ignatius of Loyola, for he retained a considerable number of pre-Tridentine elements and died two years before Charles V and nearly seven years before the conclusion of the Council of Trent”.
- 14 “It is necessary to erase completely the oft-emphasized image of an Íñigo the Founder: the authoritarian figure who dictates a juridical code imposed upon the Society; a strategist who plans on maps the actions he will later seek to implement in the real field of the apostolate; or the solitary mystic who, secluded in his *camerette* of La Strada, composes—amid mystical raptures—a document more mystical than administrative”.
- 15 “Saint Ignatius dwells at length on the humanity of Jesus Christ, presenting it to the exercitant as the object of contemplations and applications of the senses; yet we believe that, in his mind, this is always a first step—a process that can reach its fulfillment only in more transcendent realms”.
- 16 “He does not give the Society fixed forms, but rather dynamic attitudes; not specific, predetermined ministries, but principles that are to be actualized functionally”.
- 17 “The present age has enabled us to understand Saint Ignatius in a more authentic and realistic way, for it has placed him in his proper context and projected him into the time in which he lived and acted. Saint Ignatius was formed and carried out his work in a historical moment similar to our own—a time between epochs, of generational transition, of structural renewal, of return to

the sources, of renaissance. It has been necessary to experience this reality in order to understand how essential this existential, temporal, and dynamic dimension truly was”.

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Article

The Modern Making of “Ignatian Spirituality”

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Abstract

Though it has early modern roots, contemporary “Ignatian spirituality” represents a reconfiguration of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jesuit spiritual culture. This article offers a genealogical account of a key element in that modern construction: the growing emphasis on Ignatius Loyola as a mystic and the eclipse of earlier, more ascetical understandings of both Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises. The essay begins by examining key contributions of Jan Philipp Roothaan (1785–1855), the long-serving superior general of the Society of Jesus in the decades following its Restoration. Roothaan’s explicitly non-mystical and decidedly ascetical reading of the Exercises at once reflected and helped shape nineteenth-century Jesuit spiritual culture. The article then traces how this vision came under criticism in the early twentieth century. Renewed Catholic interest in mysticism, and increased attention to Jesuit sources—newly available in critical editions via the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*—fostered a reevaluation of Ignatius as a mystic in his own right. Over time, this shift came to color the interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises. Rather than a school of self-conquest, they came to be understood as a kind of mystical pedagogy. Changes in spiritual theology have had concrete implications for how the Exercises are given, as a concluding case study of the Ignatian Examen helps illustrate.

Keywords: Ignatian spirituality; Jesuit spirituality; Spiritual Exercises; mysticism; asceticism; discernment of spirits; the Examen

1. Introduction

Ignatian spirituality is often treated as a direct inheritance from the early modern period because it is so closely identified with Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556). While this assumption is justified in important respects, it can obscure the extent to which today’s “Ignatian spirituality” owes as much to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as to the sixteenth. More broadly, it can hinder full appreciation of historical contingency and change within Jesuit spiritual culture. The term “Ignatian spirituality” itself seems to have emerged early in the twentieth century. More significantly, its content was shaped by the gradual reevaluation of Ignatius Loyola as a mystic over the last century. This interpretation emerged in conversation with—and at times in strong reaction against—the prevailing spiritual culture of the “restored” Jesuit order (post-1814), which had tended to foreground the ascetical dimensions of Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Ignatius the mystic had largely supplanted Ignatius the ascetic. This inversion had important consequences for lived spirituality inside and outside the Society of Jesus.

This essay treats key parts of a history that remains to be told in full.¹ It offers a genealogical account of an essential element in the modern construction of Ignatian spirituality: the growing emphasis on Ignatius’s mysticism. It seeks to contribute to a fuller account of the historical process by which a new vision of Jesuit spiritual culture emerged

in the modern period. These developments unfolded within wider transformations in Catholic intellectual culture in the modern period, notably the nineteenth-century restoration of religious life and the renewed scholarly and theological interest in mysticism at the turn of the twentieth century. I begin by considering several contributions by Jan Philipp Roothaan (1785–1855), Superior General of the Society from 1829–1853. Roothaan was the most prominent, but not the only, exponent of an explicitly non-mystical interpretation of the Exercises. This vision was markedly more “ascetical,” stressing willed effort on the part of the one making the Exercises more than God’s graced action. Perhaps even more important over the long term was Roothaan’s emphasis on the study of Ignatian sources, especially the Exercises, and the example he offered of such study. His efforts anticipated and legitimated the later work of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, the 157 volumes of Jesuit sources compiled in critical editions beginning in 1894. The article then shows how this ascetical vision came under criticism in the early twentieth century—and how pioneers of “Ignatian spirituality” drew upon the *Monumenta* to vindicate Ignatius’s “mystical” bona fides. Ironically, the scholarship Roothaan favored would eventually undercut his vision of Jesuit spirituality. Yet what was at stake in this reconfiguration, as the closing sections of the essay will show, was more than a reevaluation of Ignatius’s image. It involved a deeper shift in the theology of the spiritual life, one that altered how the Spiritual Exercises are practiced within and beyond the Society of Jesus.

2. Roothaan’s Letter on the Spiritual Exercises

After its formal papal suppression in 1773, the Society was restored by the 1814 papal bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*. Despite brisk growth, and even though a remnant of the Society had survived, solidifying the restored order’s culture would take decades. Roothaan’s election as Superior General of the Society of Jesus marks a key moment in that process. The Twentieth General Congregation, in electing Roothaan, gave him precisely this task. Over the next twenty-four years, he never tired of trying to bolster and maintain the Society’s *esprit de corps*. A vital means of doing so were his letters to the whole Society, which touched on core components of Jesuit identity: On Love of the Society and its Institute (1830), On Tribulations and Persecutions (1831), On Stirring Up and Fostering Desire for Foreign Missions (1833), On Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (1848).

Among these, Roothaan’s 1834 letter “On the Study and Use of the Spiritual Exercises of Our Holy Father” is a landmark in the history of Jesuit spirituality. Its core conviction was that Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises were the very soul of the Society of Jesus—the fabric from which “the whole texture of [Jesuit] life and vocation” was woven. This was because they were “bestowed by Providence” to give the Society “a most distinct individuality.” The *sine qua non* of the Society’s identity, they were also the “main-spring of all her activities, the soul of all her ministries, the fountain-head of all her zeal” (Roothaan 1931, p. 69). For Roothaan, the Spiritual Exercises would be the true source of the Restored order’s conservation and growth.

From a contemporary perspective, the high importance Roothaan attributes to the Exercises can seem self-evident, even platitudinous. It would be wrong to assume, however, that Jesuit spirituality was as tightly identified with the Exercises in the nineteenth century as it is today. Roothaan’s is a hortatory letter, not a descriptive one. If he was urging the Society to greater study and use of the Exercises, he evidently believed that both were lacking.

Indeed, the letter’s most surprising feature is not the conviction named above but rather the clear lament that occasioned it. Roothaan was convinced that the Society was *neglecting* the Exercises, to its own detriment. He acknowledged that they still had a place in Jesuit life—as part of the novitiate and third probation, as well as during an annual

retreat for some eight to ten days. Yet he bemoaned the fact that the spiritual and apostolic harvest resulting from their practice was so meager.

Some benefit must, of course, always result from taking part in them [i.e., the Exercises], yet painful as is the avowal, we must own that they now but seldom bring about that surpassing sanctity which in other days was the usual fruit gathered from their practice. (Roothaan 1931, p. 70)

Roothaan's complaint is paradoxical, at least at first glance. If the Society was practicing the Exercises, how could it fail to draw fruit from them? In fact, however, he thought that many Jesuits were essentially simulating the Exercises—and deluding themselves—all to the Society's detriment. The problem was twofold. The first was distance from the *actual text* of the Exercises and an over-reliance on books that bore the title of the Exercises, but which failed to respect the "sacredness" of Ignatius's text (Roothaan 1931, p. 72). Likening such works to ashes that extinguish "sacred fire," Roothaan complained that there "is no lack of such books, and with truth it may be said that their abundance has made us poor" (Roothaan 1931, p. 72). Second, he asserted that those who use such texts failed to *make* the Exercises. They engage merely in light spiritual reading, instead of exercising their minds and hearts.

As described in the letter, Roothaan's proposed solution was a return to the close study and right use of the Exercises. By this, he unequivocally meant the *actual text* of the Spiritual Exercises. Though in his 1834 letter Roothaan gave little indication what such "study" might involve, the injunction to "right use" was clearer. In making their own retreats, Jesuits were to "use the book of St. Ignatius in preference to any other" (Roothaan 1931, p. 73). Pale imitations of the Exercises were to be left aside.

Jan Roothaan's letter raises a host of unanswered questions which exceed the remit of this essay, including about pre-Suppression Jesuit spiritual culture. Here, we can highlight one reason why the letter remains noteworthy nearly two hundred years later. Roothaan made abundantly clear that the Society's sources—here Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises—ought to be engaged as proper objects of study, not merely aids to devotion. More to the point, he suggests that for the Society, the spiritual fruit to be gained via the Exercises depended not only on their practice but on mastery of the text itself.

3. Textual Authority and the Hermeneutic of Proximity

Roothaan followed his own admonitions about practicing the Exercises. He regularly offered them to Jesuits, even during his tenure as superior general. Even more significantly, he modeled the study of Ignatius's text in ways that would have long-lasting consequences. He was a gifted philologist, having trained in classical languages prior to entering the Society. But even before bringing his considerable skills to bear on the Exercises, Roothaan tackled an important text-critical question: which *version* of them should be studied?

In 1835, one year after his circular letter stressing their study and use, the first printing of Roothaan's "literal edition" (*versio litteralis*) of the Exercises appeared. True to its name, the text is a word-for-word Latin translation of a Spanish version of the Spiritual Exercises called the "Autograph." This manuscript, which seems to date to about 1544 and is extant today, contains marginal corrections in Ignatius's hand. The translation was a passion project for Roothaan. Though he seems to have wished to translate the 'original' text of the Exercises, presumably meaning a version written entirely by Ignatius, the Autograph was as close as he could come. He learned Spanish to understand the text as precisely as possible, dedicating Sundays and holidays to the translation work. When considered alongside the extraordinary pressures of his long term in office, his dedication to the project is remarkable—and underscores the urgency that lay behind it. Roothaan's translation and commentary went through four editions in his lifetime alone, each in rapid succession.

The Autograph was not, however, the “official” version of the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius submitted two Latin versions of the Exercises to Pope Paul III (1468–1549) in 1548. Both were covered by the subsequent papal approval, and one—commonly called the “Vulgate”—was first published at Rome in 1548. It would remain the standard version of the text, seemingly without controversy, for several centuries (Cebollada Silvestre 2016, p. 400). The Vulgate translation, made by the French Jesuit and accomplished Latinist André des Freux (1515–1556), tends to be more literary than literal. Roothaan’s version identified gaps between the Vulgate and the Spanish Autograph—and sought to close them.

Roothaan did not directly question the Vulgate’s status as the official text of the Exercises. Yet even while insisting on its value, he cast a deep shadow over it. In the preface accompanying his translation, he anticipates his readers asking: “how it could have happened that a version which in so many places either differs from the proper and inherent force of the Spanish text, or is manifestly inferior to it, could have been sent to the press under the very eyes of our Holy Founder?” (Roothaan 1887, pp. xxviii–xxix). The question seems to have puzzled Roothaan as well.

The implicit hermeneutic behind Roothaan’s work on the Autograph—one of proximity—is important to underline. He chose the Autograph believing it most closely reflected Ignatius’s thought, and so brought his readers closer to the founder and, therefore, the true spirit of the Society of Jesus. Faced with a choice between what Ignatius *wrote* (the Autograph’s marginal notes) and what Ignatius *did* (the decision to publish the Vulgate), Roothaan preferred the former. Regardless of his intentions, however, the effect could only have been to call the Vulgate’s status into question. Though the inversion of the relative status of the two editions took time, by the mid- to late-twentieth century, the Autograph text would come to be considered the standard version of the Exercises for study, translation, and use. Roothaan’s hermeneutic is, of course, debatable. What is undebatable is that eventually, and thanks to Roothaan’s recovery of the Autograph, it has eclipsed the Vulgate for his twin desiderata, “study and use.”

4. Roothaan’s Exercises: The School of Self-Mastery

Roothaan’s work did not stop with translation and textual criticism. He offered interpretations of the Exercises in a variety of settings, including in the copious footnotes to his *versio litteralis*. His reading of the Exercises surely helped shape the spiritual culture of the Society, even if the precise nature of his impact remains to be adequately studied. For the genealogy charted here, Roothaan’s explicitly non-mystical—and decidedly ascetical—interpretation of the Exercises is of greatest relevance. The terms “mystical” and “ascetical” are ambiguous, notably the boundary between them. They are here used heuristically, with the “ascetical” foregrounding human effort in the spiritual life. This is not to suggest that the two are mutually exclusive; to the contrary, they are profoundly interwoven in both early modern and modern spiritual theology. Roothaan’s consistent emphasis on self-mastery, on human striving, and his practical (and decidedly moralistic) attitude towards prayer justify the use of “ascetical” in his connection. The “mystical” tends instead to emphasize the soul’s union with God owing more to Divine action and grace than human agency. It valorizes a greater degree of passivity on the part of the human subject.

Jan Roothaan left little doubt about the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises. Already in his 1834 circular letter, he put the matter baldly: “the whole doctrine of the Spiritual Exercises is reducible to the true and perfect abnegation of ourselves.” Later, he rejected the idea that the Exercises were a means toward “sublime contemplation or extraordinary union with God.” Their purpose was not mysticism but self-conquest, the “removing from our hearts everything that can be called an obstacle, that is to say, whatever savors of self-will, self-love and attachment to the world” (Roothaan 1931, pp. 78–79). The Exercises

are, for Roothaan, a tool for perfecting the “art of supplanting vices and sowing virtues in the soul” (Roothaan 1931, p. 77).

This ascetic perspective is shot through Roothaan’s writings on the Exercises. To be sure, he found ample justification for it within Ignatius’s text itself. This begins with the booklet’s very title: “Spiritual Exercises to conquer oneself and order one’s life without coming to a determination though any disordered affection” (SpEx 21). Roothaan believed this to be Ignatius’s core aim, whether in writing his various sets of “rules,” giving guidelines for an election, or in the meditations on the Kingdom, the Two Standards, or the Three Types of Humility: “Everywhere we are taught to resist and overcome the opposition made by our reluctant nature” (Roothaan 1931, p. 79).

Roothaan’s ascetical understanding for the Exercises shades logically into an emphasis on human effort. His comments stress the theme in key places, beginning with the Principle and Foundation of the Exercises. Ignatius’s text reads: “man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul” (SpEx 23). Because of this, Ignatius continues, individuals therefore must make themselves “indifferent” to all created things, using them only insofar as they serve these ends—and shunning them to the degree they prove a hindrance. Roothaan’s glosses on both basic Ignatian ideas are revealing. Underscoring the subject’s actions instead of God’s, he says: “‘Let him save his soul,’ in the active sense, not ‘let him be saved,’ in the passive sense: that is to say, it now belongs to the person himself to save his own soul” (Roothaan 1887, pp. 38–39, n. 2).

Similarly, Roothaan observes that:

But when it says ‘to make ourselves indifferent,’ it indicates the effort, the striving that is required in order to attain that indifference. [. . .] It is necessary to render ourselves indifferent—that is, to conduct ourselves toward all created things by conquering ourselves as though we felt neither inclination nor repugnance, denying our sense appetite whether those things please or displease us. And this is the effort by which we must strive toward that truly lofty degree of perfection, in which we use or refrain from created things only insofar as—neither more nor less—the order of our ultimate end requires. (Roothaan 1887, p. 40, n. 5)

These are themes that Roothaan would reprise in other places as well. The stress that he laid on continual striving and human effort is one of the more striking features of his overall interpretation.

One of Roothaan’s texts on the Exercises was written before his election in 1829. The *De Ratione Meditandi* (variously rendered “How to Meditate” or “The Art of Meditating” in English) was his extended commentary on the form of prayer taught in Ignatius’s text. Roothaan prepared it between 1812 and 1816 to aid younger Jesuits during his service as their teacher and spiritual director. The document entered wide circulation only when Roothaan was superior general (it was first edited in 1847). It was presented alongside the Exercises—and at times printed in the same volume, contributing to the manual’s quasi-official status.

Throughout his writings and especially in the *De Ratione Meditandi*, prayer is principally oriented toward the subject’s moral progress. As he put it strikingly,

The aim of meditation is not to devote an hour to God in prayer, but by it to cleanse the soul from evil habits, to adorn it with virtues, to amend and perfect our whole life, to strengthen ourselves in the service of God; to fortify ourselves against temptations and difficulties, to put order into our actions that they may be performed with perfection, etc. (Roothaan 1945, p. 24)

This point echoes a point seen earlier, that the end of the Exercises is growth in virtue, not contemplation as such. The person making the Exercises should ask: “what truth

presents itself for consideration? What practical conclusions should I draw from this? How have I observed them in the past? What should I do in the future? What obstacles must be removed? What means must be chosen?" (Roothaan 1945, pp. 24–25) As his questions suggest, the intellect plays a decisive role in how Roothaan understands prayer. He was, of course, aware that Ignatius adopted the tripartite Augustinian understanding of the soul as composed of memory, intellect, and will. Ignatius does not express a clear hierarchy among the three elements.²

Roothaan's emphasis on intellectual operations is linked to his unwaveringly practical understanding of prayer. In giving the intellect pride of place, he emphasizes that the will (classically understood as the "loving" part of the soul) will follow where the understanding leads. Speaking of intellectual acts in prayer, he says that "their purpose is to make reflections on the facts presented by the memory, apply them to our individual needs, draw practical conclusions from them, consider how I have observed these truths up to this time, how I should act in the future. All of this is the work of the intellect." (Roothaan 1945, p. 24) The praying subject seeks to rouse the will's ardent affections to carry through what the intellect has resolved.

There are some elements which soften the ascetical temper in Roothaan's writings, notably his observation that the spiritual operations of the praying subject take place thanks to God's grace. He allows, in other words, that spiritual "exercise" is possible only because God acts first (Roothaan 1945, p. 3). On balance, however, Roothaan accentuates the striving and effort of the person making the Exercises much more than God's action. There are certainly places in Ignatius's text of the Exercises themselves that can support this kind of interpretation. Yet they are softened by several significant places with clear indications of God's direct action upon the soul. These are well known: Annotation 15's injunction that the director is to allow the "Creator to deal directly with its creature," the first "time" for election (SpEx 175) when God's will is immediately made clear, or the idea of "consolation without preceding cause" (SpEx 330) from the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. Tellingly, Roothaan's commentary on these passages is sparse and does not grapple with the deeper theological questions they raise.

As we shall see, Roothaan's favored points of emphasis with respect to prayer would come in for severe criticism in the twentieth century, criticism which would help spur a different articulation of the Society's spiritual culture with the rise of "Ignatian spirituality." His concentration on the intellectual aspects of the Spiritual Exercises left him, and Ignatius with him, exposed to charges of cold intellectualism. Similarly, his emphasis on the importance of human effort and striving can easily smack of voluntarism. Roothaan's overwhelming emphasis on method lends a rigidity to his presentation of Jesuit spirituality.

Later Jesuit apologists sought to spare Roothaan from the harshest critiques, noting for instance that the *De Ratione Meditandi* did not express his most mature spiritual teaching. The point has some merit. Yet it elides the fact that the text circulated only after Roothaan became superior general, that it circulated *because* he was superior general, and was presented to Jesuits outside of formational contexts. Nor, for that matter, would later writers seek to show how Roothaan's later teaching was substantively different. In many ways, this defense was halfhearted, and betrays a certain degree of unease in his regard (e.g., De Guibert 1964, pp. 469–70). The fact remains that Roothaan's ascetical perspective is strikingly consistent across his writings on the Exercises.

5. From Restoration Toward Reconstruction

Roothaan's interpretation of the Exercises and, by extension, Ignatius, was to prove important and influential in the life of the Society—both in ways that he anticipated, and ways he could not have imagined. At the same time, we must guard against the impression

that Roothaan commanded and that a culture in his image and likeness immediately sprang into being. There are some indications from among nineteenth-century French Jesuits, for example, that progress toward Roothaan's vision of the study and use of the Exercises was slow and uneven. Likewise, it is prudent to question the extent to which Roothaan reflected, rather than molded, the spiritual temperament of the age (Chappin 1993, p. 52). Nevertheless, Jesuit culture by the early twentieth century had clear tonalities that aligned with Roothaan's interpretation—and some important twentieth-century critics of Jesuit spirituality would come to see the Dutch superior general as a key exponent of its ills.

To understand the eventual decline of Roothaan's account of the Exercises and Jesuit spirituality, two developments must be taken into account from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first is the birth and flourishing of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*. This series, which today numbers 157 hefty volumes, collected, edited, and published primary sources related to the Society of Jesus. Though the order had a tradition of history writing since its founding, the *Monumenta* was unique in its focus on historical sources. This was believed to be a necessary prelude so that historians (Jesuits and non-Jesuits alike) had reliable and widely available sources to craft historical narratives about the order. The documents were drawn from Jesuit archives in Rome and elsewhere around the world, and included material gathered from further afield. Many would have crucial implications for understanding the Society's earlier spiritual culture, especially the volumes with the writings of Ignatius Loyola and his earliest companions in the order.

It is difficult to imagine an initiative more in line with Roothaan's legacy than the *Monumenta*. He was clearly passionate about textual criticism. He was devoted to discovering and editing Jesuit sources, speculating enthusiastically about other archival finds—related to the *Constitutions* or Ignatius's voluminous correspondence—that were sure to be had (Roothaan 1940, pp. 307–8). Obviously, however, his role would not allow such extensive archival labor. Though Roothaan's *versio litteralis* of the Exercises appeared decades before the *Monumenta* gathered steam, his work gave impetus and implicit warrant for the later undertaking. Later Jesuits could collect and critically edit the order's sources in highly technical editions because one of their number—the superior general, no less—had done so already. This is among Roothaan's enduring bequests to the Society, insofar as his scholarly example would outlive the specific details of his interpretation of Jesuit spirituality.

There is, however, a deep irony: Roothaan gave impetus to and tacit warrant for the *Monumenta*, whose texts would precipitate the eventual downfall of his vision of Ignatius and the Exercises. This transformation began slowly in the first half of the twentieth century. It accelerated significantly in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), especially in light of its encouragement that religious orders were to return to the “to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time” (Perfectae Caritatis 1965, n. 2).

The second development that would contribute to the eventual decline of Roothaan's interpretation was the resurgence of interest in mysticism in the Roman Catholic Church beginning in the late-nineteenth century and continuing throughout the twentieth. This story is complex, but its broad lines—and its importance for the history charted here—are clear. The formal condemnation of Quietism in 1687, and related controversies in France in the following years, fostered a suspicion of mysticism in Catholic circles that resulted in its long neglect. With the rebirth of secular interest in mysticism near the end of the nineteenth century, largely in the domain of psychology, Catholic figures began to reengage the topic (see, e.g., McGinn 1991, pp. 266–326). It is striking indeed that robust interest in mysticism united the two disparate, and often antagonistic, theological movements in twentieth-century Catholicism: neo-Scholasticism, the dominant theological school of the ultramontane Catholic Church, and so-called theological “modernism.” When Pius XI (r.

1922–1939) declared John of the Cross a doctor of the Church in 1926—under the title of *doctor mysticus*—there could be little doubt that mysticism’s long neglect in Catholicism was at an end.

This recovery was much broader than the Society of Jesus, but it had especially profound impacts on the Jesuit intellectual culture—and, eventually, on its lived spiritual culture too. The renaissance in interest about mysticism gave the topic, and spirituality more broadly, much greater prominence as a proper area of study (beyond a merely devotional topic). Various Jesuit provinces in Europe founded periodicals dedicated to scholarship on Christian spirituality. Drawing on the ever-more abundant resources available in the *Monumenta*, an increasing proportion of that research dealt with Jesuit topics. The Society’s central university in Rome, the Gregorian, established its chair in ascetical and mystical theology in 1918. Its first holder was the French Jesuit Joseph de Guibert (1877–1942). In addition to having a significant role in the construction of Ignatian spirituality, de Guibert was a pivotal figure for the study of Christian spirituality. He helped found two of the twentieth century’s most significant scholarly outlets for such study: the *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* (1920) and the monumental *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique* (begun 1932, completed 1995).

By the mid-1920s, then, the situation had changed considerably since Jan Roothaan began his solitary study of the Exercises and prepared his *versio litteralis*. Thousands of pages of newly printed sources were available concerning Ignatius, the Society, and its spirituality. Moreover, a thriving academic enterprise had arisen around the critical study of spirituality. The union of both elements would have decisive consequences for the decline of Roothaan’s ascetical vision of Ignatius and the Exercises.

6. Ignatius Under Fire

The nineteenth-century articulation of Ignatius and the Exercises came in for harsh criticism in the late 1920s. The French priest Henri Bremond (1865–1933) was the principal protagonist in this conflict. Bremond, a prolific writer on an array of religious topics, took aim at Ignatius and his Exercises. He wrote with unmistakable flair that was by turns humorous and cutting, and was no stranger to polemics. The fact that he was a member of the prestigious *Académie française* (elected 1923) gave him prominence in intellectual culture and helped ensure that his critiques would command attention beyond a narrow circle of specialists.

That Bremond was a former Jesuit accorded his criticisms even greater weight. He had extensive personal experience both of making and giving the Spiritual Exercises, a fact that lent credence to his arguments. Two of his brothers were also Jesuits and remained so all their lives. At least until the time of the controversy, Bremond maintained cordial ties with the Society. While technically outside the Society by the time he took aim at the Exercises, his criticisms had a decidedly insider aspect, and were received by some of his former confreres as the very worst kind of betrayal. For others, it was a powerful impetus to rethink the question of mysticism in the Society, especially in light of the sources newly recovered in the *Monumenta*.

In 1927, Bremond published an article in three installments, the title of which captures his basic question about the Exercises: *Asceticism or Prayer?* (Bremond 1927a, 1927b, 1927c). For Bremond the Exercises were emphatically the former: a school of ascetic willpower, not of prayer. By “prayer,” he meant a “passive activity” in which God, not the human subject, was the principal actor. On that basis, he concluded that Ignatius was a “professor of energy,” not a teacher of prayer; a man who guided human subjects in disciplined effort. With characteristic flourish, he quipped that speaking of “spiritual exercise” already “makes the joints crack” (Bremond 1927a, p. 252). Those who followed the Exercises

implicitly centered their spiritual life on themselves and their effort, not on God. They flattered themselves into thinking they were praying when really they were simply doing ascetical gymnastics.

Bremond's interpretation of Ignatius and his Exercises would evolve over time. In later writings he would argue explicitly that Ignatius *was* a mystic, underscoring a mysticism of "election" in the Exercises. That was not his position in 1927, however. Nor, for that matter, did Bremond's criticisms spring from nowhere. He had followed carefully an earlier debate between the Jesuits and Benedictines in Belgium and France, which may have helped shape his own critique. Some of the key monks leading a nascent liturgical renewal within Roman Catholicism criticized the Exercises as individualistic and, thus, anti-liturgical. One described them as a rigid "military method that orders the soul" (Festugière 1913, p. 42).³ The Benedictine liturgists argued that the effect of the Exercises on Catholics, and on the Church's liturgical life, had been significant and adverse.

Though the controversy was short-lived, two of its effects are of note here. First, it occasioned a response from the Belgian Jesuit Louis Peeters that seems to be the earliest Jesuit use of the term "Ignatian spirituality." His *Spiritualité "Ignatienne" et Piété Liturgique* (Peeters 1914) answered a Benedictine critic, but for present purposes its title is as significant as its content. Peeters used scare quotes around the term, suggesting its novelty. Though seemingly born of controversy, *spiritualité ignatienne* (and its equivalents in other languages) would swiftly become the standard shorthand for speaking about the Society's spiritual culture—both inside and outside the order.

Second, the Jesuit-Benedictine exchanges anticipated some of Bremond's concerns and arguments—even if he did not fully accept their critiques. In his 1927 article, Bremond reprised some of the earlier themes, notably the charge of "militarism" and of intellectualism in the Exercises. Already by 1914, Jesuit authors such as Alexandre Brou began to challenge portraits of Ignatius that were overly methodical or intellectualist (Brou 1914). Such interventions remained relatively isolated, however, and a more comprehensive revision of these prevailing accounts would emerge only later. Likewise, he shared the Benedictine concern about the effects of the Society's spiritual teaching far beyond the order's own ranks. Yet Bremond's critique was that the method of the Exercises was propelled by voluntarism, not that it was overly methodical as such. Ignatius and his Exercises were *anti-mystical*, not anti-liturgical. Indeed, Bremond's talk of prayer was always inflected with his idea of the mystical, which he distinguished starkly—too starkly—from the ascetical.

Bremond concluded his 1927 critique by coining a neologism, one he borrowed from English but which has no direct parallel in French: *l'ascétisme*.⁴ It denoted a spirituality that centered on the eradication of vice and the sowing of virtue, placing human moral striving at the center of the spiritual life. It was a vital element of Bremond's critique of Jesuit prayer, one to which Roothaan's reading of Ignatius Loyola lent itself. Ignatius and the Exercises advocated "practical prayer," Bremond argued, as distinct from the mystic's "pure prayer." In the main, the Society and its founder saw prayer not as an end in itself but as a means to growth in virtue.

As has been convincingly shown elsewhere, at least some of Bremond's criticisms had roots in his own Jesuit life—though he scrupulously avoided arguments from personal experience. This is especially true of making the Exercises, which he described variously as an experience of "immense boredom." Later, he said "here, 'boredom' is not strong enough. Imagine Stevenson's island, 'Treasure Island': deluged with rain for eight days—and no treasure." So too, Bremond recalled reading the *Exercise of Perfection and Christian Virtues* (1609) by the Jesuit Alonso Rodríguez (1538–1616) "at least thirty times and in multiple languages" (Tremolières 2019, pp. 254–57). Bremond would identify Rodríguez as a classic propagator of *ascétisme* in the Society of Jesus.

In 1927, when the controversy began, Bremond's critique was something of a broadside. He did not generally distinguish between Ignatius and subsequent interpreters, and his salvos were directed both at Ignatius and later Jesuits whom he saw as exponents of *ascétisme*. These included some who had answered the Benedictines and who, now, sparred with Bremond. His references are telling: he invoked Roothaan's *De Ratione Meditandi* several times, implying that it was in fundamental continuity with Ignatius's ascetical perspective (Bremond 1927a, p. 234). Bremond does not seem to have fully grasped at that early date how much the "practical prayer" he so vehemently rejected owed to the nineteenth-century vision that Roothaan typified. As seen above, self-mastery and moral progress were the very foundation and *raison d'être* of Jesuit prayer for the Dutch superior general.

Bremond did not explicitly deny that Ignatius was a mystic in 1927. He did not have to, having branded him a "professor of energy" and a master of asceticism, as distinct from a master of prayer. Bremond's position changed when, in 1929–1930, he argued clearly and directly that Ignatius *was* a mystic and that his Exercises were the fruit of his exalted spiritual experience. In another series of articles, he proposed a reading of Ignatius's Exercises through the lens of his so-called "Autobiography" (a text given new prominence by the *Monumenta*) and argued that the Exercises distilled a "mysticism of election." This meant that Jesuits *after* Ignatius bore the responsibility for "betraying" the founder's mysticism in favor of *ascétisme*, an argument that would find increasingly clear expression in Bremond's later work on the topic (Goujon and Salin 2006, pp. 430–36).

The impact of Bremond's initial charges is best grasped by the fact that his early position, not his later one, would have the most enduring effect. His 1927 analysis of Ignatius and the Exercises, especially the allegation of *ascétisme*, had struck a nerve. One of his main Jesuit interlocutors observed that Bremond had "wounded" readers like himself "belittling and disfiguring" their spiritual tradition (Tremolières 2019, p. 269). Perhaps unsurprisingly, his Jesuit opponents were not assuaged when Bremond declared that Ignatius was, in fact, a mystic—and criticized his position on the question.

The Jesuit polemic with Bremond raged for several years before waning at the dawn of the 1930s. This was at least partly because Pope Pius XI (1853–1939) published an encyclical in 1929 lauding the Ignatian Exercises as "the mystical tree of life" that led souls "up to the supreme heights of prayer and divine love" (Pius XI 1929, nn. 10, 16). This authoritative declaration gave the Jesuits some satisfaction, yet Bremond's searching questions—about how the Society interpreted its founder and his Exercises, and about how both related to the mystical tradition of the Church—remained. His withering assault had driven a wedge between Ignatius and his interpreters, especially his nineteenth-century interpreters. The public debate may have ended, but Bremond's impact had not.

7. Joseph De Guibert's "Ignatian Mysticism"

From Rome, Joseph de Guibert closely followed Bremond's polemics and the Jesuit response. A scholar by temperament, de Guibert preferred the cooler light of careful analysis and dispassionate argument to the heat of controversy. His remarkably even-handed entry about Bremond, published in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, reflects appreciation for Bremond's talents and the questions that he raised, even as it offered incisive criticisms about his methods and some of his conclusions. Yet the questions Bremond raised about Ignatius and the Exercises helped shape de Guibert's own pathbreaking research about Ignatius—indispensable contributions in the emergence of Ignatian spirituality—and gave greater urgency to his answers. De Guibert's frequent citations to Bremond, even decades after he had died, show that Bremond's charges resonated for many years.

Vindicating Ignatius Loyola's status as a mystic was a defining element of de Guibert's later career. Importantly, however, this vindication relied primarily on sources such as the "Spiritual Diary" and the "Autobiography," rather than on Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises. His efforts reflect realities already highlighted in this article. First, de Guibert addressed the question of "Ignatian mysticism" from squarely within a neo-Scholastic framework. He tried to avoid what he saw as the imprecisions and pitfalls of earlier twentieth-century debates about "asceticism" and "mysticism" within Catholic theology in general, and the Bremond-Jesuit controversies about "mysticism" in particular. Though he used the term "mysticism" in connection with Ignatius, he was characteristically precise in what he meant by the term: "infused contemplation."⁵ Second, de Guibert's studies depended on sources that were known, but which had only become widely available in scholarly editions, thanks to the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*.

In 1938, Joseph de Guibert published a two-part article in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* on "Ignatian Mysticism" (De Guibert 1938a, 1938b). He focused in that study on the so-called "Spiritual Diary" of Ignatius Loyola, little known before it appeared in the *Monumenta*. Fragmentary and challenging, the text is an excerpt of Ignatius's notes concerning his prayer from 1544 and 1545, at least partly as he discerned a question of poverty in drafting the Society's *Constitutions*. It contains manuscript notes about Ignatius's prayer experiences, typically in the context of celebrating Mass, and reports ample extraordinary graces during his prayer. De Guibert argued that the Journal represents the culmination of Ignatius's spiritual life, and that he was led "by the paths of the highest mysticism" (De Guibert 1938a, p. 21).

De Guibert also stressed that Ignatius was a mystic of a distinctive type, especially when compared to a figure like John of the Cross. John was an important point of reference, not least because he had been accorded the status of Doctor of the Church in 1926. But where John, like other mystics, emphasized the "nuptial" element of mystical union with God, such imagery is lacking in Ignatius Loyola. Rather, de Guibert argued that Ignatius's mysticism was profoundly trinitarian, eucharistic, and focused on loving "service" to God.

In his *Histoire de la spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus*, published posthumously in 1953 (English edition 1964), Bremond remained one of de Guibert's frequently cited interlocutors. The book repeats the core of de Guibert's account of Ignatius's mysticism given in the aforementioned articles, and considerably expanded it. This more comprehensive and synthetic account of Ignatius's mystical life drew not only on the "Spiritual Diary" but also on other texts that achieved a newfound prominence in the *Monumenta Historica*. Key among these is the text frequently called Ignatius's "Autobiography." On this basis, de Guibert sketched Ignatius's "mystical itinerary" from the time of his conversion to its "summit" during his service as the first superior general, in the period recorded in the "Diary."

On his reading of these texts, there was no doubt for de Guibert that "we are in the presence of a mystical life in the strictest sense of this term. We are in the company of a soul that is being led by God in the ways of infused contemplation to the same degree, though not in the same manner, as a St. Francis of Assisi or a St. John of the Cross" (De Guibert 1964, p. 44). Yet it is interesting to recall that Bremond had based his initial argument about Ignatius as a "professor of energy" on the Exercises. Though he has plenty to say about the Spiritual Exercises, de Guibert repeatedly downplays their mystic potential, especially when contrasted with the Diary or the Autobiography. In the articles from 1938, he allows that they may open "mystical perspectives" but insists that the Exercises are "in their text itself a book of supernatural asceticism, a method of personal effort to submit oneself to the action of grace" (De Guibert 1964, p. 134). And in his later *Histoire*, he states their goal is not "the union of the soul with God," a key mystical theme which has "little or no

prominence” in the text. Rather, their end is the sound personal election on behalf of the person making them (or the confirmation of a choice already made), a decision to serve God in the practical orientation of his or her life.

De Guibert more than justified Ignatius’s claim to the title of “mystic.” By the same token, however, the connection between the Spiritual Exercises—by all accounts the core of Ignatian spirituality—and their mystical author remained ambiguous. Ironically, Henri Bremond seems to have been more convinced of the mystical potential of the Exercises than was Joseph de Guibert. Yet in this respect, at least, de Guibert did not have the final word.

8. The Mystical Exercises

Already in the early twentieth century, some Jesuits had begun to argue that the Spiritual Exercises were a path toward mystical union with God (Peeters 1924). De Guibert was aware of such interpretations, and he was critical of them. Yet in the wake of his studies of the Diary and Autobiography, and with those texts more widely available, exegetes began to reread the Exercises through the lens of Ignatius’s mysticism. Henri Bremond was an early example of this intertextual approach; in fact, it was the basis on which Bremond sharpened his initial critique, insisting that subsequent Jesuits had betrayed the founder’s mysticism of “election” in favor of *ascétisme*. Bremond’s Jesuit sparring partners predictably contested his approach and conclusions at first. Yet by the end of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first, it would become increasingly commonplace among Jesuit authors.

Other interpreters would arrive at the same basic conclusion—that the Exercises reflect the “mystical” Ignatius—by following a similar methodology. Included among them are a number of significant Jesuit theologians, including Karl and Hugo Rahner. Admittedly, these commentators often understand “mysticism” in different ways. Caution is required to avoid flattening distinctions among a diverse group of authors, even if a comprehensive survey of this literature is not feasible here. Still, what unites them is, for present purposes, more significant than what divides them. There is broad consensus that the Exercises both reflect and articulate important elements of Ignatius’s mysticism.

This increased association between the Spiritual Exercises and mysticism is especially significant because it locates the mystical at the very heart of contemporary “Ignatian spirituality.” Unlike the Autobiography or the Spiritual Diary, the Spiritual Exercises are not simply a reflection of Ignatius’s personal spiritual life or a curious idiosyncratic artifact. Precisely because they are pedagogical and meant to be *made*—enacted in the spiritual life of persons other than Ignatius—stressing their mysticism suggests far-reaching implications for all practitioners of Ignatian spirituality. Claims about Ignatius extend, almost seamlessly, into claims about the spiritual life *tout court*.

Such is the key conclusion reached, for example, by the American Jesuit Harvey Egan (b. 1937) in several studies of what he calls the “Ignatian mystical horizon” of the Spiritual Exercises (Egan 1972). For Egan, the Exercises are the “successful translation of a mystical horizon into a method,” one that “awakens, deepens, strengthens and explicates what the human person is and experiences in the deepest recesses of his being” (Egan 1976, p. 157). He underscores, for example, Ignatius’s notion of “Consolation Without Previous Cause” (SpEx 330)—an increase in faith, hope, and love which only God can give—as a distillation of the Ignatius’s own mystical experience. This is articulated with close reference to the Autobiography and Diary, and is transmitted to others by means of the Exercises. Hence, for Egan, the Exercises are properly “mystical” for the person who undertakes them. Ignatius is not only a mystic, but implicitly invites those making the Exercises to be as well.

Such convictions have resonated, and been deepened, outside the ambit of Anglo-phone scholarship. This is evident in the work of Javier Melloni, especially in *La mistagogía*

de los Ejercicios (Melloni 2001). Here, the argument is more explicit than even in Egan's work. "The point of departure of this book," Melloni writes, is the conviction that the *Exercises* of Saint Ignatius both "accommodate and foster mystical experience" (Melloni 2001, p. 20). They initiate the one who makes them into a dynamic process of progressive transformation, and a union with Christ that leads to an act of self-gift in a concrete election in one's life. There are, of course, echoes of Bremond's Ignatian mysticism of "election" in this account. But more broadly, Melloni situates the *Exercises* as a sort of distillation of the three classic "ways" of the Christian spiritual life: purgative, illuminative, and unitive.

9. From Self-Conquest to Divine Self-Communication: Shifting Spiritual Theology

Roothaan's 1834 letter on the Spiritual Exercises emphasized that "Our holy Father's object was not to set forth a method of sublime contemplation and extraordinary union with God, or to offer a series of instructions regarding them." Though he allowed that the Exercises might set the pre-conditions for such contemplation, it was not their purpose. This basic premise overlaps with Bremond's initial polemic about the Exercises. Gradually, Jesuit scholars had recovered and reinterpreted as "mystical" Ignatius's texts in the *Monumenta*. By the end of the century, John R. Sachs could speak confidently in the following terms: "The mystical experience of Ignatius has, in fact, inspired a spirituality which can be viewed as a kind of ordinary, everyday mysticism manifesting the same basic sensibility for God" (Sachs 1995, p. 73). Sachs here is emblematic of a wider consensus (see, e.g., Codina 2009).

Much had changed in a century and a half, as this article has sought to demonstrate. On one level, what changed was how Jesuits—and, eventually, those outside the Society as well—conceived of Ignatius. More fundamentally, as Sachs's quote already suggests, the rise of Ignatius the mystic has coincided with a rearticulation of the spiritual theology associated with the Exercises. Contemporary Ignatian spirituality has largely shifted from a human-striving or moral-progress framework (typified in Roothaan's expression "the uprooting of vice and the planting of virtue") toward one which foregrounds Divine initiative in the experience of making the Exercises. The goal is less obviously "overcoming oneself" and more a pedagogy for recognizing, and responding to, God's action in one's life. As Terence O'Reilly has rightly noted, this reflects a twentieth-century development in the theology of grace, a reorientation that has had concrete implications for how the Exercises are given (O'Reilly 2021, p. 81).

In the second half of the twentieth century and down to the present, emphasis has moved away from self-conquest centered on the "exercitant" and toward a greater stress on God's self-communication. It is difficult to fully chart this development, as it is sufficiently widespread as to be an assumed rather than argued point of departure for Ignatian spirituality. A classic locus of this development is the increased emphasis on Annotation 15 of the Exercises, and its observation that "the Creator deals directly with the Creature and the Creature with its Creator and Lord" (SpEx 15). In the text, this observation is intended for the person giving the Exercises, and seeks to prevent them from over-determining the exercitant's choice of a vocation. It operates more, in contemporary usage, as a general principle of spiritual theology, both within and beyond the formal setting of the Exercises (see, e.g., O'Malley 1993, pp. 373–74; Geger 2012, pp. 32–37).

This emphasis on the self-disclosure of God—and the very language of "self-communication"—is especially significant in the writings of Karl Rahner, including on Ignatian spirituality. In this connection, it is significant that the text Rahner described as his last "spiritual testament," which encapsulated his theology as a whole (Endean 2001, p. 5). Provocatively written in the voice of Ignatius Loyola, Rahner's Ignatius paraphrases Annotation 15: "But the fact remains: God can and wants to deal with his creature directly;

and one can experience such dealings concretely.” He goes on to locate this annotation at the very heart of Ignatian spirituality: “To me, this rather simple and yet enormous conviction [...] appears to be the essence of what you commonly call my spirituality.” (Rahner 2013, p. 11). “God’s own self I experienced,” the essay repeats on multiple occasions. In Rahner’s theological “testament,” the Exercises announce a theological principle for how God’s grace works with the soul, one which far outstrips the boundaries of the retreat itself. This same point is foundational to Rahner’s earlier essay “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola” (Rahner 1964).

Foregrounding God’s graced action has led contemporary Ignatian spirituality to emphasize discernment, and the discernment of spirits as a constitutive element thereof (see, e.g., Toner 1982). This stands to reason, for if God’s self-giving precedes human response, it becomes crucial to discern the action of God’s Holy Spirit (or the “good” spirit in the language of the Exercises). In addition, it requires identifying other spiritual movements, whether originating with the malign (or “evil”) spirit or from the exercitant. The multiple agencies involved in the spiritual life are here at issue. If for Roothaan in the mid-nineteenth century the accent fell on the praying subject’s agency, the calculus had significantly shifted by the second half of the twentieth century. This increased attention to discernment has also contributed to the recovery of the “individually directed” Spiritual Exercises (as opposed to a preached or group format), and to spiritual direction more broadly. Individualized accompaniment is now taken as integral to identifying and responding to the various movements of the spiritual life.

This shift contextualizes the abundant attention given to spiritual “consolation,” above all “consolation without preceding cause” (SpEx 330). This last degree of consolation, which Ignatius says God alone can give (with the suggestion of immediacy) has been the subject of extensive reflection over the past several decades (García de Castro Valdés 2001). This is after long neglect as “virtually without practical relevance,” and being treated as an exceptional “limit case” (Ivens 1998, pp. 228–29). This nexus between discernment of spirits and the mystical life is especially apparent in Harvey Egan’s work, who has described “consolation without preceding cause” as a “special Ignatian mystical experience” that is “an excellent, experiential miniature of the Exercises and of the Ignatian mystical horizon” as a whole (Egan 1976, pp. xviii–xix). This is not to say that discernment was ever absent in treatments of the Exercises. Rather, as Ignatian spirituality came into sharper relief, so did discernment—and especially discernment of spirits—as one of its defining attributes.

It bears noting, as another of the ironies that inheres in the history traced in this article, that these same aspects of the Exercises that have been lauded as central to “Ignatian spirituality” in the twenty-first century drew harsh criticism, even allegations of mystical heresy, in the sixteenth (O’Reilly 2021, pp. 81–105). Though the generations of Jesuits after Ignatius came to downplay their importance, they surged to the fore in the twentieth century.

The shift in spiritual theology identified here has had an especially revealing impact on the so-called “Ignatian Examen,” spanning paragraphs 32–43 of the Spiritual Exercises. In Ignatius’s text, the Examen is presented as a highly structured examination of conscience, performed twice per day during the span of fifteen minutes. It is an instrument oriented toward the identification and eradication of sinful actions and tendencies: to know and name sins, to ask for God’s forgiveness, and to resolve to perform penance. Contained in the First Week of the Exercises—focused on the reality of sin and the need for conversion—it is explicitly oriented toward preparation for sacramental confession. It is, textually at least, a crucial tool if one sees the Exercises as an ascetical school for the eradication of vice and growth in virtue.

In line with the twentieth-century changes in spiritual theology identified here, the Examen has come to be read in a way quite different from what the text itself suggests.

In the anglophone world, the most well-known rearticulation is that of the Jesuit George Aschenbrenner (1932–2021). In a widely cited article from 1972, he rearticulated the Examen as a review of one’s “consciousness,” not primarily one’s conscience. If the latter had “narrow moralistic overtones” (Aschenbrenner 1972, p. 14), the former was the place where God’s self-disclosure was to be detected, received, and answered. No longer principally a means of “conquering oneself,” the Examen has become a contemplative practice for ‘real time’ discernment of spirits. Despite having a somewhat impressionistic relationship to the text of the Exercises, this reorientation has in the main prevailed in subsequent decades (Arrupe 1981, pp. 233–34; see also, e.g., Gallagher 2006). More importantly, perhaps, it shows how lived Ignatian spirituality has shifted away from a framework of self-conquest toward receptiveness to God’s self-communication, in line with transformations in the spiritual theology underlying “Ignatian spirituality.”

10. Conclusions

It has now become commonplace to distinguish between “Ignatian spirituality” and “Jesuit spirituality.” The former is articulated principally in the Spiritual Exercises—drafted even before there was a Jesuit order—while the latter emerges not only in the Exercises but in documents more closely tied to the Society of Jesus. This distinction is useful, not least because it has come to correspond to lived realities.

As this article has shown, however, in its origins “Ignatian spirituality” represented a novel, twentieth-century reconfiguration of Jesuit spiritual culture. More specifically, its content and spiritual theology have been significantly colored by the emergence of “Ignatius the mystic” and eclipsing earlier, more “ascetical” interpretations of the same figure. Furthermore, efforts to write the history of Jesuit spirituality—and to articulate the theology of Ignatian spirituality—participated in the construction of what they were studying. Through historical retrieval and theological reflection, these authors gave form and content to a new articulation of the Society’s culture.

More broadly, this essay has underscored the fact that Ignatian spirituality—and Jesuit spiritual culture more broadly—is a historical reality in the proper sense. It is subject to contingency and continuous molding by internal and external pressures. Acknowledging this challenges the notion, usually implicit, that later generations are transmitting something that is somehow inert, as though frozen in amber. Instead, as these pages have shown, those inheriting a tradition participate in its reinterpretation and, therefore, its reconfiguration as new questions are put to historical sources. Michel de Certeau has rightly underscored this reciprocal relationship between the present and the past. As he memorably observed about Ignatian spirituality, “in changing, we change the past” (De Certeau 1987, p. 56). This does not mean that the past is merely a projection of contemporary concerns. The sources themselves necessarily and helpfully constrain the ways in which the tradition may legitimately develop. The question, therefore, is not whether Ignatian spirituality will continue to change, but why and how it will do so—and the degree to which emerging articulations find warrant in its rich sources. It is a question that implicates historians of spirituality and theologians, of course, but also those who practice and pastorally transmit Ignatian spirituality for contemporary audiences.

Such developments necessarily involve risk. Traditions deepen through historical retrieval and pastoral renewal; they also drift into decadence and decline. These dynamics have given Ignatian spirituality a distinctive cast in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Awareness of them carries with it a certain responsibility, for scholars as well as for practitioners, as Ignatian spirituality continues to evolve in ways that are, as yet, unknown.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

SpEx Spiritual Exercises. *Exercitia Spiritualia. Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 100, Rome 1969.

Notes

- ¹ The present essay elaborates on and extends on an earlier shared historical sketch that I co-authored with the late John W. O'Malley (O'Malley and O'Brien 2020). Our focus was tailored to the twentieth century; this essay intends to show that those developments existed in close relationship to the preceding century.
- ² The fact that the Exercises conclude, and therefore arguably culminate, with the “Contemplation to Attain the Love of God” (SpEx 230–237) at least implies that the will (classically understood as the loving faculty) was the highest.
- ³ I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Matthew Cortese, S.J., in accessing this text.
- ⁴ He would reprise the idea in subsequent volumes of his multivolume *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Bremond 2006).
- ⁵ Neo-scholastic spiritual theology distinguished “infused” and “acquired” contemplation. The former was understood as a direct gift of God, surpassing the operations of discursive prayer. Unlike “acquired contemplation,” the infused variant depended on God’s extraordinary grace, rather than human effort. In his various treatments of Ignatian mysticism, De Guibert uses the term “infused contemplation” in keeping with this technical sense.

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Article

The Construction of Ignatian Spirituality in France: 1954–1966: The Case of the Journal *Christus*

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Abstract

This contribution examines the key aspects of the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality promoted by French Jesuits through the journal *Christus* between 1954 and 1967. The founding of the journal can be understood as a response to a sense of identity crisis among French Jesuits, likely provoked by the Fourvière crisis and the abrupt end of the worker-priest movement, which was eventually prohibited by Rome. In this context, the call to reconnect with Ignatian sources became imperative to foster theological and spiritual reflection capable of shedding light on the tensions of the present. The generation led by Maurice Giuliani, Michel de Certeau, and François Roustang—who spearheaded this editorial project—distanced itself from the hermeneutics of their predecessors, particularly Joseph de Guibert, as regards the spiritual history of the Society of Jesus. Instead, they emphasized a mysticism of action, the necessary integration of spirituality and apostolic works, the ecclesial implications of Ignatian service, and a bold, increasingly open dialogue between Ignatian tradition and the human sciences.

Keywords: Ignatian spirituality; *aggiornamento*; Christus; construction; France

1. Introduction¹

Ignatian spirituality is, and has always been, a historical product in the making. Although it may seem obvious to us today to speak of it and to refer to it, the term itself is relatively recent within a social context that has nearly five hundred years of history. “Until relatively few decades ago, the term was virtually unknown” (O’Malley and O’Brien 2020, p. 272). The construction and evolution of the term *Ignatian spirituality* ought to be necessarily linked to the deliberate effort to return to the source, around the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, through the monumental work of a group of Spanish Jesuits who undertook the editing of the *Monumenta Societatis Iesu*. Undoubtedly, this edition will allow access to the sources of the Jesuit spiritual tradition. The journal French *Christus* would crystallize a moment of maturity in this process, linking spirituality with a reading shaped by dialogue with the human sciences and the problems of the present.

In his article “L’épreuve du temps,” Michel de Certeau highlights the operation of distancing that the journal *Christus* carried out in 1966 and the way it presented Ignatian spirituality—a presentation that was certainly no longer the same as at the time of its founding in 1954. This change in perspective, according to the French Jesuit, also transforms the past. “By changing, we change the past, yet we wish to preserve the justification of a past” (de Certeau 1966, p. 314). Here lies the paradox of *aggiornamento*.

The Second Vatican Council invited religious congregations to undertake an *aggiornamento* of their respective spiritualities, that is, to set out a return to the sources. In response

to this challenge, de Certeau, in his article “L’épreuve du temps”, asks, What is spirituality? His answer—quite innovative and disconcerting for the time—demystifies any possibility of understanding spirituality through a simple “return to origins,” since the more we scrutinize the origins, where we expected to find the truth of what we are, the more we are met with a void. This void, rather, opens up a path of interpretation because it forces us to divine a “system of human relationships” (de Certeau 1966, p. 316) behind the sacred object that eludes us. This spirituality:

“Taken in its principle, as the term of a ‘return,’ it would be an original ‘spirit’ already betrayed by all its initial language and compromised by its subsequent interpretations, such that, never being present where it is spoken, it would remain elusive and evanescent”. (de Certeau 1966, p. 316)

In this article, we seek to explore the main emphases, thematic choices, and hermeneutical keys developed by the journal *Christus* between 1954 and 1967 in relation to the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality. Therefore, we will address first how the founding of *Christus* seeks to respond to the challenges posed by a time of crisis. Second, we will analyze the project of the *Christus* book series, which marks the editorial orientation and intentions of the journal. Third, we will examine how generational questions influenced the interpretation of Ignatian spirituality, focusing on the distance taken by Maurice Giuliani in relation to Joseph de Guibert, a key figure of the preceding generation. Finally, we will address the journal’s intention to engage in dialogue with the human sciences in the mid-1960s.

2. Ignatian Spirituality for a Time of Crisis

Ten years after the founding of *Christus*, Father Philippe Laurent²—provincial of the Jesuits of the Paris Province between 1963 and 1967—attested to the high esteem in which the journal was held by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, the Flemish Belgian Jean-Baptiste Janssens for the journal, which played an effective role in transmitting Ignatian spirituality to the universal Society: “The Reverend Father General even told me that he thought the articles in *Christus* were more effective than the General Father’s circulars in conveying certain orientations of Ignatian spirituality” (Laurent 1964). This testimony to the journal’s impact, written during the first session of the Second Vatican Council, clearly reflects the influence of the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality undertaken by *Christus*, extending well beyond the borders of France.

The journal *Christus*, founded in 1954, was the result of a long process of discernment, the earliest indications of which can be found in the draft proposal that emerged from the meeting of the four Jesuit provincials of France on 28th to 31st May 1951 (Fouilloux 2016, p. 25; de Maindreville 2016, p. 5). This initial draft cannot be separated from the project of founding a new journal devoted to spirituality, an initiative that dates back to the end of the Second World War. Indeed, in 1944, several Jesuits from the Fourvière scholasticate—among them Henri de Lubac—launched a similar project, which would eventually culminate in the journal *Christus*.

“The issue takes on an even more precise orientation when we read the project for a *Revue Spirituelle de Fourvière* [...]. This was to be a journal directed by the Fathers of Fourvière (de Lubac) and intended for the clergy and educated laypeople, which might be entitled *Revue de formation et d’information sacerdotale*”. (Minutes. Interprovincial Meetings 1944)

This new project, evidently, had to expect several years of slow maturation before coming to fruition. At least two reasons explain this delay. On the one hand, the complex doctrinal context experienced by the Society of Jesus in France at the time of the upheaval

caused by the crisis of the *Nouvelle Théologie*, and along with the increasingly widespread suspicions directed toward certain theological and philosophical positions by the professors of Fourvière (Álvarez 2024a). On the other hand, *Christus* had to position itself among other journals also devoted to spirituality, such as the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* (RAM)³ and the *Messenger du Cœur de Jésus*—that is, between erudition and devotion.

For this reason, it is striking that only one year after the publication of the encyclical *Humani Generis*, Father Mogenet⁴ sketched the first draft. However, it seems that it was precisely this context and sense of “crisis” that made the effort to create a journal devoted to Ignatian spirituality more relevant than ever. François Roustang—who would later serve as director of the journal from 1962 to 1966—observed a few years later:

“When *Christus* was founded, the Society was experiencing a certain unease regarding its own spirituality. Its specificity and its effectiveness were being called into question. The journal’s primary objective was therefore to enable Jesuits to reconnect with their sources”. (Roustang 1964)

It seems that the sense of crisis was what propelled French Jesuits to embark upon the venture of returning to the sources through the founding of the journal *Christus*. This crisis, which had a first component of the spiritual order in the post-Second World War period, was perhaps even bigger than the doctrinal crisis that the Society was subjected to during the controversy surrounding the *Nouvelle Théologie*.

In his first report, written on 31 January 1952, Father Henri Holstein⁵ underscores the tension between two orientations, reflecting the ecclesiological entanglements of the period preceding the Second Vatican Council: “Specialization in the formation of our own members, or engagement with the problems of apostolate and Catholic Action?” Looking for middle ground and rejecting such clear-cut alternatives, he describes the spirit of the journal as “the search for and expression of an authentic spirituality, through the formulation of the attitudes it demands in the face of the eternal problems raised by spiritual, priestly, and apostolic life, as well as the particular problems of the present situation” (Fouilloux 2016, p. 30).

According to Étienne Fouilloux, the debates over the journal’s orientation left two paths open: “either an organ of retreat into a hypothetical Ignatian orthodoxy at a moment of crisis for the Church and for pastoral engagement in France, or a journal open to the spiritual problems of the present under the gaze of the founding fathers” (Fouilloux 2016, p. 34). The responses to these questions vary from one period to another. But they remain a persistent source of tension—one that the crisis of the “third man” in 1966 would bring sharply into focus.

According to Maurice Giuliani (1916–2003), the true founder of *Christus*, three concomitant factors were decisive in the founding of the journal. The first was the climate of profound disorganization and desolation experienced by a large number of Jesuits between 1950 and 1953, linked to the Fourvière crisis and the end of the worker-priest experiences, which were prohibited by Rome. This unease threatened to break off the apostolic momentum. For this reason, the mission of the journal was to restore spirit and, above all, to look toward the future. The second factor was a certain confusion, stemming from the ordeal that had been endured, regarding Jesuit identity. The third factor—more difficult to define, according to Giuliani—was the desire to create a space for free inquiry and free expression within the context of modern spirituality (Giuliani and Madelin 2004, p. 53). In the first issue, an initial attempt at articulating the journal’s orientation appears:

“Saint Ignatius would have loved our time. In view of the gravity—sometimes exceptional—of the problems confronting our consciences, it seemed to us that the moment was eminently propitious to highlight the contemporary relevance of his message” (Giuliani 1954, p. 3). “As an Ignatian journal, it will strive to

translate the essential ideas of a man who was not only the founder of an Order, but also a master of unquestionable originality. In this respect, it must undertake a threefold effort: to illuminate faithfully the spiritual events that, punctuating the life of Ignatius of Loyola, gradually shaped in his soul and in his actions the traits of what we now call his spirituality; to discern the scriptural and traditional currents that animate it; and to specify, insofar as possible, the apostolic attitudes that it orders". (Giuliani 1954, p. 5)

By way of a brief illustration of the themes and style characteristic of the journal in its early years, the first issue was composed of five articles (Jacques Guillet, "Jésus-Christ vie de l'Église"; Donatien Mollat, "Le Christ dans l'expérience spirituelle de saint Ignace"; Hugo Rahner, "La vision de saint Ignace à la chapelle de la Storta"; Jean Rimaud, "On amenait à Jésus des enfants"; Paul Agaesse, "Connaître le Christ"), one historical text, "Le règne du Christ" by Jérôme Nadal, and two chronicles: Maurice Giuliani, "Présence actuelle du Christ," and Henri Holstein, "Le désert ou la cité ?"

At the Versailles meeting with the Provincials in February 1955, Father Clément Plaquet—a Belgian Jesuit who served as Visitor of France from 1954 to 1959—drew attention to the importance of the journal *Christus* and to the scope of the responsibilities borne by those who directed it. He described the mission of *Christus* as "the diffusion of the spirit of the Society of Jesus." For this mission to be ensured,

"it is necessary that there be a community of Fathers with complementary ideas and tendencies in order to guarantee balance (. . .) This diffusion of our spirituality will require the creation of a more substantial team (. . .) From what I can see of the work of grace and its present demands within the French Province, this task is of the utmost importance, especially if it is closely linked to the work of retreats and the Congregations". (Plaquet 1955)

The appointment of Michel de Certeau, François Courel, and François Roustang—who began their work with the journal in 1956—was undoubtedly a response to the request made by Father Plaquet and Father Holstein (the journal's first director).

The early works of Michel de Certeau, a pivotal figure in this renewal, must be situated at the confluence of these factors. His reflections led him to immerse himself in the history of spirituality of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—with particular attention to the history of the Society of Jesus—through the editing of the *Memorial* of Pierre Favre and the writings of Jean-Joseph Surin, the French Jesuit mystic (*La Guide spirituelle* and *La Correspondance*). To this end, he attended Jean Orcibal's seminar regularly from 1956 until the mid-1960s at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE). Jean Orcibal also supervised his doctoral dissertation, which was devoted to the critical edition of the *Memorial* of Pierre Favre. His reflections considered the contributions of the human sciences, responding both to the effort to think through the crisis of the Society and of the Church in France and to the task of addressing it through the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality. The human sciences provided a deeper and more fruitful analysis of modern spirituality. It is within this context that we must read the intention and momentum that run through the *Mémorial* of Pierre Favre and De Certeau's articles for *Christus*.

It is evident that his career as a historian of spirituality and of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mysticism is, above all, indissolubly linked to his participation in the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality undertaken by the journal *Christus*. As De Certeau wrote to De Lubac on 23 October 1956: "The work at *Christus* is very diverse; it would require studies—studies that we will absolutely have to undertake—on the entire spiritual tradition."

3. The *Christus* Series

In November 1956, Maurice Giuliani and Michel de Certeau presented to their superiors the project for a *Christus* Collection. In the same spirit as the *Sources chrétiennes* collection, the creation of a series capable of publishing texts from the Ignatian tradition was considered imperative: there was an urgent need to return to the sources. Giuliani directed the series as its director, while De Certeau served as its secretary. On 5 November 1956, they sent a draft of the collection to several Jesuits, requesting collaborations as well as suggestions, corrections, and additions.

It therefore seems appropriate to examine this project and its subsequent implementation, as it offers an illuminating insight into what Michel de Certeau and Maurice Giuliani had in mind regarding the construction of Ignatian spirituality in 1956.

“The journal *Christus* sought to respond to contemporary spiritual needs in accordance with the Ignatian tradition to which it aimed to remain faithful. Its readership and the circumstances of the time called for an expansion of its publications and for the creation of a series of texts—major witnesses to this tradition—capable of providing a deeper knowledge of it and of fostering a reflection that could shed light on our present difficulties”. (Giuliani and de Certeau 1956)

Three types of publications were envisaged. First, the “major spiritual works of the Society of Jesus.” The aim is to publish these books as they are, in all their simplicity and vitality. Only a few notes and an introduction would “assist in the spiritual understanding of these texts.” The project begins with the writings of Saint Ignatius: the *Spiritual Diary*, the *Letters*, the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, and the *Spiritual Exercises*. This was followed by texts linked to the origins of the Society and to the Ignatian tradition: Favre’s *Memorial*; the *Letters* of Francis Xavier; González de Cámara’s *Memorial*; the *Diary*, *Meditations*, and the *Letter of April 1570* by Francis Borgia; Nadal’s *Chronicon*, *Spiritual Diary*, and *Instructions on Prayer*; and the *Confessions*, *Testament*, *True and Catholic Way of Praying*, *Domestic Exhortations*, etc., by Canisius. The collection also included texts from the Ignatian tradition, by authors such as Bellarmine, Cordeses, Luis de la Puente, Gagliardi, Álvarez de Paz, Lallemant, Surin, Huby, Caussade, and Hopkins, among others. Finally, there is a list of contemporary texts by Fr. de Grandmaison, Fr. Lebreton, Fr. Delp, Fr. Pierre Lyonnet, missionaries to China, and the *Letters from Chad* (Projet Collection Christus 1956).

The second type of publication, Essays, was intended to address “the questions raised by one or another of these works, to the historical and theological problems that arise for Christian reflection when it reflects on the spiritual life.” In this context, the project proposes a series of topics for study. Only a few of these suggestions will be mentioned here: “The nature and character of Ignatian mysticism”; the “mystical” current in sixteenth-century Spain: the Álvarez affair (1574) and the Cordeses affair (1578); the school of Lallemant: innovation and continuity, action and contemplation; Quietism and the Society of Jesus, Fénelon and the Jesuits; Maximilian van der Sandt and Angelus Silesius; the importance of mystical theology in early seventeenth-century Ignatian literature (Spain, Germany, France, etc.); the opposition between “theologians” and “mystics” in France in the second half of the seventeenth century (cf. Surin–Chéron); mystical and spiritual literature intended for missionaries and arising from spiritual direction (practical literature, in the sense in which prayer is said to be practical); Cf. Scaramelli, Pierre de Calatayud; devotion and theology in Ignatian spirituality: tears, “devotions,” etc.; and missionary spirituality.

The project also includes a third series of texts devoted to biographies. The proposal here was much more tentative: *The Gentleman Iñigo of Loyola*, trans. Fr. Audras, followed by the biographies of Saint Ignatius and Fr. Lebreton by Robert Rouquette, and a biography of Fr. de Grandmaison by Lebreton (to be republished), among others.

The first book published was *Journal Spirituel* by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, translated and commented by Maurice Giuliani. That same year, the collection published the *Lettres de San Ignacio*, translated and commented by Gervais Dumeige, and *Doctrine Spirituelle* by Louis Lallement, edited by François Courel. In 1960, the fourth volume of the collection appeared: *Mémorial* by Pierre Favre, translated and commented by Michel de Certeau (Fabre 2026, pp. 69–80; Álvarez 2024b, pp. 95–97). That same year, the text of the *Exercices Spirituels*, translated and commented by François Courel, was published; also, the book *Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France*, whose selection of texts and presentation is by François Roustang. In 1961, the book by Pierre Clorivière, *Prière et oraison*, appeared, with introduction and notes by André Rayez. The same Rayez was in charge in 1962 of the edition of *Écrits Spirituels* by Claude la Colombière. That same year, the collection published *Lettres Spirituelles I* by Jean-Pierre Caussade. In 1963, the first essays of the collection appeared. This was written by François Roustang under the title *Une initiation à la vie spirituelle*, and the second by Jacques Guillet, *Jésus-Christ hier et aujourd'hui*. Then appeared the second book edited by Michel de Certeau, *Guide Spirituel* by Jean-Joseph Surin. In 1964 came the wave of the Rahner brothers, appearing first with the two volumes of Hugo Rahner, *Ignace de Loyola et les femmes de son temps*, and then, in the essay genre, *Éléments de la théologie spirituelle* by Karl Rahner. That same year also saw the publication of the second volume of *Lettres Spirituelles* by Jean-Pierre de Caussade, with the edition presented by Michel Olphe-Galliard. In 1965, the fourth essay written by Maurice Bellet, *Ceux qui perdent la foi*, appeared. Under the label *Suppléments*, the book *Commentaire du livre des Exercices* by Hervé Coathalem appeared, and the figure of Teilhard de Chardin entered the pantheon of consecrated spiritual authors with *Lettres à Léontine Zanta*, edited by Michel de Certeau and Henri de Lubac (Álvarez 2024b, pp. 126–34). In 1966, *Mémorial* by Luis Gonsalves da Cámara appeared, translated and presented by Roger Tandonnet. That same year saw the sixth essay, *Prière et action*, authored by Maurice Giuliani. The last title of that year is *L'abandon à la providence divine* by Caussade, whose edition is by Michel Olphe-Galliard.

Within these editorial works, special attention should first be given to the translation and presentation of the *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius of Loyola, as carried out by Maurice Giuliani, the inaugural text of the *Christus* collection. The relevance of this edition is not merely philological or historical; rather, it is situated at the very heart of a theological-spiritual rereading of the Ignatian tradition. Indeed, the text, which records the interior movements of the founder of the Society of Jesus, makes it possible to access an understanding of prayer in which spiritual experience is inseparably articulated with everyday life. As Giuliani underlines, “almost always Ignatius’ prayer is linked to the events of the day, that is, linked to his action, service of God” (Saint Ignace de Loyola 1959, p. 47). This interpretation not only reinstates the dynamic character of Ignatian spirituality but also helps to rethink the classical tension between contemplation and action, showing their structural mutual implication in the inspiration that shaped Ignatius.

In this same interpretative line of the *Spiritual Diary*, Giuliani insists that, for Ignatius, “Going toward creatures does not mean leaving God, but rather adoring and seeking Him in His work. . . finding God in all things before He Himself manifests how He is all in all” (Saint Ignace de Loyola 1959, pp. 106–7). In this way, the edition of the *Spiritual Diary* becomes a privileged testimony of a theology of God’s presence in history, in *everyday life*, where mystical experience is not opposed to commitment to the world but rather constitutes its very condition of possibility. The emphasis on this unity between action and contemplation is particularly significant in the context of the intellectual project of the *Christus* collection, which sought to reconfigure the language of spirituality in dialogue with the cultural and theological transformations of the twentieth century, in which the paradigm of action was emerging as a structuring force.

A second text whose edition proved equally decisive is the *Memorial* of Pierre Favre. The exhaustive editorial work on this source is directly linked to Michel de Certeau's doctoral research, supervised by Jean Orcibal at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Álvarez 2023, pp. 111–13). This edition not only made it possible to recover a fundamental source for understanding the origins of Jesuit spirituality, scattered across several manuscripts, but also inaugurated a historiographical approach attentive to spiritual writing as a site for the production of modern subjectivity and the configuration of believing practices. It seems to us that the work on Favre's *Memorial* should be read as the birth of a research project. All the major intuitions that Certeau would later develop are already outlined here, anticipating his subsequent reflections on the relationships between spiritual experience, language, and social practices and situating the history of spirituality at the crossroads of theology, cultural history, and the human sciences.

The second text edited by Michel de Certeau in the *Christus* series is the *Spiritual Guide* by Jean-Joseph Surin. This work holds a significant place in Certeau's intellectual trajectory, not only for its historical relevance but also because the French Jesuit viewed it as a vital source for understanding the internal tensions of mystical experience in the seventeenth century. The edition includes an extensive introduction that facilitates a deeper exploration of both the doctrinal aspects and the historical conditions surrounding the work's production, situating Surin within the context of the spiritual and theological controversies of his time. Indeed, the historical–theological analytical framework that Certeau mobilizes to study the relationship between nature and grace in his edition of the *Guide spirituel* is strongly inspired by the research developed by Henri de Lubac on the question of the supernatural. These investigations enable Certeau to recognize that Surin's mystical experience overflows any attempt at dichotomous reduction, whether in the form of an autonomization of reason or a strict subordination to extrinsic contents of revelation, as was frequently maintained by certain developments of scholastic theology (Surin 1963, pp. 48–49). From this perspective, Surin does not find the source or inspiration for his experience within these theological frameworks. Instead, his insights emerge from a spiritual dynamic that engages the fragility of the believing subject, the alterity of God, and the historicity of the languages through which this experience seeks expression. In Certeau's intellectual project, the engagement with Surin's figure is not limited to the critical recovery of a mystical author; it serves as a hermeneutical laboratory where categories are explored that would later inform his reflection on spiritual writing and the relationship between experience, language, and institution.

Between 1959 and 1966, the *Christus* collection, published by Desclée de Brouwer, released 22 books. The most significant writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola stand out, followed by the recovery and re-reading of the French Jesuit spiritual tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries. A significant part of the proposed essays would later constitute the core of Certeau's work in the field of the history of modern spirituality and the history of mysticism. This work first took shape in the editions of Pierre Favre's *Mémorial* (1960) and Surin's *Guide Spirituel* (1963). Subsequently, a substantial portion of this body of work was gathered in *The Mystic Fable*, volumes I and II, as well as in his other studies on mysticism.

4. Christus's Distance from de Preceding Generation

In the second issue of *Christus*, published in July 1954, the *Chronicles* section includes a review of the book by Fr. Joseph de Guibert (1877–1942), *La spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus. Esquisse historique* [*The Spirituality of the Society of Jesus: A Historical Sketch*], published posthumously in 1953. The book was quickly translated into Spanish in 1955. De Guibert was one of the most important experts on Ignatian spirituality in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1917 he founded the *Revue d'Ascétique et mystique* (RAM) with the

aim of establishing a periodical that would apply the methods required by contemporary scientific research to the study of spirituality. From 1922 to 1942, De Guibert taught ascetical and mystical theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, and from 1932 to 1942, he served as a consultant to the Congregation of Rites.⁶

Although Joseph de Guibert belonged to an earlier generation, it is important to emphasize that the publication of his *History of the Spirituality of the Society of Jesus* faced significant resistance from within the order itself. The volume was ultimately published in 1953; however, the origins of the work dates back to 1935, when the Superior General, Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, tasked a commission with producing a text that would enrich the literature on the Society and of filling certain significant gaps. It was not until 1941 that De Guibert submitted the manuscript to the General, who intended to review it meticulously. Ledóchowski had reservations about the text, as he envisioned “a positive exposition of the spiritual doctrine of the Society, in which the historical section would be reduced to a brief introduction” (de Guibert 1955, p. VI). Both the General and de Guibert passed away in 1942, leaving any potential revisions to the work unfinished.

The preface notes that the request from the Roman Curia indicated a need for a work focused more on historical aspects than on doctrinal content. This methodological choice is particularly significant, insofar as it shifted the focus from a normative and doctrinal presentation of the spiritual tradition toward an analysis of its historical development, with its internal variations, tensions, and processes of differentiation. The definitive publication of the work was authorized only during the generalate of Jean-Baptiste Janssens, highlighting the institutional resistance that a historical approach to Jesuit spirituality encountered.

The controversy surrounding the delay in its publication—and, to some extent, its inability to appear during the author’s lifetime—paradigmatically reflects the tensions between historical scholarship and theology at the dawn of the crisis that would affect Catholic theology in the mid-twentieth century. In contrast to a doctrinal approach to the history of ascetical and mystical theology, Guibert notably articulated an explicit interest in the history of spirituality as a dynamic and plural phenomenon, open to analysis in terms of its conditions of emergence and transformation (Desmazières 2016). To properly acknowledge Guibert’s contribution, it is essential to highlight that his methodological proposal paved the way for more radical developments by thinkers like Maurice Giuliani and Michel de Certeau. The emphasis on a historical understanding of spiritual practices was not just a simple shift in focus; it laid the groundwork for a broader reconfiguration of the relationship between personal belief experiences, the production of discourse, and the sociocultural contexts in which these expressions occur.

It is worth pausing briefly over this critical notice as it offers a striking illustration of the new way in which Giuliani—and the new generation of Jesuits committed to *Christus*—conceived Ignatian spirituality. De Guibert’s book, perhaps the most comprehensive treatise written at the time on the history of Jesuit spirituality, is divided into three stages: Saint Ignatius, historical development, and the general aspects of Jesuit spirituality.

For Giuliani, the opposition between a “mysticism of union” and a “mysticism of service” is one of the fundamental ideas that illuminates the entire book by Fr. de Guibert. A “mysticism of service through love, rather than a mysticism of union and transformation [...] would explain the precise nature of the gifts of infused contemplation received by Saint Ignatius” (Giuliani 1954, p. 135). Maurice Giuliani’s critiques of Joseph de Guibert reveal a new moment in the construction of the culture of Ignatian spirituality in the mid-1950s.

“First of all, this mysticism (we take the word here in its broad sense, to define a spiritual attitude that does not necessarily include extraordinary gifts of grace) assigns a positive role to action in sanctification. Action cannot be merely the

occasion for self-sacrifice, nor an inescapable requirement (almost regrettable) that, for a time, separates us from God". (Giuliani 1954, p. 136)

He criticizes the fact that Nadal's adage "*contemplatives in action*" is mentioned only once in De Guibert's book, without sufficient emphasis being placed on the union of these two terms. Giuliani writes, "Perhaps we are mistaken in demanding that Fr. de Guibert should have taken up a question that has become urgent and crucial for us" (Giuliani 1954, p. 136). In this way, the question of action emerges as a central theme.

Giuliani's second point of departure from De Guibert's history of spirituality concerns the omission—perhaps unconscious—of Jesuit humanism in his book (Giuliani 1954, p. 137). Giuliani's critique consists of showing that although a history of spirituality is not a history of apostolic achievements, it cannot provide a complete understanding of spirituality without showing the concrete commitments to which it has led.

"Is there not a risk of distorting a spirituality by analyzing it solely on the basis of written texts, and what is more, theoretical ones? It seems to us that apostolic effort, with its searches, its failures, and its successes, is in itself indicative of a spiritual attitude..." (Giuliani 1954, p. 139)

A third criticism Giuliani addresses to De Guibert concerns the fact that his history offers extensive treatment of the relationship between the soul and God but only rarely addresses the Church. It is not that De Guibert leads us toward an individualistic spirituality, Giuliani notes; however, in his view, he does not make explicit the depth of what service in the Church meant for Saint Ignatius.

Concerning the mysticism of action, I would like to offer a brief *excursus*. The new position adopted by Giuliani and by *Christus*, focused on hermeneutics of Ignatian spirituality as a "mysticism of action," encountered resistance within the Society of Jesus in France, thereby reflecting a new approach to the spirituality of Saint Ignatius. In 1955, de Lubac rejected Marxist readings of Teilhard's work that sought to reduce the interpretation of *The Divine Milieu* to a purely action-centred mysticism (Álvarez 2024b, pp. 123, 178–80). His concern lay in the growing penetration of Marxism into Catholic circles. "His unease was probably heightened in the aftermath of the crisis of the worker-priests, with its political and theological ramifications, and in view of the influence of a certain mysticism of action—conveyed through left-wing circles—drawn from Teilhard's thought" (Álvarez 2024b, p. 123).

In 1956, we observe De Lubac's critique of a "Jesuit form of progressivism," linked to the development of the notion of a "mysticism of action," which risked turning Ignatius into "a precursor of Marx" (de Lubac 1956). This progressive Jesuit front, represented by a new generation, was certainly influenced, in the view of the Lyonnais Jesuit, by Hegelian thought. François Roustang wrote in his commentary on Gaston Fessard's *La dialectique des Exercices*,

"Since, moreover, decision, according to Saint Ignatius, does not lead to conceptual thought or to pure faith, but to praxis and to the transformation of the world, Fr. Fessard's attempt allows us to bring together, within a totalizing attitude, not only the truths contained in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but also those offered by Karl Marx". (Roustang 1956, p. 572)

De Lubac took note of this passage and transcribed it in his *Cahiers de Fourvière* on 9 October 1956. For him, Roustang's reading amounted to annexing Gaston Fessard's thought "to the militant Marxism of the younger generation." According to Henri de Lubac, Christian life would thus be reduced to a single *praxis*, understood essentially as political action. The turn to Saint Ignatius would have put an end to a "noetic mysticism" and inaugurated a "mysticism of action," as Maurice Giuliani and Robert Rouquette had

already suggested. In other words, what de Lubac considered abusive was the assimilation of two profoundly different themes: the transformation of the world according to Marx and the establishment of the Kingdom of God in Saint Ignatius.

5. Christus's Orientation Toward the Human Sciences

From its founding until 1962, the journal had to make its way in the still tense climate that marked the end of the pontificate of Pius XII. The objective behind the launch of *Christus* was twofold: “on the one hand, to revalorize Ignatian spirituality within and beyond the Society of Jesus in order to capitalize on its influence; on the other, to reassure the Roman authorities regarding the spiritual solidity of the French Assistancy” (Fouilloux 2016, p. 50). This needed to reassure Rome, concerned not only with spiritual solidity but also doctrinal soundness. The heavy atmosphere that had to be dispelled thus also shaped, in the early years of the journal, the tone of a particular relationship with the human sciences.⁷

From its earliest years, the editorial leadership of *Christus* showed a particular interest in those sciences that could help to better know and understand spirituality. One could even say that this concern for dialogue with them is part of *Christus*'s very DNA. We must not overlook the evolution of the journal's relationship with the human sciences, undoubtedly linked to the rapid expansion of these disciplines in the 1960s.

There was an initial phase in which a relationship of *ancilla* was established, similar to the role Saint Thomas Aquinas assigned to philosophy as the handmaid of theology. In 1957, *Christus* declared that the sciences were the servants of spirituality. This designation is particularly striking given the strength that the theology–philosophy dialogue still held in French Catholic intellectual circles at the time. This relationship would later change, giving way to an attempt at a closer and more reciprocal dialogue between theology and the human sciences.

As a journal of spirituality, *Christus* is indifferent to none of the sciences that make it possible to inventory the riches of the Christian tradition and thought. On the contrary, it seeks to make use of them, while always situating them in relation to the dialogue that must be established at each moment between the human spirit and the Spirit of God. For the editors of the journal, spirituality is therefore an eminently practical science, which seeks not only to discover and contemplate the truth but to engender it (Giuliani 1957).

This statement about *Christus* can be applied—without excessive exaggeration—to the way Certeau understood, in 1957, spirituality and its dialogue with the human sciences. Certeau, who was already participating in Jean Orcibal's seminar, was not indifferent to “any of the sciences” which allowed for a better classification of the riches of traditions, as his later works would amply demonstrate: the *Memorial* of Pierre Favre (1960), the edition of Jean-Joseph Surin's *Spiritual Guide* (1963), and the *Correspondence* of J.-J. Surin. It is clear that, at that time, the role of the human sciences was still far from fulfilling the critical and problematizing function they would later assume in relation to spirituality. The trajectory of De Certeau and of the journal *Christus* clearly illustrates the evolution of the human sciences in the reading and understanding of the Christian tradition. In other words, we are witnessing a genuine epistemological turn that introduces a new way of establishing a dialogue between intelligence and tradition. “A renewed understanding of tradition is therefore imperative; otherwise, it will inevitably turn into a dead language” (Dosse 2002, p. 88).

Gradually, the editorial leadership of *Christus* became aware that the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality was not, on its own, a sufficiently effective tool for addressing the situation of crisis in the Church and in Christianity. Attention to the present thus acquired decisive importance. The growing demands of reality led De Certeau and François Roustang to engage

seriously with contemporary questions and problems. From 1964 onward, they decided to change course, developing a more intense dialogue with the human sciences.

Their entry into Lacanian territory that same year produced opposite effects in each of them: in Certeau, an itch to write; in Roustang, a priority given to listening. *The Third Man* bears the mark of this—both evident and paradoxical—since his writing, drab and dutiful in his later articles, suddenly frees itself by giving voice to another in order to speak the unbearable: the king is naked (Langlois 2019, p. 69). This dialogue was clearly related to the founding of the École Freudienne de Paris, in which both Jesuits participated actively (Dosse 2002, pp. 317–44).

6. A New Moment: Responding to the Problems of the Present

In July 1962, Maurice Giuliani, founder and director of the journal, was appointed editor-in-chief of *Études*. The Jesuit François Roustang took over the direction of *Christus*, with Certeau as associate editor. Although there was continuity with the editorial line developed under Giuliani's leadership, a gradual shift toward the pressing issues of the 1960s soon became apparent. In a note on *Christus* issued in 1963, the Doctrinal Commission of the French Jesuits observed that in the two issues devoted to *The Missionary Duty* and *Intelligence and the Spiritual Life*, a new orientation was emerging: an emphasis on the relationship between spiritual life and human life, between the Church and humanity. The report identified two risks. The first—dismissed at the time by the Jesuit author of the report—concerned the danger of confusion between spiritual life and authentic human life; the second concerned the danger of abstraction (Commission doctrinale 1963).

In 1964, a new range of themes appeared in *Christus*: “The Peace of Humanity” (no. 41, November 1964), “Educators” (no. 44, October 1964), “The Event” (no. 47, July 1965), and “The Political Life of Christians” (no. 52, October 1966) (Fouilloux 2019, p. 39). Alongside these were articles with more traditional titles that nevertheless served as foundations for reflection on the present, such as De Certeau's article “Christian Experience and the Languages of Faith.” This evolution was the result of a deliberate vision on the part of the journal's new leadership. Following the January 1964 *Note on the Orientation of Christus*, drafted by François Roustang and Michel de Certeau, the journal underwent a genuine change in direction. The period in which the relevance of *Christus* was tied to the contemporary pertinence of Ignatian spirituality and to the possibility of speaking today a religious language that was both traditional and modern had come to an end. What was now required was “to respond to the problems that are posed today to those who strive to live as Christians in our world.” Therefore, the journal had to undertake “a critique of our religious language, to free it from outdated or inadequate formulations” (Roustang 1964). This was the project to which Certeau and Roustang began to devote themselves with increasing rigour from 1964 onward, opening a field of inquiry in which they would continue to work thereafter (de Certeau 1964, pp. 294–313; 1965a, pp. 147–63; 1965b, pp. 551–71). In their report of 10 June 1966, François Roustang and De Certeau were in full agreement:

“*Christus* can therefore strengthen its role of spiritual discernment among the many initiatives released by the Second Vatican Council.” Yet the question they raised echoed the new antinomies that had emerged: “Can *Christus* carry out this discernment without taking into account the conditioning factors of spiritual life brought to light by the human sciences?”

Their answer was unequivocal: “No,” replied Roustang and De Certeau (Fouilloux 2019, p. 50). The increasingly pronounced context in which the conversation between spirituality and the human sciences took place was rooted in the dialogue with atheism, which called for an urgent change in direction. The dialogues presented by de Lubac in *Le Drame de*

l'humanisme athée, for example, no longer seemed sufficient. “How can we, in the present moment, address the question of atheism [as Paul VI asks the Jesuits to do] without approaching it where it actually arises, without asking ourselves what the human being is today?” (de Certeau and Roustang 1966). And if there is a field of inquiry in which this question is posed, it is that of the human sciences—a field into which Roustang and De Certeau were urging a deeper immersion at the time. This unavoidable trajectory justified, in their view, the need to create a centre for reflection and action in the human sciences in place of the journal *Christus*.

On 10 June 1966, François Roustang and De Certeau already pointed to the disagreement between the journal’s editors and the authorities of the Society of Jesus: “If we do not find men to replace us at *Christus* (...) we propose the suppression of the journal, to devote our energies to the founding of a center for reflection and action in the sectors of the human sciences” (de Certeau and Roustang 1966).

Echoes of this project—aimed at building bridges between disciplines—can be found in the introduction to *La Solitude*, edited by De Certeau and François Roustang.⁸ There, both a diagnosis and a project take shape:

“The isolation experienced by our contemporaries is aggravated by the fragmentation of knowledge. Today, stable models and enduring figures no longer exist—figures to which everyone might refer and which could thus constitute a kind of common ground of shared assumptions enabling discussion [...] And are not the bridges we attempt to build between one or another human science often hasty and fragile? [...]”. (de Certeau and Roustang 1967, pp. 9–10)

Roustang and De Certeau’s proposal was far from being unanimously accepted among the Jesuits in France. We must not overlook the impact that the sense of crisis surrounding priestly and religious vocations⁹ had on the older generation of Jesuit fathers. Fr. Jacques Guillet suggested a different approach (de Certeau and Roustang 1967, pp. 9–10). In a “Confidential Note on *Christus*,” he offered his opinion in response to Fr. Philippe Laurent (Provincial of Paris): “While it is indeed indispensable to integrate the human sciences into the religious disciplines, care must be taken not to make the human sciences the center and the pole of religious inquiry. Such a hegemonic claim would be the ruin of faith” (Guillet 1966). The disagreement over the place of the human sciences as an analytical tool in studies of spirituality thus becomes a genuine symptom of the generational tension at work within French Jesuit circles.

7. Conclusions

In connection with an article by Fr. Rafael Sánchez, SJ, on preaching, published in the April issue of the Chilean Jesuit journal *Mensaje*, J. González wrote a letter to the editor, the Jesuit Hernán Larraín, pointing out several errors related to the fact that Sánchez attacked preaching on sin. What is striking is the way that Jorge González criticizes the influence of existentialist doctrines on Sánchez’s thought: “Fr. Sánchez, without realizing it, has allowed himself to be influenced by existentialist doctrines, according to which lived experience replaces objective reality. Indeed, it opens a wide field for a purely subjective morality, that is, for the justification of immorality” (González 1966). In response to González’s attack, Hernán Larraín replied with a letter in which he referred to the eminently positive character of the spirituality of Saint Ignatius, thereby revealing a shift in the spiritual paradigm manifested in the disagreement between the two Jesuits. This shift can be read, among other things, as an echo of the work of *aggiornamento* undertaken by the journal *Christus*.

“The spirituality of St. Ignatius is essentially positive; it is a great love that must move a Jesuit, not simply fear. Sin is transformed into a motive for generosity. Seeing

the immense goodness of God, I should feel obliged (*noblesse oblige!*) to act as befits a gentleman. Since Christ has done so much for me—out of love!—I too must respond with immense love. These are lofty goals—magnificent goals!—that St. Ignatius sets before us, not an exclusive system of defenses. But why insist on something so well known? It is enough to read the *Christus* collection, the journal founded and directed for more than eleven years by Fr. Giuliani”. (Larraín 1966)

This fragment from Larraín’s letter shows, on the one hand, the role played by *Christus* in the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality in Chile as well. The process of *aggiornamento* in Ignatian spirituality in Chile was marked by the convergence of multiple sources, including Spanish and German renewals. However, the journal *Christus* played a particularly significant role in this development. The circulation of Michel de Certeau in Latin America since 1966 (Álvarez 2025) illustrates this dynamic. Additionally, several Chilean Jesuits studied in France, which helped them maintain strong intellectual connections with Jesuits from those provinces. On the other hand, it makes explicit the fact that spirituality is constructed in relation to the intellectual and symbolic context of its own time. In the post-Second Vatican Council period, as reflected in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, the outlook on the world is fundamentally positive. It is this same positive stance toward the present that constitutes the hermeneutical key through which the spirituality of St. Ignatius is also read. This key is very different from those operative in other moments in the history of the Society of Jesus.

Between the 1950s and the mid-1960s, *Christus* functioned as a genuine intellectual and spiritual laboratory in which a rereading of the Ignatian tradition was tested in light of contemporary challenges. The journal carried out an *aggiornamento* understood as a reconfiguration of the spiritual gesture, shifting it from a spirituality centred on interiority and doctrinal defence toward one attentive to the present, to history, and to concrete human action.

The transition within *Christus* from the promotion of Ignatian spirituality to a critical dialogue with the human sciences marks an important epistemological turn. The human sciences, especially history and psychoanalysis, gradually ceased to occupy a merely instrumental or ancillary role and became instances of problematization and criticism of spiritual experience itself. This shift, clearly visible in the trajectories of Michel de Certeau and Francois Roustang, introduced a new mode of relating tradition and intelligence: no longer a matter of applying modern categories to inherited contents but of allowing the present to interrogate the conditions of possibility of spiritual discourse.

As Michel de Certeau shows forcefully in his article “Cultures and Spiritualities,” published in the journal *Concilium* in 1966, the language of a given cultural moment organizes spiritual language. This means that the languages of tradition and spiritual texts manifest the religious consciousness of a particular place and time, structured by objective and subjective forms of shared consciousness.

In every spirituality, what is essential is not something located elsewhere, beyond the language of its time. It is precisely this language that takes the spiritual seriously; it is there, within that cultural situation, that its desire and its risk are “embodied.” It is through this language that spirituality encounters God and continues to seek Him, expresses its faith, and simultaneously experiences an encounter with God and an encounter with real brothers and sisters (de Certeau 2010, pp. 50–51).

The conflict surrounding the “mysticism of action,” the resistance articulated by de Lubac, and the internal debates within the Society of Jesus bring into sharper focus a central intuition of Michel de Certeau: there is no spirituality without language, and no spiritual language outside a specific cultural context. Ignatian spirituality cannot be understood as an invariant core simply expressed differently across historical periods but rather as a historically situated symbolic practice whose intelligibility depends on the regimes of

language, knowledge, and experience proper to each era. From this perspective, *Christus* appears as a space in which the tension between continuity of tradition and transformation of its modes of expression and practice is made visible and productive.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

AFSI	Archives Françaises de la Compagnie de Jésus
APCHSJ	Archivos de la Provincia de Chile de la Compañía de Jesús
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
FRC	Fonds Révue Christus

Notes

- ¹ This article forms part of the research project of Fondecyt Initiation Grant 11240407, “*The Impact of New Francophone Theological Trends on the Evolution of Chilean Social Catholicism (1931–1979)*,” exploring the theoretical frameworks surrounding debates on the understanding of Jesuit spirituality in France and its reception in Chile during the 1960s.
- ² Father Philippe Laurent (1913–1998) was provincial of the Jesuits of Paris from 1963 to 1967 and subsequently director of the Centre for Studies, Research, and Social Action (CERAS), then located in Vanves.
- ³ RAM was founded by Joseph de Guibert (1877–1942), who was for the Jesuit school what Garrigou-Lagrange was for the Dominican school: its great inspirer. From 1922 onward, he taught ascetical and mystical theology at the Gregorian University. He was also involved in the founding of the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* in 1932. In the first article of RAM, the programme of the new journal was set out. Although RAM conceives of itself as a journal of theology, it also makes room for history and psychology, to which it assigns an important place.
- ⁴ Henri Mogenet, sj. Professor at the Jesuit Faculty of Fourvière in Lyon.
- ⁵ Henri Hostein, sj (1906–1980), Professor of theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris.
- ⁶ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/guibert-joseph-de> (accessed on 15 January 2026).
- ⁷ It should be recalled that the expression “*human sciences*” began to find its place in the French academic milieu at the end of the 1950s. Apart from psychology and sociology, one must first consider history, a discipline with which *Christus* would necessarily be confronted in relation to the *aggiornamento* of Ignatian spirituality. “The expression ‘human sciences’ is, in France, a common way of designating the fields of psychology and sociology. Since the Second World War, it has replaced the earlier designation ‘moral sciences’. In 1942, Wilhelm Dilthey’s work on the sciences of the mind (*Geisteswissenschaften*) was translated into French under the title *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. By a decree of 23 July 1958 (published in the *Journal officiel* of 17 July 1958), the Faculties of Letters were transformed into Faculties of Letters and Human Sciences, with the aim of promoting the teaching of part of the social sciences (psychology and sociology) alongside the literary humanities. In this academic sense, now established in common usage, the expression ‘human sciences’ is a typically French idiomatic phrase (English sometimes uses it in rather loose contexts, but more commonly speaks of the *social sciences*).” Edmond Ortigues, *Encyclopedia Universalis*, <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedia/sciences-humaines/> (accessed on 14 January 2026).
- ⁸ This volume brings together several texts from issue no. 49 of January 1966. That issue was composed of articles by Madeleine Delbrel: *Le silence dans la ville*; Denis Vasse: *De l’isolement à la solitude*; Jean Devaud: *Solitude dans le mariage*; François Courel: *La retraite selon les Exercices*; Jean-Jacques Latour: *Solitude et Liturgie*; Paul Beauchamp: *Plainte et louange dans les Psaumes*; Jacques Guillet: *Rejetés des hommes et de Dieu*; and Michel de Certeau: *La rénovation de la vie religieuse*.
- ⁹ The Jesuits were never as numerous in France as in the aftermath of the Second World War (3160 in 1946), yet they were 1000 fewer, or nearly so, by 1960 (2272), and fewer than 1800 (1794) in 1964. (Quoted by Fouilloux 2014, pp. 12–13).

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Article

God Who Prays in Us: Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Diary*

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Abstract

This article explores Katherine Sonderegger's thesis that in Christian prayer, not only does the person pray, but God prays. Though such an idea runs contrary to the settled conviction in Christian spirituality that the human person prays to God, this paper enquires into the idea that God also prays in the person with a study of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Diary*. That record of his spiritual experiences suggests that not only did he listen to God's prayer in him, but that this listening comprised a spiritual itinerary in which he was led into a deeper experience of God's prayerful laboring in him. Following this itinerary, this article proceeds in three parts. First, a study of Ignatius's prayer to the mediators reveals that in his petitions, he sought to hear the intercessory prayer of Mary and Jesus. Second, he found himself discovering a new way to name God as he celebrated the mass; that newness resided not in a new vocabulary but in his participation in the prayer of the Son to the Father. Finally, Ignatius experienced the grace of *loquiela* in which he heard a kind of celestial music whose tone and language moved him to a simple, contemplative admiration of God. More than the story of a mystic with an uncommon ability to listen to God, Ignatius's journey into greater attention to God's language within him is the story of grace, God's life, which is always present, active, and audible in the believer's prayer.

Keywords: divine prayer; spiritual listening; grace; contemplation

1. Introduction

Katherine Sonderegger admits that the question she poses in her essay "Does God Pray?" is strange (Sonderegger 2022, pp. 136–48). She understands that it does not make sense to consider God's prayer when the "settled conviction among Christians" is that "we pray, God does not" (Sonderegger 2022, p. 136). Nevertheless, exploring the possibility that God joins the human person in his or her prayer, Sonderegger goes beyond traditional understandings of prayer that reduce it to a need or a cry for help. Her argument rests upon the passage from Romans 8 where Paul declares that "the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26). She also points to Jesus, "the man of prayer" who shows "in his own devotions the simplicity, the vulnerability, and the meekness proper prayer exacts" (Sonderegger 2022, p. 145). Recalling for us that Scripture discloses the life of God, she argues that these passages reveal that the Son and the Spirit, these processions from the Trinity, "are divine prayer, source of all creaturely prayer" (Sonderegger 2022, p. 148). God does pray, and as she affirms, "everything about God is blessing, everything" (Sonderegger 2022, p. 148).

For as novel as Sonderegger's thesis appears, it reminds us that prayer is a relational space in which both the human person *and* God engage each other in ways that are personal and direct. As Gabino Uríbarri Bilbao plainly states about prayer, "God enters into dialogue through history with persons in history" (Uríbarri Bilbao 2017, p. 49). Such an idea about

God's action in prayer can hardly be considered the domain of one charism in the Christian tradition, but it fits well in the context of Ignatian spirituality, especially as interpreted by William Barry. Barry, perhaps most known in the North American context for his work in spiritual direction, has argued that prayer might best be understood as *friendship*, and in that intimate relationship "God reaches out and desires intimacy with the person" (Barry 2007, p. 1370). Intrigued by this idea of prayer as friendship in which God is an active pray-er in the relationship, I will examine Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Diary* to see in what ways Ignatius listened for God's prayer in him.¹ These personal notes of his, covering a 13-month period, record his discernment regarding an issue connected to the vow of poverty. Praying over whether to accept some, all, or none of the revenue attached to the churches entrusted to the Society of Jesus, he registered what he experienced in his prayer as a way to find God's will on this issue. These notes, eminently personal and never meant for others to read, immerse us in his interior life; they tell us of the devotion, warmth, tears, and other spiritual and corporal experiences he felt as he prayed and celebrated the mass. They are not *about* prayer but reveal what he actually felt and thought *in* prayer. Scholars typically invoke the text to study his discernment process, especially in its correspondence to his more famous text, the *Spiritual Exercises*. But another reading of his personal notes could be framed along the lines of Sonderegger's insight into the intimate and familiar ways in which God speaks to the person in prayer. The *Diary* itself invites such an interpretation because in it Ignatius minutely attended to his experiences to see in what way they came from God and revealed God's will to him. In short, he was listening to the groans of the Spirit within him.

In this article, I will explore three of Ignatius's experiences in prayer that sketch the outlines of God who labors in him—to use one of Ignatius's basic understandings of God's interaction with the human person—and whose labor takes the form of prayer. This approach to a mystical text from the 16th century may help us deepen our experience of the Spirit's intercession in us, an intercession in the life of the Church that is inviting all of us to listen more deeply to the voice of the Spirit, and in so doing become a more synodal church (Pope Francis 2020, p. 86).

2. Intercessory Prayer: Listening to the Prayer of the Mediators

Ignatius began his discernment praying to Mary and Jesus, petitioning them to intercede on his behalf to the Father. Readers familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises* will not be surprised to see in these prayers the practice of colloquies as he seeks help from them. This prayer was more than a perfunctory supplication for assistance; he spent several days drawing close to them, growing in intimacy and gaining confidence that they would help him. For this reason, his petition to Mary and to Jesus was relational: it is as if he believed that moving deeper into a relationship with them would move him closer to God.² After five days of praying and noticing the presence of Jesus and Mary, whom he refers to as the "Son" and the "Mother", he sensed that they had interceded to the Father. He perceived a "sign" (*señal*) of their presence, and with this sign, he believed that they had prayed for him.³ The confirmation of this was his feeling of having "notable access" to the Father.

With this unhurried period of intercessory prayer to the Mother and the Son, Ignatius implicitly reveals how important this discernment was. The question of receiving or not receiving income for the maintenance of churches was ultimately a question of how to be faithful to his experience of Jesus, whom he knew and loved as the poor and humble one. For this reason, the discernment touched an essential element of his way of following Jesus in the Church. Though many commentators see the vow of obedience as central to the Jesuit vocation or way of proceeding, the vow of poverty held at least an important, if not more important, place in the order's religious self-understanding. Poverty was, in the

words of Philip Endean, “the cardinal Ignatian value. . . obedience takes over this primacy only later” (Endean 1987, p. 21).

Ignatius’s intercessory prayer also suggests that prayer for him was a populated space in which he sought intimate contact with the divine persons. Similarly, his desire that they intercede for him discloses a fundamental posture of his: humility. He seems to know that he cannot pray or discern on his own or as he would like, and so he seeks their presence and guidance. At the same time, Mary and Jesus were not instruments in his quest to know God’s will. He did not abandon them once he felt that they had interceded for him; rather, he imagined himself *in their company*—as friends—as he progressed closer to God in his prayer.⁴ In this way, petitionary prayer was about cultivating a deeper relationship, and in this relationship, what he sought in his prayer was to hear *their* intercessory prayer to God.

Petitionary prayer, although often thought of as vocal prayers or simple expressions of one’s desires, is relational. For Ignatius, it is the work of two. In other words, a petition for him was more than asking God for what he wanted; it was a moment of *mutual* giving and receiving; it is about speaking and listening (Arana 2007, p. 342).⁵ And his listening was a patient listening: it was only on the sixth day of his process that he approached God the Father with his desire to know God’s will. On a theological level, his prayer to the mediators is his asking that his prayer be raised up in the prayer of Mary, the one who contemplated and pondered all things in her heart (Luke 2:19). His prayer to the Son invoked Jesus as the mediator, the one who exists to intercede to the Father on behalf of men and women (1 Tim 2:5). Moreover, his petitionary prayer, made in the solitude of his room and chapel where he prayed and celebrated mass, participated in the Church’s praise and adoration to the Father to know and to do the Father’s will.

In terms of the spirituality of his petitionary prayer, attention characterized his disposition, and attention represents a contemporary spiritual topic whose reach is expansive. One might think of the growing practice of and reflection on mindfulness in genres both popular and academic. Similarly, one may also consider the encyclopedic studies of Iain McGilchrist who, drawing from the fields of neuroscience, philosophy, and psychology, has argued that “what we attend to, and how we attend to it, changes it and changes us” (McGilchrist 2019, p. 167).⁶ In addition, on a sociological and political level, attention—or our lack of it—is a growing cause for concern.⁷

In Christian spirituality, attention, in the estimation of Mark Burrows, “has long shaped Christianity” (Burrows 2023, p. 280). Though ours is an era where we may find ourselves, borrowing from T.S. Eliot, (*Burnt Norton*) “distracted from distraction by distraction,” (Eliot 1944, lines 4–5) spiritual reflection in the Christian tradition has always been interested in cultivating the search for God in silence, listening, and attention, and some of that reflection has not been without creative connection to theology. For example, in an epilogue to a series of studies on kenosis, Kevin Hector argues that attention could be one way to “put kenosis into practice” (Hector 2022, p. 310). In short, attention is not something new. The poet Mary Oliver’s intuition that “To pay attention, this is the work of our lives”, not only recovers the basic insights of the Christian spiritual tradition, but it reminds us that attention is work, and in the context of prayer, the work of attention is about listening to the prayer of the Spirit in us (Oliver 2023, p. 264).

The opening entries of Ignatius’s *Spiritual Diary* reveal the prayer of intercession as an act of attention to a deeper prayer that takes place in the person. This is to suggest that the most basic form of prayer runs much deeper than a simple formulation of wants and needs. It participates in and is lifted up by the movement of the Spirit in the person. Such a perspective on prayer is more than a compelling insight offered by Ignatius the mystic. This is Christian prayer. One need only to look at the “Hail Mary” in which one beseeches Mary that she might “pray for us sinners now and the hour of our death”. Similarly, in praying

the “Our Father”, one enters into that which belongs to the very heart of Jesus’s prayer, yet, “not for that reason is it exclusive to him” (Uríbarri Bilbao 2017, p. 149). The Christian prays the “Our Father” as his or her own, and it is—it is a prayer which configures the person into the Son, the one who prayed and prays it to the Father. Christian prayer, in its most elementary or rote forms, “returns us to that prayer which was uttered in the person of Jesus Christ and of which is constantly repeated because God is not without humankind” (Barth 2002, p. 14). Intercession, the simplest form of Christian prayer, participates in the prayer that Jesus and Mary offer to the Father.

3. Listening to God Pray in Him in the Mass

Throughout the *Diary*, Ignatius continued calling out to God with petitions, and on occasion, he transcribed the words that he uttered to God. He also specified moments in which he was not able to speak the way he wanted; words were, at times, withheld or not available to him. For example, in the first days of his discernment, he wrote that he felt a kind of “withholding” of speech.⁸ The language that he used indicates a kind of loss of the word; his speech was, as he put it, retained (*retener*). It could be that at that moment, he was so affectively moved by an experience of God that he was at a loss for words. But more than a loss for words because of powerful emotions, the way he described this experience suggests something different; he found himself held back from using his typical expressions to talk to God.

This withholding of the word does not seem to be a random or haphazard spiritual experience; rather, there seems to be a pattern of language being withheld, followed by language given. For example, in describing his prayer several days later, he reported that as he was heading to mass, “there came to me a short prayer.”⁹ Unfortunately for us as readers, he did not transcribe in his notes what this “short prayer” was, nor did he indicate why it provoked in him, as he reports, “intense devotion and tears.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, the text presents a dynamic of losing and then receiving new language.

This pattern repeats. Two days after receiving this new prayer, he again indicated an experience of an “abundance of tears, devotion, and great sobs”, and the cumulative effect of this intense moment in prayer was that “many times I was not able to speak without losing the ability to speak” (*no pudiendo muchas veces tener la habla sin perderla*).¹¹ Yet, this loss of language did not seem to have been a kind of void or an emptiness, but rather something fruitful, noting that he received “many spiritual intelligences.”¹² Though the content of these “spiritual intelligences” is not specified, something new was coming to him. A hint of this newness might be found in what he said when he described his prayer in “finding much access to the Father in naming him as the mass names him.”¹³ It seems that naming God felt new to him, and that experience continued. On the following day, he returned to this experience of naming God, writing that “at the first prayer, in naming the eternal Father, etc., there came an felt interior sweetness”.

Summarizing, it is possible to detect an itinerary that consists of first losing a certain language to address God, followed by the reception of a new prayer or new spiritual thoughts, and then finally a new way to name God. This movement suggests that part of his spiritual journey during this discernment process involved a loss of language familiar to him as well as the advent of a new way to name, speak to, and be with God.

In her study of what she has called a “contemplative theology in via”, Sarah Coakley has argued that contemplation, an experience of “graced vulnerability”, “invites uncomfortable change” (Coakley 2013, pp. 86–87). In an early part of her study, she describes this transformation as a process of “contemplative effacement”. Such effacement for Coakley is the *sine qua non* “to learn to speak a new language” (Coakley 2013, p. 23). She circles back to this idea in a chapter titled “Reorientations of Classic Trinitarian Thought”, where

she argues that true contemplation brings about “an epistemic stripping necessary to right contemplation of the divine,” and in a right contemplation of God, she suggests that one learns how to “name God” (Coakley 2013, pp. 309, 311). According to Coakley, in this condensed summary of her work, one loses in contemplative prayer a way of knowing in order to receive a new way of knowing and naming God.

This epistemological *metanoia* represents a considerable and often overlooked aspect of the spiritual journey. Scholars of the *Spiritual Exercises* opine that a kind of epistemic stripping should be thought of as part of Ignatian spirituality. According to Santiago Arzubialde, one of the great commentators on the *Spiritual Exercises*, the spiritual experience offered in the *Exercises* is that of “abandoning language for a new language” (Arzubialde 2009, p. 83). Similarly, Patrick Goujon affirmed that the *Exercises* allow for the creation of a new discourse for the retreatant, a discourse in which each person discovers and enters into a new or different relationship with God (Goujon 2021, p. 24).

The *Diary* suggests that Ignatius made this journey. His way of knowing God shifted and that shift involved a new relationship with language. The words were likely the same, but they meant something new to him. Moreover, the *Diary* situates this spiritual process in a place: the Eucharist. To cite just two examples. While at Mass, he reported that with “every word of naming God, ‘Dominus’, etc., I seemed to be penetrated so deeply” (*cada palabra de nombrar a Dios, Dominus, etc., me penetraba tanto dentro*).¹⁴ The second example is even more vivid: one day at the mass “with the most holy Sacrament in my hands there came to me a speech” (*al tener el santísimo Sacramento in las manos, viniéndome un hablar*).¹⁵

These experiences in the celebration of the Eucharist suggest that his experience of naming God in a new way consisted of something more than a new relationship to language. The shift was relational. In the mass, the liturgical prayers said by the priest are prayers said in the Son, through the Spirit, to the Father. Thus, Ignatius was praying, as all priests are when they say the mass, in the Son who is praying all things to the Father. As such, the new naming of God that Ignatius felt might best be understood as his participation in the Son’s prayer to the Father. The new language that he receives is the language of the Son’s prayer to the Father. He was, as it were, inside the prayer of the Son, quite possibly feeling the Son’s love and passion for the Father in naming “God, ‘Dominus’, etc.”

In the Letter to the Hebrews—the New Testament text that elaborates theologically upon Jesus’ priesthood—the author declares that Jesus “is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Jesus, the high priest who definitively offered himself to God for men and women, continues to intercede for all of humanity. His priesthood is open to all those who approach him with faith, and in faith all can enter into his prayer to the Father. In his priesthood, Ignatius entered into the intercessory prayer of Jesus, who intercedes for all from his exalted place with God.

This was Ignatius’s own realization. In the midst of this discovery of a new speech and new feelings at naming God, he wrote: “It is Jesus who presents or accompanies my prayers.”¹⁶ And in one of the few images that he used in his notes, he wrote that he found himself “in Jesus’ shadow.”¹⁷ His experience of naming God anew and being penetrated so deeply by the name of God points to his prayer as taking place in the Son. His words were participating in the prayer of the Son, “who lives make intercession” for the person before God.

4. To Be Within Listening Distance

In Ignatius’s spirituality, there is continuation and movement. In other words, the spiritual experience is not comprised of isolated moments, but rather motions which are relational in nature and which continue to develop and deepen. This is to suggest that

Ignatius's listening to God is not just an interesting part of his prayer, but it is a spiritual itinerary not unlike that experienced in friendship; it was a movement that was deepening. It began with his listening to the prayer of the intercessors, and it deepened in his prayer in the mass where he discovered that Jesus presented his prayers to the Father. And this movement continued: for a period of two weeks, Ignatius reported a remarkable grace whose content has both fascinated and eluded readers of his text—*loqüela*. This grace had an internal and external resonance, and it was often, in his words, “admirable”.

The word “*loqüela*” comes from Latin, which denotes one's speech or accent. It is possible to imagine that Ignatius would have come across the word in the Vulgate. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew, Peter is recognized as a Galilean for his accent or “*loqüela*” (26:73). Another possible source for the word could be Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. In the third section of what is considered the most famous book from the Modern Devotion tradition, and one that early companions of Ignatius indicated that he cherished deeply, Kempis identified God's speech as the source of consolation. Book III, a book on consolation, impresses upon the reader that the “inward speech of Christ to a faithful soul” causes true spiritual consolation.¹⁸ Thus, though *loqüela* represents a sublime mystical gift, sources for it were at hand for Ignatius, helping him place himself in his prayer, in the words of the Welsh poet R.S. Thomas, “within listening distance” of God's speech.¹⁹

His notes about this grace furnish some idea as to what he was hearing or sensing. For example, on the first day that he recorded it, he made the distinction between an external and an internal *loqüela*, identifying the internal *loqüela* that he felt on that day as *more divinely given*.²⁰ This is a point he circled back to: “in the internal and external *loqüela*, all moving me to divine love and to the grace of the *loqüela* so divinely given.”²¹ And if the reader was interested in finding out what it felt like for Ignatius, he mentioned that both *loqüelae* brought him great relish or enjoyment (*gusto*).

Over the next two weeks, he will, as is his custom, briefly note how he experienced this grace. On one day, he repeated the great relish or enjoyment he derived from it, and he gave a brief description of it: “With so much enjoyment of the internal *loqüela* in assimilating or recalling the *loqüela* or celestial music.”²² More than a speech or a voice, it appears to have been much more tonal, musical, even mellifluous. Curiously, he described the feeling of that music not in reference to the sense of hearing but to the sense of taste (*gusto*). In some ways, Ignatius received this gift much like the prophet Ezekiel received God's word. In what is perhaps one of the more famous images from that prophetic book, God calls out to the prophet: “Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel” (Ezek 3:1). The prophet eats the word, and he exclaims: “I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth” (Ezek 3:3).

In a more detailed description of his prayer in this section that commentators have called a “*loqüela* cycle”, Ignatius wondered if he was enjoying the sound of the *loqüela* too much. With his extreme, even scrupulous attention to what he felt in prayer, he noticed that his tears diminished during his experience of *loqüela*, and this alerted him to the fact that something was awry in his reception of it. Reflecting more on this, he concluded that he delighted too much in the “tone” or the “sound” of it without paying attention to the “meaning of the words”. He concluded his notes for that day, stating his desire to continue to learn how to receive the gift: “hoping for greater erudition for the future.”²³

The word itself and his description of it as music, tone, sound, and also as language suggest that he is hearing something of God in his prayer. Perhaps, as Santiago Thió de Pol has commented, *loqüela* is something along the lines of what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth: “And I know that this man, whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell” (2 Cor 12:3) (Following Thió de Pol 2024, p. 200). Caught

up to paradise in the mass, Ignatius seems to have heard “inexpressible things”, delighting and savoring in them. Quite possibly too, the insight of John of the Cross gives an idea as to what Ignatius was experiencing. In *The Spiritual Canticle*, the narrator speaks of “silent music/sounding solitude/the supper that refreshes, and deepens love.” (John of the Cross 2017, p. 473). The Eucharistic banquet was for John of the Cross, as it was for Ignatius, an experience of listening to love and being moved into love. Elaborating on this stanza in his commentary on the poem, John wrote that “when these spiritual faculties are alone and empty of all natural forms and apprehensions, they can receive in a most sonorous way the spiritual sound of the excellence of God, in himself and in his creatures” (John of the Cross 2017, p. 536). It could be that with *loqüela* Ignatius was filled with the sound of God’s “excellence” as he celebrated the mass, and he responded by contemplating God with deep admiration. And most importantly, he was moved to love God.

Though the exact content of *loqüela* is not easy to locate, the grace of *loqüela* suggests that his attention to God deepened over the time period covered in the *Diary*. In this way, the *Diary* does more than affirm Katherine Sonderegger’s thesis about God joining the human person in prayer; it reveals that listening to God who prays in us can become a journey into the mystery of God, where inexpressible sounds and words fill a person who beholds God’s glory. And if that glory is “admirable” as Ignatius repeatedly describes it, it is because love is involved.

For as sublime as the grace of *loqüela* appears, this celestial music should be thought of as relational. In his fascinating study of the brain’s hemispheres and their differing functions, Iain McGilchrist explores the fundamental place of music in human evolution and the evolution of language acquisition. Though we tend to think of music as something peripheral, McGilchrist proposes the thesis that “music consists entirely of relations”; in his estimation, it is all about “betweenness” (McGilchrist 2019, p. 103). In other words, music represents a deeper expression of intimacy and relationality—it pulls us into the sphere of the other. Attuned to it, we become attuned and in harmony with the other. With such an understanding of music as that which is at the base of our relationality, the grace of *loqüela* points to the simplicity, intimacy and betweenness that God and he are enjoying. Returning to the formulation of John of the Cross, there are no forms or apprehensions that get in the way of his listening and savoring God’s mellifluous presence.

5. Conclusions

The sudden emergence and disappearance of *loqüela* in the pages of Ignatius’s *Diary* has confounded readers. One wonders how this grace appeared so suddenly and why it disappeared, if it did disappear, equally abruptly. Perhaps Ignatius turned his attention to other graces. Or quite possibly, the celestial tones became fainter as he moved out of that deep harmony. But a likely hypothesis is that these celestial tones and the words that accompanied them continued because God continues. Grace does not come and go; it is not “on” and then “off”. The offer of an ever-deepening friendship with God is there; it is we who move in and out of attunement with God in our lives. As Javier Melloni pointed out, the grace of *loqüela* in the *Diary* underlines “the inseparable link between God’s gift and the disposition of the human person” (Melloni 2001, p. 65). Ignatius was disposed during those weeks to a more immediate, simpler presence with God. The story then of his listening to God’s prayer in his prayer is the story of grace: his listening and attention to God was a process of becoming more in harmony with a God who was always praying in him.

Ignatius’s *Diary* reminds us that the Spirit does intercede for us with inexpressible groans, and the human person—*homo capax Dei*—is able to sense them. In our context, the Church has helped us to recognize that those groans are inviting us to listen more

deeply to those with whom we live, minister, and work. Communal discernment, spiritual conversation, and synodal decision-making processes comprise the ways we believe God is inviting us to be Church. All of these communal acts depend upon listening. Following Ignatius's journey in the *Diary*, this journey of listening to each other, if guided by the Spirit, will take us into something greater than that of landing upon the right decision. It will be greater than feeling consolation at having arrived at consensus. Listening will bring us into the life of the Son who lives to pray for us. It will immerse us into deeper love and intimacy with God, the one who prays in us, and whose groans for friendship with us take the simplest, most sonorous forms.

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Notes

- ¹ Critically edited text titled, (Ignatius of Loyola 1934). Hereafter cited as *Diary* with reference to paragraph numbers. All translations mine.
- ² For more on the emphasis on mutuality in the colloquies in the *Spiritual Exercises*, see (Arana 2007).
- ³ *Diary*, n. 6.
- ⁴ *Diary*, n. 8.
- ⁵ Emphasis mine.
- ⁶ See also McGilchrist, Iain. 2021. *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*. 2 vols. London: Perspectiva Press (McGilchrist 2021).
- ⁷ For example, see, Tali Sharot, and Cass Sunstein. Why People Fail to Notice Horrors Around Them. *New York Times*. 25 February 2024 (Sharot and Sunstein 2024).
- ⁸ *Diary*, n. 7.
- ⁹ *Diary*, n. 18.
- ¹⁰ See footnote 9.
- ¹¹ *Diary*, n. 27.
- ¹² See footnote 11.
- ¹³ See also footnote 11.
- ¹⁴ *Diary*, n. 164.
- ¹⁵ *Diary*, n. 69.
- ¹⁶ *Diary*, n. 77.
- ¹⁷ *Diary*, n. 101.
- ¹⁸ See: Kempis. 2017. *The Imitation of Christ*. Edited by William C Creasy. Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics (Kempis 2017). For uses of “loquella” and “loquor” in the *Imitation*, see (Storr 1910).
- ¹⁹ Thomas, Ronald Stuart. 1993. But the Silence in the Mind. In *Collected Poems 1945–1990*. London: J. M. Dent (Thomas 1993).
- ²⁰ *Diary*, n. 221, emphasis mine.
- ²¹ *Diary*, n. 222.
- ²² *Diary*, n. 224, emphasis mine.
- ²³ *Diary*, n. 234.

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Article

Temporal Coadjutors in the Society of Jesus: Legal and Spiritual Profile

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Abstract

The Society of Jesus is a clerical religious order, but it has incorporated non-sacred members, in different degrees of membership, although not from the beginning. The priests professed members constitute the nucleus of the Society of Jesus, and in concentric circles are the formed coadjutors (spiritual coadjutors, the priests, and temporal coadjutors or brothers, the non-priests), the approved scholastics and the novices. In this article, we present the historical juridical framework of the temporal coadjutors, since they have been and are an important part of the history and life of the Society of Jesus, although they are not sufficiently well known because they are less visible. We study the origin of this grade among the Jesuits, its incorporation and legislation, as well as its subsequent evolution. We have gone through the founding and regulatory documents of the Society of Jesus and the rather scarce bibliography. There has been a great evolution in the profile of the temporal coadjutor since the 20th century in practice, that we briefly describe, but not so much in the legal profile. This publication is a preview of a larger research project on the Jesuit brothers, which is still in progress.

Keywords: brothers Jesuit; temporal coadjutor; society of Jesus; religious live

1. Introduction: Non-Priest Religious

To speak of religious brothers/sisters is to refer to the majority of the members of institutes of consecrated life. That is to say, the most general and usual situation in religious life is to be only a religious man or woman, brother or sister, without having the addition of the priesthood. Thus, the religious of all women's congregations are only religious, without priesthood; so are the vast majority of non-Sacerdotal male congregations such as the Brothers of St. John of God, the De La Salle Brothers or the Marist Brothers. Likewise, the military religious orders, some of which are extinct (such as those of Order of Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller, Order of Saint James, the Teutonic Knights, Montesa, Calatrava, Alcántara) and a percentage of the members of the other congregations, the clerical or priestly ones (Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Augustinians, Claretians, Salesians).

St. John of God and many others saints were brothers, including all the female religious saints, beginning with St. Teresa of Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi (one of the most influential saints in the history of the Church) expressed himself as a brother and did not want to be ordained a priest, although at some point, he seems to have acted as a deacon, so it is disputed whether he was one (Callebaut 1927; Muscat 2018). According to St. Bonaventure, St. Francis “estimaba más a un simple y balbuciente hermano que con buenos exemplos mueve y excita a otros a la virtud que a un grande y elocuente predicador que en sus sermones busca no la gloria de Dios y el provecho de las almas, sino sus aplausos y popular estimación, [I esteemed more highly a simple and stammering brother who by

good examples moves and excites others to virtue than a great and eloquent preacher who in his sermons seeks not the glory of God and the benefit of souls, but their applause and popular esteem].” (Oviedo 1755, Dedicatoria) although the terms of comparison are very unbalanced: a virtuous and unfit brother and a very fit but not very virtuous preacher.

Religious brothers/sisters (or non-priests) are persons who at one point in their lives decided to serve the mission of God radically and exclusively by following the so-called evangelical counsels, by which they gave the essential dimensions of their person and life to the service of the Gospel. They renounced the personal possession of goods, becoming poor in order to share what they had; they renounced an exclusive and excluding affectivity, being chaste in order to be able to love everyone without exclusivity; and they renounced a full autonomy, for the sake of a greater freedom of heart to live the Gospel message, being obedient in order to better discern God’s plan. This is what the evangelical counsels and the three religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience mean. The brothers/sisters want to follow Jesus in these dimensions, while denouncing the great idols of our culture by which many people are dehumanized: money/wealth, sex/pleasure, power/fame/independence (Ruiz Pérez et al. 1995; Bandera 1996; Uríbarri Bilbao 2001; Uríbarri Bilbao and Martínez-Gayol 2015). The brothers/sisters live dedicated to the radical following of Jesus expressed without the “distractions” of the obligations and social position associated with the priesthood, including sacramental “distractions”, as Fr Adolfo Nicolás pointed out at a meeting of Jesuit brothers in Rome in 2014, who presented the vocation of a brother as an example of “being good” without distraction (Soto Artuñedo 2014).

Statistically, the total number of religious congregations at the end of 2022 was 777,201, of whom, professed women religious were 599,228 (77%), and professed men religious non priests were 49,414 (6%), totaling 648,642 lay people, 83% of all members of religious congregations. Actually, religious life is a matter for lay people (sisters and brothers) rather than for presbyters (fathers or priests). The number of religious priests at the end of 2022 was 128,559, 17% of religious and 32% of the total number of Catholic priests (407,730), although not all of them perform as their main task what we might call priestly ministerial work properly speaking. However, while the total number of members of religious congregations is decreasing, the number of men religious priests is increasing slightly, perhaps due to greater visibility. At the end of 2021, there were 128,262 men religious priests, which means that in 2022 there was an increase of 297 units, mainly in Africa and Asia.¹

As far as the Society of Jesus is concerned, it must be borne in mind that it is a clerical religious order, composed mainly of priests. At the demographic zenith of the Society of Jesus (1965), there were 36,038 Jesuits, of whom 5872 were brothers (16.29%). Due to the vocation crisis and the demographic transition, this percentage dropped to 8% in 2014, as only 1331 of the 16,986 Jesuits were brothers. In Europe, there were 546 (almost 11%), and among those living in Spain the percentage was higher, 18% (216) out of 1212².

In 2020 the percentage continued to fall, to 5.32% (974 out of 15,306), and since then, they have practically remained the same, as in January 2025, Jesuit Brothers worldwide were 5% (718 out of 13,768), while in Spain the percentage rises to 14% (80 out of 634), and in Brazil, with quite a few young people, to 16.8% (65 out of 385), although the total demography is in a continually decreasing phase. In the United States, on the other hand, they are 4.5% (84 out of 1855) (Compañía de Jesús 2025).

Maybe some socio-historical-political conditions of the 16th century probably played a part in the establishment of the Society as a clerical order. For example, to counteract the Protestant reform that questioned aspects of the “Catholic” model of priesthood; as an alternative model to the Catholic clergy that was generally poorly educated, not very vocational, and more interested in the income from church benefits than in pastoral care. To

this may have been added Ignatius' own experience, whose activity for the good of souls, as a layman, aroused suspicion. He understood that, as a priest, he could more easily, at that time, speak of God and help souls. However, this practical element must not have been decisive, for there are ways of helping souls that are exclusive to the priesthood, such as the sacraments, which St. Ignatius and his first companions valued highly from their own experience.

Today, the ecclesiology of the laity and the theology of ministries promoted by Vatican II offer other perspectives, even, according to some, a break with the former, and many of the apostolic tasks cease to be exclusive to the ordained ministerial priesthood and come under the umbrella of the common priesthood of the faithful (Zas Friz 2002, 2003). Hence the Code of Canon Law (Canon 230, 1 and 3) ratifies the term "ministry" for the laity (Bourgeois et al. 1996, p. 251).

2. Results

2.1. The Origins of the Brothers in the Society

Marcos Recolons, after his exhaustive research in the documentary sources, deduces that Esteban de Eguía was the first layman who, without intending to be ordained, was admitted to the group of Ignatius' first companions at the end of 1536 or the beginning of 1537. He remained faithful to this incorporation until his death, being already formally a temporal coadjutor. Esteban de Eguía can therefore be considered the precursor of the temporal coadjutors, even before the Society was approved in 1540 (Recolons 2015). Likewise, his brother Diego, who was a priest, can be considered the precursor of the spiritual coadjutors. During his last illness, Ignatius offered him solemn profession, but he refused out of humility, contenting himself with the grade of spiritual coadjutor (de Dalmases 2001).

They continued to incorporate lay people to serve Jesuits or the Society, but it was a *de facto* incorporation, not *de iure*; they were "Jesuits without papers", until 20 December 1545, when Ignatius decided to consult about the coadjutors³ to a prelate of the Pope, probably the Cardinal of Burgos, Juan Alvarez de Toledo. The content of the consultation seems to be that of a document from the Biblioteca Capitulare de Toledo⁴ proceeding of the Zelada Archive⁵ in the handwriting of Brother Santiago Guidoni, Ignatius' amanuensis from 1545 to May 1546⁶. On the back, there is writing by the same hand, as an epigraph: "De ordinare li Coaiutori per la Compagnia de Jesu".

This survey offers us the possibility of knowing the three ways in which Ignatius conceived the degree of coadjutor as possible, in general, without distinguishing between spiritual and temporal. The document contains several queries, the first one being about the vows of these coadjutors, in which he proposes three possibilities:

1. Who make the three simple vows, for as long as the Society may deem it necessary, without being received to profession;
2. Who make two simple vows of chastity and poverty, observing voluntary obedience, it being in their power to leave the Society or enter another congregation, and
3. They are to live in poverty, chastity and obedience as long as they are in the Society, without making any vows, being free to leave the Society, and the Society may also command them to leave. This modality seems less spiritual and incomplete.

After the formal request, the Pope's official response came in the brief *Exponi nobis* of 5 June 1546, known as the "brief of coadjutors" in which the auxiliary forces of the Society are regulated. Regarding the first consultation, it grants that the Society can have priests to help in spiritual offices, and lay people to help in the temporal ones. Thus, the spiritual and temporal coadjutors were legally established (Granero 1970, 1972). However, in the copy preserved in the State Archives in Rome, there is a marginal note by Polanco: "No

es bien restringir a sacerdotes los espirituales coadjutores, y seglares para cosas espirituales [sic, but must mean temporal], porque podría ser que se tomasen seglares para lo spiritual, como leer, y sacerdotes para algunos ministerios temporales” [It is not good to restrict spiritual coadjutors to priests, and laymen for spiritual [sic, but must mean temporal] things, because it could be that laymen are taken for spiritual things, such as reading, and priests for some temporal ministries] (*EppIgn* I, 171 note 2). That is to say, Polanco (and presumably Ignatius) did not think that the link between priest and spiritual coadjutor or layman and temporal coadjutor should not be exclusive, but would depend on the mission to be developed and their own abilities. At that time even teaching was a spiritual ministry.

Of the three possibilities offered regarding the vows for the coadjutors, the first is chosen in the brief: once they have made their experiences and probations, they can take the three simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, to which they will be bound for as long as [*pro eo tempore*] the Superior General or his successors judge it convenient to use his ministry. Polanco added in the margin: “Aunque de aquí se collige que se pueden despedir, pareze que debría explicarse” [Although it is inferred here that they can be dismissed, it seems that it should be explained]. Neither should they be obliged to make solemn profession of vows, nor be admitted to do so (*MCo* I, 170ss.).

Regarding the quality of the vows, the brief does not clarify whether they are private (simple profession) or public (solemn profession), which were the only types of vows known at the time, so it cannot be deduced that they are private vows (Olivares 1964).

In the term temporal coadjutor we can see an advance with respect to those used for these same functions by previous religious orders: converso, oblate, layman. With it, Ignatius dignifies the function of assistant to the mission, making them religious, although not entirely comparable to the professed. Nevertheless, the utilitarian and practical conception prevailed, and the temporal coadjutors could be replaced by paid lay people, so that if there was no one to serve the Society, the superior of Modena was advised to take on any external paid servant⁷. Ignatius clarifies that it was not more expensive to hire laymen in Rome than to admit coadjutors, since the salary of one was equivalent to the maintenance of the other⁸. They could even be supplied by slaves. The utilitarian and practical conception led Francis Xavier to recommend weighing the advisability of admitting coadjutors, or, instead, to buy black slaves:

“Tambem vos encomendo muito que tomes muito poucos n’a Companhia, e os que receberdes sejam pessoas que a Companhia tem neçecidade d’elles; e para o serviço de cassa, oulhay bem se seria melhor tomar ou comprar alguns negros para o serviço de cassa, que servir-[v]os de muitos que querem emtrar n’a Companhia. Isto diguo pelo que lá vy e conhecydos que comigo vierão” [I also ask you very much to take very few into the Society, and that those you receive should be people that the Society needs; and for the house service, I wonder if it would be better to take or buy some black people for the house service than to take them from many who want to join the Society. This I say from what I saw there and from the acquaintances who came with me].⁹

2.2. The Temporal Coadjutor in Official Documents

2.2.1. Examen

All the previous documents, except the pontifical ones, had no legislative value, so many of them only explored options. The *Constitutions* closed the exploratory phase and fixed the doctrine when they were approved by the first General Congregation (GC) in 1558. Therefore, these contents do have legal value, although some of these, which are not of pontifical law, have been modified by the 34th General Congregation (1995), in which a general revision was made to adapt the *Constitutions* to current times and to ecclesiastical

common law, and the *Complementary Norms* were approved (*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* 1996).

To the legislative body, Ignatius wanted to add an Introduction or Preamble to the *Constitutions*, which he called the *General Examen*. According to the oldest text of the Examen (1546), which is contemporary to the brief of coadjutors, the Society receives coadjutors for the service of God and of the Society; they enter into this Society of Jesus; they are to have a vow of obedience, poverty and chastity; they do not make a solemn vow to the Pope or to the Society itself; They are to observe obedience to the superiors (like the professed); the vows are such that the coadjutors are obliged, on their part, to live and die in the Society; the Society can dismiss them; the superior can discharge them, not arbitrarily, but when he sees that the Society is not helped by them; once discharged, they remain free of any vow. These characteristics are also found in the text A of the *Examen* (1550), in which it is clarified that they are simple, perpetual and public vows, but not solemn. The expulsion, it is now indicated, should be, no longer when the Society does not make use of them, but when they positively disavow them. In text B (1556), it is indicated that they are public but not solemn vows (Granero 1972, pp. 10–11).

The text was reworked in the various revisions, and was fixed in 1594, mitigating “service” to the Society with “help” to the Society; it added “content with their degree” with the same spiritual motivation as the drafting of 1546. “Servile things” was changed in 1550 to “lower and humbler”:

According to the text A of the *Examen* (1550), the usual though not exclusive, duties of temporal coadjutors are

“to exercise themselves in all the low and humble services which are enjoined upon them, [. . .]. They should believe that by helping the Society in order that it may the better attend to the salvation of souls, they are serving the same Lord of all, since they are doing this out of love and reverence for him. They ought therefore to be prompt in carrying out the tasks given to them thoroughly and with all possible humility and charity” (*Constitutions* 114, p. 49).

Humility and charity are the motivations for the exercise of these offices. However, since 1550, the possibility of other occupations has been added: “although they may be employed in more important matters in accordance with the talent God may have given them . . .” (*Constitutions* 114, p. 49). Therefore, other services of higher quality are not excluded. It is forbidden to aspire to another grade.

2.2.2. Constitutions

In the *Constitutions*, the Society is structured as a body with concentric degrees of membership, in declaration A to chapter 1, Part V, already in its draft of 1556. At the core, the professed members to whom the proper meaning of the Society applies: “The fourth and most proper meaning of this name, the Society, comprises only the professed. The reason is, not that the body of the Society contains no other members, but that the professed are the principal members, some of whom, as will be explained later, have active and passive voice in the election of the superior general and in other such matters”; in a second ring, the formed coadjutors; in a third ring, the approved scholastics and, at present, also the approved brothers; and in a fourth ring, in a broad sense, they form the Society of Jesus. “All those who live under obedience to its superior general. Thus, it comprises even the novices and the persons who, desiring to live and die in the Society, are in probation to be admitted into it under one of the other categories of membership about to be described” (*Constitutions* 511, p. 193). At present, only the novices are in probation.

The mission is the core of the Society of Jesus and of its *Constitutions* (Aldama 1976; Salvat 2007), and the different grades (Olivares 2007) are justified by their relationship

with the mission “in view of the end which the Society pursues” (*Constitutions* 10, p. 25). Although all Jesuits are part of the same unique mission, the professed are “the [...] most proper meaning of this name, the Society (*Constitutions* 511, p. 193), and, properly speaking, the agents of the mission, and the coadjutors are those who collaborate with the mission, “are received [...] in the service of God and to aid the Society in either spiritual or temporal matters” (*Constitutions* 13, p. 26).

2.3. Profile of Temporal Coadjutors in the Constitutions

2.3.1. Type of Vows

Already, from the first text of the *Constitutions*, at the end of 1549, the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience made by the coadjutors are public vows and received by the superior, but not solemn (they do not entail the mutual commitment, also of the Society towards the subject). They do not make the fourth vow of obedience to the Pope *circa missiones* nor the other simple vows of the professed. The temporal coadjutors cannot be superiors, since the Canon 588 §2 of the Code of Canon Law establishes that, in general, lay members of a clerical institute of pontifical right or of a clerical society of apostolic life of pontifical right cannot be appointed to positions of leadership or government that require the exercise of the power of order, although there are exceptions provided for in the proper law of the institute or society, or in provisions of the Apostolic See¹⁰. In addition, logically, the different quality of the coadjutor’s vows has its consequences, some of which are as follows:

1. The first one is the interim, at least theoretically, since
 “The reference to the bulls and the Constitutions makes clear that the coadjutors take these vows with a tacit condition in regard to the perpetuity. This condition is: if the Society will desire to retain them. For although they on their own side bind themselves perpetually for their devotion and stability, the Society remains free to dismiss them, and in that case, they are entirely freed from their vows” (*Constitutions* 536, p. 210);
 The consent of the Superior General is required (*Constitutions* 208, p. 94), although the interested party may appeal to the Holy See (Complementary Norms 35, *Constitutions* 100);
2. They are not “ordinary” members of a general congregation, nor do they participate in the election of the general (*Constitutions* 682, p. 339);¹¹
3. The coadjutors are assimilated to the professed in terms of the requirements of poverty:
 “The coadjutors dwelling in the houses will live on alms according to the manner of living in these houses” (*Constitutions* 560, p. 236).

2.3.2. Qualities

Assuming they do not have the impairments included in the *Examen* (*Constitutions* 148–151, pp. 73–74), they must be:

1. Physically healthy and strong, of “honest appearance”, good age for the body work required by the Society. Ignatius asks Father Salmerón about an aspiring soldier; in what part of his face does he have a wound;¹²
2. Useful for the Society: “They should also have or give hope of having some good ability to help the Society [...] to admit persons who are very difficult or unserviceable to the congregation is not conducive to his greater service and praise, even though their admission would be useful to themselves” (*Constitutions* 151–152, p. 74);
3. Psychologically good-natured and “well-conditioned”, not hard of judgment and will or restless. In a first formulation it was stated “Buena consciencia, quietos, tractables” [Good conscience, quiet, tractable]; be “strenuos”, with some skill, either as a nurse,

amanuensis . . . and not “floxos y para poco” [lazy and for little] (Texto α, P. I, C 4, MCo II, 142);

4. Spiritually “lovers of virtue and perfection, inclined to devotion, edifying for those inside and outside the house, content with the lot of Martha in the Society, well-disposed towards its Institute, and eager to help it for the glory of God our Lord” (*Constitutions* 148, pp. 73–74).

A good conscience, a love of virtue and perfection, a mind inclined to devotion and affection for the Institute of the Society are common to every Jesuit, for no one should remain a Jesuit in the Society of Jesus “in our colleges” without any desire to serve the Lord in the Society. All were commanded to seek devotion as much as divine grace communicated to them, and Ignatius wanted to see in everyone that spirit of not finding “menos devoción en cualquiera obra de charidad y obediencia, que en la oración y meditación; pues no deben hacer cosa alguna sino por amor y servicio de Dios Nuestro Señor” [Less devotion in any work of charity and obedience than in prayer and meditation; for they must do nothing except for the love and service of God our Lord].¹³ These qualities should also be demanded of the temporal coadjutors, one example of whose love for the Institute we read in the letter of Brother Antonio Gou thanking Ignatius for his admission to the Society¹⁴.

Polanco, in its *Segunda Industria* develops “Las partes de los coadjutores temporales” [The parts of the temporal coadjutors]: They must be free from the impediments of the Examen, of good condition, virtuous, edifying, strong, spiritual, fond of the Society, happy in the office of Marta, healthy and strong, of good age (*Pol Compl* II, 732–733).

2.3.3. Occupations of Temporal Coadjutors

Although St. Ignatius admits other abilities in the brothers, he determines that domestic work is more appropriate for them (*Examen* 6, 7, *Constitutions*, 118, p. 59). At the beginning, the companions themselves did the housework, but they needed to free themselves from these tasks in order to dedicate themselves more to strictly spiritual functions. “De aquí nacieron en la Compañía los coadjutores temporales y en su defecto los criados y sirvientes por salario” [From here were born in the Society the temporal coadjutors and, in their absence, the servants and servants for wages] (Aicardo 1919–1932, II, p. 913).

The occupations, from the text B of the *Constitutions* of 1556, in a declaration of the 2nd chapter of the 1st part, are as follows: “Cook, steward, buyer, doorkeeper, infirmarian, launderer, gardener, and alms gatherer (in a place where the members live on alms); and there could be others of this kind” (*Constitutions* 149, p. 74)” as a grape harvester¹⁵, washing household/laundry cloths¹⁶, barbero¹⁷. Nadal mentions other trades: tailor, shoemaker, painter, sculptor, superintendent or business solicitor.¹⁸

However, the recommendation of the apostolate of spiritual conversation, which is in the *Examen*, was not included in the *Constitutions*: “Even so, in their spiritual conversations they should strive to obtain the greater interior progress of their neighbor to show what they know, and to stimulate those whom they can to do good, inasmuch as our Lord has given care of his neighbor to everyone” (*Constitutions* 115, p. 49). Neither, the prohibition to preach was not transferred to the *Constitutions* for those admitted as temporal coadjutors: “Those whom the superior thinks should preach should do so; but among these there should be no one of those who were admitted to become temporal coadjutors” (*Constitutions* 80, p. 40).

There were some brothers with sensitivity and previous training that allowed them to dedicate themselves to more qualified tasks than the domestic ones. Brother Antonio Gou (or Monserrat), who was a notary and was appointed procurator general of the Society, inserted in a letter a spiritual colloquy on frequent communion.¹⁹ Br. Melchor Marcos, former minister to the Dukes of Medina-Sidonia, who was assigned by Ignatius as

a companion of Francis Borgia, announced to the Duke of Gandía the death of St. Francis Borgia, in an eloquent spiritual letter²⁰. Juan Cors, admitted to the Society in 1551, was Ignatius' valet, who also entrusted him with the task of reprimanding those at home, who were still priests, for which he also made use of other coadjutors, such as Anthony Rion. (*EppIgn* IV, 15, nota 2), of whom many anecdotes and expressions of his own were preserved. In fact, from the very beginning, the catalog of trades assigned to the temporal coadjutors in the Constitutions was surpassed, especially from 1552, when Lorenzo Tristán began the great tradition of Jesuit builders and artists.

The original utility was not to be lost sight of. For this reason, it is regulated that no more should be admitted than necessary to help the Society in what the others could not, in domestic work, so that they do not neglect their fundamental task or ministries (*Constitutions*, 148, p. 73). They should be sufficient, especially for housework, such as laundry, barber and the like, and if they do not know the trades, they should learn them (*Constitutions* 305, p. 129). Someone who had been admitted as a scholastic, if he turned out to be unfit for study, could become a temporal coadjutor, as happened to a young man whom Olave was told to decide: “de dexarle ay para estudiar, ó mudarle á Perosa para servir” [leaving him there to study, or moving to Perosa to serve].²¹

2.4. Grade Rigidity

A person who has been admitted to the grade of spiritual or temporal coadjutor should not seek any change in grade:

“He ought not to seek in one way or another to pass from the grade of temporal coadjutor to that of a spiritual coadjutor or a scholastic or a professed [. . .]. But he ought with much humility to persevere in giving service in everything to his Creator and Lord in his first vocation and to endeavor to grow in the abnegation of himself and in the pursuit of genuine virtues” (*Constitutions* 117, p. 50).

This immutability was enshrined by the privilege of Gregory XIV, in his document *Ecclesiae Catholicae* (1591): “Ad Sacerdotium vel ad Professionem, aut cuiusvis gradus mutationem, nemini aspirare licet” [No one is permitted to aspire to the priesthood or to profession, or to any change in degree] (*Inst.* I, 158, 598). This constitutive rigidity of the grades is expressed in phrases such as the temporal coadjutors should be “feliz con la suerte de Marta” [happy with Marta's lot] and “no aprenda más letras de las que sabía al entrar” [not to seek more learning than he had when he entered].

“Lot” is the English translation of the Spanish word “suerte” in reference to the degrees, according to the terminology used by the *Examen*. One of the meanings given by the Spanish *Diccionario de Autoridades* is “estado o linaje” [status or lineage]; therefore, as something fixed, determined, immutable, unchangeable (Real Academia Española 1726–1739, VI, 178). Martha refers to Mary's sister in the gospel (Lc 10:38–42). Therefore, the “suerte de Marta” alluded to Martha's condition or behavior, as opposed to Mary's condition or behavior in the Gospel (service vs. devotion), and was used to allude to the domestic offices: “los demás hermanos estamos, gracias al Señor, bien ocupados con Marta” [The other brothers are, thanks be to the Lord, well occupied with Marta].²² Marta's model for the temporal coadjutors was later reinforced by that of the holy brother porter or receptionist and mystic Alonso Rodríguez, patron saint of the temporal coadjutors.

The *Examen* 6 makes it clear that the person admitted for temporal coadjutor “no debe pretender más letras de las que sabía cuando entró” (not to seek more learning than he had when he entered) (*Constitutions* 117, p. 50), while scholastics are expected to “saldrán con las letras” (they will succeed in their studies) (*Constitutions* 523, p. 199), and the professed, must be “suficientes en letras” (should possess sufficient learning) (*Constitutions* 12, p. 25). The word “letras” corresponds globally to the intellectual culture of the time, “las ciencias,

artes y erudición” (sciences, arts and scholarship) (Real Academia Española 1726–1739, IV, 388), usually with a university education.

To “be happy with Marta’s lot” and “not to seek more learning than he had when he entered” are intended to block any expectation of a change in grade. Ignatius took on the rigid structure of a static, stereotyped society such as that of the sixteenth century, different from today’s fluid society. Thus, not only are grades created in the Society, but the final grades are static grades, with no possibility of transfer from one to another. One of the reasons that moved Ignatius was to reinforce fidelity to the first vocation:

“After anyone has been incorporated into the Society in one grade, he should not seek to pass to another, but should strive to perfect himself in the first one and to serve and glorify God our Lord in it, leaving the care of everything else to the superior whom he holds in place of Christ our Lord” (*Constitutions* 542, p. 211).

Another reason is to avoid the disquiet that might ensue with the possibility and expectation of change.²³ The desire for the coadjutors to live their state in peace and quiet led St. Ignatius not to encourage them to study or to favor a dress similar to that of the scholastics, in order to avoid stimulating the desire for studies or the priesthood, with the consequent disaffection for the lot of Martha. Especially, the inclination to study in unfit persons generated concern, thus, with respect to one admitted to the Society Ignatius says

“[. . .] Nel’ altro etiam del paese di V. R. pare si scuopra qualche inclination al studio, de la quale io non pensaua che in lui fusse; si anche là li fosse data o agiutata tal inclination, non sarebbe senza colpa, perché sarebbe in prejudicio de la abnegation et indifferenza che si ricerca nei serui de Iddio, et li tali non si trouarebbono contenti, si ben il superior giudicasse che in altro si seruerebbe Iddio N. S. di loro più che in studio. Questo per auiso et aduertenza” [In the other etiam of the country of V. R. it seems to discover some inclination to study, of which I do not think that it was in him; if even there he were given or helped such an inclination’, it would not be without fault, because it would be in prejudicio of the abnegation et indifference that is sought in the servants of God, and such ones would not be found contenti, if well the superior judged that in other things God N. S. would be served more by them than in study. This is for notice and warning].²⁴

Properly, what is intended to be avoided is the “religious career” (a type of clericalism) and to combat the pride and self-sufficiency that can come from studies (of which the priests are not free either), which also seems to be one of the reasons for blocking the possibility of studies in the brothers.

For all these reasons, Ignatius was inflexible, even harsh, against what was called the temptation to study in the case of brothers. Juan de Alba, admitted to the Society in 1545, may have influenced this decision. While working in the stable, he learned to read and began to study Isaiah and was trying to interpret the most intricate passages. When Ignatius knew this, he ordered that from then on no temporal coadjutors should learn to read or write without the permission of the superior. Then Alba studied the Institute of the Society and spread among the brothers that they did not belong to the Society, but only the priests. He ended up leaving the Society (*FN* I, 664, 715, 718, 738; Aicardo 1919–1932, pp. 5, 764).

2.5. The Rules

The prohibition of formation for the temporal coadjutors has its most concrete expressions in the *Rules*, as a concrete application of the *Constitutions*. The *Common Rules* are inspired by those of the House of Rome, the drafting of which was completed by St.

Ignatius around 1549. Rule 14, the final text of which seems to be later than Ignatius, forbids temporal coadjutors to learn to read and write and also forbids anyone else to teach them, without the permission of the superior: “Nemo eorum, qui ad domestica ministeria adinittuntur, aut legere discat aut scribere, aut, si aliquid scit, plus litterarum addiscat, nec quisquam eum doceat sine Praepositi Generalis facultate; sed satis ei erit sancta cum simplicitate et humilitate Christo Domino nostro servire” [None of those who are assigned to domestic ministries should learn to read or write, or, if he knows anything, to learn more letters, nor should anyone teach him without the permission of the Superior General; but it will be enough for him to serve Christ our Lord with holiness, simplicity, and humility] (*Inst.* III 10).²⁵ This rule remained in force until GC 27 (1923) suppressed rule 14 together with the rule 12 (“Aperta fenestra nemo noctu dormiat, nec sine indusio, aut non coopertus” [No one should sleep at night with an open window, nor without clothing, nor uncovered] *Inst.* III, 10), and entrusted Fr. General Ledóchowski with the revision of the whole Rules. Accordingly, in the English version of 1929 it is not included and is indicated: “The following Rules only have been changed somewhat: 2, 3, 10, 14 (16)” (*Rules*, 23).

The “Rules of the Temporal Coadjutor”, from the time of Acquaviva, constitute one of his *Instructions*, published as such in *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, (*Inst.* III, 355–356). A commission was created for its drafting by GC 6 (1608), and, once the text was approved by GC 7 (1615–1616), it was edited in 1616. Rule 10 prohibits even having books without the permission of the superior: “Librum nullum neque retinere, neque legere, cuiuscumque generis, iis licebit, sine Superioris licentia, cuius erit iudicium eos illis assignare, qui magis ad ipsorum spiritualem fructum expedire videbuntur” [They will not be permitted to keep or read any book, of any kind, without the permission of the Superior, whose judgment will be to assign them to those who will seem more conducive to their spiritual benefit] (*Inst.* III, 26). They were revised by GC 27 (1923) and its content became Rule 15 of the Temporal Coadjutors Rules, adding the prohibition to learn more than he knew when he entered:

“They shall not read or keep any book or periodical of any kind whatever, without leave of the Superior. It is for him to assign to them such as he may judge to be suitable for their spiritual profit or for the better performance of their work. Except with the leave of the Provincial they are not to pursue any studies beyond what they knew at their entrance into the Society; but they are to be content to serve Christ our Lord with holy simplicity and humility” (*Rules*, 74).

2.6. Practice in the Modern Age

The grades made their debut in Rome when, on 29 September 1553, three temporal coadjutors took their vows “en manos del Padre Ignacio” [In the hands of the Father Ignatius]²⁶: Martín de Zornosa, Juan de Alba, and the cook Juan Baptista de Anzola. Then, on the first Sunday of October, Nadal, who had arrived in Lisbon to promulgate the *Constitutions*, took the first vows of coadjutors at the same time that he took possession of the church of San Roque before the king: two spiritual coadjutors, Miguel Esteves and Francisco Vieira, and two temporal coadjutors, Domingo Anes and Andres Fernandes. The following day, at the College’s private feast, they were joined by another two “coadjutores speciales [sic], Manuel Rodrigues y Antonio Soarez, y los hermanos Andrés Gomes y Bernardino Descalcio” [Special [sic] Coadjutors, Manuel Rodrigues and Antonio Soarez, and brothers Andrés Gomes and Bernardino Descalcio] (*Litt. Quad.* II, 441; Rodrigues 1931, p. 624).

During Ignatius’ lifetime, very few Jesuits professed vows of coadjutor; according to Olivares: four spiritual coadjutors in Lisbon, and twelve temporal coadjutors²⁷, among them, Lorenzo Tristano from Ferrara, in 1555. In the XVI and XVIII centuries the temporal coadjutors were 30%, in the following century it dropped to 25% (Rodríguez G. de Ceballos

1964, C-13). GC 1 (1558) already drew attention to the excessive number of brothers and GC 7 (1615) limited their number to a quarter in the colleges and a third in the professed houses (*Inst.* II, 359). GC 8 (1645) hired servants so as not to increase the number of temporal coadjutors, and ordered that, in the interim, no more brothers be admitted (*Inst.* VI, 585–593).

During his government, St. Ignatius did not burden “a sus hijos más de lo que buenamente podrían llevar, y quería que antes anduviesen descansados que ahogados” [their children more than they could properly carry, and he wanted them to be rested rather than drowned]²⁸ but already in his time he had to order a superior not to impose too tiring and humiliating offices on the brothers, such as carrying firewood, because it was better to pay a boy for that than to have the coadjutor sick or embittered.²⁹ As Provincial of Sicily, Polanco ordered that they should not be obliged to work as muleteers or garbage collectors (*Pol Compl* II, 560).

In some circumstances, the rigidity was mitigated and some brothers were authorized to begin priestly studies and to be ordained, such as the architect Giuseppe Valeriano (Rodríguez G. de Ceballos 1964, C-7). Also, Francisco de Briones, admitted by Borgia as temporal coadjutor in 1554, who was his companion in Portugal and Castile. In Medina del Campo he studied grammar for six months and in 1566 he was an associate of the procurator general of the Society in Rome. He became a scholastic and did his studies with interruptions at the Roman College where he was *sotoministro* (1567 and 1570) and at the German College (1668, 1571), being ordained around 1576 (O’Neill and Dominguez 2001, *DHCJ* I 548–549).

But, in general, the prohibition of learning for the temporal coadjutors also applied to any type of intellectual formation, including the learning of reading and writing. However, permission could be requested for the reading and writing, which was granted on an extraordinary basis. This is what St. Francis Borgia did on some occasion.³⁰ Mercuriano granted it in a more extraordinary way.³¹

In the province of Baetica, requests to learn to read and write were made relatively frequently and were usually granted,³² but a general license was not given to provincials to authorize them to learn to read and write indiscriminately, but was granted to those who proposed it individually.³³ This prohibition was not formally repealed until 1995.³⁴

The novitiate of the temporal coadjutors was shorter than that of the scholastics, because unlike these ones, who could not leave the novitiate before completing two years, they could be taken out of the novitiate after having been exercised and tested for a year, even for six months.³⁵ Then they began the practical learning of the trade to be exercised, if they did not know it when they entered, which was done in practice, starting to work alongside a veteran. For the spiritual cultivation of this group, they were given talks on Christian doctrine on Sundays³⁶ and meditation points twice a week,³⁷ in addition to assuring mass with communion and confession, even for those who lived in isolation on the farms.

In the Modern Age, there was no significant change in the conception of the brothers. Most of the temporal coadjutors carried out the service assigned to them from the complete anonymity of domestic tasks, without expecting any recognition, making possible, in this way, the Society’s mission. Many brothers are remembered for their contributions to art, science, or culture, supporting and completing the Society’s mission in these fields (Oviedo 1755). As examples, but not exhaustive, we list some names of brothers who provided services other than domestic ones: Gaspar López was a procurator and redeemer of captives; Lorenzo Ortiz de Buxedo was a teacher, procurator, and writer (Soto Artuñedo 2009); Francisco Velho was procurator of the Indies; Hernando de la Cruz (Fernando de Ribera) was the spiritual director of Mariana de Jesús, a poet, and painter. An important

group were missionaries (Svriz Wucherer 2019) or “language brothers” like Juan de Villegas in Tucumán, or they were anonymous scribes or assistants of recognized authors. Some were dedicated to architecture (Lorenzo and Giovanni Tristano, Juan Bautista Villalpando, Alonso Matías, Pedro Sánchez, Pedro Pérez, Juan de Carvajal), sculpture (Francisco Díaz del Rivero), and painting (Andrea Pozzo, Giuseppe Castiglione, Andrés Cortés) (for example: Mendoza Maeztu 2012³⁸). Others were missionaries and explorers like Bento de Goes; or botanists like George Kamel, after whom the Camellia flower is named; or physicians (Louis Bazin in China); pharmacists (Martín Coll).³⁹

Canonized Jesuits as Alonso Rodríguez Gómez (the receptionist or porter of Mallorca), Renato Goupil (martyr in North America), Diego Kisai (martyr in Japan), Jean de La Lande (martyr in North America), Nicolas Owen (martyr in England) were temporal coadjutors. Some 35 Jesuit brothers have been beatified, all of them martyrs, except Brother Francisco Gárate, also a receptionist or porter at the University of Deusto (Bilbao). Four other brothers are venerable as martyrs and 22 are Servants of God as martyrs and 1 is not a martyr. Another 74 have been victims of violence during the 20th century, such as those killed in the Asturias revolution, and in the Spanish Civil War, in the concentration camps and the Second World War or for the defense of the weakest, such as Brother Vicente Cañas, murdered in Mato Grosso, Brazil, in 1987. As recognized by GC 34, d. 7, 8 (*Decrees of General Congregation 34*, 1995, p. 49):

“The rich history of brother Saints and Blessed and the multiplicity of tasks and ministries in which brothers have been and are engaged throughout the world clearly show the variety and complementarity which characterize the apostolic mission of the brother in the Society.

It is appropriate that, along with the figure of brothers like Alphonsus Rodriguez and Francisco Garate, who achieved sanctity in domestic tasks, we make known the lives of others like James Kisai, Dominic Collins and Nicholas Owen, who laboured with dedication and generosity in the external ministries of the Society even to the surrender of their very lives. This will contribute to a more comprehensive image of the brother’s vocation and can attract new vocations.”

2.7. Changes in the 20th Century

The number of brothers began to decline and the Society realized that, if the vocation of the brother was not presented in a more modernized way and adapted to the mentality of our times, it was in danger of disappearing. We refer only to some milestones.

As we have seen, GC 27 (1923) suppressed rules 12 and 14 (prohibition of learning to read and write without permission of the superior) of the common rules, reducing them to 47, and entrusted Fr. General Włodzimierz Ledóchowski with the revision of the whole set of rules, which were enacted on 4 April 1932. They were finally replaced on 31 December 1975 by the publication entitled *Vida religiosa del jesuita* (1976).

Fr. Ledóchowski understood the importance of the problem and paid attention to the issue of Brothers with a letter in 8 July 1936 “Ad omnes Provinciarum Praepositos Asistentiae Americae. [...] In promovendis vocationibus ad gradum Fratrum Coadjutorum” [To all Provincial Superiors of the American Assistance. [...] In promoting vocations to the grade of Coadjutor Brothers] warning about the alarming decrease in temporal coadjutors, one of the causes of which was that the fathers themselves discouraged the candidates by convincing them that the vocation of brother was unworthy of our time (AR VIII, 585–591). From then on, the changes continued.

His successor, Father Jean-Baptiste Janssens, in his letter of 30 October 1948, introduced some novelties and advances: training for coadjutor novices similar to those for scholastics; the creation of preparatory schools for coadjutor postulants, the possibility of technical

studies and degrees for the brothers; more generosity on the part of superiors in granting trips, vacations and breaks. He criticized the sour manner in which many fathers treated the brothers as if they were their own servants (AR XI, 511–529).

GC 30 (1957) dedicated Decree 13 to the brothers. In response to the request formulated by many provinces, it asked Father General to revise the rules for the brothers and to remove the prohibition in Rule 15 (Rules, 74), which comes from Exam 6 and prevents them from learning more than they knew before they entered. The congregation, instead of this reference from the Examen, confirmed what Father General expressed in his letter of 30 October 1948, in which he foresaw the possibility of superiors permitting some formation. The congregation tried, albeit timidly, that the most suitable cultural and human formation be provided for the brothers, in addition to the spiritual, but, assuming the limit of the Ignatian conception of the temporal coadjutor, it did not approve that they be formed and work in what “cum vera indole gradus Coadiutorum temporalium ad mentem S. P. Ignatii non congruerent” [Since the true nature of the degrees of the temporal coadjutors did not conform to the mind of St. Ignatius]. He established a juniorate or period of formation after the vows, for the brothers, and a third probation before the final vows (AR XIII, 309–310).

As a result of this congregation, Janssens wrote a broad instruction on 11 February 1958, on the formation of the brothers, with the principle that the temporal coadjutor will be a better religious the more educated he is, and the more perfect his human, technical and professional formation is, for which reason his formation should be sought, even by obtaining civil diplomas. He asks that a school be established, similar to the apostolic schools, for the formation of postulants to the brotherhood; no distinction should be made between brothers and scholastics in the formation of the novitiate, although they should have their own novice master, distinct from that of the scholastics (AR XIII, 438–449). As a consequence of the same general congregation, the new rules for brothers were promulgated on 30 October 1959, feast of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez (AR XIII, 628–637).

GC 31 (1965–1966), which elected Fr. Pedro Arrupe as Superior General and put an end to the Jesuit gerontocracy by modifying the composition of the provincial congregations, he also dealt with a decree on the grades (d. 5) because a good number of postulantes questioned the appropriateness of maintaining the differentiation of grades. They were not modified, but it was decided to create a commission to study the matter, once the congregation was over, whose opinion was to be passed on to the next congregation of procurators. Decree 7 dealt with the vocation and mission of the coadjutor brother in the Society and his greater integration into community life, understanding the reality of the Society as a “priestly body” in which, according to decree 23, 4, “All Jesuits, scholastics and brothers included (in schools, for instance, and in other communal works), share together in the one total apostolate exercised by the Society as a priestly body” (Padberg 2009, GC 31, p. 150; La Bella 2019, p. 39).

The 65th Congregation of Procurators (1970) took up the assignment of GC 31 to study several topics. The first was the opportunity to abolish the “degrees” and the second was the revision of the theological foundations of the vocation of the coadjutor brothers. On this question, Fr. General Pedro Arrupe had promoted a world congress at Villa Cavalletti, 20–30 May 1970, the results of which were presented to the Congregation of Procurators; In the Society of Jesus, the coadjutors accompany the priests; in the Ignatian vision, they participate together in the redemptive work of Christ, in a single mission, lived by each according to his own charism. The congress recognized the awareness of inequality, which at times was visibly bitter. The conclusions of the congress occupied the first days of the congregation of procurators. In response, it was emphasized that brothers and priests share the same unique apostolic vocation, albeit through complementary activities, and, more radically, the participation of brothers in government and the abolition of the distinction

of degrees were proposed. Pedro Arrupe, responded in a letter to the whole Society, 29 June 1970, that the juridical recommendations “tangum structuram ipsam Societatem et manifeste ingrediuntur competentiam Congregationis Generalis vel etiam Sanctae Sedis, exempli causa, de suppressione graduum, de identitate votorum, de plena participatione in Congregationibus Provincialibus et in Cong. Generali, de eligibilitate Fratrum ad quemvis gubernii vel directionis gradum” [touch the structure of the Society itself and manifestly enter the competence of the General Congregation or even the Holy See, for example, on the suppression of degrees, on the identity of vows, on full participation in Provincial Congregations and in the General Congregation, on the eligibility of Brothers for any degree of government or direction] (AR XV, 567–570, 569–70).

GC 32 (1974–1975) emphasized in its decree 2, 22 that there is only one mission of the whole Society, in which all Jesuits participate, albeit in different ways (Sobrinho 1978):

“Because this is its common task, the Society of Jesus is, in its entirety, a sacerdotal society. But it is sacerdotal not merely in the sense of the priesthood of all the faithful. For the Society began as, and continues to be, a band of ordained ministers of the Gospel which comprises in the self-same company both those willing to share the presbyteral function of being coadjutors of the episcopal order and those willing to give themselves to those aspects of our apostolic mission for which priestly orders are not required” (Padberg 2009, GC 32, 294).

In parallel to this process, the rigidity of the grades was also broken. It was always easy to pass from scholastic to brother, usually because of not obtaining the desired results in studies and other personal situations, but in the last part of the twentieth century there were several cases of scholastics who freely asked to pass to the rank of brother, not because of academic problems, but because, feeling a strong Jesuit vocation, they did not feel a sufficient vocation to the priesthood. There were also cases of brothers who were ordained priests, a situation not contemplated in the 1962 *Epitome Societatis Iesu*. For this reason, some of the first brothers to follow this path had to leave the Society, study theology on their own and then re-enter as scholastics.

Although some extraordinary permissions were given, it was not until 1986 that it was regulated that formed temporal coadjutors could study for the priesthood and be ordained deacon or priest (*Manual for Juridical Practice* 1997, pp. 90, 60). However, it does not seem to contemplate the possibility that any of them could be professed, but they continue with their vows of coadjutor. There were also cases in which some who had already made their final vows as spiritual coadjutors were offered the possibility of making their vows as professed (CN 122).

Arrupe was willing to extend the vow *circa missiones* also to the coadjutors, according to the contents of more than 1000 postulates, and the manifestation of 37 of the 85 provincial congregations and 4 of the 15 preparatory working groups of the general congregation, in addition to the congress of Villa Cavalletti (1970):

“El 22 de enero de 1975, tras un debate intenso, la Congregación define con tres votaciones sobre el tema que la extensión del cuarto voto a todos los jesuitas no perjudica la naturaleza sacerdotal de la orden, que se muestra favorable a la abolición de los «grados» y que se le comunique al papa la *representatio*, lo expresado por los delegados. De los doscientos treinta y seis electores votan a favor de las tres cuestiones respectivamente: ciento sesenta y ocho, ciento sesenta y ciento ochenta y siete jesuitas” [On 22 January 1975, after an intense debate, the Congregation defined with three votes on the subject that the extension of the fourth vow to all Jesuits does not harm the priestly nature of the order, that it is in favor of the abolition of the “degrees” and that the pope be informed of the

repraesentatio, as expressed by the delegates. Of the two hundred and thirty-six electors, one hundred and sixty-eight, one hundred and sixty-six and one hundred and eighty-seven Jesuits voted in favor of the three questions respectively] (La Bella 2019, p. 96).

This vote provoked a major crisis in relations with the Holy See, since Paul VI had previously shown himself to be opposed to the extension of the fourth vow, since “tale innovazione, ad un attento esame, sembra presentare gravi difficoltà, che impedirebbero la necessaria approvazione da parte della Santa Sede.”⁴⁰

At that time, there was a large group of Jesuits in favor of the suppression of the degrees, which led some of them to renounce solemn profession and prefer to make their definitive incorporation into the Society as spiritual coadjutors. Some others left the Society frustrated by the maintenance of grades.

Arrupe returned to the subject in a talk to the brothers of the Roman houses, 30 October 1978, with a more spiritual tone, in which he referred to the contribution of the Jesuit brother to the apostolic community as something irreplaceable, not in a utilitarian sense, since the great contribution of every brother is himself, his own life, with the *koinonia*, *kerigma* y *diakonia* (Arrupe 1978).

One of the issues that his successor, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach had to face was the massive decrease in the number of Brothers, and he feared that one of the most devastating effects of the vocation crisis would be the disappearance of the figure of the coadjutor brothers. To avoid this, in a letter on vocation promotion dated 15 April 1985, he saw the need to revise our way of presenting the Society by making it “atrayente, contemporánea y no solo como una gloriosa y polvorienta institución del pasado” [attractive, contemporary and not just as a glorious, dusty institution of the past] (Kolvenbach 1992, pp. 37–42). From 3–8 September, 1987, the 67th congregation of procurators was held, where topics such as formation, the role of the coadjutor brothers and the relationship with the laity were studied (La Bella 2019, p. 185). From 20–27 September, 1990, the first congregation of provincials was held in Loyola. The postulates that arrived in Rome to be submitted to the attention of Father General are 174, 11 of them about the coadjutor brothers.

An important event was the Loyola Symposium held for fifteen days (12–24 June 1994), presided over by Father General, the majority of whose participants were Jesuit Brothers. The result was a series of proposals in which they asked the General that the next General Congregation establish clearly that the brothers are full members of the apostolic body of the Order, that they be recognized as having the right to be named superiors and the possibility of participating in the various levels of government of the Society, opting for a new name, that they cease to be called coadjutors and be called Jesuit brothers. The Brothers expressed: “Queremos compartir la misión, y dejar de ser únicamente meros ejecutores” [We want to share the mission and stop being mere executors] (La Bella 2019, pp. 206–7).

The biggest change so far was brought about by GC 34 (1995), in which, for the first time, seven temporal coadjutor brothers participated, not elected, but appointed by Father General. John Paul II confirmed that the possibility of granting the fourth vow to the brothers and making the vows solemn for all Jesuits was not to be debated. This congregation dedicated decree 7 to the brothers. Declared, as a symbolic gesture, the term “temporal coadjutor” in disuse, proposing the term “Jesuit brother”; abolished the prohibition contained in the Examen, by which the one admitted as temporal coadjutor “should not claim more learning than he knew when he entered” and, among other decisions, determined the creation of formation programs for the brothers, while expanding the range of apostolates that can be assumed by the brothers (La Bella 2019, p. 226).

In connection with the decree on Brothers, the situation was discussed when a brother was appointed minister, given that, normally, the minister replaces the superior in his absence (*Complementary Norms* 346, § 1, *Constitutions* 356). It was intended to reduce to a minimum the distance between what brothers and fathers could do; to limit it to what was required for the exercise of the priesthood. For this reason, the first proposal was that, if the minister was a brother, he should substitute for the absent superior, but, in consideration of CIC 274, §1 it was decided that a priest should be appointed simultaneously to replace the superior in certain situations:

“When a member who is not a priest is appointed minister of the house, at the same time a priest is to be designated by the provincial to take the place of the superior when he is absent, impeded by illness, or has died, whose duty it will be to care for those matters requiring the power of orders or the power of ecclesiastical governance” (*Complementary Norms* 346 § 2, *Constitutions* 356–357).

It was not clear what those situations were, in which the action of a superior requires the power of order or the power of ecclesiastical regime, and this formulation lent itself to interpretation. A restrictive interpretation could lead to taking away from the brothers what GC 34 wanted to grant them. In the appointment of this priest, some provinces simply put “Vice-Superior” in the Catalog, although GC 18, d. 2 does not contemplate the possibility of a stable vice-superior when there is a superior. With this, some Brothers ministers felt slighted. Other provinces limited his function by adding “substitutes for the superior when priestly authority is required (§: NC 346 § 2)” others simply put “substitutes for the superior according to §: NC 346 § 2”, to make it clear that the usual vice-superior should be the Jesuit brother minister.

In the GC 35 (2008), in which 6 brothers, designated by Father General for the *ad negotia* phase attended, but was not granted freedom to study the revision of the Grade System. This congregation agreed to the possibility that also coadjutor brothers and priests with simple vows could, although in limited numbers, participate fully in the general congregations, even as electors of the general. This was the case in GC 36 (2016), for which a mechanism was arbitrated for the election of six brothers who participated in the election of Fr. General (La Bella 2019, pp. 229, 284). But it was also not allowed to debate on the grades.

Father Adolfo Nicolás was in favor of reducing structural differences as much as possible, while respecting the limits of canon law, which at that time, for example, did not allow a brother to be superior of clerics, although he recognized that some brothers would make good superiors. But something is moving, since a rescript of Pope Francis, which came into force on 18 May 2022, allows a non-priest religious to be appointed local, provincial and general superior in a clerical religious institute of pontifical right, notwithstanding can. 588 §2 of the Code of Canon Law and the proper law of the Institute of Consecrated Life or of the Society of Apostolic Life, without prejudice to can. 134 §1.⁴¹

Arturo Sosa established the International Commission of Jesuit Brothers (ICJB), which met for the first time in Rome in January 2025, to continue the work of the International Assembly of Jesuit Brothers held in Rome in July 2022, deepening the identity, formation and vocational promotion of the Jesuit Brother.

3. Conclusions and Final Thoughts

1. St. Ignatius incorporated the temporal coadjutors to help the mission of the Society with temporal or non-spiritual works. The spiritual coadjutor arose for candidates to the Society who were already priests with little formation, much inferior to that of any present-day spiritual coadjutor, to help in simple spiritual works; later it was applied to scholastics who were not able to finish their studies with an adequate level.

The different participation in the mission justified the grades, which classified Jesuits into agents (professed) and coadjutors of the mission, reserving the former only for a part of the priests. This stratification has caused pain and is not easily accepted by today's culture and ecclesiology;

2. The works proper to the temporal coadjutors foreseen in the *Constitutions* were soon surpassed because, although during the Modern Age, the majority of them dedicated themselves to the domestic trades, others, according to their capacity and previous formation, performed more qualified services, for example, as builders and artists;
3. Since the 20th century there has been a progressive reduction in the differences between the grades in the Society, and the brothers have received more strategic and apostolic missions such as teaching at all educational levels including theology, direction of the Jesuit Refugee Service, mission in science and research, catechesis, management of works, government of the Society (socius, delegate), technical work, vocation promoters, In addition, logically, supporting "like a mother" communities and works by acting as ministers and carrying out other internal work;
4. In practice, the Ignatian structure of the grades has been blurred with regard to their participation in the mission. Today the brothers are agents of the mission. There are even non-religious laity (men and women) who also carry out the mission of the Society. Today we speak of a plural apostolic subject, but a complete description of this concept in its relation to the Society's Institute is yet to be elaborated;
5. The difference between the brothers and the other collaborators and employees of the mission is that the brothers are fully integrated into the apostolic community and with the radicality of the religious vows, following the poor Jesus, with a love that is neither exclusive nor excluding and in harmony with the will of God;
6. It can be said that the profile of the temporal coadjutor described in the *Constitutions* has disappeared in practice and a new one has emerged in practice, which is a lay religious agent of the mission, which is not always identified with that of the *Constitutions*;
7. Recognizing this reality, the last General Congregations have diluted the differences between the degrees, have opted for a less differentiated participation in the mission, and some changes have been made in the conceptual and juridical framework, insofar as it depends on the Society, but the framework of pontifical law remains in force, which, although the Society has tried to revise, has not been allowed. For vocation promotion, it would be desirable to be able to present the different Jesuit vocations at the same level;
8. One of the reasons for settling the grades, especially that of spiritual coadjutor, is that, in addition to the pain it generates, any current spiritual coadjutor has much more training than the first ones did. Differences in availability, poverty and ability will always exist (even within the professed), but, assuming a minimum that the Society can guarantee, there is no reason to consecrate the differences with different categories among priests, professed/spiritual coadjutors;
9. It is advisable to continue to develop and implement good formation programs for the brothers, which can be personalized since they are not bound by canonical norms on formation for the priesthood. It is also necessary to continue to entrust them with apostolic missions at all levels, including government responsibilities, if they have the necessary capacity and the appropriate disposition;
10. Regarding the Jesuit brother and the priestly character of the Society, it would be necessary to discern which of the differences imposed for the mission were intrinsic to the priesthood, and which were due to the historical, sociological and ecclesiological moment in which St. Ignatius lived, with a vertical and static society and a clericalized

church. Today, is the ordained ministerial priesthood indispensable to carry out the mission of the Society? For what missions and services would it be strictly necessary? The veto on this subject imposed by Paul VI could be clarified internally, if it is a disciplinary and political measure or also a theological and spiritual one. Are there intrinsic and necessary reasons that prevent the extension of the fourth vow to the brothers? Could the vows they pronounce have the quality of solemn vows? Could they also assume some of the simple vows of the professed?

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

AESI-A	Archivo de España de la Compañía de Jesús – Alcalá de Henares
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
AHSI	Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu
AR	Acta Romana Societatis Iesu
BNM	Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid
CN	Complementary Norms
d	decree
GC	General Congregation
Hist Soc	Historia Societatis

Notes

- ¹ Accessed on 5 July 2025: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2024-04/quo-077/publicati-l-annuario-pontificio-2024-e-l-annuum-statisticum.html>.
- ² These data can be found in the *Annual Catalogues of the Society of Jesus* of the respective Jesuit provinces.
- ³ Ignacio to Simon Rodriguez, 20 December 1545, (*EppIgn* 1:353). Ignatius to Faber, declining year 1545, (*EppIgn* I, 334). St. Ignatius explains to him that he intends to ask that those who enter the Society may enjoy the same graces and faculties granted to the ten founders by the Pope, since the brief *Cum inter cunctas* had extended it, but only to those who were then in the Society.
- ⁴ Biblioteca Capitular de Toledo (87–13). This document was studied by José M. March (1949), who includes a facsimile reproduction on page 120 b. It was part of a volume with various documents that was in the Novitiate of Sant Andrea al Quirinale (Rome), probably compiled by Bishop Scannaroli, who died in 1664 and was bishop of Sinodia.
- ⁵ Cardinal Zelada was one of those commissioned by Clement XIV to execute the brief suppressing the Society, he was appointed prefect of studies of the Roman college and seminary and president of the Gesù, where he had the opportunity to obtain valuable documents and scientific objects and antiquities (Pérez Martín 2010).
- ⁶ He took the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience “a Dios Nto. Sr. y al Rdo. Padre Maestro Ignacio en su lugar” [to God Our Lord and to Rv. Father Ignatius in his place], ARSI, Italia 59, 467.
- ⁷ Polanco to Fr. Philipo Lerno in Modena, by commission, Roma 21 October 1553, *EppIgn* V, 599.
- ⁸ Ignacio to Alberto Ferrarense, rector of Gubbio, Roma 9 December 1553, *EppIgn* VI, 30.
- ⁹ Francis Xavier to Gaspar Barceo, Sanchian, 25 October 1552, *Xavier*, I, 795.
- ¹⁰ Modified by Pontifical Rescript of May 18, 2022. Accessed on 30 June 2025: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/18/0371.pdf>.
- ¹¹ This provision was modified by GC 34 (1995), d. 23, 2, which determined that all formed coadjutors have the right to be electors in the General Congregation. GC 35 (2008) operationalized it by providing for a mechanism to ensure a minimum representation, at least of brothers (to say nothing of spiritual coadjutors) who also attend as electors since GC 36 (2016).

- 12 Ignacio to Salmerón 28 October 1554, *EppIgn* 7, 712.
- 13 Polanco (ex comm) to Urbano Fernández, Roma, 1 June 1555, *EppIgn* 3, 502.
- 14 Antonio Gou to Ignacio, Barcelona, 14 January 1549, *Mixtae* 2, 43.
- 15 Ignacio to Fr. Desiderio Girardino, Roma, 13 September 1553, *EppIgn* V, 471.
- 16 Polanco for commission to Oviedo and Bobadilla, 17 January 1552, *EppIgn* IV, 106.
- 17 Polanco by commission to Fr. Felipe Leerno, Roma 2 May 1555, *EppIgn* IX, 43–4.
- 18 Tractatus de traditionibus et consuetudinibus Societatis Iesu, *Nadal* IV, 622.
- 19 Antonio Gou to a friend, Barcelona 16 May 1546, *Mixtae* I, 279.
- 20 Melchor Marcos to Carlos, Duke of Gandía, Roma 2 October 1572, *Borgia* V, 710–711.
- 21 Polanco for commission to Martin Olave, Roma, 29 July 1553, *EppIgn* V, 257.
- 22 Manuel López to Araoz, Alcalá 1 August 1549, *Mixtae* II, 261.
- 23 Ignacio to Fr. Antonio Araoz, Roma 17 July 1548, *EppIgn* 2, 158.
- 24 Ignacio to Oliverio Manareo, 22 June 1555, *EppIgn* IX, 247.
- 25 Spanish version: *Reglas Comunes*, 14. *Reglas de la Compañía de Jesús*. Sevilla 1735, 23–24. This is the Acquaviva edition, with 49 rules. For the Ignatian rules, see: (Fernández Zapico 1948).
- 26 Polanco to Nadal, 27 October 1553, *EppIgn* V, 624–625.
- 27 Olivares (1964) disagrees with the list of the editors of *Fontes Narrativi* I, who rely on ARSI, *Hist Soc* 32, 7 and 8. This document adds as spiritual coadjutors Pedro Codacio (+1549) and Diego de Eguía, (+16 June 1556), and Esteban de Eguía (+1551) as temporal coadjutor (FN I, 66*). Although they did not formalize these vows, they can be assimilated to these degrees, since two of them died in the Society before the implementation of these vows, and the third, Diego de Eguía, refused out of humility the offer of solemn profession that Ignatius made to him, contenting himself with the degree of spiritual coadjutor. The O'Neill and Dominguez (2001, O'Neill and Dominguez) gives the date of his last vows as 22 February 1542.
- 28 Pedro de Ribadeneyra, “Tratado del modo de gobierno que observaba Ignacio”, in FN III, 618. (López Rivera 1987, pp. 18–30).
- 29 Ignacio to César Hermio, 21 April 1554, *EppIgn* VI, 629.
- 30 Francisco Borja to Bartolomé Bustamante, Roma 20 February 1567, *Borgia* IV, 410.
- 31 Everardo Mercuriano to Polanco, visitator in Sicilia, Roma, 19 November 1575, *Pol Compl*, II, 406.
- 32 ARSI, Hispania 110, 335: Jerónimo de Acosta, Segovia, 25 May 1569.
- 33 ARSI, Baetica 5 I, 67, 68, to the provincial Francisco Alemán, 1 November 1621.
- 34 *Complementary Norm* 81, 3; 83, 3; 98, 243, 2. (*Constitutions* pp. 151, 155, 269)
- 35 GC 7, d. 80, n. 15 (*Inst* II, 338); ARSI, Baetica 4 I, 335: Vitelleschi to Fr. Hernando Ponce, 30 June 1617.
- 36 BNM, Ms. 9473, 32: Visit of Fr. Bernardo de Ocaña, 13 November 1650.
- 37 BNM, Ms. 9473, 17v: Visit of Fr. Gonzalo de Peralta, 20 December 1639.
- 38 Among the many initiatives to study the contributions of Brothers Jesuit art producers, an International Seminar was held on 2–3 June 2022. “Los jesuitas y las artes: coadjutores, padres, artífices”, by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Universidad a Distancia de Madrid. The proceedings are in the process of being published: González García, Juan Luis and Fuentes Lázaro, Sara (eds.) “Coadjutores: artistas e ideas migrantes en la globalización ibérica”, Akal: Arte y Estética. It is scheduled for release in November 2026.
- 39 See biographical sketches of most of them at O'Neill and Dominguez (2001, O'Neill and Dominguez).
- 40 Letter from Cardinal J.M. Villot to Fr. Arrupe, 3 December 1974, *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu* XVI (1973–1976), 446.
- 41 Accessed on 12 July 2025: www.vaticannews.va/es/papa/news/2022-05/un-religioso-no-sacerdote-podra-ser-superior-de-un-instituto.html.

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- (Pol Compl) *Polanci Complementa*. 2 vol. Madrid: Gabrielis Lopez del Horno, 1916–1917.
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Article

The Remission Phase in the Canonization of Francis Borgia (1649–1655)

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Abstract

This article examines a decisive yet relatively understudied stage in the canonization process of Francis Borgia, third superior general of the Society of Jesus, by focusing on the remission phase carried out between 1649 and 1655. Although Borgia had been beatified in 1624, the path toward his canonization extended over several decades, shaped by a combination of institutional, political, and procedural factors that slowed its progress. The pontificate of Innocent X marked a turning point, creating favorable conditions for renewed momentum within the Roman Curia. Following authorization by the Congregation of Rites, the remission phase formally commenced in 1649, leading to a series of witness examinations conducted in key Iberian centers—Toledo, Madrid, and Valencia—beginning in 1650. By analyzing the selection of witnesses in each location and the substance of their testimonies, the article sheds light on the strategies employed to consolidate Borgia's reputation for sanctity and to address juridical expectations in Rome. Particular attention is given to the coordination between local ecclesiastical authorities and the central institutions of the Holy See. The study argues that the efficiency and coherence of this phase, culminating in the issuance of the remission briefs in 1655, played a crucial role in advancing the cause toward its successful conclusion in 1670.

Keywords: canonization process; Society of Jesus; early modern sainthood

1. Introduction

The canonization cause of Francis Borgia, third superior general of the Society of Jesus, extended from his beatification, decreed by Pope Urban VIII on 24 November 1624, until 21 June 1670¹. A variety of factors contributed to the protracted nature of the process, while progress unfolded in a slow yet persistent manner. The accession of Innocent X to the papal throne in 1644 made renewed advancement possible. In 1649, the Congregation of Rites authorized the opening of the remission phase, which led to the examination of witnesses in 1650 in Toledo, Madrid, and Valencia. In this regard, the selection of witnesses in each of these locations, together with the significance of their testimonies, provides deeper insight into the development of the process that ultimately led Borgia to the altars, so that the faithful might render him universal veneration as a saint. This phase unfolded efficiently and successfully, as the remission briefs were issued in 1655.

It should be clarified that this article adopts a juridical-procedural framework, focusing specifically on the remission phase (1649–1655) within the post-Tridentine canonical structure. The study offers an analysis of the witnesses selected to give testimony, the rationale underlying their selection for this task, and their integration into the various groups that supported the advancement of the cause. To this end, it draws upon previously

unpublished documentation from the ARSI (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu), specifically from the APG section (Archivio della Postulazione Generale [Santi]), pertaining to this phase of the process.

2. The Factors That Prolonged the Canonization Process

2.1. *The Tridentine Redefinition of Sanctity and the Roman Centralization of Canonization Procedures*

The collective perception of sainthood has undergone significant transformations across different historical periods. Critiques advanced by Christian humanism and Protestantism against the medieval understanding of sanctity and the practices of saintly veneration prompted the Council of Trent (1562–1563) to address this issue with the aim of redefining the concept. The establishment of bodies responsible for centralizing the recognition of sainthood developed in parallel with the affirmation of papal primacy established by the decretals of Gregory IX in 1234. Although effective pontifical control was consolidated gradually—supported by the action of the Roman Holy Office to prevent deviations and excesses—it remained essential to renew the model of sanctity, a matter addressed in the final session of the third Tridentine period. The appointed commission reaffirmed the intercessory role of the saints, the tradition of their veneration since the origins of Christianity, and the legitimacy of devotion to relics and images. Within this framework, the bishop, a key figure in the proposed reforms, was tasked with guiding the faithful toward a dual objective: encouraging the imitation of the saints' lives and exercising vigilance to prevent deviations in devotional practice that might compromise orthodoxy. See: (Jedin 1972, pp. 253–54, 274–80; Suire 2001; Kaziri 2014; García y García 1989; Vauchez 1981; Eire 1996, pp. 28–39; Gotor 2004, pp. 17–23, 26, 30–35).

From the late sixteenth century onward, the papacy progressively established institutional bodies to manage matters related to the recognition of sainthood. The formal institutionalization of the Congregation of Rites by Sixtus V in 1588 formed part of the broader structural reforms undertaken within the Holy See. Following the work carried out by the Tribunal of the Rota, this commission was entrusted with examining the dossiers of the candidates, which included information concerning their lives, the exercise of the theological and cardinal virtues, as well as reported supernatural experiences. The establishment of new bodies continued with the creation of the Congregation of Beatification in 1602 under Clement VIII.² In practice, the members of the Congregation of Rites and the Roman Holy Office collaborated closely in the supervision of canonization causes. Paul V (1607–1621) maintained this dynamic by establishing that every candidate had to be beatified by the pontiff prior to canonization, thereby prohibiting unauthorized personal cults. The concentration of authority over the recognition of sainthood in papal hands reached its culmination under Urban VIII (1623–1644), while the monitoring and sanctioning of transgressions remained the responsibility of the Holy Office (Papa 2001; Gotor 2002).

2.2. *Seventeenth-Century Canonical Legislation and Its Delaying Effects on Canonization Causes*

Between 1625 and 1631, a series of decrees established the canonical procedures governing beatification and canonization. These provisions curtailed popular initiatives and reduced episcopal competences, which were made subject to Roman approval. The depiction of individuals who had not been beatified or canonized with a halo of sanctity was prohibited, as was the placement of lamps or epitaphs at their tombs and the publication of accounts of miracles or revelations. All printed biographies of candidates for recognized sainthood were required to include a formal protestation clause. Although cases involving immemorial cults were exempted, it was stipulated that no new cause could be initiated unless these norms had been observed. In addition, a minimum period of fifty years from

the candidate's death was established before a cause for beatification could be opened. These measures were compiled and published in 1634 and subsequently in 1642. The reforms introduced made it necessary to restart all ongoing processes, resulting in significant delays in their resolution. Indeed, no canonizations were recorded in the following decades, affecting, among others, the cause of Francis Borgia (Armogathe 2005, pp. 149–54).

The canonizations carried out by the Church in the seventeenth century represented the exaltation of the leading figures of the Catholic Reformation, grounded in Tridentine principles. Within this framework, several categories have been identified that characterized the new saints: exemplary bishops (such as Saint Charles Borromeo), founders or reformers of religious orders (such as Ignatius of Loyola or Teresa of Jesus), prominent missionaries whose work proved especially significant (such as Francis Xavier), as well as religious figures from the sixteenth century and earlier periods. In this context, the relationship between the Spanish Monarchy and the Holy See during the development of canonization processes was decisive. The support of the Crown was essential to achieving this objective, even though the final decision rested entirely with the pope. As various studies have noted, the notion of the Spanish Monarchy as a 'Catholic Monarchy' took shape under Philip II, was consolidated under his successor, and reached its fullest definition during the reign of Philip IV. In the jurisdictional struggle between the Monarchy and the papacy, both Charles V and, above all, Philip II managed to subordinate the pontiffs to the interests of a Monarchy that presented itself as "Universal." However, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the popes reversed this situation, subjecting the Monarchy to the influence of the Church. This concept of "Catholic Monarchy" entailed the establishment of a series of rites and devotions intended to promote its acceptance throughout society. Such religious practice was accompanied by an ideological discourse aimed at reducing the prominence of the Spanish Monarchy in the development of an autonomous and universalist political thought. To this end, the idea of an equal fusion with the Empire was promoted, so that both dynastic branches might share a primary objective: the defense of the Catholic Church. See: (Martínez Millán 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018; Martínez Millán and Visceglia 2008).

Thus, the concentration of authority over the recognition of sainthood in papal hands meant that aspirants had to be presented and defended amid the competition generated by the simultaneous candidacies of others, within a procedure governed by highly precise norms and timelines. The difficulty of securing solid support and the considerable financial costs involved compelled promoters to assess the risks carefully, including the potential negative consequences of failure. The models to be emulated were drawn from figures representative of the spirituality emanating from Rome (such as Philip Neri) and from reformers who advanced the new ideal of the bishop and the missionary, in keeping with the orientation promoted by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (such as Archbishop Thomas of Villanova). Candidates who did not conform to these categories, such as Francis Borgia, therefore faced greater obstacles in attaining universal veneration, which in his case were compounded by additional, specific constraints.

2.3. *The Case of Francis Borgia: Political, Familial, and Hagiographical Constraints*

Although petitions calling for the elevation of Francis Borgia to the altars began to circulate shortly after his death on 30 September 1572, the process proved protracted. The procedure leading to beatification began in 1607, encouraged by Pope Paul V and promoted by the Duke of Lerma. While the Society of Jesus firmly supported the cause, it was deemed unnecessary to publicize Borgia's figure, as he was believed to enjoy widespread renown. In this regard, it should not be forgotten that this was a lineage that had produced two popes, Pope Callixtus III and Pope Alexander VI, and that was related by kinship to

Ferdinand II of Aragon. See also: (Batllori 1999). Informative processes were initiated with the participation of numerous individuals who had known him personally. From 1611 onward, petitions for beatification began to reach Rome, addressed both to the ambassador and directly to the pontiff. The Duke of Lerma remained the principal advocate of the cause, although several of Borgia's great-grandsons also intervened in the diplomatic negotiations. Paul V and the Jesuit superior general Vitelleschi authorized the transfer of Borgia's remains to Madrid. On 22 April 1617, the body was entrusted to Cardinal Antonio de Zapata for its conveyance from Rome. Owing to the unfinished state of the Jesuit Professed House in Madrid, the remains were temporarily deposited in the Royal Convent of the Incarnation until their definitive placement there on 18 December of the same year. Beatification was decreed by Urban VIII on 24 November 1624. Aware of the event's significance as a reflection of familial prestige, the descendants of the fourth Duke of Gandía chose to postpone the celebrations until September 1625 in order to stage them with appropriate splendor. The solemn thanksgiving ceremony was attended by the monarchs and the principal figures of the court. His noble status was especially emphasized during the celebrations, presenting him as a man who, from his elevated position, had served as counselor to Emperor Charles V and had applied the political experience acquired during his courtly career to the governance of the Society of Jesus in the service of the Church (García Hernán 2010b, pp. 80–82; Rodríguez de G. Ceballos 2011, p. 294). See also: (García Hernán 2010a; Coloma 1903, pp. 11–20; Simón Díaz 1992, pp. 108–9; Felipe Orts 2012, pp. 67–68).

The canonization of Francis Borgia, initially regarded as imminent owing to the support of the Congregation of Rites, was delayed by the decrees promulgated by Urban VIII between 1625 and 1631, which established a new procedural framework and required the reopening of cases already underway. The expectations of the Borgia family for a swift resolution were thus frustrated, especially as the evolving relationship between the Spanish Monarchy and the papacy did not favor this outcome. While the fourth Duke of Gandía had served both emperor and pope, his descendants were compelled to navigate mounting tensions in maintaining this dual loyalty. Cardinal Gaspar de Borja, the blessed's great-grandson, assumed responsibility for promoting the cause after the beatification, while his brother Melchor, appointed General of the Neapolitan Galleys in 1627, provided financial support. However, during the consistory of 1632, Gaspar de Borja openly protested against Urban VIII's policies concerning Spanish interests in the Thirty Years' War, prioritizing his duties as royal ambassador over his cardinalatial status. This action gravely damaged his political standing and influence. Undoubtedly, a context marked by strained relations between Philip IV and the pontiff during the conflict hindered the progress of the canonization process.

In response, the Society of Jesus sought to advance the cause by reshaping Borgia's image in accordance with Roman expectations. To this end, in 1644, Juan Bautista Nieremberg composed a new biography that, from an ascetic-mystical perspective, emphasized humility and detachment from the world in contrast to noble vanity, while highlighting the blessed's virtues and miracles. This work replaced the earlier biography by Pedro de Ribadeneira, which had been written with the aim of reconciling diverse—and at times conflicting—interests surrounding Borgia's figure and of projecting an image that embodied an ideal of sanctity for the Spanish nobility, at the service of both king and God. Such an image, however, was deemed unlikely to secure the necessary papal favor of Urban VIII. At the same time, Borgia's iconography was transformed, depicting him with the Eucharistic monstrance in reference to his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Through these adaptations, efforts were made to align Borgia's image with the successful models

required for the attainment of officially recognized sainthood. See: (La Parra López 2011; Martín López 2010, pp. 224–26; Aldea Vaquero 1986; Visceglia 2003; Chaparro 2011).

3. The Development of the Remission Phase

3.1. *The Reactivation of the Cause Under Innocent X and the Mobilization of Dynastic and Royal Support*

The election of Innocent X as pontiff in 1644 made it possible to reactivate the canonization process of the Blessed Francis Borgia with the support of Philip IV. The family clan promoted the revival of the cause, whose success they regarded as a familial triumph. Thus, in the summer of 1645, a series of letters were sent by prominent members of the lineage, including Francisco de Borja y Aragón, Prince of Esquilache, who alluded in his letter to the pope to his recent widowhood following the death of his wife, Ana de Borja. The ninth Count of Lemos likewise emphasized his kinship with the Blessed and the distinction that canonization would bring to the House of Borgia, arguments echoed by the seventh Duke of the Infantado, who underscored the support provided by the family for Innocent X's elevation to the papal throne. He also expressed the expectation that the Society of Jesus would press this petition as a result of the Eighth General Congregation then being held in Madrid. These requests were accompanied by a letter from the king to the pontiff, dated 20 September 1647, which emphasized the growing devotion of the faithful and the miracles worked through Borgia's intercession. The monarch further reported that he had instructed the Count of Oñate and Villamediana, ambassador in Rome, to appear in person to present this petition on his behalf.³

3.2. *Canonical Verification and Obstacles in the Roman Phase of the Process*

In late February 1647, the Congregation of Rites proceeded to verify that the process conformed to the decrees of Urban VIII, thereby making it possible to initiate the remission phase. Tasked with rigorously ensuring that no irregularities were present, the long intervals between successive meetings of the Congregation led Cardinal Ciriaco Rocci to press the body repeatedly to bring its deliberations to a conclusion.⁴ Thus, in January 1648, the Congregation ordered a renewed review of all the documentation concerning the miracles attributed to the Blessed, as well as of his writings both prior to and subsequent to his entry into the Society of Jesus. These two issues were evidently of great importance, since it was necessary, on the one hand, to assess the extraordinary events said to have occurred through his intercession, and, on the other, to address the fact that one of his works had been deemed heretical by the Spanish Inquisition and included in the Index of Prohibited Books of 1559. Although his reputation had later been rehabilitated through the actions of the Inquisitor General Gaspar de Quiroga—who published the Catalogue of Prohibited Books in 1583 and the Expurgatory Index the following year, explicitly naming Borgia among the authors who had been removed from censure—this issue proved to be one of the factors that most significantly delayed the resolution of the process. Cardinal Rocci's final intervention before the Congregation took place in July 1649, when his efforts met with success and resulted in the issuance of the remission and compulsoria letters.⁵

3.3. *Opening of the Remission Phase and Institutional Coordination*

So, the Congregation of Rites authorized the opening of the remission phase in October 1649, which led to the examination of witnesses the following year in Toledo, Madrid, and Valencia. At the same time, the Society of Jesus republished the biography of Borgia authored by Francesco Sacchini in 1622, entitled *Historiae Societatis Iesu, pars tertia, sive Borgia*, issued in Rome in 1649, and focused on his tenure as Superior General, offering more balanced assessments of his spirituality than those presented by other biographers.

Likewise, having obtained the approval of the Congregation, both the Superior General of the Society of Jesus and the Vicar General sent letters to the rector of the Professed House in Madrid, Manuel Pardo, as well as to the city of Toledo, to the assistant of the rector of the Professed House in Valencia, Father Miguel de San Román, and to Martín Pérez, rector of the Jesuit College of San Pablo in Valencia, in order to keep them informed and prepared for further progress in the canonization cause. Following the death of Cardinal Gaspar de Borja in 1645, the principal impetus for the process within the family clan fell to Fernando de Borja y Aragón, son of the first Count of Mayalde, joined by the eighth Duke of Gandía, Francisco Diego Borja Centelles, who closely monitored developments through his contacts with Father Alonso Yáñez, rector of the Professed House in Toledo, and with the Superior General of the Society after the completion of the collection of testimonies.⁶

3.4. *The Toledo Proceedings: Ritual, Personnel, and Judicial Formalities*

The Toledan remission process began on Friday, 20 May 1650, with a meeting held in the archiepiscopal palace attended by Cardinal Baltasar Moscoso y Sandoval, primate archbishop of Toledo; Fray Pedro Orozco, Bishop of Temnus; Fray Miguel Abellán, Bishop of Syria; and the apostolic notary Julián de Pedraza, a Jesuit appointed by the Vicar General of the Society of Jesus in matters relating to the canonization cause of the Blessed Francis Borgia. In accordance with the instructions issued by the Congregation of Rites, Jacinto de Urtariz Ibáñez, fiscal promoter of the Archiepiscopal Court of Toledo, was to be summoned to ensure that proceedings were conducted in conformity with canon law, as was the ecclesiastical prosecutor Ignacio de Velasco, apostolic public notary and secretary to the nuncio, who was responsible for certifying the accuracy of the transcription of the testimonies. Likewise, the cathedral chapter supported the proceedings through two of its members: the dean canon Antonio Fernández Portocarrero and Pascual de Aragón, archdeacon of Talavera. The archbishop of Toledo appointed the bachelor Blasco Antonio de Valencia to exercise the office of nuncio, while the promoter of the faith deputed by the Congregation of Rites was Pedro Francisco de Rubeis, who was assisted by an interpreter, Martín de Ximena, a cleric of the diocese of Jaén residing in Toledo and secretary to Cardinal Moscoso y Sandoval.⁷

The appointed officials gathered between the two choir stalls of the cathedral to receive and open the letters and packet containing the instructions of the Congregation. The dean and chapter organized the reception of the procession at the Puerta del Perdón, which was preceded by musicians playing kettledrums and wind instruments—like trumpets—as a demonstration of celebration and joy. This was followed by the banner bearing, on one side, the image of the Blessed and, on the other, the arms of his house. A large group of knights and citizens accompanied it, along with a significant representation of members of religious orders. Pascual de Aragón, canon and archdeacon of Talavera, as well as professor of Canon Law at the University of Toledo, brought up the rear of the procession, carrying the documents pertaining to the remission letters that were to be put into effect.⁸ Upon reaching the designated place between the two choir stalls, the banner was placed on the high altar and the documents were laid upon a desk prepared for their opening, with Julián de Pedraza ensuring the strict observance of the prescribed procedures. It was decided that witnesses were to appear to give testimony in the chapel of Our Lady of the Conception located in the archiepiscopal palace. Accordingly, from 23 May onward, those summoned were required, after taking an oath, to testify by responding to the questions put to them.⁹

3.5. *Structure and Scope of the Interrogatories*

The interrogation naturally focused on the essential matters necessary for the continuation of the canonization process. Structured in twenty-four questions, translated from

Latin into Castilian from the original text contained in the documentation received—a task carried out by Martín de Ximena, a member of the Toledan prelate’s household—the questionnaire addressed in detail the issues that the Congregation of Rites was required to examine and verify.¹⁰ First, the witnesses were warned of the gravity of committing perjury and of the importance of truthful testimony, given that the matter concerned sanctity. They were required to begin by providing information regarding their name, age, place of origin, profession, family background, and wealth, as well as the frequency with which they confessed and received communion and the last occasion on which they had done so. They were also asked whether they had encountered any problems with justice—even if they had been acquitted after prosecution—or whether they had been excommunicated, subsequently absolved or still under censure. Finally, they were to declare whether they had been instructed on what to say in their testimony and, if so, by whom and in what manner.

They were asked whether they felt devotion toward the Blessed and whether they desired his canonization; whether they knew when the Blessed had died, where he had been buried, and whether they had visited his tomb. They were also required to testify as to their knowledge of the condition of the tomb, whether it had undergone any transfers, and, if so, where it was currently located, under what conditions, when the relocation had taken place, and who had ordered and financed it. In all cases, witnesses were further asked whether they knew of any memorial or inscription placed on the tomb and, if so, of its content. They were to specify whether the influx of the faithful was continuous throughout the year or limited to particular dates, and whether they knew the motives that led frequent visitors to attend, when such visits had begun, and to what extent this devotion stemmed from the Blessed’s reputation as a saint and powerful intercessor, whose favor was sought.

Particular emphasis was placed on the notion of public fame as attested by the witness: whether this reputation was confined to a single locality or extended to other places; whether it originated among persons with vested interests or close ties—such as relatives, friends, members of the Society of Jesus, or other sympathetic religious—or whether it was upheld by persons of standing rather than by ordinary or ignorant individuals, such as women or rural laborers; and whether this fame had been constant and enduring or short-lived and gradually dissipating. Witnesses were also asked whether they had discussed this reputation with relatives or friends, on what occasions, and whether they had heard that such fame already existed in the time of their elders. Finally, they were to state whether this reputation had grown and persisted not only in places where the Blessed had lived or in Madrid, where his tomb was located, but also elsewhere.

They were likewise questioned about the gathering of the faithful at the tomb: what kinds of people attended; whether attendance had increased or declined, especially since 1624, and for what reasons; whether visitors came to venerate him as a saint; whether ex votos had been placed at the tomb itself or before one of his images, of what kind and in what quantity, and whether these offerings had endured over time. Similarly, they were asked whether lamps, candles, or other forms of lighting had been installed, who had paid for them, and how long they had remained in place. They were also questioned as to whether Mass had been celebrated at the tomb or before an image of the Blessed, and specifically whether Masses were offered in his honor or commemoration under the title of Blessed or Saint, whether this occurred at particular times of the year or in specific churches, which authority had granted permission for such celebrations, whether attendance was general or limited to local inhabitants, and since when such practices had been observed.

The witnesses were expressly questioned about any miracles they knew to have occurred through the intercession of the Blessed, whether reported to them or directly witnessed and experienced, and were required to declare everything they knew regarding their circumstances (place, time, witnesses, and so forth). They were asked to consider

whether the events in question exceeded the powers of nature and could therefore be attributed to a miracle. In this regard, they were questioned about the distinction between grace and miracle, whether they believed that God's grace could be obtained through the mediation of a saint, and whether they perceived the difference between such grace and events attributable solely to natural causes. Witnesses were repeatedly and meticulously questioned on all aspects of their testimony concerning miracles and graces, as well as on the Blessed's reputation in relation to these matters and in connection with the aspects of public fame addressed previously. It was specified that interrogation or admonition might be employed to ensure that the witness provided all information known to them, whether directly or indirectly, as well as their opinion or conjecture regarding the Blessed's sanctity. The final question concerned the veneration of relics: whether it had increased since 1624, in which places—especially whether it had extended beyond the local contexts of Madrid and Rome, where he had lived and died—and whether such veneration was spontaneous or promoted by particular individuals or by members of the Society of Jesus.

On 25 May, the tribunal was formally constituted at ten o'clock in the morning, and the necessary checks were carried out regarding the interrogation and its translation into Castilian, in order to ensure that the proceedings conformed in every respect to the decrees established by Urban VIII. In order to advance the canonization process, the matters that had to be proven through the interrogations were clearly defined. The investigations to be conducted were organized into five sections, reflecting the substance of the questions to be put to the witnesses, which were articulated in different forms throughout the interrogation.

1. Whether it was true that there had always existed a common, public, and well-established reputation that the Blessed Francis Borgia conducted the course of his life in the continual practice of the theological and cardinal virtues in heroic degree, and that he performed miracles even during his earthly lifetime; whether such a reputation was not confined solely to the cities of Toledo, Madrid, and Valencia, but extended to other parts of the world; and whether all of this had been confirmed by the testimonies of serious and reputable men, without any of them being able to say anything to the contrary.
2. Whether it was true that, since the Blessed had been received into the heavenly dwelling, his reputation had led to popular gatherings of men and women, as well as persons of standing and distinction, at his tomb and in the veneration of his relics, in order to seek his intercession and to commend themselves to him in both spiritual and temporal matters; whether inquiry should be made specifically into the healing of various illnesses, and whether the Blessed enjoyed a reputation as a healer in any part of the world, transcending the local sphere; and whether all of this had been confirmed by testimonies without any contradiction to such a reputation.
3. Whether the veneration of his relics since he had been declared Blessed had increased in Rome and Madrid, as well as throughout the rest of the world, following the decrees issued by Urban VIII on this matter in 1624 and 1625; whether it could be verified that pilgrims of all social conditions came to his tomb, what reputation he enjoyed among those who visited it, and what spiritual or temporal benefits they obtained. More specific reference was also made to the tomb itself, to the paintings that adorned it, to the ex votos, to wax figures, candles or lit lamps, and to other objects and ornaments that might reflect the growing devotion to his relics. The witnesses were required to declare whether they themselves had obtained countless favors through his intercession, and to testify to the universal reputation associated with these matters.
4. Whether there was evidence that miracles had occurred through the intercession of Francis Borgia since Urban VIII had declared him Blessed, and whether instantaneous

healings or similar extraordinary events—belonging to the third category, and likewise to the second—had been verified as having taken place in various parts of the world, and what reputation he enjoyed in this regard. Emphasis was placed on the requirement that the questions posed should relate directly to the testimony provided by the witnesses, who were to report either on what they had personally experienced or on what they had learned through others.

5. Whether the Blessed's reputation for sanctity was widespread, public, and well established by virtue of the benefits obtained through his intercession;¹¹

3.6. *Extension of the Process to Madrid and Valencia*

In mid-June 1650, the extension of the process to the city of Madrid began. Gabriel de Arenas, lawyer of the Royal Councils and fiscal promoter of the archiepiscopal court, went to the Convent of San Gil of the Discalced Franciscans to initiate the summons of witnesses and the taking of depositions, a task in which Julián de Pedraza—who normally resided at the Imperial College in Madrid—was engaged until the end of July. While women were received in the chapel of the Blessed Pascual Bailón, men were summoned to the cloister of the Chapel of the Holy Christ.¹² It was precisely through his initiative, undertaken in defense of the rights of the Society of Jesus in the cause, that the initial list of witnesses was expanded to include individuals associated with the Monastery of the Incarnation, as well as several nuns of the Descalzas Reales, who gave testimony within their convent. Moreover, the proceedings conducted in Madrid made it possible to carry out a visit to the tomb of Francis Borgia in the Jesuit Professed House and to subject his burial site to a detailed examination.

The procedural framework established in Toledo and Madrid was replicated in Valencia during the months of September and October 1650. There, witnesses were received in the Chapel of the Nativity of the archiepiscopal palace to give testimony, under the supervision of the promoter Martín Guillermo Villorodo, a presbyter and doctor of theology of the Valencian Church. He was assisted by two presbyters, Vicente Bassant and Vicente Pérez de Cullamilito, and the proceedings were attended by the bishops of Valencia and Segorbe—both royal councilors—Pedro de Urbina Montoya and Diego Serrano de Sotomayor, who acted as apostolic commissioners, as well as by the bishop of Maronea, Jacinto Minuarte. The Jesuit Martín Pérez, rector of the College of San Pablo of the Society of Jesus in Valencia, served as procurator for the cause. The notaries appointed were Jerónimo Ruiz de Ripodas, a beneficed cleric of the church of Segorbe, and Vicente Ayerne. Also present were Bruno Soriano, representing the city of Valencia, and the presbyter Vicente Sepúlveda. Likewise, as in the Toledan process and its extension to Madrid, the promoter of the faith appointed by the Congregation of Rites was Pedro Francisco de Rubeis.

The procedure for summoning witnesses was identical in all three venues, as they were divided and cited in different groups, which appeared successively in organized batches to give their testimony.¹³

4. Some Considerations Regarding the Witnesses

Although they appear grouped together in the documents reflecting this phase of the process, the majority of the witnesses gave their testimony in Madrid, since the holding of various offices within the administration of the Monarchy and the Royal Household, as well as affiliation with different Madrid convents, determined this circumstance. The witnesses who testified in Toledo and Madrid were as follows (Table 1).¹⁴

Table 1. The witnesses in Toledo and Madrid.

Witness No.	Name	Office	Age
1	Don Pedro de Losada y Quiroga	Canon of Toledo	n.r.
2	Don Alonso de Morales y Ballesteros	Canon of Toledo and Vicar of Madrid	57
3	Pedro López de Inarra e Isasi	Senior canon of the fabric of Toledo Cathedral	40
4	Don Miguel Ferrer	Penitentiary canon of Toledo	60
5	Don Matías de Cuéllar	Professor of Prima and university lecturer	48
6	Father Luis (Aloysius) Fernández	Member of the Society of Jesus	60
7	Don Francisco Miranda	Chaplain of the Reyes Nuevos	32
8	Don Diego Osorio	Vicar General and Canon of Toledo	50
9	Don Mateo Segade Bugueiro	Magistral canon of Toledo	45
10	Don Antonio de Isla	Doctoral canon of Toledo	38
11	Don Antonio de Verastegui	Royal chaplain and chaplain of the Reyes Nuevos	50
12	Don Miguel de Noronha	Count of Linares and Marquess of Villareal; Council of State; General of the Sicilian Gallies	72
13	Alonso de Palma	Bishop-elect of Ceuta	67
14	Don Francisco de Rebollo	Knight of the Order of Santiago	65
15	Don Juan Francisco Pacheco	Dean of Jaén Cathedral and sumiller de cortina to Philip IV	44
16	Fray Luis de San Bernardo	Provincial of the Discalced Franciscans	74
17	Don Francisco de Chiriboga	Lord of the House of Chiriboga	72
18	Fray Francisco de Santa Ana	Royal preacher and Discalced Franciscan	54
19	Fray Juan Ponce de León	Friar of the Order of Minims of St Francis of Paola	60
20	Fray Alonso de Herrera	Friar of the Order of Minims of St Francis of Paola	59
21	Don Gaspar de Rocafull	Count of Albaterra, Councillor of Aragon	50
22	Don Juan Pérez Delgado	Bishop-elect of Ciudad Rodrigo	46
23	Fray Alonso de Sanvitores	Benedictine monk and master	72
24	Fray Diego Niceno	Provincial of the Order of St Basil	56
25	Don Pedro de Rojas	Count of Mora; Queen's steward; Knight of Calatrava; Council of Italy	59
26	Fray Andrés Pacheco	Abbot of San Bernardo and qualifier of the Holy Office	44
27	Don Francisco Ramírez de Haro	Knight of the Order of Santiago	52
28	Don Gil González	Royal chronicler and priest	64
29	Don Antonio Calderón	Canon of Toledo; chief chaplain of the Convent of the Incarnation; tutor to the Infanta	56
30	Fray Francisco de Ricos	Royal preacher; friar of the Order of the Holy Trinity	40
31	Father Vicente Guevara	Bishop-elect in the Philippines	74
32	Cardinal Antonio de Aragón	Cardinal	n.r.
33	Don Martín de Saavedra de Guzmán	Knight of the Order of Calatrava	52
34	Don Juan Jerónimo Pallavicino	Knight of the Order of Santiago	40
35	Father José Láinez	Augustinian; Bishop-elect of Solsona	63
36	Don Pedro Nápoles	Knight of the Order of Calatrava	24
37	Don Pedro Cartagnazia	Canon of Santa Fe Cathedral (Indies)	40
38	Don Diego Mendoza y Acevedo	Captain General of Santa Marta (Indies)	36
39	Don Duarte de Alburquerque	Marquess of Vasto; Count of Pernambuco; Gentleman of the Chamber	55
40	Don Pedro Gregorio y Buglio	Duke of Tremistère; Council of Italy	58
41	Don Francisco de Rojas	Judge (oidor) of the Chancery of Valladolid	60

Table 1. *Cont.*

Witness No.	Name	Office	Age
42	Don Jaime Manuel de Cárdenas	Duke of Nájera and Maqueda; Lord High	50
	Manrique de Lara	Steward of the Queen	
43	Don Gaspar Méndez de Rubiales	Royal lawyer of Santa Fe (Indies)	42
44	Don Jerónimo de Ataíde	Marquess of Colares and Count of Castañeyra	50
45	Father Gabriel Adarzo de Santander	Mercedarian friar, priest, and royal preacher	51
46	Don Juan de Cabrera y Benavides	Marquess of Rus; Knight of Santiago; maestrescuela of Lima Cathedral	70
47	Don Juan de Solórzano	Royal councillor and Knight of Santiago	70
48	Father Miguel de Cardona	Carmelite friar	54
49	Don Diego Aragón	Duke of Terranova; member of the Royal Chamber; trece of Santiago	40
50	Don Jerónimo Biffi	Representative of the Archduke of Innsbruck; Knight of Santiago	40
51	Don Fadrique Enríquez	Castellan of Milan; Councillor of War; Knight of Alcántara	50
52	Don Juan de Aguirre	Royal secretary	60
53	Doña Inés de Guzmán	Marchioness of Alcañices	65
54	Don Juan Salazar	Purveyor of the Convent of the Incarnation	50
55	Don Mateo Puelles y Escobar	Physician of the Supreme Inquisition; royal household	52
56	Doña Isabel de Morales	n.r.	40
57	Ana García	Wife of Nicolás Gutiérrez	37
58	Doña María Pérez	Wife of Juan Salazar	36
59	Father Juan de Muniesa	Franciscan friar; confessor of the Descalzas Reales	40
60	Don Diego de Arce y Reinoso	Bishop of Plasencia and Inquisitor General	60
61	Don Andrés de Palacio	Notary of the Holy Office	54
62	Doña Damiana de la Encina y Molina	Wife of Andrés de Palacio	40
63	Don Miguel Bautista de Lanuza	Knight of the Order of Santiago	58
64	Sor María Clara	Abbess of the Royal Convent of San Francisco (Descalzas Reales)	66
65	Sor Ana María de la Concepción	Nun of the Descalzas Reales	48
66	Sor Serafina María del Santísimo Sacramento	Nun of the Descalzas Reales	31
67	Sor María de la Santísima Trinidad	Nun of the Descalzas Reales	65
68	Don Diego de Riaño y Gamboa	President of the Council of Castile; Knight of Santiago	61

At the same time as the interrogations were being conducted, Pedraza and the procurators requested that copies be made of the documents preserved in the archive of the archbishopric of Toledo concerning the Blessed's miraculous intercession in a case that had occurred in the territory of New Granada. Likewise, Gabriel de Arenas undertook the examination of witnesses who were summoned in Madrid for this purpose; they appeared in obedience to an order issued by the king in order to promote the success of the proceedings.¹⁵ Accordingly, the presence—already recorded in the preceding table—was required of Martín de Saavedra, Knight of the Order of Calatrava and former president of the Audiencia of Santa Fe; of Pedro Cartagnazia, canon of the church of Santa Fe; and of Diego Mendoza y Acevedo, governor general of Santa Marta. They were joined by Vasco de Figueroa, dignitary of the church of Cartagena; Gaspar Méndez de Rubiales; Francisco de Piedrahita; Master Fray José Pacheco, provincial of the Augustinian Order in the kingdom of New Granada; Juan de Cabrera y Benavides, maestrescuela of Lima Cathedral, who was then in Madrid attending to matters concerning his church; and Juan de Solórzano, royal

councilor and Knight of the Order of Santiago, who had served as oidor of the Audiencia of Lima and as fiscal of the Council of the Indies, and who testified to the great devotion enjoyed by Borgia in the viceroyalty of Peru.¹⁶

4.1. *Miracles, Inquisitorial Scrutiny, and the Construction of Fama Sanctitatis*

Similarly, in July 1650, Archbishop Julio de Cortázar of Santa Fe was requested to forward to Cardinal Moscoso y Sandoval all the information contained in his archives on this matter. Although, following the provincial synod held in Santa Fe in 1625, a vow had been made to celebrate the feast of the Blessed as patron and protector against earthquakes, in 1627, news reached Santa Fe de Bogotá that an image of Saint Francis Borgia kept on an estate in Chitagoto—an *encomienda* of Félix Mújica Buitrón See: (Constanza Villalobos and Contreras-Guerrero 2023, pp. 53–79)—had been observed to sweat for several days. Both the parish priest responsible for the chapel where the painting was located and other witnesses to the phenomenon cooperated with the envoys of Archbishop Julián de Cortázar and with the commissioner of the Holy Office to ascertain all the details of the event. The fourteen witnesses who confirmed what they had observed—including changes in the image of the saint, such as alterations in color and movement—also attested that improvements in the health of certain individuals had occurred when cloths used to dry the perspiration and tears of the crucifix held by Borgia in the portrait were applied to them. Indeed, both the synodal initiative and the miracles attributed to this image provided a significant stimulus to the growing devotion, and in that year the Blessed was named patron of New Granada.

In 1629, the Jesuit Manuel de Vargas composed an account of the juridical investigations collected, dedicating it to the Blessed's grandson Francisco de Borja y Aragón, Prince of Esquilache and viceroy of Peru between 1614 and 1621; this work compiled the testimonies and descriptions of the miracles recorded in the original processes approved by the archbishop. Rumors of illicit enrichment led to a *juicio de residencia*, whose guilty verdict, issued in 1626, conditioned his political marginalization. He remained at court as a gentleman of the king's chamber, but the support of Sor Margarita de la Cruz from the Descalzas Reales proved to be of no avail in securing his political rehabilitation. The compilation and organization of testimonies carried out by Gabriel de Arenas was of particular importance for the advancement of the canonization cause, since it confirmed that an image of the Blessed inspired widespread devotion by virtue of its association with a series of extraordinary events that were duly reported to the Congregation of Rites. Moreover, the process benefited from the specialized testimony of Pedro López de Inarra e Isasi, senior canon of the fabric of Toledo Cathedral, who was responsible for negotiating and contracting the various artists commissioned to embellish the cathedral and who defended his professional judgment before the prelates and the other members of the cathedral chapter.¹⁷

As noted above, the majority of the witnesses gave their testimony in Madrid, since only the first thirteen testified in Toledo. Certainly, while the question of the extraordinary events attributed to the Blessed's intercession was essential for the continuation of the cause, it was equally necessary to clarify the situation arising from the inclusion of one of Francis Borgia's works in the Index of Prohibited Books published in 1559. The so-called Valdés Index was instrumentalized by the Inquisitor General Fernando de Valdés as a means of attacking those who represented a threat to his waning influence and political power, as was the case of the archbishop of Toledo, Bartolomé de Carranza, and of Francis Borgia himself, among others (Astrain 1914, p. 78). Although, as noted, the Index and *Expurgatory* published by Gaspar de Quiroga removed the Borgia work from censure and explicitly emphasized this measure, there remained in Rome a clear determination to examine all the implications of this matter (de Dalmases 1972; Cereceda 1950, 1951).

In this regard, the testimony of the Inquisitor General himself, Diego de Arce y Reinoso, was of particular importance, since his mere presence signified the backing of the Holy Office for the advancement of the canonization. Nor was it coincidental that the first witness to testify was Pedro de Losada y Quiroga, canon of Toledo and nephew of Gaspar de Quiroga, both of whom were closely associated with the Society of Jesus. The issue of inquisitorial oversight concerning works included in the Catalogues was likewise linked to the testimony of Alonso Morales y Ballesteros, canon of Toledo and vicar of Madrid, whose responsibilities included the ecclesiastical censorship of written works and the granting of publication licenses. Moreover, he was an accomplished jurist who had defended, in several lawsuits, the interests of various Jesuit colleges in Andalusia. Similarly, Fray Juan Ponce de León, a presbyter of the Order of Minims of Saint Francis of Paola, served as a qualifier of the Holy Office and as an inspector of bookshops in Spain.

This perspective also helps to explain the presence among the witnesses of Francisco de Chiriboga, Lord of the House of Chiriboga, who was married to Elena de Córdoba y Aragón and thus connected by kinship to the Blessed. At the conclusion of his testimony, reference was made to the statement of Gaspar Rodríguez de Soria, fiscal of the inquisitorial tribunal of Toledo, concerning the proceedings brought against Chiriboga in 1644. After spending twenty-six months in prison, he was released when it was established that his arrest had been based on false testimony, and he was consequently restored to his honor in all respects. This episode underscored how falsehoods could cause an innocent person to encounter serious difficulties with the Holy Office and suffer damage to his reputation. In this context, it is not insignificant that, as previously noted, the dedication of the biography published by Nieremberg was addressed to the dukes of Gandía, but above all highlighted the figure of Fernando de Borja y Aragón, with whom the author had dealt concerning the writings of the Blessed. The Jesuit's opposition to the policies pursued by Philip IV and Olivares in their confrontation with Urban VIII, together with his relationship with Fernando de Borja—an object of the Count-Duke's suspicions—placed both men within anti-Olivares political circles. In this regard, particular attention should be drawn to the close relationship linking Fernando de Borja with the religious María de Jesús de Ágreda, whose counsel was highly valued by Philip IV, as well as to their association with a group of visionaries, among whom Chiriboga became entangled, whose aim was to bring about the political downfall of Olivares. See: (Morte Acín 2010; Martínez Millán 2012).

4.2. Court, Nobility, and Religious Orders in the Promotion of the Cause

While both issues—the documentation of miracles and the demonstration that Borgia's encounter with the Inquisition had been the result of the self-interested actions of his enemies—were of primary importance, it was also necessary to show the existence of a solid and growing devotion underpinning his reputation for sanctity. The adaptation of Borgia's biography to the accepted model was promoted by the Society of Jesus itself through the work of Francesco Sacchini. In this same light, one may understand the appearance as a witness of the chronicler Gil González Dávila, who sought to follow the guidelines laid down by the Congregation of Rites while simultaneously integrating all orders and charisms into his proposal to promote causes of officially recognized sainthood (López Vela 2024, p. 201). Relevant experience in this regard was also possessed by Francisco Miranda y Paz, chaplain of the Reyes Nuevos, who in 1636 had written a work submitted to Urban VIII arguing the illegitimacy of publicly celebrating Adam as a saint prior to the pope's issuance of the requisite decree. Taken together, the testimonies clearly demonstrated that devotion to the Blessed was both deep-rooted and widespread. Of particular note is the testimony of Fray Andrés Pacheco, abbot of San Bernardo and qualifier of the Holy Office, who stated that the Count of Salvatierra possessed a relic of the Blessed and venerated it,

and that he was aware of other nobles and grandees who did likewise.¹⁸ Father Vicente Guevara, bishop-elect of the Philippines, declared that the Jesuits did not distribute relics of the Blessed and that, on the contrary, they received many requests that they entirely refused. He believed that only after persistent insistence had one relic been granted to the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, whose foundation was closely linked to Francis Borgia.¹⁹

Likewise, representatives of the city of Madrid addressed a letter to the pope dated 19 September 1650. They noted that, once the collection of remission information had been completed, the cause would return to the pontiff's hands, and they therefore requested permission for the city to enjoy a day of celebration upon the attainment of canonization. They affirmed that the body deposited in the Jesuit Professed House was visited both by the entire court nobility—many of them members of the Borgia clan—and by the population at large, who sought his protection and miraculous intercession.²⁰ The testimonies gathered clearly aimed to substantiate the validity of the Blessed's intercession in matters of health, as reflected in the statements of the Carmelite royal preacher Miguel de Cárdenas, qualifier of the Holy Office within the Council of the Inquisition and procurator of the Spanish provinces, as well as of Mateo Puelles y Escobar, physician of the Supreme Inquisition, of the royal household, and of the chamber of Don John of Austria, whose declaration was particularly extensive with regard to miraculous healings.²¹

In this respect, the testimonies of several women summoned in connection with the rights invoked by the Society of Jesus for the advancement of the cause were of special significance. Among them was Inés de Guzmán y Pimentel, Marchioness of Alcañices by her marriage to Álvaro Enríquez de Borja, who had died in 1643 and was a grandson of the Blessed. She was required to testify in her own home owing to illness. She was the sister of the Count-Duke of Olivares, who maintained close ties with the Jesuits (Rivero Rodríguez 2025, pp. 209–20). Likewise, among the women who appeared at the chapel of Pascual Bailón—an invocation closely associated with the dukes of Gandía and linked to difficult childbirths—were Andrés de Palacio, notary of the Holy Office, and his wife Damiana de la Encina y Molina, who both testified to the Blessed's intercession in a similar ordeal caused by the unusually large size of a child's head, from which the infant nonetheless survived.²²

Testimony was also gathered from several nuns of the convent of Our Lady of Consolation of the Franciscan Recollect nuns in Madrid, known as the Descalzas Reales, which was closely linked to the life of the Blessed. Several nuns were summoned, in addition to the abbess María Clara de la Cruz, known in the world as Clara de Alarcón y de Andrade, daughter of the Lords of Buenache and Marquesses of Palacios. Ana María de la Concepción, known as Ana Pacheco, a native of the town of San Clemente and daughter of Rodrigo Pacheco and María de Mendoza, was likewise cited. Testimony was also given by Serafina María del Santísimo Sacramento, known as Serafina Fardella y Pacheco, a native of Palermo and daughter of Plácido Fardella and María Pacheco y Mendoza, Princes of Pacheco and Marquesses of San Lorenzo; and finally, by María de la Santísima Trinidad, known as María Pacheco Mendoza, Princess of Pacheco and Marchioness of San Lorenzo, who before professing had been married to Pedro de Verástegui (Vilacoba Ramos and Muñoz Serrulla 2010, pp. 127, 133). See also: (López Ruiz and Martín 1988). All of them emphasized the Blessed's mediatory role and his miraculous intervention against pains and illnesses of various kinds. All testimonies were delivered in the presence of the nuns' confessor and qualifier of the Holy Office, the Franciscan Juan de Muniesa, who also testified in the process. His asceticism led him to disseminate the School of Christ in Aragon, where he moved after completing his duties in the convent confessional in 1658 and assumed the office of Commissary General. The influence of Cardinal Barberini was decisive in this appointment, as was the support of Philip IV through his designation as royal preacher (Vilacoba Ramos 2013, pp. 411, 457ss).

It should also be noted that the nun María Fardella y Pacheco was the niece of the ambassador to Rome and viceroy of Sicily, Juan Fernández Pacheco y Toledo, Marquess of Villena, and thus represented the ties of these families to the Italian territories. Accordingly, the extension of the Blessed's reputation for sanctity was also reflected in the presence of other witnesses connected to these networks, such as Pedro Gregorio y Buglio, Duke of Tremistère, Knight of Santiago, and regent for Sicily on the Council of Italy, as well as Fadrique Enríquez de Luján, castellan of Milan, councilor of War, and Knight of the Order of Alcántara. In this way, the Blessed's reputation for sanctity was shown not to be confined to the cities in which he had lived and died. In this respect, one must also consider the influence exerted by Melchor de Borja, member of the Council of War and captain general of the galleys of Spain, Naples, and Sicily, as one of the principal promoters and financial supporters of the continuation of the canonization cause.

Likewise, one testimony that stood out within the corpus was that given by Miguel Bautista de Lanuza, a Knight of Santiago, protonotary and councillor of Aragón, as well as a familiar of the Holy Office in Zaragoza and Toledo. His deposition was far more extensive than that of the other witnesses, as it addressed in detail the practice of heroic virtues, the blessed's miraculous intercession, the devotion derived from it, and his reputation for sanctity, which Lanuza went so far as to compare with that of Saint Teresa of Jesus. In support of his arguments, he compiled a wide range of texts and works on which he based his assertions, referring to all the authors who had written about the blessed's reputation for sanctity and thereby demonstrating a profound literary erudition.²³

Similarly, among the witnesses were several Portuguese individuals who had remained loyal to Philip IV after the crisis of Évora in 1637 and the proclamation of the Duke of Braganza. These men had distinguished themselves in the military sphere and held various positions within both the administrative apparatus of the monarchy and the royal household. Thus, Duarte de Albuquerque, Marquis of Vasto, Count of Pernambuco, and Gentleman of the Chamber to Philip IV, suffered severe consequences and reprisals as a result of João IV's political actions after remaining loyal to the Habsburg monarch. For his part, Jerónimo de Ataíde, majordomo to Queen Isabel of Bourbon, Marquis of Colares and Count of Castañeyra, played a prominent role in the household of Prince Baltasar Carlos, whom he served as tutor, as well as during the final decade of the existence of the Council of Portugal. In the case of Miguel de Noronha, Count of Linares and Marquis of Villareal, member of the Council of State and General of the Galleys in the Kingdom of Sicily, this office was granted toward the end of his eventful life, at which time he also celebrated his marriage to Lucrecia de Silva, lady-in-waiting to Queen Mariana of Austria.

The support provided by the monarchs—and especially by the queens—was likewise highly significant. This patronage is evidenced in the testimonies of members of the royal households. Thus, Friar Alonso de Sanvítores, a Benedictine religious, attested to Queen Isabel of Bourbon's devotion to the blessed's relics, a point corroborated by Pedro de Rojas, Count of Mora, the queen's majordomo, Knight of Calatrava, and member of the Council of Italy, as well as by Master Gabriel Adarzo de Santander, a Mercedarian friar, definitor general of his order, and royal preacher. The religious testified that the celebration of the blessed's feast on 1 October became one of the most solemn events at court, frequently attended by the king, accompanied by ambassadors and nobles who came to pray for his intercession. The queen customarily attended in the afternoon with the prince and the infanta, while on the remaining days of the octave, the celebrations were financed by numerous grandees and nobles.²⁴ Moreover, this devotion on the queen's part was reinforced by her chief lady-in-waiting, Juana Fernández de Velasco, Duchess of Gandía, who intervened decisively to secure Queen Isabel's donation of the silver urn in which the blessed's remains were placed.

No less significant was the connection between the religious witnesses and the royal chapel or royal foundations and convents, whether through their service as royal preachers—such as the Franciscan Francisco de Santa Ana or the Trinitarian Francisco de Ricos—or through positions held by Antonio de Verástegui, royal chaplain and chaplain of the Reyes Nuevos; Juan Francisco Pacheco, dean of the cathedral of Jaén and *sumiller de cortina* to Philip IV; and Antonio Calderón, canon of Toledo, chief chaplain of the Convent of the Encarnación and tutor to the infanta. It should be recalled that this convent was the site of Francis Borgia's first burial place in Madrid. Testimony was therefore also taken from Juan Salazar, purveyor of the Convent of the Encarnación, and from his wife, María Pérez.

The presence among the witnesses of Jaime Manuel de Cárdenas y Manrique, Duke of Maqueda and Nájera, chief steward to Queen Mariana and head of the entourage responsible for accompanying her journey to Madrid, as well as of the Infanta María Teresa's gentleman of the chamber and Knight of the Order of Alcántara, exemplifies the interest of the knights of the various Military Orders—particularly that of Santiago—in seeing a representative of the ideals of the Spanish nobility attain recognized sanctity.²⁵ Accordingly, testimony was given by Don Francisco de Rebollo, Knight of Santiago; by Francisco Ramírez de Haro y Gaitán de Ayala, later Count of Bornos, also a Knight of Santiago and *alférez mayor* of Motril; and by Juan Jerónimo de Pallavicino de Rojas, likewise a Knight of Santiago, belonging to a Genoese family established in Toledo in the late sixteenth century and whose father was one of the principal financiers of the monarchy. The Pallavicino family's staunch defense of Philip IV's interests in Catalonia after the revolt of 1640 was comparable to that of another witness, Cardinal Antonio de Aragón y Córdoba, who, among other dignities, served as councilor of the Military Orders. Another witness, the Augustinian José Laínez, bishop-elect of Solsona, was unable to take possession of his see as a result of the wars that followed in Catalan territories. Likewise, noteworthy was the testimony of Diego Aragón Tagliavia, Duke of Terranova, member of the royal chamber, commander of Villafranca, and one of the *trece* of the Order of Santiago, a dignity he was obliged to relinquish upon receiving the Order of the Golden Fleece. After a long career, he was appointed ambassador to Rome in 1654 and intervened in the canonizations and beatifications processes, such as those of Thomas of Villanova and Peter of Alcántara. He also coordinated the cardinals of the 'Spanish part' in preparation for the conclave to elect the successor of Innocent X, whose fragile health suggested an imminent outcome. In the diplomatic sphere, mention should also be made of Jerónimo Biffi, ambassador of the Archduke of Innsbruck and Knight of the Order of Santiago.

It is also necessary to refer to the ecclesiastics who testified as witnesses, among whom members of the Toledo cathedral chapter constituted a particularly prominent group. Diego Osorio de Escobar, who had served as inquisitor, canon, and vicar general, was elected bishop of Puebla de los Ángeles on 4 April 1655. His appointment was made at the proposal of Cardinal Moscoso y Sandoval, who considered it essential that the nominated prelate be close to the Society of Jesus. Likewise, Mateo Segade Bugueiro, *canónigo magistral* and a trusted associate of the primate prelate, was appointed archbishop of Mexico. Miguel Ferrer was elected bishop of Tuy on 10 September 1656, while Antonio de Isla y Mena, treasurer and *canónigo doctoral*, was elected bishop of Osma on 4 April 1672. Alonso de la Palma, for his part, was the last bishop of Ceuta appointed at the proposal of Philip IV as king of Portugal in January 1647; it is believed that he never resided in his diocese, as the king wrote to the cathedral chapter requesting the appointment of a governor. Similarly, Juan Pérez Delgado, bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo, was promoted in 1655 to the see of Salamanca. Representatives of all religious orders were also present, including Friar Luis de San Bernardo, provincial of the Discalced Franciscans, and Friar Diego Niceno, provincial of the Order of Saint Basil.

In an exceptional case, Diego de Riaño Gamboa, president of the Council of Castile and Knight of the Order of Santiago, went to the Convent of the Descalzas Reales to give testimony.²⁶ He was the sixty-eighth witness and brought the series of interrogations conducted in Madrid to a close. The Society of Jesus concluded the collection of testimonies in Madrid on 20 August 1650.²⁷ A few days later, the commissioners carried out a visit to the tomb containing the remains of Francis Borgia, conducting a thorough inspection of the chapel with regard to its adornments, lamps, ex-votos, paintings, jewels, and other elements subject to verification. This review, attended by a considerable number of individuals, was accompanied by Father Manuel Pardo, prepositus of the Casa Profesa, and Father Cosme Zapata, among other Jesuits.²⁸

4.3. Territorial Scope of Devotion: The Valencian Evidence

Likewise, witnesses originating from the Kingdom of Valencia contributed to sustaining the blessed's reputation for sanctity, the growth of devotion, and belief in his miraculous intercession, such as Gaspar de Rocafull, Count of Albatera and councillor of Aragón, who testified in Madrid. It should be noted that the witnesses summoned to testify in Valencia in September and October 1650 were fewer in number and differed in profile from those examined in Toledo and Madrid (Table 2).²⁹

Table 2. The witnesses in Valencia.

Witness No.	Name	Office/Status	Age
1	Don Cristóbal Cabanillas	Count of Casal	52
2	Don Luis Crespí	Archdeacon of Sagunto	43
3	Fray Pedro Oñate	Friar of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans)	54
4	Felipe Pesantes		76
5	Don Carlos Juan de Torres	Count of Peñalba	50
6	Don Pedro Catellus	Member of the Order of the Militia of the Blessed Virgin	63
7	Father Jerónimo Crespo	Member of the Society of Jesus	63
8	José Polo	Lord of Todoella	40
9	Fray Juan Insa	Friar of the Order of St Francis	82
10	Father Juan Agustín de Palacios	Member of the Society of Jesus	50
11	Miguel Vidal	Jesuit lay brother (coadjutor)	44
12	Magdalena Vicenta Ferrer	Domestic servant	45
13	Don Juan Urgellus	Doctor of Medicine	33
14	Juan Vicente Martí	Layman	48
15	Fray Lluís Bonaventura	Friar of the Order of Discalced Franciscans	55
16	Vicente Sepúlveda		37
17	Father Pablo de Rojas	Member of the Society of Jesus	66
18	Vicenta Pelliffer		66
19	Mariana Sanz de la Llosa	Laywoman	58
20	Dorotea Puig	Laywoman	47
21	Marcela Marro	Laywoman	37
22	Bruno Sorino	Layman	27
23	Vicenta Marro	Laywoman	38
24	Catalina Pazuelo	Laywoman	50
25	Bárbara Pasqual	Laywoman	50
26	Ángel Fuster	Friar of the Order of Carmel	67
27	Vicente Miguel Gil	Doctor of Medicine	63

Indeed, the witnesses who testified in Valencia did not possess the same degree of social prominence as those who had appeared at court, since neither high-ranking noble titles nor knights of the Military Orders are to be found among them. Cristóbal

Cabanillas, Count of Casal, was connected to the Borja family through kinship ties. This close relationship likewise linked Carlos Juan de Torres, Count of Peñalba. As a Knight of the Order of Santiago, he served as comendador of Museros and alcaide of the Royal Palace of Valencia. As *maestre de campo* under the orders of the viceroy Fernando de Borja, he also acted as a lender and tax farmer.

In the ecclesiastical sphere, however, particular attention should be paid to the significant figure of Luis Crespí de Valldaura y Brizuela, archdeacon of Sagunto and founder of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in Valencia. Appointed bishop of Orihuela in 1650, he was later named by Philip IV as extraordinary ambassador to the Holy See in order to defend the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. A similar profile is found in Pedro Catellus, a member of the Order of the Militia of the Blessed Virgin.

Undoubtedly, the witnesses selected in Valencia reinforced through their testimonies the same issues that had been addressed in Toledo and Madrid, most notably the blessed's miraculous intercession, as reflected in the presence of two physicians among the deponents.³⁰ In this regard, the testimonies given by José Polo concerning the illness of his servant Magdalena Vicenta Ferrer—who had been declared beyond medical hope—proved crucial for the culmination of the canonization process. These events took place in August 1650. The physician Juan Urgellus stated in his deposition that the cure had been effected through a relic of the blessed that was brought to Polo's residence in Valencia. These declarations were further corroborated by a considerable number of additional witnesses.³¹

5. Conclusions

The witnesses selected to give testimony attested to those aspects that were required to be proven at this stage of the cause. On the one hand, several deponents testified to the healing power attributed to Borgia's miraculous intercession, with particular emphasis on the statements obtained in Toledo, at the Descalzas Reales, and in Valencia. Likewise, the substantial presence of members of the Holy Office served to redress the negative perception created by the inclusion of a work by Francis Borgia—written prior to his profession as a Jesuit—in the Index of Prohibited Books of 1559, and supported the rehabilitation promoted by the Inquisitor General Gaspar de Quiroga.

The determined intervention of the Society of Jesus was not limited to the selection of witnesses, but also extended to the adaptation of Borgia's biography in accordance with the directives of the Congregation of Rites. The ecclesiastical sectors most closely aligned with the Jesuits collaborated in this endeavor, most notably members of the Toledo cathedral chapter—particularly those who obtained prelacies in the American territories and supported the activities of the order—and Cardinal Moscoso y Sandoval, nephew of the Duke of Lerma.

The testimonies of the royal preachers were likewise numerous and significant, in a context of reduced tension between the Holy See and the Hispanic Monarchy compared to that which had prevailed during the pontificate of Urban VIII. Similarly noteworthy is the presence of servants of Queen Isabel de Borbón, who died in 1644, in whose household members of the Borgia family had served, such as Juana Fernández de Velasco and her son, the seventh Duke of Gandía, who held the office of *mayordomo mayor*.

Indeed, the prominence of the family clan remained essential to the financial support of the cause. The extensive network of noble houses connected to it, together with their ties to the Military Orders, conditioned the manner in which aristocratic ideals were reflected at a particularly delicate moment. The political changes that occurred from 1640 onward were evident in the witnesses appointed, all of whom represented the nobility of the various kingdoms that had distinguished themselves by their loyalty to Philip IV during the uprisings that took place. At the same time, the evolution then underway in the sphere

of spirituality is also perceptible, as several witnesses appear connected to the expansion of the Oratorian congregations and the Escuela de Cristo in the Hispanic realms.

Once the phase devoted to the collection of testimonies had been completed, the process of compulsa was set in motion in order to remit the documentation to the Congregation of Rites.³² These procedures were carried out with relative speed, as the brevia remissorialia were issued in 1655. This progress encouraged renewed initiatives before Rome by various institutions and groups seeking to prevent further delays, including the deputies of the Kingdoms of Aragón and Valencia, the consiliarii of Barcelona, and the Borja family itself through the mediation of Cardinal Moscoso y Sandoval.

Nevertheless, the death of Innocent X in 1655 and the election of Alexander VII marked a new turning point, as the pope decreed an *interim* period that was devoted primarily to the review of the alleged miraculous interventions.³³ In 1662, the Congregation of Rites dispatched emissaries to the tribunal of the Inquisition of Toledo to examine the documentation relating to the Catalogue of Prohibited Books compiled under Cardinal Quiroga during his tenure as Inquisitor General. Once these investigations had been concluded, the matter was resolved and the process advanced to the validation phase in 1665 and to the compulsatoria in the following year.³⁴

The death of Alexander VII in 1667 meant that the final ratification took place under the pontificate of Clement IX. In September 1668, the Congregation of Rites confirmed that the candidate fulfilled all the requirements established by Urban VIII. The canonization of Francis Borgia was formally effected with the signing of the bull on 21 June 1670, and the solemn celebration of his elevation to the altars was scheduled for 29 May 1671.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ARSI Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu

APG Archivio della Postulazione Generali (Santi)

Notes

¹ On the process initiated following his death and the growing reputation for sanctity, see García Hernán (2010b).

² On the motivations that led to the creation of this body, see (Noyes 2011).

³ ARSI (Archivum Romanum Societatis IESU), APG (Archivio della Postulazione Generali (Santi), Franciscus Borgia, n. 58.

⁴ Although he was very close to Urban VIII and the Barberini family, he was regarded as a cardinal inclined to favor Spanish interests.

⁵ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 53.

⁶ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 58.

⁷ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 49, fol. 1.

⁸ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 5v–12v.

⁹ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 49, fols. 21r–24r; n. 52, fols. 1r–5r. The schedule for the collection of witness testimonies was set from 8:00 to 11:00 in the morning and from 4:00 to 7:00 in the afternoon. Provisions were also made regarding the preparatory arrangements and the commencement of the summonses. Also: fols. 16, 21v–22r.

¹⁰ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 260r–266v.

¹¹ ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 11r–12v. The Vicar General of the Society of Jesus granted power of attorney to the provincial Ignacio Víctor before Pedro Francisconio, notary of the Sacred Rota; Víctor, in turn, delegated this authority to the

Jesuits Julián Pedraza, Bernardino de Villegas, and Alonso Yáñez, entrusting them with the continuation of the cause (fols. 12v–14r).

- 12 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fol. 170.
- 13 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 22–63.
- 14 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 49, fol. 116v; n. 52, fols. 187v–188r.
- 15 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 49, fols. 341r–v.
- 16 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fol. 219v, 396v, 401r.
- 17 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 49, fols. 220v–221r, fol. 341r–v; n. 52, fol. 132 ss.
- 18 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fol. 318r.
- 19 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fol. 330r.
- 20 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 58.
- 21 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 404r–410r, 439r–v.
- 22 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fol. 454r.
- 23 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 457v–458r.
- 24 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 308r, 312r, 392v.
- 25 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 378r.
- 26 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 239r–260v.
- 27 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 479v.
- 28 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 480v–491r.
- 29 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 50.
- 30 The miracles recorded at this stage, which numbered thirty, were compiled into a single volume: ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 56–57.
- 31 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 56, fols. 140–147.
- 32 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 52, fols. 491v–496r.
- 33 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 65, n. 20.
- 34 ARSI, APG, Franciscus Borgia, n. 53.

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Article

The Earliest Artistic Representations of Blessed Luigi Gonzaga (1568–1591): Devotion, Spirituality, and Family Patronage

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Abstract

The Gonzaga family promoted, in the early seventeenth century, a visual and devotional program aimed at positioning Blessed Luigi Gonzaga as both a spiritual standard-bearer and a political instrument of their dynasty. A comparative analysis of prints, paintings, and liturgical objects from this period has made it possible to reconstruct the iconographic model that shaped subsequent representations of the young religious. The consolidation of the prototype of his likeness was facilitated by his family circle and enabled the dissemination of his charisma and virtues among the nobility and the Society of Jesus across the territories of the Spanish monarchy and the states of the Italian peninsula. This strategy sought to secure the preeminence of the House of Gonzaga through the canonization of a “family saint,” emulating the practices of other Italian dynasties. The article highlights the pressures exerted by the beatus’s relatives on the Jesuits and the papal court in their efforts to accelerate his canonization. The manuscript and printed sources cited underscore that the principal promoters of Luigi’s sanctity were his brother and sister-in-law, Francesco Gonzaga and Bibiana von Pernstein, although their early deaths curtailed broader dissemination initiatives. The couple, together with other members of the Gonzaga–Tana family, relied on narrative, visual propaganda, and political ambition to hasten the canonization of Blessed Luigi—an event that, nonetheless, would be delayed until 1726. In parallel, the circulation of, and devotion to, the earliest images depicting the Jesuit novice’s likeness brings to light the significant role of female agency in the diffusion of his cult.

Keywords: beatification; Society of Jesus; prints; Luigi Gonzaga; patronage

1. Introduction

[...] Intesa la morte di questo giovane [Luigi Gonzaga] Eleonora [Gonzaga] disse molte cose in lode d’esso, replicando, era un giovane santo, è morto un santo [...].¹ (Folcario 1598, p. 329)

[...] Paragonate, vi prego, quell’innocenza di Luigi [Gonzaga] con l’integrità di Bibiana [von Pernstein], quelle lagrime con questo pianto, quelle funicelle con queste discipline e cilicci, quelle spronelle con queste catenelle di ferro, al sicuro direte che precorse Luigi con l’età, seguitollo Bibiana con l’industria [...].² (Mascardi 1616, p. 23)

The life and principal episodes related to the devotions, charism, and spirituality of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga have been the subject of reflection primarily in hagiographic writings aimed at a broad readership. This article approaches the topic from a scholarly perspective. The first section outlines the most significant milestones of his biography, namely his birth into the Gonzaga family and the family’s connections with the court of

Philip II of Spain and that of Cosimo de Medici in Tuscany. The adolescent's entry into the Society of Jesus entailed the renunciation of the privileges to which he was entitled as heir to the Marquisate of Castiglione delle Stiviere. Once his withdrawal from courtly life had been formalized, Aloysius Gonzaga gained renown among the Jesuits for his charity, self-sacrifice, and spiritual commitment. The saint's early death, at only twenty-three years of age, prevented his ordination as a priest and, at the same time, precluded his assumption of other responsibilities within the Society of Jesus.

The second part of the article examines how the Gonzaga family—particularly his brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces, and nephews, as well as another relative, Friar Francesco Gonzaga, Bishop of Mantua—promoted devotion to and the beatification of the young Aloysius from the late sixteenth century onwards. The dynasty sought to emulate other Italian noble families (such as the Borromeo, Pazzi, and Corsini), which had developed various programs for the exaltation of saints within their lineages. In all cases, the objectives were to obtain benefits, perks, and a more advantageous position in the competition for the election of cardinals and popes. In this regard, the Gonzaga family itself, together with the Society of Jesus, promoted the writing of a biography of Blessed Aloysius and assumed control over the reprinting rights of subsequent editions.

To achieve this aim, as described in the third and fourth sections of the article, they publicized the appearance and virtues of the novice through prints and paintings financed with their own resources, and they initiated an extensive propaganda campaign throughout the territories of the Spanish Monarchy and the Italian Peninsula. The marriage of Francesco Gonzaga and Bibiana von Pernestein played a leading role in this dissemination program and, as discussed in the fourth section, also selected items of liturgical furnishings and relics associated with the young Aloysius Gonzaga for display and veneration in churches as well as in the Museo Aloisiano of Castiglione delle Stiviere.

The final section describes the couple's efforts to expedite the canonization of Blessed Aloysius in Rome through a dense network of contacts who traveled specifically to the city with the aim of promoting the process among the Jesuits and the highest ecclesiastical authorities. Nevertheless, canonization did not take place until 1726; the early deaths of Francesco and Bibiana, together with the lack of interest on the part of the Society of Jesus in pursuing the canonization of Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga during this period, delayed this outcome. The article concludes with a reflective assessment of directions for future research.

2. The Blessed: Lineage, Kinship Networks, and Key Biographical Milestones

On 21 June 1591, the young Aloysius Gonzaga died in Rome. He had been born in Castiglione delle Stiviere (Lombardy) on 9 March 1568 as the firstborn son of Ferrante Gonzaga, Marquis of Luzzara and of Castiglione delle Stiviere, and of his wife, Marta Tana of Santena (Bandera 1991).³ From birth, Aloysius was destined to succeed his father in the governance of the small marquisate located some thirty kilometers from Mantua. His parents had met at the court of Philip II in Madrid, the same setting in which they chose to marry. Ferrante, like other aristocrats holding minor fiefs on the Italian peninsula, depended on royal prebends in order to secure visibility and income, both to sustain his elevated standard of living and to ensure the well-being of his domains. Marta, by contrast, had arrived in Spain as a lady-in-waiting to Elisabeth of Valois, together with other noblewomen of Italian origin—such as the painter Sofonisba Anguissola, a cousin of her husband—as well as French aristocrats (Gamberini 2024, pp. 11, 12, 30, 38, 68, 71, 74, 88).

The chapel of the former Alcázar of Madrid was chosen as the venue for the celebration of the sacrament of marriage on 24 June 1566 (Fernández Martín 1977). The couple

subsequently returned to Castiglione delle Stiviere and became the parents of five sons and one daughter: Luigi, known as *Il santo*, who was consecrated to the religious life; and Rodolfo (1569–1593), second Marquis of Castiglione, who died in early youth without male heirs;⁴ Ferrante (1570–1577), who died in childhood; Carlo (1572–1574), who likewise died as a child; Isabella (1574–1593), lady-in-waiting to the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, who died in adolescence at the court of Philip II; Francesco (1577–1616), third Marquis of Castiglione;⁵ Cristierno (1580–1630), third Marquis of Solferino;⁶ and, finally, Diego (1582–1597), who was murdered in a conspiracy during puberty.

During his early childhood, Aloysius was educated alongside the male members of his family by private tutors, dividing his time between his native town and the court of the Medici family in Florence. At the same time, he displayed from a very early age a marked inclination towards the priestly life. While in the capital of the Arno, he regularly attended the church of San Giovanni Evangelista⁷ and confessed to Francesco della Torre, rector of the local college of the Society of Jesus. The adolescent developed a particular devotion to the Virgin Mary, a process that matured through contemplation of the medieval fresco of *The Annunciation*, still preserved today in the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata. At the time, this image became the most frequently copied and widely disseminated Florentine painting beyond the city's borders (Moralejo Ortega 2024).⁸

Concurrently, the young Aloysius began to cultivate ascetic practices and the recitation of the rosary, aided by devotional readings such as the work written by the Jesuit Gaspar de Loarte, which was reprinted on numerous occasions in Italian, Spanish, and other languages (de Loarte 1573). The appointment of Ferrante Gonzaga as governor of Monferrato in 1579 facilitated the relocation of his offspring—always for educational purposes—from Florence to Mantua. Saint Charles Borromeo administered first communion to Aloysius Gonzaga in Castiglione delle Stiviere in 1580, a gesture closely linked to the friendship between the Gonzaga and Borromeo families. This decision helps to explain the subsequent dissemination of the adolescent's virtues, once he had been beatified, throughout Lombardy, as well as his prominence in spiritual texts, prints, and paintings promoted in the region.

In the autumn of 1581, the Gonzaga Tana family settled on the Iberian Peninsula. All travelled as members of the entourage that accompanied Maria of Austria (1528–1603), widow of Maximilian II and a renowned benefactress of the Jesuit Imperial College in Madrid, on her return to the Spanish court (González Cuerva 2021; Ceñal Lorente 1983, 1991). Aloysius and his brother Rodolfo entered service as pages to the Infant Don Diego, while the young Isabella was chosen as a lady-in-waiting to the Infant Isabella Clara Eugenia (Martínez Hernández 2011; Martínez Millán 2019). The Infant's tutors educated the group in mathematics, logic, philosophy, natural theology, astronomy, and languages.

During this period, the young Aloysius strengthened his contact with Ferdinando Paternó, a Sicilian Jesuit and member of a prominent family of the Viceroyalty of Naples, who was residing temporarily in Madrid. Paternó introduced him to the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola and instructed him in the devotional readings of the Dominican friar Luis of Granada (Scalisi 2024). The Gonzaga family resided in the houses that the Society of Jesus had designated as a novitiate in Madrid; this circumstance was later skillfully publicized by the Jesuits following the beatification of the young Aloysius (Marín Perellón 2009, pp. 51–54; de León Pinelo 1931, pp. 58–59; Aznar Sánchez 2021).⁹

In the spring of 1584, the entire family returned to the Italian peninsula. During this period, the first conflicts arose between Ferrante Gonzaga and his firstborn son: the former opposed his son's entry into religious life, as he did not place full confidence in the character of Rodolfo, his second son. In this context, the renunciation of the firstborn compelled the second son to assume responsibility for the marquisates and for the future

of the family.¹⁰ After a brief period of instruction at the Jesuit College of Brera in Milan, Aloysius Gonzaga formally signed his abdication before a notary on 2 November 1585 at the palace of San Sebastiano in Mantua.

The young Aloysius immediately travelled to Rome in order to enter the Society of Jesus as a novice. Upon his arrival in the city, accompanied by Father Ludovico Cattaneo, his tutor, and his household, he met with the Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva and other prominent figures from political, diplomatic, and noble circles, among them Gaspar de Guzmán, Count of Olivares, ambassador of Philip II to the papacy and father of the future Count-Duke of Olivares. In November 1585, the adolescent entered the novitiate of Sant'Andrea, where he was received by the master of novices,¹¹ Father Giovanni Pescatore.

His decision should be understood in relation to a provision of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, which forbade Jesuits from accepting ecclesiastical dignities—precisely what the adolescent desired. His health, fragile since childhood, led to a temporary stay in Naples, where he received instruction in metaphysics from Giovanni Camerota; nevertheless, his ailments persisted. Aloysius Gonzaga subsequently returned to Rome to recover physically and completed the third year of philosophy at the Collegio Romano, attending courses in logic, physics, and metaphysics. He complemented this training with theological studies under prominent Jesuits, including Agostino and Benedetto Giustini-ani, Juan Azor, and Gabriel Vázquez.¹² Roberto Bellarmine became his confessor, whose guidance proved beneficial to the young man's spiritual life; Bellarmine would later play a decisive role, following his elevation to the cardinalate, in promoting the process of Aloysius's beatification.

During this period, at the request of Vincenzo Bruno, rector of the Collegio Romano, Aloysius Gonzaga composed the *Trattato o meditazione degli angeli*, a short treatise in which he discussed guardian angels, the nine choirs of angels, and their division into three hierarchies (Giachi 1990).

Concurrently, the death of Ferrante Gonzaga in 1586 required the young Aloysius to assume responsibilities related to family reconciliation and pacification.¹³ These duties obliged him to travel between Milan and Rome, before his final return to the latter city in May 1590 in order to complete his theological studies and proceed to priestly ordination. His death, however, meant that he only took his first vows, which were pronounced in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome in 1588.

In the spring of 1591, he contracted typhus while assisting the sick during the severe epidemic that afflicted the city. He died at the age of twenty-three in the infirmary of the Collegio Romano a few months later (Cepari 1862; Giordano 2006, vol. 66, p. 499). Before his death, he still found the strength to write a farewell letter to his mother, Marta Tana.

His body, preserved for a brief period in the communal chapel of the Roman educational institution, was transferred to the Chapel of the Crucifix, located in the small church within the same block popularly known as *La Nunziata* (Vetere and Ippoliti 2003; Testa 2002) (Figure 1a,b).

This decision should be understood in relation to the devotion that Aloysius Gonzaga had demonstrated towards this Mariological episode since childhood. From the moment of his entry into the novitiate, he had on many occasions the opportunity to pray before the principal fresco executed by the Zuccari brothers in the 1560s, which eloquently embodied this devotion (Moralejo Ortega 2021; Alsteens 2026). The young man's remains were kept here until the summer of 1602, when they were placed beneath an altar dedicated to Saint Sebastian in the same church. This choice was not consonant, on the one hand, with the growing devotion inspired by the novice, nor, on the other, with the ambitions of his family, all of whom desired a more visible and impactful setting.

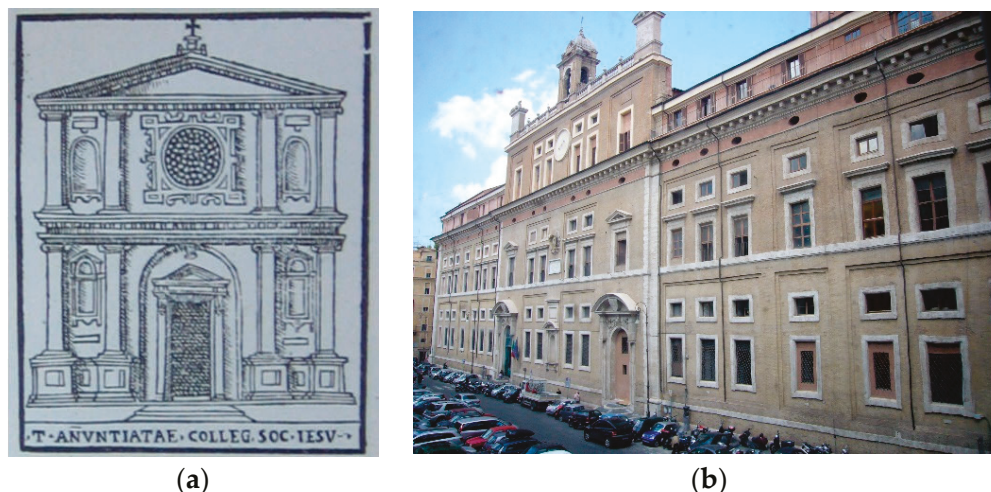


Figure 1. (a) Front of the chapel of the novices and Jesuits of Santa Maria dell'Annunziata, located on the site of the former Collegio Romano, engraving (church destroyed in 1622) (Francino 1610, fol. 95). (b) The Collegio Romano today; site of the construction of the *camerette* and the chapel of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga.

The beatification of the Gonzaga firstborn in 1605 made the provision of a suitable burial site a priority, intended to underscore the notion of emulation, especially among students of the Society of Jesus. It was therefore decided to dedicate a chapel to the young Aloysius, still within the small church of *La Nunziata*, later demolished during the construction on the same site of both the basilica dedicated to Saint Ignatius and the later building of the Collegio Romano. This was the same location in which the *camerette* and the chapel of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga were also built, structures that are still extant today (Croce 2013, pp. 40–43).¹⁴

Lacking sufficient resources at the time, the Jesuits received a substantial donation from Tiberio Lancellotti and his wife, Laura Marsciana, who in 1617 contributed one thousand scudi for the ornamentation of the chapel of the Blessed and in recognition of the intercession of Aloysius Gonzaga in Tiberio's miraculous healing. The embellishment of the space with an altar of polychrome marbles, designed by the Jesuit Orazio Grassi together with Santi Ghetti, was carried out expeditiously. The mortal remains of the Blessed were transferred to his eponymous chapel on 15 June 1620 (Bösel 2004, pp. 33–34; Furlotti 2019).

They remained there until the demolition of the church of *La Nunziata* and the design of a new altar, in which the remains of Blessed Aloysius were deposited. Brother Andrea Pozzo undertook the design of this altar in the basilica dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola (Contardi 1991, p. 27B; 1996; di Feo 1996, pp. 133–39).

3. Devotion to the Newly Beatified Saint in the Early Seventeenth Century: “A Family Affair”

From the time of Aloysius Gonzaga's death in 1591, the process of recognition and exaltation of his virtues began. The Society of Jesus, together with the men and women of the Gonzaga family, supported this process during the first two decades of the seventeenth century (Grendler 2009, pp. 41–48; Logan 2011, pp. 248–56). The visions reported by many of the deceased proved decisive: the Polish Jesuit Stanisław Oborski claimed to have seen him in the company of Ignatius of Loyola and Stanisław Kostka, while Marta Tana stated that she had recovered her health following the appearance of her firstborn in a dream. Miracles continued to be reported in territories far removed from Rome and from the Duchy of Mantua; petitions for his beatification and canonization arose spontaneously and were subsequently channeled through the systematic collection of evidence in Castiglione delle

Stiviere, Mantua, Florence, Piacenza, and Rome (Vigna 1991, p. 153). In these locations, theologians evaluated the reported miracles, their task being to discern which could be attributed to the intercession of the young Gonzaga.

The family—understood as a dense network of members of the Gonzaga dynasty, the Habsburgs, and other lineages, comprising both relatives and allies—expressed its support for the beatification process from an early date. Leonor of Austria (1534–1594), Duchess of Mantua by virtue of her marriage to Guglielmo Gonzaga, was among the first relatives to declare that Aloysius was destined to become the first saint of the family (Vigna 1991, p. 151). Father Folcario, her confessor and the author of a hagiographic profile of the aristocrat, noted in his work of 1598—written at an early stage of the cultic process—that Leonor had described the young man as her godson and as an *angelo celeste* (Folcario 1598, pp. 327–28).

The synod held in Mantua in 1604, at the request of the local bishop, Francesco Gonzaga—another relative—spontaneously proclaimed Aloysius as “Blessed” (Brunelli 1986, pp. 123–30, 138–39). At the first Mass celebrated in honor of the novice, Marta Tana occupied a place of distinction within the church (Ferri 1991, p. 235). These events unfolded in a climate of exaltation surrounding the figure of the marquis’s firstborn, in which various members of the Gonzaga dynasty took part. At the same time, the young man’s role was acknowledged—despite his youth—as a peacemaker in several internal family conflicts (political and religious) and as a key agent in maintaining the unity of the clan. Male members of the dynasty prostrated themselves before the pontiff to promote the beatification, each acting in accordance with his own political, religious, and diplomatic interests. Among them were Francesco Gonzaga, Bishop of Mantua; Vincenzo, Duke of Mantua; and Francesco Gonzaga, younger brother of Aloysius, among others.

The official proclamation of Aloysius Gonzaga as Blessed in 1605 was expedited by these initiatives. Beatification enabled Pope Paul V to authorize the beginning of public cult and veneration. The news was disseminated throughout Italian diocesan sees, though not universally. This distinction is crucial, since the subsequent step—canonization and universal cult—could only be articulated, among other means, through the dissemination of a visual likeness of Blessed Aloysius. This approach applied to prints, an inexpensive and easily distributed medium, as well as paintings conceived in a variety of artistic formats, and sculptures, reliquaries, and small items of liturgical furnishing. The cult of relics was actively promoted by Jesuits and family members alike; all objects preserved within reliquaries were believed to possess thaumaturgical power derived from physical contact with the new Blessed (Arias Martínez et al. 2021). Masses in honor of the young man were not permitted until April 1618; prior to that date, ceremonies were celebrated exclusively in the chapels of Jesuit residences (Zwyssig 2024; Schena 2013).¹⁵

Within this process, the production of a biography was also a priority. This task was entrusted to Father Virgilio Cepari, who had begun writing about the young man’s life while he was still alive. The published work synthesized interviews conducted with Jesuits and relatives; the author had access to letters and documents belonging to both the adolescent and his family. The writing process thus relied on what would today be described as “fieldwork.”¹⁶ The first edition, published in 1606 and lacking a portrait of the subject, was subsequently reprinted, translated, and expanded, particularly after the late canonization of 1726 (Coutinho Pereira 2022). Moreover, Father Cepari obtained specific papal authorization for the term “Blessed” to appear in the title of the book from its first edition.

Family support was constant throughout the process. The biography included a dedication to Francesco Gonzaga, the younger brother of the Blessed. The relatives also negotiated with the Society of Jesus the dissemination and printing of subsequent editions

of the work. In this respect, the Blessed's brother Francesco and his successors held the privilege of reprinting the biography from its first edition of 1606 onward. Father Cepari's biography, written in a plain style and without rhetorical artifice, was intended for a heterogeneous readership: Jesuit novices, nuns, spiritual directress, members of the higher ecclesiastical hierarchy, and nobles—both men and women—with spiritual aspirations.

The machinery of propaganda did not cease after 1606. The Jesuits resident in Mantua celebrated the beatification with a Eucharistic ceremony and a panegyric delivered by one of their members on 21 June 1607; the new Blessed became the protector of the local college and co-patron of the city. With the financial support and donation of a plot of land by Francesco Gonzaga, brother of the Blessed, the Society of Jesus established itself in Castiglione delle Stiviere, the birthplace of Aloysius. There, they founded a college in 1607, which remained in operation until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1755 (Salvarini 2004).

Aloysius Gonzaga's nieces, daughters of his brother Rodolfo—namely Cinzia, Olimpia, and Gridonia—also founded, in the same town, the congregation of the *Vergini di Gesù*, whose mission, down to the present day, has been the education of women (Paganella 1994; Arlati 2024). The founders and other women—particularly those born into noble families—who have belonged to the institution throughout its history were characterized by their adoption of Jesuit spirituality and the model of virtue embodied by Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, to whom they even dedicated a small museum within their premises.

In the nearby locality of San Martino Gusnago, the Jesuits received the donation of a tower that Ferrante Gonzaga had commissioned for family leisure. This structure had been inherited by Aloysius Gonzaga, and his brother Francesco, as the subsequent heir, transferred the tower and its surrounding lands in 1608 to the Jesuit college of Castiglione so that it might serve as a place of rest for novices, brothers, and Jesuits.

4. Devotional Prints Commissioned by the Gonzaga Family: Bibiana von Pernstein, Princess of Castiglione delle Stiviere

The Castle of Ambras (Innsbruck, Austria) preserves a painting of Aloysius Gonzaga as a child, identifiable through the inscription painted at the lower edge, within its remarkable collection of miniatures and portraits of European families from the early modern period (Bosio 1968, pp. 20–22; Arcari and Padovani 1997, p. 10).¹⁷ The portraits of men and women of the Gonzaga dynasty held at Ambras Castle—today part of the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna—have recently been the subject of renewed scholarly attention (Morselli 2002). In the present case, the painting most likely derives from one of the portraits belonging to a series commissioned by Ferrante Gonzaga and Marta Tana to provide a visual record of their entire offspring.

In this respect, the canvas preserved in Austria adopts the representational models typical of princely portraiture of the period and emphasizes the serene and pacific character of the sitter. His physiognomy was later reinterpreted in other media, giving visual expression to notions such as charity, introspection, and spiritual recollection. Portraits of Aloysius Gonzaga, conceived in the early seventeenth century, adhere to this prototype, both those commissioned by the Society of Jesus and those sponsored by the family, especially after his beatification in 1605.

The dynasty of engravers and printers of Flemish origin bearing the surname Wierix assumed responsibility for the earliest commissions of devotional prints from both patrons—the Jesuits and the Gonzaga—at the beginning of the seventeenth century. For reasons of thematic focus and space, the present analysis will consider exclusively the engravings commissioned by the family with the aim of extending devotion and disseminating the young man's charism. The ultimate objective was to secure a saint within the Gonzaga

dynasty and to promote his deeds through prints circulated among their networks of contacts, namely the Society of Jesus, devotees residing in the territories of the Spanish Monarchy, and the families of the European nobility.

The first print, designed and engraved by Jérôme Wierix (1553–1619), does not contain an explicit reference to Aloysius Gonzaga; nevertheless, in our view, it can plausibly be associated with his figure (Alvin 1866; Hollstein 1949, no. 1660; Arcari and Padovani 1997, p. 88, cat. no. 90; Van Ruyven-Zeman and Leesberg 2004, par VII, nos. 1659, 1660, 1661) (Figure 2).¹⁸



Figure 2. Jérôme Wierix, *Young Man Praying before the Arma Christi* (Aloysius Gonzaga before His Beatification?), engraving, inv. no. 1980.45.2260, 10.1 × 6.5 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art.

The image depicts a young man kneeling, with his arms crossed over his chest and a halo, as he contemplates the Instruments of the Passion laid upon the ground. None of the attributes traditionally associated with the canonical representation of the Jesuit appear here, most notably the crucifix and the lily; in the latter case, its later inclusion would assume a meaning linked to innocence and purity, two notions traditionally associated with the feminine sphere.

The phylactery in the upper part of the engraving contains a reflection drawn from the Book of Psalms (37:18): *Quoniam ego in flagella paratus sum* (“For I am ready for the scourges”). The composition thus constitutes a suggestive *mise en scène* that explicitly conveys the young man’s disposition—already identified as Blessed through the presence of the halo—towards suffering and pain. At the lower part of the print, a second quotation from the Gospel of Saint Luke (12:50) completes the meaning of the image: *Baptismo habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor, usquedum perficiatur?* (“I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!”). This meditation alludes to suffering and persecution—that is, the baptism of fire—and to Christ’s sacrifices on the Cross. It is therefore fully coherent with the presence of the Instruments of the Passion depicted in the engraving.

Despite the absence of any explicit reference to the name of the figure represented, two concepts may plausibly be associated with Aloysius Gonzaga: youth and the renunciation of worldly goods and luxuries in favor of spiritual concentration, made visible in the act of contemplating the Instruments of Christ's Passion.

In this respect, a comparison may be drawn: the gesture of divesting oneself of luxurious garments and superfluous objects is also markedly feminine, particularly if one considers the devotional practices of noblewomen and representations of Mary Magdalene, who frequently appears in Early Modern prints engaged in analogous behavior. The notion of abandonment and detachment is clearly articulated in the young man's attire: the Jesuit cassock, worn open to the chest, constitutes a transgressive and even scandalous gesture within the aristocratic context of Aloysius Gonzaga's birth.

In light of these considerations, and given the lack of specific information regarding how and when the image was commissioned, it is plausible to hypothesize that the engraving was commissioned within the circle of women of the Gonzaga family—an assumption that remains to be corroborated through specific archival evidence. Likewise, the posture of the figure and his contemplation of the *Arma Christi* are analogous to certain artistic representations depicting the likeness of Saint Francis of Assisi. The Italian saint is closely connected to the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and of the Jesuits; indeed, the Wierix workshop itself produced an engraving in which the Basque and Italian saints are shown praying before the Immaculate Conception (Van Ruyven-Zeman and Leesberg 2004, part VI, nos. 1227, 1278).

Moreover, this detail may not be coincidental, since the Venerable Friar Francesco Gonzaga, a relative of the young Aloysius, served as Bishop of Mantua and was also a Franciscan who maintained close ties with the family established by Ferrante Gonzaga and Marta Tana (Donesmondi 1616, 1625; Sacco 1624; Askew 1968, pp. 1–10). It is also worth recalling that the bishop consecrated Mantua Cathedral in 1594 and, for its decoration, commissioned the painter Ippolito Andreasi (1548–1608) to produce an altarpiece.¹⁹

The work depicts the newly beatified Aloysius, clad in the Jesuit cassock and crowned by an angel, who rewards him for renouncing the marquisate crown, while the saint holds a lily in his right hand (Bosio 1968, pp. 30–31; Arcari and Padovani 1997, pp. 24–25; Berzaghi 1998, pp. 160–71).²⁰ The scene takes place in his private oratory; the altar frontal adorning the altar table is decorated with the Gonzaga coat of arms, an unequivocal indication of dynastic patronage. The painting should be interpreted as a development of the iconography proposed for the earliest representations of Blessed Aloysius in the prints discussed in this section. Its composition is therefore not accidental, but rather the result of early directives issued by the Bishop of Mantua, Friar Francesco Gonzaga, and perhaps by other members of the lineage as well (Bertelli 2022, Figure 1) (Figure 3).²¹

A second engraving (Figure 4) by Jérôme Wierix depicts Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga alongside Christ the Redeemer (Hollstein 1949, vol. 2, no. 1287; Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1979, no. 575; Alvin 1866, no. 1174; Arcari and Padovani 1997, p. 18, cat. no. 2; Van Ruyven-Zeman and Leesberg 2004, part VI, nos. 1287, 1288).²² The two Jesuits, shown half-length, wear the canonical habit of the Society of Jesus; both appear without a nimbus, which in all cases signifies the status of venerable, blessed, or saint. The figures direct their gaze towards a domestic altar, dominated by a large, bare cross, set within an outdoor landscape. The presence of several classical buildings in the background suggests Rome as the setting of the scene.



Figure 3. Ippolito Andreasi, *Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga*, 1604, oil on canvas, 200 × 155 cm, Mantua Cathedral.



Figure 4. Jérôme Wierix, *Aloysius Gonzaga, Ignatius of Loyola, and Christ the Redeemer*, engraving, 116 × 78 mm, British Museum, London.

Christ is represented with a bare torso, the crown of thorns, and nails in his hands, which he extends towards the viewer with open arms. The intention is to emphasize the reception of the *scintilla divinitatis*. The inclusion of the Christological figure is particularly eloquent in underscoring the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist. In this respect, a chalice-monstance is placed upon the domestic altar, displaying the consecrated Host. This liturgical object is visually and symbolically linked to the copious blood flowing from Christ's hands and side.

The two Jesuits—the first an adult, bearded man (Ignatius), the second a youthful, beardless figure (Aloysius)—act simultaneously as witnesses and co-protagonists of the image. At the lower part of the engraving appears a quotation from the Old Testament as cited by Saint Bernard in one of his sermons: *Per has rimas licet mihi sugere mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo. Bern.* (“Through these fissures I am able to draw honey from the rock, and oil from the hardest stone”). The phrase functions as a metaphor describing God's abundant provision for His people. Through their conduct, charisma,

and virtues, Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga are thus presented as agents who fostered blessings and sustenance even in the most arduous circumstances and places.

A third engraving (Figure 5)²³ confirms the direct involvement of Bibiana von Pernstein, the wife of Francesco Gonzaga and thus the sister-in-law of Blessed Aloysius, in the commission (Hollstein 1949, vol. 2, no. 1481; Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1979, no. 1217; Alvin 1866, no. 1004; Arcari and Padovani 1997, p. 54, cat. no. 48; Van Ruyven-Zeman and Leesberg 2004, part VII, nos. 1481, 1987). The engraver is once again Jérôme Wierix; the novelty lies in the explicit identification of the novice by name—*b. Aloysius Gonzaga*—together with the date 1607.



Figure 5. Jérôme Wierix, *Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga*, engraving, 1607, inv. no. 1859,0709.3168, 109 × 67 mm, commissioned by the Marchioness of Castiglione delle Stiviere, British Museum, London.

The print was therefore commissioned after the declaration of beatification. In this case, the young man is represented alone, standing and shown full-length, dignified in the cassock and cloak with the same magnificence accorded to any portrait of a member of the Gonzaga family. The blurred landscape surrounding the figure is deliberate: the viewer's or devotee's attention is directed entirely towards the sole figure depicted. Above Aloysius Gonzaga's head appears a radiant sun bearing the IHS monogram, held aloft by two angelic figures in flight. The Blessed holds in his hands a crucifix entwined with branches of flowering lilies. Neither the physiognomy nor the attributes are incidental; rather, they correspond to the canonical image of the Blessed that would endure over time across a wide range of artistic media.

The engraving thus proposes a prototypical image of the novice intended for emulation in prints, paintings, reliefs, and the decorative arts. At the lower part of the print appears the dedication by the noblewoman: "*Illust. mae D. nae D. Bibianae de Pernestain, Oratoris Caesarei, apud S. m D. Paullum V. coniugi, a. o 1607.*"

The aristocrat's purpose in commissioning the engraving was highly specific: to underscore the Gonzaga dynasty's support for the dissemination of the Blessed's virtues, while explicitly acknowledging her status as the wife of Francesco Gonzaga, the Blessed's brother, and her proximity to Pope Paul V. The most effective means of disseminating the print was through female networks, which in her case were particularly extensive. Bibiana had been born in Prague, into a family of Czech and Hispanic origins. Moreover, she

had married into the Gonzaga family, an aristocrat born in Spanish Lombardy, a territory governed by the Spanish Monarchy.

Bibiana was the daughter of Vratislav, Grand Chancellor of Bohemia and a prominent member of the Czech noble family of Pernstein, and of his Spanish wife, the aristocrat María Maximiliana Manrique de Lara y Briceño (Růžička and Fritz 1974, pp. 163–69). Francesco Gonzaga met Bibiana in Prague, the city where they were married in 1598. The couple resided between Castiglione delle Stiviere and the so-called *Casino Petersano* in Gozzolina and were the parents of nine children, all educated in Catholicism and in devotion to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. Several of their daughters—namely Luigia, Polisenna, and Maria Luigia—entered religious life at the convent of San Paolo of the Congregation of the Angelic Sisters of Saint Paul in Milan, where their presence contributed to the promotion of devotion to the family’s Blessed.²⁴

Bibiana’s spiritual director was the Jesuit Father Agostino Mascardi, author of both her biography and the funeral oration delivered upon her death (Mascardi 1616). This work repeatedly alludes to Bibiana’s desire to imitate the holiness and virtues of her brother-in-law. In this respect, the aristocrat prayed before an image of the Blessed—whether a print, a painting, or both—and it was this devotion that she sought to disseminate among her female networks. As described by her confessor, Bibiana imagined herself at the threshold of Paradise, welcomed by her brother-in-law and by two of her children, nephews of Aloysius Gonzaga, who had died in infancy.

Father Mascardi composed a comparable biographical account of Francesco Gonzaga upon his death in 1617, in which the Blessed brother appears as a mirror of emulation for the family’s pursuit of holiness (Mascardi 1617; Botturi 1996; Bellini 2002, p. 21).²⁵

A fourth engraving (Figure 6) may likewise be associated with the cult of Blessed Aloysius promoted by the Gonzaga family (Hollstein 1949, vol. 2, no. 1479; Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1979, p. 1219; Alvin 1866, p. 1008; Arcari and Padovani 1997, p. 40, cat. no. 28; Van Ruyven-Zeman and Leesberg 2004, part VII, nos. 1479–1480).²⁶



Figure 6. Jérôme Wierix, *Aloysius Gonzaga as Blessed and Marquis of Castiglione*, engraving, 1607–1615, inv. no. 1859,0709.3167, 10.9 × 7.1 cm, British Museum, London.

The engraving, likewise designed by Jérôme Wierix, depicts the young man dressed as a Jesuit, shown almost full-length, standing before his desk and inclining himself towards

a small sculptural representation of Christ on the Cross, beside which lies his biretta. In this instance, the domestic altar has been replaced by the worktable of a small space—a cell or private room—but the intention remains the same: to emphasize private prayer before an image of the newly beatified saint, in a clear association with the oratories and private palatine chapels that were preferentially used and decorated by women.

The scene is completed by an angel with outstretched wings, suspended in the upper register, as he prepares to place the crown upon the head and halo of the Blessed. This is the crown of the marquisate that Aloysius Gonzaga had renounced in order to enter religious life, and it also appears alongside his noble title in the lower inscription. A didascaly reinforces the message: “*il b. Luigi Gonzaga marchese/di Castigl.e della comp.a di Giesù.*” The emphasis placed on the novice’s noble status in this engraving is not incidental; it was intended to allow the Gonzaga dynasty to publicize its privileged condition, underscoring the fact that Blessed Aloysius had distinguished himself through the renunciation of the marquisate crown, as well as through his virtues and spirituality.

Finally, at the request of Bibiana von Pernstein and her husband Francesco Gonzaga, the German engraver and printer Wolfgang Kilian²⁷ produced another engraving after the beatification (Figure 7), bearing the following inscription: “*Vera effigie di san Luigi Gonzaga comprotettore di Mantova, e si vende in Mantova da Innocente Prati libraio a Santa Agnese*” (Arcari and Padovani 1997, pp. 63–64, cat. no. 61; Rodríguez de la Flor 2012, p. 207).²⁸ Wolfgang Kilian belonged to a dynasty of artists whose production has been the subject of recent scholarly analysis, although the number of prints associated with the promotion of Jesuit sanctity produced by different members of the family remains limited (Tipton 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d, 2025e). Indeed, Lucas Kilian, a relative of Wolfgang, produced at approximately the same time an engraving depicting the apparition of Christ to the Jesuit Jacopo Ledesma, director of studies at the Collegio Romano and a contemporary of Aloysius Gonzaga (Tipton 2024, p. 150).²⁹



Figure 7. Wolfgang Kilian, *Exaltation of Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga*, engraving, commissioned by the Marquesses of Castiglione delle Stiviere, religious sanctuary, Poland.

As for the engraving by Wolfgang Kilian examined here, it is the most complex and suggestive of those analyzed in this article, owing to its dense array of allegorical symbols, political references, and ideological positions. The image presents the triumph of the

Marquesses of Castiglione delle Stiviere through the display of their coats of arms, while simultaneously acknowledging the institutional and religious dimension of the Gonzaga dynasty. To this end, the ideologue behind the engraving chose to exalt, in the foreground, the colossal figure of Blessed Aloysius.

The young man is positioned at the center of the composition within a kind of fortress endowed with high walls that protect, isolate, and emphasize a palatial residence. Within this space, the novice is flanked by two kneeling princely figures, plausibly identifiable as the two sons of the couple—namely Luigi, namesake of the Blessed, and Ferdinando. The head of the Blessed rises above the clouds, which introduces a clear division between the earthly and the celestial realms.

In the heavens, the Virgin appears crowned, vigilant, and militant; she holds a burning mirror and sets ablaze the flames of Neptune amid a turbulent sea filled with ships. Saint Michael beheads Heresy, personified in the form of a hydra, while several angels charge against allegorical figures of vice. Imperial eagles in the sky drive away the swans and lions of Bohemia, while on earth, armies flee in terror. The severed heads of Holofernes and Sisera are presented as trophies. The engraving thus narrates an apocalyptic apotheosis: the defeat of the heretics and the victory of Catholic forces over the Protestant enemy, unfolding outside the walls of the fortress in which the Blessed and his family are sheltered.

At the same time, the print underscores the propagandistic capacity of the Gonzaga dynasty, which sought to highlight its greatest asset at the threshold of Heaven: the presence of a Blessed member of the family endowed with the power of intercession on their behalf. This circumstance placed the Gonzaga in a position of superiority vis-à-vis other noble lineages of comparable social standing and positioned them at the forefront of the nobility within the Church.

Other elements included in the engraving—such as the depiction of the scene of the *Annunciation* upon the walls granting access to the fortress, and the architectural structure that shelters the novice and his nephews—reveal a clear intention to reflect a devotion that had become widespread within the family. The European nobility, as well as religious orders, possessed copies of the medieval Florentine fresco in the chapels of their residences and were well aware of the devotional impact it elicited. Moreover, the episode of Blessed Aloysius's spiritual identification with this image during his childhood in Florence had been recorded in the biographical account written by Father Cepari.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the placement of the colossal figure at the center of the engraving may be interpreted as anticipating a wish expressed by Prince Francesco, the younger brother of the Blessed: the construction of a large, full-length sculpture of Aloysius Gonzaga in one of the squares of Castiglione delle Stiviere—the same town in which he had financed a college dedicated to the formation and dissemination of the message of the Society of Jesus (de Paoli 2013).

5. Liturgical Objects and Furnishings Related to the Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga

The presence of certain objects and attributes in the prints discussed above cannot be explained as arbitrary; rather, it is closely related to the liturgical and other furnishings preserved by the Gonzaga family in their residences. The association of these items with Blessed Aloysius formed part of the family tradition, as his relatives zealously safeguarded everything that had belonged to the spiritual experiences and daily life of their beloved kinsman. The majority of these objects were preserved thanks to the efforts of Marta Tana, the novice's nieces, and other women of the family; they themselves, and their descendants, donated a significant portion of these possessions to the *Collegio delle Vergini* in Castiglione delle Stiviere.

Part of this legacy later constituted the first nucleus of artistic objects of the *Museo Aloisiano*, established within the premises of the institution and thus within the same town.³⁰ At the same time, both the women and the male members of the dynasty undertook, in the early seventeenth century, the donation of relics to various territories. Among several comparable cases, the Marquis Francesco Gonzaga donated a relic of Blessed Aloysius to the church of Sazzo (Valtellina) in 1609 (Zwyssig 2024).³¹

The spirituality and devotions of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga may be explained, in part, through the preservation of a crucifix that accompanied him during his earthly life. This object, of Lombard manufacture, is made of silver, walnut wood, and metal and measures 40 cm in height. The metal terminals of the cross are trilobate; the lower section is attached to a hollow cone designed to be fitted onto a support, a clear indication of its possible use in processions. The figure of Christ is cast in bronze and engraved with a burin. Finally, the Crucified figure was mounted on a walnut-wood cross with silver fittings at the extremities (Bosio 1968, pp. 192–93).

In the same location as the former domains of the Marquisate of Castiglione, a silver chalice with relief decoration (22 cm in height) of Lombard manufacture is preserved, although it bears no maker's marks (Figure 8). It has a polylobate base divided into several compartments, which contain images of the Virgin, Charles Borromeo, and Aloysius Gonzaga; the latter holds in his hands a crucifix entwined with branches of lilies, as observed in one of the prints discussed above. This iconography endured over time and became a distinctive feature associated with the Blessed in other artistic media.



Figure 8. Silver chalice, 22 cm in height, Museo Aloisiano, Castiglione delle Stiviere.

The knop of the chalice is densely decorated with arabesques and cherub heads. The lower part of the cup is likewise articulated into compartments and ornamented with angel heads and phytomorphic motifs. The object is documented as a gift from Giulio Piantanida, a Milanese and a fellow student of the Jesuit at the College of the Society of Jesus in the Lombard capital (Bosio 1968, p. 199).³² Upon Aloysius's death in 1591, the chalice passed to Marta Tana and subsequently to her descendants. Following the beatification of the novice in 1605, the object was modified to incorporate the figures of the two Blessed—namely Charles Borromeo and Aloysius Gonzaga—thereby granting full prominence to both.

The Museo Aloisiano also preserves a small tabletop crucifix, likewise associated with private prayer in the oratory, measuring 15.5 × 9.5 cm. The work is carved in dark wood,

as is the base on which it stands. The figure of Christ is likewise carved in wood, with the loincloth painted white; drops of carmine-colored blood issue from the wound in his side. This object, characterized by a powerful realism and skillful modeling, has traditionally been associated with the liturgical furnishings owned by Francesco Gonzaga, the Jesuit's brother, and was also donated to the institution in Castiglione delle Stiviere by the female descendants of the marquises.

6. Promoting the Canonization of Blessed Aloysius: Francesco Gonzaga and Bibiana von Pernstein, Princes of Castiglione

Francesco Gonzaga and his wife Bibiana von Pernstein personally assumed responsibility for promoting the cult of the Blessed through a range of initiatives, including the commissioning of prints, paintings, and possibly also large-scale sculptures, as discussed above. Together with the Society of Jesus, they oversaw the dissemination of Cepari's biography, holding the privilege of its reprinting; they likewise acted as guardians and custodians of a substantial portion of the liturgical objects directly associated with their kinsman. The couple's periods of residence in Mantua, Castiglione delle Stiviere, Castel Goffredo, and other nearby fiefs, as well as in Prague, Rome, and Madrid, among other cities, must have served as key occasions for publicizing the novice's virtues and charism (Figure 9a,b).



Figure 9. (a) Anonymous, *Portrait of Bibiana von Pernstein*, oil on canvas, after 1616, 129.2 × 106.1 cm, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua. (b) Anonymous, *Portrait of Francesco Gonzaga*, oil on canvas, after 1616, 129.2 × 105.3 cm, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua.

Francesco Gonzaga possessed extensive contacts within his own dynasty and was related to several Italian families. Bibiana, for her part, was connected by kinship to nobles in Bohemia as well as to Spanish³³ and Italian aristocrats.³⁴ Francesco, who enjoyed the particular protection of Rudolf II and Philip III, was appointed Imperial ambassador in Rome in 1604 with the aim of advancing the interests of the Spanish Crown. These services earned him recognition as Prince of Castiglione delle Stiviere from Emperor Matthias in 1610. In 1611, Philip III appointed him Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and in order to receive this distinction the couple travelled to the Iberian Peninsula.

At the Spanish court, Francesco renewed ties with families he had known since childhood, while at the same time consolidating new relationships together with his wife. It is certain that both made use of these clientelar networks to promote devotion to Blessed

Aloysius. Their proximity to the royal family must have been decisive, given that both Antonio de León Pinelo and Diego de Guzmán place Bibiana at the deathbed of Queen Margaret, who died in October 1611, even though she was never formally a lady in waiting of the court (Deelen Porta 2024).

The Gonzaga–von Pernstein couple also relied on a valuable network of figures outside the monarchy and the nobility in order to achieve their aims. Among those cited by historiography are Archbishop Prospero Peranda and his son Giovanni Antonio; the notary Paolo Quadrio (Zwyssig 2024); and, above all, Camillo Cattaneo (1573–1644), Abbot of Castiglione delle Stiviere. News concerning the delays in the canonization of Blessed Aloysius, which greatly troubled the family, was communicated by letter. The costs of travel and residence in Rome for some of these intermediaries, such as Abbot Cattaneo, were borne by the aristocratic couple. It was therefore necessary to report promptly on all developments in the capital, as Cattaneo himself expressed in a letter addressed to Bibiana:

“[...] I rejoice exceedingly with Your Excellency that yesterday, in the public *Rota*, the matter of hope and charity of Blessed Luigi was dispatched, and this certainly through the great labours and diligence of Father Virgilio, which truly fills me with astonishment. I beg Your Excellency to grant me this favour, namely to thank the said Father with a few lines of your own hand, for beyond the infinite satisfaction it will give him, it will also serve as further encouragement. Now attention will turn to proving that he never committed a mortal sin, to his contemplations and mortifications, and then to the miracles; in all of this may the Lord God be praised, and the said glorious Blessed [...]” (Botturi 2019, p. 181)

This letter reveals the familiarity of the couple with Father Virgilio Cepari, who was repeatedly to be thanked for the interest he was showing in the canonization process and for his significant contribution through the writing of the Blessed Aloysius’s biography. Camillo Cattaneo also kept the Princess of Castiglione delle Stiviere regularly informed of the meetings he held in Rome, as he reports in another letter:

“[...] It is advisable to keep the matter of Blessed Luigi secret, because here the Fathers of the Society raise great opposition; but I say this to Your Excellency in the strictest confidence, for they would wish to put forward not only Blessed Xavier but also Blessed Stanislaus [...]” (Botturi 2019, pp. 89–90).³⁵

The reading of this correspondence, together with historical events known from other sources, confirms that despite the dynasty’s efforts, the process had reached an impasse. The epistolary evidence indicates that the Society of Jesus preferred to concentrate its energies on the canonization of Blessed Francis Xavier—achieved in 1622—and on that of Stanislaus Kostka. The latter, however, together with Aloysius Gonzaga, would not be canonized until almost a century later, in 1726. By 1614, Francesco Gonzaga had become convinced that the canonization was being postponed *sine die*. For this reason, he requested that Abbot Cattaneo return to the fief of Castiglione delle Stiviere: his duties had come to an end, and with them ceased the payments for his stay in Rome (Botturi 2019, p. 90).³⁶

7. Conclusions

The deaths of Francesco and Bibiana at a young age in 1616, in light of the circumstances outlined above, brought to a halt the propaganda campaign they had initiated to disseminate the charism, spirituality, and virtues of their brother and brother-in-law, respectively. Their premature disappearance prevented them from personally—or through intermediaries—pulling the necessary strings to fulfil the aspiration they shared with other members of the family: to see Aloysius Gonzaga canonized. The couple was fully aware that achieving this goal, as other members of the Borromeo, Borgia, Pazzi, and Corsini

dynasties had sought to do in the Early Modern period with venerable and beatified relatives, meant acquiring a form of symbolic capital that could be interpreted as religious legitimation for the assertion of power, titles, and benefits.

Unpublished correspondence preserved in Italian archives concerning the individuals who accompanied the Princes of Castiglione during this process should yield further insights into the factors that slowed the canonization of the novice. At the same time, it is necessary to investigate the synchronous stance adopted by the Society of Jesus and members of the Gonzaga family in commissioning prints intended to foster devotion to Blessed Aloysius during the first decade of the seventeenth century. As discussed above, they relied on the dynasty of engravers and printers known as the Wierix, yet archival research remains to be undertaken in order to determine how negotiations for these commissions were initiated and how both parties worked to satisfy the expectations of the Society of Jesus and the family.

Finally, further research is still needed into the ways in which the descendants of the second generation of the family—that is, the nieces and nephews of Aloysius Gonzaga—proceeded in disseminating the figure of their uncle within both religious and secular contexts, not only on the Italian peninsula but also in other territories of the Spanish Monarchy during the Early Modern period.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (Spain)
ASM	Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Italy
ASMn	Archivio Storico Comune di Mantova, Italy

Notes

- ¹ “[...] Upon hearing of the death of this young man [Luigi Gonzaga], Eleonora [Gonzaga] spoke at length in his praise, repeatedly affirming that he was a holy young man and that he had died a saint [...]”.
- ² “[...] Compare, I beg you, the innocence of Luigi [Gonzaga] with the integrity of Bibiana [von Pernestein], those tears with this weeping, those cords with these disciplines and hairshirts, those little spurs with these small iron chains; you will surely say that Luigi outstripped her in age, while Bibiana followed him through diligence [...]”.
- ³ Marta Tana was born in Chieri (Piedmont), the daughter of Baron Baldassarre Tana and Anna della Rovere, the latter a cousin of Cardinal Girolamo della Rovere, Archbishop of Turin.
- ⁴ Rodolfo was murdered in the church of San Erasmo in Castel Goffredo, one of the family’s fiefs. In 1588, he had secretly married Elena Aliprandi, an unequal union that was later ratified by his brother Luigi, *Il Santo*, acting as head of the family following the death of Ferrante Gonzaga. From this marriage were born Cinzia, Olimpia, and Gridonia, all of whom, by virtue of their sex, were excluded from succession to the marquisate; nevertheless, they became the founders of the *Collegio delle Vergini di Gesù* in Castiglione delle Stiviere, an institution intended to preserve and promote the spirituality of their uncle, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga.
- ⁵ In 1593, following the death of his brother Rodolfo without male issue, Francesco inherited the title of Marquis of Castiglione delle Stiviere, which was elevated to a principality in 1610 at the behest of Philip III. In 1598 he married Bibiana von Pernstein. Both the couple and their descendants lived in close proximity to, and were deeply shaped by, the spirituality of Blessed Aloysius.

- 6 Cristierno Gonzaga married Marcella Malaspina in 1605; from this union were born three children, among them Carlo, Prince of Castiglione delle Stiviere and Marquis of Solferino; Carlo Antonio, a Capuchin friar; and a Jesuit who bore the same name as his uncle, Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga.
- 7 Referred to in contemporary sources as the “*Chiesa di San Giovannino*”.
- 8 From the last quarter of the sixteenth century onwards, the Dukes of Tuscany commissioned copies of the fresco from local painters and sent them to kings, aristocrats—both men and women—and religious orders, among them Philip II. Ownership of such a replica signified membership in a restricted circle of individuals loyal to the Medici dynasty and to the family’s interests, while at the same time sharing in a devotion cultivated by an elite.
- 9 A chapel was installed in the same room and, subsequently, four additional chapels were also constructed on each side of the novitiate church in honour of the Jesuit saint. A study by Father Fidel Fita and Jerónimo de la Quintana, based on a codex of the Society of Jesus recounting the foundation of the novitiate, brought to light the Gonzaga family’s residence in Madrid between 1581 and 1583 in the house of Doctor Cristóbal de Espinosa, the owner of the novitiate building. See also AHN, Clero, Jesuitas, leg. 11, no. 2, fol. 30: letter from Francisco Robledillo to Mutio Vitelleschi, Superior General of the Society, written in Madrid on 8 September 1634 (de Quintana 1629, p. 431).
- 10 The issue of inheritance was even more complex, for Aloysius Gonzaga was also required to renounce his rights of succession to his paternal uncles: Alfonso, lord of Castel Giuffré, and Orazio, lord of Solferino.
- 11 Giovanni Pescatore, who died in 1588, achieved considerable renown as a writer on the life and death of the legendary Ruggiero, a pagan knight, and on his love for Bradamante, a Christian warrior, whose story was popularized by Ludovico Ariosto in the chivalric epic poem *Orlando Furioso* in the early sixteenth century, a work that attained universal circulation.
- 12 Aloysius Gonzaga met Father Vázquez in Alcalá de Henares during his stay at the court of Philip II.
- 13 The novice also took responsibility, in his capacity as head of the family, for approving the unequal marriage of his brother Rodolfo, the new holder of the fief, to Elena Aliprandi.
- 14 Specific studies of these spaces are still lacking. Created after Aloysius Gonzaga’s death, they were conceived and designed with an explicitly emulative purpose for the young students of the Society of Jesus.
- 15 Between 1612 and 1618, the Congregation of Rites examined fifteen miracles.
- 16 The biography incorporated the notes taken by Father Girolamo Piatti, a friend of the deceased.
- 17 The portrait, an oil on paper, measures 13.5 × 10.5 cm.
- 18 For the purposes of this article, the print preserved at the National Gallery of Art, Washington (inv. no. 1980.45.2260; 10.1 × 6.5 cm) has been examined. Other variants of the engraving exist, as noted by Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg in their 2004 publication. Both authors reject the possibility of identifying the figure depicted here with Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga, as previously proposed by Alvin in 1866, owing to the absence of physiognomic resemblance to the young man in other portraits produced by the Wierix workshop. In our view, however, the aim was to present an idealized image of Blessed Gonzaga; the design of the print likely coincided with the phase of consolidation of his visual likeness between 1605 and 1607.
- 19 Recent scholarship has indicated that Bishop Francesco Gonzaga commissioned the altar with a painting of the Blessed, a fact to which Carlo Magni alluded in a letter to his brother Giovanni, ambassador of the Duke of Mantua in Rome. See the following note.
- 20 Oil painting on canvas, 200 × 155 cm, now located in the second chapel on the right of Mantua Cathedral.
- 21 The devotional practices of the family may be interpreted in light of a painting depicting a family portrait during a celebration officiated by Francesco Gonzaga (oil on canvas, 110 × 159 cm), now preserved in a private collection.
- 22 For the purposes of this article, the print preserved in the British Museum (inv. no. 1859,0709.3168; 116 × 78 mm) has been examined. The British Museum also holds a version lacking the lower inscription; see inv. no. 1857,0411.9. A further variant of the engraving has been identified, as noted by Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg. In addition, the Wierix workshop published a closely related version in which the two Jesuits are replaced by angels. These conclusions have been highlighted by Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg in Part IV of the volume devoted to *The Wierix Family* (Rotterdam, 2003), see cat. no. 735.
- 23 For the purposes of this article, the print preserved in the British Museum (inv. no. 1859,0709.3168; 13.6 × 8.0 cm) has been examined. A copy was produced by Justus Sadeler, as noted by Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg.
- 24 The nuns of the religious order founded by Luisa Torelli, Countess of Guastalla, were particularly receptive to the charism of Blessed Aloysius and, until the Napoleonic suppression of the convent in 1808, consistently had spiritual directors from the Society of Jesus. A fourth daughter of Francesco and Bibiana, Giovanna, lived for a time at the *Collegio delle Vergini di Gesù* founded by her cousins in Castiglione delle Stiviere, before marrying the Bohemian nobleman Jiří Adamz Martinic and, in a second marriage, Diego Zapata de Mendoza y Sidonia. Their male descendants, Luigi and Ferdinando, inherited the family fiefs.
- 25 This biographical profile, together with that of his wife Bibiana, was republished in the volume *Orazioni*, issued by Mascardi in 1622, and in the work *Prose volgari* of 1625 (Mascardi 1624, 1625). These panegyrics and their subsequent reprints contributed, indirectly, to the dissemination of the virtues and spirituality of Blessed Aloysius.

- 26 For the purposes of this article, the print preserved in the British Museum (inv. no. 1859,0709.3167; 10.9 × 7.1 cm) has been examined. Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg have highlighted the existence of two versions of this engraving.
- 27 A study of Wolfgang Kilian's activity as an engraver and printer in Mantua is still lacking.
- 28 We are grateful to Professor Oskar Jacek Rojewski for his assistance in locating one of the versions of the engraving at the *Muzeum im. ks. Józefa Jarzębowskiego MIC w Licheniu Starym* (inv. ML/G/XVII/176). Likewise, a family from Castiglione delle Stiviere owns another version, which we were unable to examine for the purposes of this study.
- 29 As indicated by the lower inscription, this work was commissioned by Maria Fugger, Baroness of Kirchheim and Weißenhorn, née Countess of Schwarzenberg, in 1611. She was an aristocrat of the same social standing as Bibiana and likewise a benefactress of the Society of Jesus.
- 30 The museum does not have a printed or online catalogue raisonné. As a reference, this study has relied on the brief descriptions of each object provided in the online records of the *Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali*. Available online: <https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/adv-search> (accessed on 10 November 2025).
- 31 ASM, b. 164, fols. 203r–206v: Instrumento di consegna della Sacra Reliquia del Beato Luigi Gonzaga mandata in Valtellina per disposizione del Sig. Francesco Gonzaga, Marchese di Castiglione, 31 October 1609.
- 32 The foot of the chalice bears the inscription: "Iulius Plantanida, Archipresbiter Sancti Laurentii Maioris Mediolani, B. Aloysii Gonz(agae) condiscipulus donavit".
- 33 Her mother, María Manrique de Lara, served as chief lady-in-waiting to Empress Maria in Vienna, but did not accompany her when she chose to travel to Madrid together with the parents of Aloysius Gonzaga—and Bibiana's future in-laws—Ferrante Gonzaga and Marta Tana.
- 34 Her sister Juana married Fernando de Gurrea y Aragón, sixth Duke of Villahermosa; Isabel married Albrecht I von Fürstenberg; Juan married his cousin Ana María Manrique de Lara; Francisca married Andrea Matteo IV Acquaviva d'Aragona; and Polisena married Zdeněk Adalbert von Lobkowicz, Chancellor of the Kingdom of Bohemia.
- 35 ASMn, AGCS, b. 225: Camillo Cattaneo to Bibiana von Pernstein, Rome, 4 November 1614.
- 36 ASMn, AGCS, b. 257, cop. 1614, fol. 61v: Francesco Gonzaga to Camillo Cattaneo, Castiglione, 11 December 1614: "[...] Since he sees that the matter of Blessed Luigi is destined to be protracted."

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Article

Prayer, Mission, and Divine Filiation in Saint Anthony Mary Claret (1807–1870): An Analysis Based on the Reception of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius and Nineteenth-Century Spirituality

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Abstract

In the Spanish 19th century, Saint Anthony Mary Claret found in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius a suitable mediation to reinforce his missionary and evangelizing work. In his vital journey as a man, disciple, and apostle, he experienced deeply and fruitfully that the Spiritual Exercises are a methodology that enables the conversion of sinners while reinforcing the perseverance of those who live their Christian journey with conviction. Furthermore, they promote spiritual renewal in all states of Christian life, resulting in an increase in active and committed evangelizers. In this way, his “filial and apostolic prayer” reflects and condenses—with four affective and active verbs—his personal experience of the Exercises, which he offered to others at all stages of his apostolic life in order to transform their lives and renew the Church of his time.

Keywords: Claret; spiritual exercises; apostolic prayer; mission; 19th-century

1. Introduction

“O my God and my Father, may I know you and make you known; love you and make you loved; serve you and make you served; praise you and make all creatures praise you. Grant, my Father, that all sinners be converted, all the just persevere in grace, and all of us attain to eternal glory. Amen” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 289).

In this article, we will examine one of the key prayerful elements of Saint Anthony Mary Claret’s spirituality, known as filial and apostolic prayer. First, we briefly present the life of the saint and the context of the age in which he lived, together with the most remarkable characteristics of his missionary vocation, highlighting the place that the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius occupied in his spiritual life and his apostolic activity. Secondly, based on the filial and apostolic prayer, we suggest the points of contact that this prayer has with the spiritual tradition of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, of which Claret was a regular exercitant and exerciser.

The four verbs in Claret’s prayer formulation conceal and reveal, suggest and accomplish, synthesize and condense, emphasizing the process that the pray-er (the person doing the exercises) must accomplish during the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. At the end of this journey we understand that, in 19th-century Spain, the Spiritual Exercises were an effective way to rekindle the inner fire in many Christians and allow those seeking God not only to find Him, but also to become involved in apostolic work, because in an apostolic mysticism there can be no love of God without a real commitment to one’s neighbor.

2. Claretian Reception and Internalization of the Spiritual Exercises

2.1. Claret: Man, Disciple, Apostle

Saint Anthony Mary Claret was born in Sallent (Catalonia, Spain) on 23 December 1807, into a Christian family of textile workers, formed by Juan Claret and Josefa Clará and their eleven children, of whom Anthony was the fifth (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. xlix and 179–82). He was baptized two days after his birth. Among his childhood memories, he narrates in his autobiography that at the age of five,

“instead of sleeping (...) I used to think about eternity. I would think *forever, forever, forever*. I would try to imagine enormous distances and pile still more distances on these and realize that they would never come to an end. Then I would shudder and ask myself if those who were so unhappy as to go to an eternity of pain would ever see an end to their suffering. Would they have to go on suffering? *Yes, forever and forever they will have to bear their pain!*” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 183–84)¹

this memory was the seed of his calling to work tirelessly for the salvation of others. He learned to read and write and was prepared to complete his Christian initiation with the sacraments of confirmation at the age of six and first communion at the age of ten. From these years, he would also remember with immense affection the frequent visits he made with his sister Rosa to the hermitage of the Virgin of Fusimaña, expressing from childhood his deep devotion to Mary, the mother of God (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. l–li, 189–92 and 199–201).

During Claret’s childhood, the political, social and religious situation was complex: in 1807, the year of his birth, Napoleon ordered the military occupation of Spain, which later ended in the so-called War of Independence, which came to an end with the period of absolutist Restoration in 1814 (the return of Ferdinand VII, who reigned in Spain until his death in 1833). From this period, Claret would remind and recount that his family and the entire population had to flee in the middle of the night upon hearing the news that the French army was approaching the town (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. xlix–lii and 187–89; Also cf. Lozano 1985, pp. 16–18).

In 1825, Claret moved to Barcelona to improve his skills in the art of textile manufacturing and design. There he studied drawing, grammar and French at La Lonja school, and developed his creative qualities, confirming that in addition to his natural talent, he had a great passion for art and textile design. His time in the big city offered him a new world of opportunities and projects, but soon, the Word of God, firstly, posed a great question to him from the Gospel of Saint Matthew with the *quid prodest*² wakes him up as from a dream; and, on the other hand, various experiences (he was providentially saved from drowning at sea, he was seduced by the wife of a friend he went to visit, and he was swindled by a friend) challenges him and invites him to search deeply for the meaning of his life beside a radical search for God and His will (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. liii and 210–16; Also cf. Lozano 1985, pp. 33–34 and 130).

In 1829, at the age of 21, Claret was admitted to the seminary in Vic, thus beginning his training to become a priest as an external seminarian. At this time, he began a period of intense spiritual asceticism with fervent prayer, devotions and penitences, and assiduous contact with the Word of God (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. liii–liv, 216–25 and 235–38; Also cf. Lozano 1983, pp. 147–57). During this period, it registers an important milestone in his spiritual journey: every year, he practices the Spiritual Exercises for eight days.³

On 13 June 1835, he was ordained as a priest in Solsona, having previously completed forty days of spiritual exercises,⁴ and celebrates his first Mass in his hometown on 21 June. He took on the role of parish vicar and then bursar of Santa María de Sallent, and continued

his studies until completing his academic training at the seminary while intensely occupied with the obligations of his ministry: celebrating the Eucharist daily, hearing confessions, preaching, teaching catechism, visiting the sick in the town, and striving to serve everyone equally. Every year he did ten days of spiritual exercises and deepened the spiritual life plan he had outlined in the seminary (frequent confession, fasting twice a week, discipline and cilice, mental prayer and praying the rosary every day) (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 230–33).

Within the narrow confines of the parish, and despite feeling loved and valued by the people, Claret feels a more universal calling, which is connected to his deepest vocation: to be happy (to become holy) by doing God's will in his life, working tirelessly to help souls achieve salvation. But how will he do this? Being a missionary! (cf. Lozano 1985, pp. 59–60).⁵ He decided to travel to Rome and offer his services to *Propaganda Fide* to be sent as a missionary anywhere in the world. To do this, he travelled from Sallent to Marseille on foot, then boarded a ship to Civitavecchia, and finally walked the rest of the way to Rome, where he arrived on 6 October 1839 (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 238–48).

On arrival in Rome, the cardinal prefect to whom he was to speak was away from the city for the entire month, so he had to wait. In the meantime, he uses the time to do the Exercises. For this purpose, he goes to a priest from the professed house of the Society of Jesus, who gives him the book of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius and gives him the necessary advice to begin them. On the appointed days, Claret gives him an account of his spirit. After completing these Exercises, Claret is invited by his director of Exercises to join the Society of Jesus, because, as a member, he could fulfil his desire to be sent on missions. After writing his application for admission and meeting with the Father General and then with the Father Provincial, he was admitted to the Jesuit novitiate, where his spiritual life reached new experiences that helped him to deepen the spiritual path he had been following (practice of virtues, mortifications, silence, humble and self-sacrificing works) (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 249–54). But, a severe pain in his right leg—which impeded his walking and whose lack of improvement caused fear that he might become crippled—occurred during the month of Exercises, leading his novice master and the Father General of the Society of Jesus to discern that God's will for Claret was another and that he should return to his homeland. So, he did (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 261–64).

Upon arriving in Catalonia, he was sent to the parish of Viladrau, where he regained his health and dedicated himself to apostolic work. It was here that he began to gain a reputation as a missionary, as it was from here that he began his missionary travels preaching missions and novenas—for the parishes of the diocese; he then extended this ministry to the towns of Catalonia. From Vic, and sent by his prelate—which helped him to exercise his availability in obedience—he preached intensely in different parishes of the diocese and neighboring dioceses between 1841 and 1849, with the obligatory interruption in 1842 due to complicated political circumstances. In July 1841, he had received the title of apostolic missionary from the Roman congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, which endorsed his vocation and itinerant mission (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lvi–lvii, 266, 272–76 and 395; cf. likewise Sánchez Miranda 2019, pp. 83–87 and 88–89; and cf. moreover Sidera i Plana and Blanco Pacheco 2023).

The evangelizing method adopted by Claret in his missionary work was that of popular missions⁶—adapted according to the possibilities of the context—which included the preaching of doctrinal and moral sermons, administering the sacrament of reconciliation. When the political context allowed it, he added other apostolic strategies, such as the production and distribution of devotional pamphlets and books—ascetic and catechetical—the formation and association of lay people, and the promotion of a more apostolic clergy through the preaching of Spiritual Exercises and conferences (cf. Sánchez Miranda 2019,

pp. 406–9). Claret's apostolic success in Catalonia led him to replicate his evangelizing method for just over a year in the Canary Islands (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lviii and 399–405; also cf. Lozano 1985, pp. 151–74).

After returning to Catalonia, Claret decided to concretize an apostolic project that he had been dreaming about and discerning some time ago; a project that would prolong his missionary spirit and ardor, and in which he could condense and deliver everything he had learned and practiced over the last ten years. Thus, on 16 July 1849, in a cell at the seminary in Vic, he founded, together with five companions, the Congregation of Missionaries Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 405–10), that “great Work” (cf. Clotet 2000, p. 252) through which he would be able to do with others what he could not do alone (cf. Gil 1970, p. 305). Twenty-six days after founding the congregation of missionaries, he received the appointment as archbishop of the diocese of Santiago de Cuba, which shocked him because it disrupted all his plans and forced him to give up the projects he had conceived. After discerning it in prayer, he decided to accept the appointment, and while awaiting the day of his episcopal consecration, he accompanied and trained his missionaries, made Spiritual Exercises, wrote a plan of life for his government, and recruited a group of collaborators for his diocese (cf. Gil 1970, p. 363; and cf. also Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 409–15).

His pastoral work in the Church of Santiago de Cuba was overwhelming. In the six years and two months he remained there, he made the pastoral visit four times (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lviii and 444).⁷ Each Sunday and on holidays, he preached wherever he happened to be (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 425–26), and he preached—like his collaborators—popular missions in parishes, as well as Spiritual Exercises for the clergy. He renewed and updated regulations for the functioning of the diocesan curia and the improvement of pastoral work (cf. Lozano 1985, pp. 290–94), and he reorganized the conciliar seminary and became involved in social action with the goal of alleviating poverty and denouncing slavery, among other initiatives (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lix and 426–31; cf. also Cabestrero 2013, pp. 83–85). In Cuba, Claret preached and practiced the Spiritual Exercises together with his missionary community. The schemes of the Exercises that he made and gave during his six years on the island have been preserved (cf. Fernández 1941, pp. 379–81). His work was not always well appreciated or received by the enemies of the Gospel, so after several threats, on 1 February 1856, in Holguín, he suffered a failed attempt on his life, which seriously injured his left cheek and right arm (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lix, 453–56 and 461–62).

On 18 March 1857, he was summoned to Madrid by Royal Order, where, upon his arrival in May of that same year, he was appointed Confessor to Queen Isabella II (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. lx and 462–64). In order to accept the position, he stipulated that he would not live in the palace, would only participate in essential ceremonial duties, and would make this appointment a true spiritual and pastoral ministry. Thus, he chose not to involve himself in politics and to be available to carry out his responsibilities: hearing the Queen's confession, celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments, instructing the Infanta in the faith and religion, giving spiritual exercises to Her Majesty and other members of the court, attending the audiences required by his role, and visiting the sick and prisoners. He dedicates his free time to writing and preaching sermons and Spiritual Exercises to priests, nuns and the people, thus finding his missionary calling amid his responsibilities. He does the same on the trips he must accompany the royal family on (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 474–89).⁸ Because of his role, he was harshly criticised and slandered, mocked and despised by various individuals and groups in the political world. This stage of his life, characterized by great personal and spiritual maturity, was marked by graces received that confirmed his mission and strengthened his experience of a mysticism

of apostolic and missionary action, which configured him to Christ (preservation of the sacramental species, love of enemies) (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 504–11; and cf. also Lozano 1983, pp. 367–402 and 403–13).

In 1868, following the September Revolution, which led to the fall of Isabella II, Claret went into banishment in France with the royal family, first to Pau and then to Paris, where they lived in exile (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. lxii). On 30 March 1869, he left the court and went to Rome to have an interview with Pope Pius IX. In the Eternal City, he dedicates himself to prayer, study, writing and preaching. He participates in the opening and sessions of the First Vatican Council (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. lxiii). In July 1870, he took refuge with his missionaries in Prades and later in the Cistercian monastery of Fontfroide, where he arrived ill and persecuted by his enemies. There he died a holy death on 24 October 1870. He was buried in the monks' cemetery and his tombstone was inscribed with these words of Pope Saint Gregory VII, inspired by Psalm 45 (44):8: I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore, I die in exile (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. lxiii). He was beatified by Pope Pius XI on 25 February 1934 and canonised by Pope Pius XII on 7 May 1950 (cf. Lozano 1985, p. 573).

Up to this point, we have presented the story of a man, a disciple and an apostle, who sought and found God and discovered his vocation and mission in the world and in the Church, and lived it with faithfulness until the end, despite the difficulties, embracing the missionary path as a manner of proclaiming that the God of love wants all his children to be saved.

2.2. Claret: *Exercitant and Exerciser*

We are certain that from the years when Claret lived and was formed in the seminary of Vic, he had contact with the Exercises—practicing them at least once a year—so we can affirm the saint's familiarity in his spiritual practice with this mediation established in Ignatian spirituality and in the Church, which helped him to grow in his vocation and configuration with Jesus the missionary, the one sent by the Father, whom Claret desires to follow and imitate.

This is attested to by the resolutions he writes each year at the end of the Exercises, as a kind of life plan and guide for reviewing his actions—asceticism—in light of the grace of God he experiences in the Exercises—mysticism—which he wishes to preserve and strengthen throughout for the rest of the year.⁹ These resolutions are “a human plan of action or better yet, human-divine, and because of this, the inspiration of God is reflected in them through the aim and intention of man” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 738). If we review Claret's resolutions that arose in the context of the Exercises, we will grasp the evolution of some key elements of his missionary spirituality, while also contemplating his role as an exercitant:

We can affirm that the first resolutions that have been preserved are those from 1843, and they serve as guiding principles for the whole of his period as an itinerant missionary travelling the roads of Catalonia and the Canary Islands (1843–1849). They reflect how his ascetic efforts were entirely focused on responding to the action of God's grace (balance between personal piety and apostolate). His fundamental spiritual attitude is oriented towards the desire to imitate Christ, poor, humiliated and despised (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 736 and 750–53).

Subsequently, the resolutions of the Exercises practiced during 1850 served as a guide for his entire period as missionary archbishop in Santiago de Cuba (1850–1856) and reflected, together with the novelty of his episcopal ministry, certain continuities (the particular examination continued to be on humility, to which he added meekness in the face of persecution). A new attitude towards Christ emerges, who is no longer only to be followed, but is also a source of action and strength for Claret, expressed in the motto on his

archiepiscopal coat of arms: “*Charitas Christi urget nos*”¹⁰ (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 767–68). In subsequent years—within this period—his interior work will appear, showing his dependence on God in the face of the difficulties and contradictions he experiences, in configuration with the suffering Christ, and which he will repeat for some years, until he arrives at the formulation of indifference in everything, giving thanks and praying for those who slander him, carrying the practice of humility, patience and meekness to the extreme (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 773–74, 776–79 and 781–82).

Finally, the resolutions of his time as royal confessor (1857–1867) and those of the last years of his life in exile and as a conciliar father (1868–1870) point to a new direction in terms of spiritual depth. During these years, in addition to his particular examination of meekness, he also examined the love of God. Aspirations and acts of love abound—quoting Saint Teresa—and, in the last year of his life, he expressed his desire to go to heaven to be united with God (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 736–37 and 854–56).

Based on his personal experience of the Exercises, Claret is convinced that he must share this mystical and mystagogical path with other people, so in July and August 1843, Claret led—with certainty—the first series of Exercises, thus beginning a ministry that he would develop, dedicating time and effort to leading various groups of people until the end of his life (cf. Gil 1970, pp. 112–16),¹¹ helping them to improve the religious life of the People of God, enkindling everyone with the fire of divine love, thus seeking the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, the greater glory of God, and the salvation of souls (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 255–56, 259, 276, 304, 310, 336, 398, 410, 442–44, 457–60, 471 and 903).

Thus, we can verify that for many years, Claret directed Exercises—developing his role as exerciser—to different portions of the People of God (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 487–89), which we can group as follows:

First, religious life: This group includes consecrated women to whom Claret gives a series of Exercises on various topics and of varying lengths, aimed to perfect the living of religious consecration. He affirms that many souls are saved thanks to the prayers of nuns, which is why he always feels inclined to preach to them and ask them to commend him to God. He preaches to the Carmelitas descalzas and the Beatas (Dominicas); he also gives Exercises to religious women of active life (Adoratrices, Escolapias and Terciarias—Carmelitas de la Caridad de Vedruna-) (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 329 and 542; Also, cf. Claret n.d., Vol. X, pp. 537–56).

Second, priests and clergy: In all the places Claret visits, he always preaches to the priests and gives them Spiritual Exercises. He begins this practice in Catalonia and repeats it in the Canary Islands, Cuba and Madrid. He emphasizes this ministry because he is convinced that priests who are converted by the Exercises are zealous and fervent preachers (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 324–25). This group can be divided into three subgroups, which are of special importance to Claret, as follows:

The first subgroup is the congregation of missionaries founded by him: this long-dreamed-of project was founded with Exercises given by the saint to the nascent community (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 409–10; and also cf. Claret n.d., Vol. X, pp. 23–37), and he also preached Exercises in 1865 to the communities of Vic and Gracia (Barcelona) (cf. Claret n.d., Vol. X, pp. 43–98).¹²

The second subgroup consists of his team of collaborators in Cuba: every year they meet and retreat for ten days of Spiritual Exercises, which Claret preaches (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 473).

A third subgroup is the seminarians: Claret devoted himself intensely to preaching Spiritual Exercises to this group. There are several testimonies that attest to this occupation

on the part of the saint at various times and places (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 325, 397, 401, 414 and 530).

Third, the lay people: Claret also devoted part of his evangelization efforts to the laity, giving series of Exercises—some of them very numerous—(cf. Gil 1970, pp. 1427, 1444 and 1474) based on his conviction that the Exercises bear more fruit than missions. He also wrote books on the Exercises to enable many people to access this experience (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 326–27).¹³ Within this group, we can distinguish the following categories of lay people, namely:

First, we found Her Majesty Queen Isabella II and other people in her circle: The saint himself explains that the Queen practised the Exercises using his book of explained Exercises, although it is also known that on some occasions, he personally directed her in the Exercises. This preaching also reached other members of the court, in some cases on the recommendation of the Queen (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 327, 475 and 543).

The second category is men: Claret preaches to men, including those of the court, in groups with a high level of participation and favorable results in terms of reforming their lives, so much so that on one occasion the saint mentions that he has been told that after the Exercises, a revolution that was about to break out has been dispelled (cf. Gil 1970, pp. 1423–24).¹⁴

The third category is women: Claret directs Exercises to this group, which are also attended by ladies from the palace. The saint appreciates that silence reigns in these large groups and that all of them make a general confession (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 326–27, 475–476 and 543).¹⁵

The final category is children: On some occasions, the saint also directs Spiritual Exercises for children, a group for which he composed a book especially.¹⁶ He directs Exercises for the Infanta Isabella (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 474–75), and also for the girls boarding at the school of the Vedrunas religious sisters (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 547).

Claret's dedication to sharing the Spiritual Exercises with the various forms of Christian life has an added peculiarity, which is that on several occasions Claret will develop his role as an exerciser—or director or accompanier of the Exercises—simultaneously with the role of exercitant, that is, practicing the same Exercises that he preaches.¹⁷

2.3. Claret's "Filial and Apostolic Prayer", a Synthesis/Parallel/Update of the Process of the Exercises

Four verbs give life and play a prominent role in Claret's so-called "filial and apostolic prayer", which he records in number 233 of his autobiography: "to know", "to love", "to serve" and "to praise". In this prayer, an intense movement unfolds those springs from the human being and tends towards God, seeking to consciously enter into his mystery, finding him and experiencing his presence, sharing his life with others and raising a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of God himself.

In Spanish, if we join the initial letters of each of the four verbs—in the same order in which they appear in Claret's prayer—we can form the acronym CASA (in English, house/home). Thus, the simple image of a house allows us to condense and show the symbolic power contained in these four verbs, while expressing that those who pray with and like Claret dream of being able to dwell in the home, in the house of God (cf. Psalm 23 (22):6). The four verbs have a circular dynamic that interrelates them, expressing the apostolic openness and interiority that their conjugation in prayer enables, like a house that has interior and exterior spaces. Thus, the verb "to know" can be linked to the most interior aspect of the house. The verb "to love", on the other hand, shows a double dimension, both internal and external to those who inhabit the house. For its part, the verb "to serve" is suggested to us as an action in missionary outgoing, and therefore takes place outside the

house. Finally, the verb “to praise” brings inside that which has been expressed outside, also showing a double dimension of prayerful and spiritual experience.

“To know”, “to love”, “to serve” and “to praise” always refer to God—the protagonist and recipient of prayer—but at the same time, they make visible the co-protagonists, who are, on the one hand, the person praying—the self, who addresses his prayer in the first person to the good God—and, on the other hand, the neighbors of the person praying, whom they wish to incorporate into the same dialogue of love, encounter and sending that they have established through their friendly and solidary prayer.

The dynamic of apostolic prayer, combined with each of the four verbs, follows and is nourished in some way by the structure of the four weeks of the Exercises. Thus, in the first place, the verb “to know” allows us to connect fully with the dynamic and theme of the First Week, in which the exercitant is invited to enter into an inner knowledge of Jesus, of sin and of mercy (cf. EE [45–55, 61–63 and 71], and cf. also EE [104], which, although it is from the Second Week, speaks of internal knowledge). Secondly, the verb “to love” refers to the experiential and relational knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord, which is achieved through the work of the Second Week, which challenges the exercitant with its proposal to contemplate the mysteries of Christ’s life, to place oneself under his standard, to choose him and be chosen, to amend one’s life (cf. EE [189, 97–98, 107–109, 114–116, 164–169 and 184]). Thirdly, the verb “to serve” suggests that outward movement towards reality, where our neighbors inhabit, suffering the way’s hardships, wounded, as well as the space where solidarity is exercised with the pain of the world and of Christ—who actualizes his passion in the little ones of the earth—in coherence and congruence with the theme of contemplating the passion and death of the Lord in the Third Week (cf. EE [191–198, 200–203 and 208]). Finally, and fourthly, the verb “to praise” suggests the confident and grateful action directed towards God, who is found alive and present and contemplated in all that is created and saved; such is the proposal for contemplation and meditation of the Fourth Week, through the Easter journey that proposes the resurrection of the Lord, his new life and contemplation to attain love (cf. EE [218–226]).

The Exercises, at the same time, are the appropriate vehicle for providing feedback and rekindling the dynamic that the four verbs of the prayer enable in Claret’s life of faith and missionary action. He, a missionary impelled by the love of the One he wants to make known, love, serve and praise, also understands that the Exercises are a proclamation of the Gospel, missionary action, since in them it is possible to read the Bible and life (“to know”), and to contemplate the eternal Word of the Father—Jesus Christ himself, our Lord—with whom an affective and grateful dialogue is established (“to love”, “to praise”), encouraging the exercitant, through a choice or reform of life, to place himself at the service of God’s own desire (“to serve”). The Exercises contain and awaken in Claret’s spiritual experience a missionary, apostolic and committed dynamic. Choosing the standard of the Captain and Lord Jesus Christ, and being chosen by Him, the apostle feels welcomed, loved and, at the same time, sent.

The first petition of the apostolic prayer contains the binary “to know”/“to make known”, which denotes a double movement, internal and external. “To know” implies a look towards the internal experience of the person praying; while “to make known” refers to external activity, which, in Claret’s case, involves the apostolic sphere. Both poles refer to the capacity for welcoming and surrender, for appropriation and communication, for reception and transmission (cf. Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, pp. 131–32). The knowledge of God points to the highest human aspiration, which is made explicit in the fourth Gospel when it states that eternal life consists in knowing the true God and his envoy Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). Claret discovers that seeking and finding God are a grace that God himself grants him, because both actions will enable him to

begin the journey of knowing God, which, in his case, will take shape along two paths. Firstly, the path of prayer. Secondly, the path of study, which includes various registers (reading the Word of God, reading texts from tradition, reading the lives of the saints, contemplating creation through which he perceives signs of the divine presence, awareness and admiration for the action of the Holy Spirit in his life and in the lives of other people with whom he interacts at various times and places), for Claret, study consists of seeking and obtaining knowledge that reflects rather an experiential knowledge of God and his action in daily life (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, pp. 136–37).

From this internalization of the knowledge of God arose in Claret the need and desire to make known the God who accompanied him, called him and sent him forth. But since he knew that nothing depended on himself, he asked God for the grace to be able to bring many others to Him so that they too could know Him. Let us remember that his initial motivation for the salvation of people comes from that childhood experience in which he thought about eternity. He wants to address everyone, the just and the sinners—the former so that they may persevere, and the latter so that they may be converted. And to achieve this, he will use all the instruments he knows and has at his disposal, especially those that have proven effective according to his experience (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, pp. 137, 142 and 144).

Claret's passionate heart asks for the grace that the Lord may grant him to love and serve Him, so that he may work tirelessly to ensure that others also love and serve Him. Love and service—contained in the second and third places in the apostolic prayer—arise in his life journey from the experience of compassion: empathy for the suffering of others and the desire that no persons be condemned and that all be saved (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, pp. 147–49).

The compassion for sinners, and the love he feels for God—who is God himself—make his missionary vocation a passionate and urgent mandate, and his apostolic action unfolds from the intention of reaching deep into people's lives—attracting their attention and goodwill—to bring about a decisive change in them towards God and his project: the love and happiness of all his children (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, pp. 150–51). He will accompany his action with a humble heart, always keeping in mind that “the virtue an apostolic missionary need most of all is love (. . .) If he lacks this love, all his talents, however fine in themselves, are for nothing. But if, together with his natural endowments, he has much love, he has everything” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 380).¹⁸

Service occupied much time and space in Claret's life (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, p. 54). In his autobiography, he gives us several testimonies of his dedication to the service of God and his brothers.¹⁹ Perhaps one of the most eloquent is the one he repeated several times with similar wording in his resolutions for the Exercises: “I resolve never to lose a moment's time, and hence I will always keep busy by studying, praying, preaching, conferring the sacraments, etc.” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 491). From this affirmation it follows that, for Claret, service is apostolic-missionary and he lives it intensely from the ministerial aspect (preaching, administering sacraments, studying, praying) as a service to people (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, p. 56), those whom he calls “my neighbours”.²⁰

Claret will attempt to ensure that his neighbors serve God by inviting them to live their Christian lives consistently, and in order to do so, he will work on several fronts simultaneously. First, he will write several books entitled “Advice to . . .” and through them he will address individuals and groups from different states of life (religious, priests, lay people, children, young people, parents) (cf. *Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago* 2016, p. 58). Secondly, he will encourage priests to live their vocation of service to the People of God with fidelity and depth, and to do so, he will work as hard as he can to help them

in their human and Christian formation (improving their economic conditions, pastoral conferences, Spiritual Exercises to renew their spiritual life, exhortation to assume the work of evangelization of the people) (cf. Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, pp. 60–61). Thirdly, he will be responsible for “devising and putting into action apostolic institutions, both for priests and lay people, which constantly encourage the Christian people in their duty to serve God”²¹ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 63) (apostolic collaboration teams, missionary congregation, confraternities, brotherhoods, Academy of Saint Michael) (cf. Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, pp. 63–68), as he is aware that “man needs to be reminded that he is a creature, whose fulfilment lies in serving his Creator in this world and enjoying Him in eternity”²² (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 63).

The conjunction of the two verbs found at the center of the apostolic prayer, “to love” and “to serve”, is manifested in Claret’s experience expressed through his apostolic zeal. His missionary heart, inflamed with this loving service, led him to overcome obstacles and devise strategies to tackle the work of evangelization and to invite others to participate in the same task and mission. Claret, both in the experience of his own priestly vocation and in his role as one who accompanies and forms priests for the apostolate, and also as one who exercises priests, knows that the “starting point of the theological spirituality of the ordained ministry [is in] the very revelation of God, God is love and mercy”²³ (López Hortelano 2023, p. 18), and that apostolic zeal—expressed in current terminology as pastoral charity—was, is, and will always be “a way of exercising pastoral ministry, a primacy over other types of love and choices”²⁴ (López Hortelano 2023, p. 18), a manner that reflects God’s interest, care and love for his people, and which is expressed in its dual dimension of love and service through the words of Jesus contained in the parables of Matthew 25:31–46 (judgement of the nations) and Luke 10:30–37 (the Good Samaritan).

Claret cultivated praise as a form of prayer throughout his spiritual life, “not as an isolated or solipsistic movement of the believing heart towards God, but [as] a fontal, broad and integrating experience (...) [within] the totality of an integral experience of faith”²⁵ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 187) that is consciously oriented towards the apostolic/missionary dimension.

The overall experience is so deeply integrated into Claret’s spiritual process that if we study the implications of the verb “to praise” and its relationship with the other three verbs in Claret’s filial and apostolic prayer, we will discover, first of all, that for the saint “praise (...) follows knowledge (...) and at the same time promotes it”²⁶ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 189) because he does not follow a “coldly intellectualised model of Christian life (...) but rather explores and proposes a path of deepening (...) [in which] both the knowledge of God and the study of realities (...) should always result in the praise of the Creator”²⁷ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 187). Secondly, and “like every believer, Claret knew he was called to pass from love of self to love of the Other and of others; from self-vanity to praise of the Lord”²⁸ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 190) and he worked all his life to grow in love and in the praise of that love as “a sublime way of carrying the love of Christ within oneself and of configuring one’s own love in the image of His”²⁹ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 191). Thirdly and finally, service through apostolic and missionary action became for Claret “a privileged and most effective way of praising God and making Him praise”³⁰ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 193) and he lived this out by praying, working and suffering through his “ardent belief and his *determined determination* to make his words an uninterrupted praise to the Lord of glory”³¹ (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 193).

One reflection masterfully summarizes what it meant for Claret to express his apostolic prayer, since in it

“he turns to his missionary heart, as if searching for the spring of his evangelising thirst. He then finds a desire (...) and allows that longing to be expressed in the form of a needy and trusting prayer. (...) Thus, through a simple and spontaneous pleading, the saint allows us to contemplate his “deepest centre” and leads us by his hand into an experience that, while inaccessible, becomes accessible to any believer (...) Claret bequeaths to us in the Filial and Apostolic Prayer a plea that is both intimate and universal: perhaps the most personal and the most common of all his prayers”³². (Misioneros Claretianos Provincia de Santiago 2016, p. 183)

3. Conclusions

The Spiritual Exercises set Claret on a path of knowledge and love, service and praise along his entire missionary life, leading him to follow a path that began with the personal practice of the Spiritual Exercises to the consideration and proposal to others of the fruitful experience of the Spiritual Exercises, which he adopted and adapted as a way to spread the Gospel and renovation of Christian life.

The personal prayer of Claret, that is a synthesis of his whole life in the service of the Gospel, expresses in a condensed way the spiritual experience proposed by the pieces that open and close the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: the Principle and Foundation, and the Contemplation to Attain Love. On the one hand, the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises [23] contains the verbs “to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord”³³ (de Loyola 2018, p. 57) and asks us to deepen our knowledge—of humanity and of God—with the expression “desiring and choosing what leads us most to the end for which we were created”³⁴ (de Loyola 2018, p. 58). On the other hand, the Contemplation to Attain Love in EE [230–237] expresses the love of/for God and neighbour when it says that “love should be put more into works than into words”³⁵ (de Loyola 2018, p. 134), “love consists in communication between the two parts, that is, in the lover giving and communicating to the beloved what he has, or what he has or can have, and thus, conversely, the beloved to the lover”³⁶ (de Loyola 2018, p. 134), “to ask for internal knowledge of so much good received, so that I, recognising it fully, may love and serve His divine majesty in everything”³⁷ (de Loyola 2018, p. 134), and, par excellence, with the Ignatian offering, which says, “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess; You gave them to me; to You, Lord, I return them; everything is yours, dispose of them according to your will; give me your love and grace, for that is enough for me”³⁸ (de Loyola 2018, p. 135).

The four verbs of the filial and apostolic prayer, in one part, introduce the uninitiated to the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises in a relational mystagogy, from which the person who makes the experience for the first time knows, loves, serves, and praises God, in order to immediately afterwards make him known, loved, served, and praised by all creatures. On the other hand, the verbs of prayer help to deepen the journey of those who have already begun the practice of the Spiritual Exercises, through the experience of asceticism and apostolic mysticism, which trusts in the action of God’s grace, but which puts personal effort and creativity into spiritual and pastoral work, from the conviction of those who know they are sought, loved, saved and sent by God into the world to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.

In this manner, Claret’s life and apostolic action throughout the Spanish 19th century were enhanced by the Spiritual Exercises, which, three centuries after their original experience and formulation, continue to demonstrate their strength and vitality in renewing

personal life and communities in the Church, through the active and affective, experiential and transformative dynamics of their methodology.

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Abbreviation

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

EE Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola—Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.
The numbers of the text of the Exercises are indicated between [].

Notes

- ¹ Also (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 277–79). This reflection on the eternity of pain awakens an apostolic reaction in Claret, who affirms in number 9 of his Autobiography that “this same idea has made me work in the past, still makes me work, and will make me work as long as I live, in converting sinners, in preaching, in hearing confessions, in writing books, in distributing holy cards and pamphlets, and in having familiar conversations, etc.” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 184). In our opinion, this experience from early childhood constitutes, as it were, the claretian Principle and Foundation.
- ² The text of Matthew 16:26, which Claret quotes in number 68 of his Autobiography as “*For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?*” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 209).
- ³ In number 92 of his Autobiography, the saint recounts that “Every year in the chapel, during Lent, we made an eight-day retreat, from Sunday to Sunday. The bishop attended all the morning and evening exercises” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 221). In the original version of his Autobiography—in Spanish—Claret uses the expression: “los santos Ejercicios Espirituales” (“the holy Spiritual Exercises”) that in the English version was translated as “retreat”.
- ⁴ He narrates this in number 102 of his Autobiography: “Before my priestly ordination I made a forty-day retreat. I have never made a retreat so full of sufferings and trials but neither, perhaps, so replete with great graces” (Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 227–28). We note that here too, “Exercises” has been translated as “retreat”. Those forty days consisted of special training for the ordinands, in an atmosphere of fraternal conviviality. The last ten days were dedicated to the Exercises properly speaking, in their classical form. During these days, the bishop often intervened directly (cf. Sidera i Plana and Blanco Pacheco 2022, pp. 119–22).
- ⁵ A study about Claret presents him as someone who welcomes God’s calls throughout the different stages of his life and spiritual journey, leading him to deepen his discernment and choice for what he feels and discovers as God’s will for his life and apostolic mission (cf. Randle 1993, pp. 71–112).
- ⁶ About this term and its meaning, see (cf. Sánchez Miranda 2019, pp. 25–26).
- ⁷ Claret was in charge of a local Church that had been without a bishop for at least 14 years and had a deficient clergy—both in number and formation—a geographically extensive and poorly connected diocese with two major deep-rooted social challenges: slavery and immorality; politically, with separatist attempts (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, p. 423).
- ⁸ Since 1859, Claret was appointed president of the Royal Monastery of El Escorial, with the task of restoring it both physically and spiritually. He established a primary and secondary school, as well as a seminary, a choir and a centre for superior studies (cf. Viñas and Bermejo 2011, pp. 486–87 and 513).
- ⁹ Volume II of the Claretian Manuscripts contains the resolutions of the Spiritual Exercises practised by Claret between 1843—the year he began his missionary travels—and 1870—the year of his death—with the single exception of the year 1848.
- ¹⁰ His episcopal motto is taken from 2 Corinthians 5:14.
- ¹¹ In this letter dated 25 November 1842—a year in which the political situation was unfavourable for itinerant preaching—Claret shares with Jaime Soler his plan to form a group of missionary priests dedicated to evangelising all kinds of people. He also says that he will turn the rectory of San Juan de Oló, where he is currently residing, into a retreat house to receive two priests at a time, in order to give them the Exercises and prepare them for the apostolate.

- 12 A biblical reflection about the themes that appear in the schemas of the Exercises preached by Claret to his missionaries can be found in (Franquesa 2008).
- 13 One of the books of Exercises that Claret wrote and published is entitled *Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio explicados*, first published in Barcelona in 1859 (cf. Claret 1859).
- 14 Furthermore, in the letter on (Gil 1970, pp. 1441–42), he recounts that 4000 men attended the retreat.
- 15 In (Gil 1970, pp. 1441–42) there is mention of a group of women attending, numbering up to 6000.
- 16 In 1855 Claret published a book in Barcelona entitled *Ejercicios espirituales preparatorios a la primera comunión de los niños* (cf. Claret 1855).
- 17 This can be verified, for example, during the period when Claret stayed as missionary archbishop in Santiago de Cuba (1852–1856), years in which he directed the Spiritual Exercises to his group of collaborators in the Cuban diocese—ten days each year—and at the same time did those Exercises with them (cf. Fernández 1941, pp. 376–92).
- 18 In numbers 438–453 of his autobiography Claret develops the virtue of love of God and neighbour.
- 19 Cf. For example, numbers 40, 111–112, 136, 152, 202–203 of the autobiography.
- 20 Thus it appears in numbers 28, 42, 113, 153, 213, 744, and 789 of his autobiography.
- 21 “Idear y poner en marcha instituciones apostólicas, tanto de sacerdotes como de seglares que constantemente espoleasen al pueblo cristiano en su deber de servir a Dios”.
- 22 “El hombre necesita que se le recuerde su ser criatura, cuya realización se cifra en servir en este mundo a su creador y gozar de Él en la eternidad”.
- 23 “Punto de partida de la espiritualidad teologal del ministerio ordenado [está en] la misma revelación de Dios, Dios es amor y misericordia”.
- 24 “Una manera de ejercer el ministerio pastoral, un primado por encima de otro tipo de amores y de opciones”.
- 25 “No como un movimiento aislado o solipsista del corazón creyente hacia Dios, sino [como] una experiencia fontal, amplia e integradora (...) [dentro] del conjunto de una vivencia de fe integral”.
- 26 “La alabanza (...) sigue al conocimiento (...) y a la vez lo promueve”.
- 27 “Modelo de vida cristiana fríamente intelectualizado (...) sino que él explora y propone un camino de profundización (...) [en el que] tanto el conocimiento de Dios como el estudio de las realidades (...) deberían redundar siempre en la alabanza del Creador”.
- 28 “Como todo creyente, Claret se supo llamado a pasar del amor de sí al amor del Otro y de los otros; de la vanidad de sí a la alabanza del Señor”.
- 29 “Forma sublime de portar sobre sí el amor de Cristo y de configurar el propio amor a imagen del Suyo”.
- 30 “Un modo privilegiado y eficazísimo para alabar a Dios y para hacerlo alabar”.
- 31 “Ardor creyente, y su *determinada determinación* en hacer de su palabra una alabanza ininterrumpida al Señor de la gloria”.
- 32 “Se vuelve hacia sus entrañas de misionero, como buscando el hontanar de su sed evangelizadora. Encuentra entonces un deseo (...) y deja que dicho anhelo se exprese en forma de plegaria menesterosa y confiada. (...) Así, a través de una súplica sencilla y espontánea, el santo nos permite contemplar su “más profundo centro” y nos adentra de su mano en una experiencia que, siendo inaccesible, se torna a su vez accesible para cualquier creyente (...) Claret nos lega en la Oración filial y apostólica una plegaria intimísima y universal al mismo tiempo: quizás la más personal y la más común de todas las suyas”.
- 33 “Alabar, hacer reverencia y servir a Dios nuestro Señor”.
- 34 “Deseando y eligiendo lo que más nos conduce para el fin que somos criados”.
- 35 “El amor se debe poner más en las obras que en las palabras”.
- 36 “El amor consiste en comunicación de las dos partes, es a saber, en dar y comunicar el amante al amado lo que tiene, o de lo que tiene o puede, y así, por el contrario, el amado al amante”. The translation is ours.
- 37 The original text, in Spanish, says: “Pedir conocimiento interno de tanto bien recibido, para que yo, enteramente reconociendo, pueda en todo amar y servir a su divina majestad”.
- 38 “Tomad, Señor, y recibid toda mi libertad, mi memoria, mi entendimiento y toda mi voluntad, todo mi haber y poseer; Vos me lo distes; a Vos, Señor, lo torno; todo es vuestro, disponed a toda vuestra voluntad; dadme vuestro amor y gracia, que ésta me basta”.

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Article

Trinitarian Interpretation of Ignatian Obedience: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr

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Abstract

The following essay seeks to provide a theological consideration of the concept of obedience in the Ignatian tradition through the lens of Hans Urs von Balthasar. We will first argue that Balthasar can indeed be considered an Ignatian theologian based on his personal engagement with the spirituality of saint Ignatius. Secondly, we will offer an outline of his treatment of the theme of obedience as he links it to related concepts such as service, mission, indifference, and election. Finally, we will suggest that the influence of Adrienne von Speyr provoked a deepening of the Ignatian tradition toward a Trinitarian interpretation. We seek to conclude with a tentative proposal that Ignatian spirituality can serve a foundation to his creative treatment of the Trinity.

Keywords: Hans Urs von Balthasar; obedience; Ignatian spirituality; Adrienne von Speyr; Trinity; service

Balthasar considers that Erich Przywara along with Karl Rahner and Gaston Fessard are responsible for developing a theology of the Exercises that was never developed in the baroque era because of the rationalistic tendencies in theology at the time (Balthasar, 1989, p. 189). Although Balthasar does not include himself in this category, later scholars have extended this recognition to his work. There are a few scholars who have argued that Balthasar offers a dogmatic interpretation of Ignatian spirituality. For example, (Löser 1989, p. 172; see Löser 2015) and, more systematically, Fr. Jacques Servais, SJ mention a few key Catholic theologians in the twentieth century who attended such a task: Erich Przywara in his “*Deus Semper Major*,” Gaston Fessard in his “*La Dialectique des Exercices Spirituels*,” and Karl Rahner in his “*Existential Logic*.” However, he believes that “although original and interactive their respective approaches may be, they hardly provide a decisive solution in the current crisis” (Servais 1994, p. 353). Fr. Servais proposes that “among the major theologians of our time who have closely examined the libretto from a doctrinal point of view, Balthasar is probably the author who has shed the most light on the Trinitarian, Christic and Ecclesial principle of Ignatian obedience” (Servais 1994, p. 354). In Servais’ view, obedience must be explained not only as the central vision of Ignatian spirituality, which involves the choice presented to us for the service and praise of God (Exx 169) [Spiritual Exercises], and for the mission that imitates the “love descending from above” (Exx 184), “but also, on the doctrinal and metaphysical level. . . . not merely ascetic, mystical or pastoral, but the end is to derive from the original substance of the libretto the principles of a speculative theology properly so called” (Servais 1996, pp. 15–16).

There are also places where Balthasar’s name is omitted, for example in the *Contemporary Approach to The Spiritual Exercises* edited by Philip Sheldrake, SJ even though they

stress the importance of a theological reading of the exercises as something “highly relevant for what happens in retreat houses” (Sheldrake 1991, p. 9). This essay pretends to offer a coherent outline of Balthasar’s theological interpretation of obedience as readiness, election, and mission, in addition to Speyr’s Trinitarian interpretation of Ignatian obedience.

Ignatius calls this innate availability or readiness to self-denial *indifference*. It is broadly defined as “a means of becoming open to deeper union with God” (O’Reilly 2020, p. 270; see López 2023). It is an attitude that allows the Jesuit to “distinguish himself in service” willingness (Rahner 1953, p. 12). In other words, indifference (which does not mean being uninterested in either option but available for whatever God desires) allows Jesuits to act in obedience to whatever task or mission is revealed to them. It is an “asceticism” that the exercitant undergoes throughout the four weeks of the Exercises, especially in the first week, where he works on the purification and cleansing necessary for the adequate discernment of spirits (Exx 21,23). This ensures the response of obedience in action: in the election of one state of life (Exx 169), acceptance of the mission to which one is sent in the command received by the Superior (*Constitutions* 6.1). It can be very personal and individual, such as the personal call one receives to a state of life, but it is also an attitude that unites one with the militant Church and her universal mission (Exx 352–3).

Balthasar’s interpretation is undoubtedly speculative and dogmatically creative, less supported by a literal interpretation of the libretto. His approach differs from those studies O’Reilly that are biographical (Rahner 1953), historical (O’Reilly 2020) or pastoral (Sheldrake 1991). There is no assessment about his reception in Jesuit circles perhaps due to the often-fine line between “a legitimate adaptation and unauthentic deformation” (Endean 1998, p. 36). There are times when a creative reading of the Exercises seems to be encouraged in the context of pastoral application of the Exercises (Endean 1998, p. 40). There are other times when the same creativity is questioned in the dogmatic front, for example, when it comes to Karl Rahner’s philosophical interpretation of the Ignatian heritage (Endean 2001). Balthasar, like Rahner, reads the Exercises philosophically and theologically.

Philosophically, indifference means the innate availability, openness, and vocation to the supernatural in nature. While Ignatius does not expand his understanding of obedience according to a philosophical style (and the Exercises cannot be considered an academic treatise), he nonetheless proposes a key theological anthropology. Ignatius derives his “Principle and Foundation” from the definition of man according to the purpose, or end, for which man is created: “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save [his] soul” (Exx 23). It is more accurately a “praise, reverence and serve” done for love, as “love and praise” (Exx 15) or “love and serve” (Exx 233)” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 28). Human beings are made to be available for God, and the more they foster this attitude of availability, the higher their freedom will be. Servais summarizes with the claim that, “Indifference is the fundamental act of the creature; it is from it that the theology of *potentia oboedientialis* can be developed.” Therefore, the finality of man for which he was created is to adore and to praise God, his nature, in Balthasar’s words, “already bears the mark of God’s kenosis”, so that man is, by definition, a kenotic substance of a rational nature (Servais 1994, p. 360).

Theologically, Balthasar reads this tradition according to his dramatic theology (Goulding 2009). In Saint Francis, the spirit of the Gospel is most evident in the joy of poverty, in giving up all personal possessions for the highest form of receptivity or obedience to the mystery of the crucified. In Benedict of Nursia, this same spirit manifests in the love of Christ as reverence and humility, which he integrates into the concept of Christian obedience, as exemplified in the fourth degree of humility. For Ignatius, the spirit of the Gospel is found in the drama of human freedom, which must be placed at the service of

love or, to use more precise Ignatian language, when human freedom is disposed to the election of God. A loving obedience that Ignatius expresses as “give me loving humility and loving reverence”.¹ The mysticism of obedience inspires Balthasar and Speyr because of its radicality. It is an ever-greater obedience always marked by the *magis* principle (*siempre más*) and the through all things (*en todo*), it is “blind,” not only of execution but also desire and judgement, and also because of its concreteness, it is about action-in contemplation, effectively going out into mission, electing the state of life God is calling us to. As Balthasar writes: it “is a willingness to be completely exposed ‘on the mountain of the Lord,’ a willingness to embody Christ’s own obedience for the sake of all and each one in particular (Exx 95)” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 153).

1. Balthasar’s Jesuit Identity

Balthasar was raised in a Catholic family in Lucerne, with no connection to the Jesuits apart from occasional visits to a beautiful Baroque Jesuit church in the town center, which stands just opposite to the lake where he is now buried. He began his education at the Benedictine school at the Abbey of Engelberg, but later transferred to the Jesuit school in Feldkirch after completing his secondary studies. As a student, Balthasar participated in a retreat of the Spiritual Exercises in the Black Forest at Wylhen in 1929. It was during this retreat that he underwent a profound conversion of heart, feeling called to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. He was particularly moved by the program and spiritual direction set forth by Ignatius of Loyola:

Even today [in 1959], after thirty years, I could still find again the tree on the lost path in the Black Forest, not far from Basel, under which I was struck as if by lightning. ... [I]t was neither theology nor the priesthood that, at that moment, appeared in a flash before my mind; it was this alone: You have nothing to choose; you are called. You will not serve; another will use you. You have no plans to make; you are only a small little tile in a mosaic that has long been ready. I needed only to “leave everything and follow,” without making plans, without wishes or ideas: I needed only to stand there and wait and see what I would be used for—and so it happened (Balthasar, 1991c, p. 22).

The notion of “serving” and being “called” reflects the significant influence of Ignatius of Loyola, of whom Balthasar would later say, using the Pauline metaphor of election, that he was struck by lightning: “I did not choose him; he set me ablaze like a bolt of lightning” (Balthasar, 1988). Soon after his mother’s death, in the same year he experienced this conversion, on 18 November 1929, Balthasar entered the Society of Jesus. For his commemoration card, he chose an image depicting the evangelist John leaning on the Lord’s breast at the Last Supper, accompanied by the motto “*benedixit, fregit, deditque*” (he blessed, broke, and gave), perhaps anticipating the influence that John would have on his deepening understanding of Ignatian spirituality. Balthasar certainly felt at home in the Society, describing it with such warm words as “most dear and self-evident home” (Löser 1999, p. 38).

Balthasar was particularly interested in the spiritual exercises of Ignatius, to which he attributed, if not necessarily a good theological erudition, a wealth, nevertheless, of Christian fruitfulness of following and of obedience in the service of God, in whatever way God desires for his greater glory. In 1955, he would write:

I often gave talks at retreats and conferences about the idea of the Exercises, about their philosophical and theological foundations, about the encounter between Ignatius’ thought and modern thought in theology. The most important thing

always happens of course during the exercises themselves: one cannot lead them without receiving them anew from the origin (Schindler 1991, p. 99).

He frequently cited Ignatius throughout his works, notably in “Theo-Drama Vol. 5,” “The Explorations in Theology Vol. 4,” and “The Christian States of Life,” where he contrasts Ignatius’ understanding of election with Aquinas’s works on the counsels of perfection. While he never produced a treatise exclusively dedicated to Ignatius, he did translate the *Spiritual Exercises*. He recounts: “I translated the exercises and gave about a hundred retreats; if anywhere this is where Christian joy lives. If anywhere this is where it becomes clear what being a Christian means in its ‘origin’: listening to the word that calls and becoming free for the expected answer” (Schindler 1991, p. 99). His theological colleagues Henri de Lubac and Joseph Ratzinger both reinforced this Ignatian imprint, considering him a true follower of Ignatius (De Lubac 1975, pp. 228–49). It is significant for a fellow Jesuit like Lubac to have noticed this influence and for a theologian of Ratzinger’s caliber to emphasize it so decisively. More significantly, they stress this Ignatian influence around the concept of obedience:

The bond of obedience was the Ignatian trait of his entire life. He did not traverse the path of his own will; he walked the path he found himself led against his own desires, to the point where his will and his being became more and more free, more and more pure. In this way, he was, in the deepest sense, a man of the Church. . . an authentic teacher of faith, a guide to the sources of living water—a witness of the Word, from whom we can learn about Christ, from whom we can learn about life (Ratzinger 1989, pp. 351–53).

Balthasar’s decision to leave the Society in 1950 came just before taking his final vows, a choice he made after completing the spiritual exercises with this question in mind. He deeply understood the importance of obedience, and it would be unfair to suggest that he disregarded this principle during the deliberations within the Society; instead, one needs to see his departure as an extension of Ignatian obedience (Balthasar, 1995, p. 160). After encountering Speyr, Balthasar came to understand that God was calling him to establish a secular institute, not as a departure from the Society, but as a continuation of its mission within the world: “what Ignatius wanted in his time clearly meant for me from then on, ‘world community’ (secular institute), the difficult sacrifice demanded by the transition was accompanied by the certainty of serving the same idea with greater exactness” (Schindler 1991, p. 99). This decision placed him in the delicate situation of seeming to disobey ecclesial authority, who thought it was incompatible his life as a Jesuit with his role as director of the institute, represented at the time by his Superior, in order to fulfil his mission in deeper obedience to Christ. He would express this tension, saying: “This is a real test of one’s tensile strength, and in this crucible the one contesting the authority must remain conscious that he can contradict the office only in (ecclesial!) obedience to Christ” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 161).

When Balthasar presented his initiative to his Superior, he faced a decisive choice: to remain in the Society or to establish his own secular institute. To understand the weight of this dilemma, it is essential to recognize that a Jesuit always seeks the divine will, which precedes our human actions and aims for God’s greater glory. Typically, this divine will is communicated to a Jesuit through the command of his Superior (Balthasar, 1991a, p. 312). While the Superior’s command is not infallible and can be prone to error due to poor judgment, lack of prudence, or other deficiencies, a Jesuit understands that obedience is owed on matters related to the community life and mission when the command does not contradict what is already approved as God’s will, such as natural law, the Constitutions of the order, and the teachings of the Church. According to Fr. Carlos Palmés, there are two

forms of imperfection in a Superior's command that might affect a Jesuit's obedience. The first is a positive imperfection, where the command, while not sinful, conflicts with a rule or obligation rooted in Christian charity. The second is a negative imperfection, where the Superior chooses a less perfect option when faced with a choice between two alternatives. Fr. Palmés asserts that a Jesuit should always obey in the case of negative imperfection and is encouraged to obey in the case of positive imperfection (Palmés Genover 1963, p. 231). While the Superior's command may have been imperfect in terms of what was best for Balthasar and the Society, the command did not contravene Christian charity or the teachings of the Church.

The matter of disagreement was that they judged it incompatible to direct the Community of St John while remaining a Jesuit priest, making it impossible for Balthasar to continue being a Jesuit. He would have preferred for the Community to be an extension of the Jesuit Order, like a third order in other religious orders, but the refusal from his Superiors of this request meant that he could only proceed with the Community by not taking the final vows. For that reason, knowing that he would have had to obey those directives preventing him from establishing the Community, he decided, after a 30-day retreat, and with the approbation of his Jesuit superiors, to leave the society before taking the final vows. Thus, he was no longer bounded by the vow of obedience toward his Jesuit Superiors.

He deeply felt his vocation and calling to establish the secular institute, guided by a profound sense of "obligation" and mission privately revealed. Balthasar describes his decision with the resignation of someone left without alternatives: "the brokenness that I sensed was effectively consummated when, in obedience to another express command of St. Ignatius—against my will—I had to leave my spiritual home, the Society of Jesus, in order to carry out a kind of prolongation of his idea in the world" (Balthasar, 1984, pp. 27–28). His choice resulted in ostracization, years without episcopal support, inability to publicly celebrate Mass, and only a limited capacity to hear confessions. In a letter to his Superiors, he explains his departure as a genuine interpretative challenge between Jesuit availability and obedience to God or his Superior:

I am leaving then, voluntarily and involuntarily. Voluntarily because my resignation has no other reason than to obey God. Now, as always, the work of our Father Ignatius seems to me the most beautiful thing on earth, and to dwell in his house the most desirable death. . . but I am also leaving to be myself, compelled by a series of circumstances in which I cannot but recognize an unavoidable necessity. . . It cannot be objected, then, that the best solution to the conflict consists, in principle and in any case, in obedience to the Order. This consists, in principle, and in any case, in obedience to God. The superior, who should never be confused with God, is the ordinary way of manifesting the divine will. . . And if by this, almost necessarily, the rule of exercises number 167 is fulfilled, it will be received with gratitude in the deepest part of your soul. But again, what does it matter? God will ensure that such obedience, if offered with the simplicity of a child, and not heroically or presumptuously, does not fall in vain but on the foundation of the Catholic Church. . . God is permanently free in relation to humans, especially when it concerns someone who has chosen to be completely at His disposal. He is free to use them according to His pleasure, as He sees fit. What order preaches more and understands better the instrumentality and availability before God (not only for its members but also for itself) than the Order of the Jesuits? (Balthasar, 1991b, p. 17).

While it is true that Balthasar left the Society of Jesus in 1950, we have provided ample evidence of his self-confessed sympathy for this tradition. This does not demonstrate that

his speculative interpretation recovers faithfully the core of Ignatian speculative, but it encourages as to highlight the influence of Ignatius in his thought. In this sense, following a recent distinction of GC35, we consider Balthasar can certainly be labelled as Ignatian since his “manifests the Ignatian charism: i.e., when it intentionally seeks God in all things; when it practices Ignatian discernment; when it engages the world through a careful analysis of context, in dialogue with experience. . . .” (GC35, 6, 9–10). It is more subject to controversy to consider him a Jesuit. Since the General Congregation reserves this title only to those who have a “clear and definitive relationship with the Society of Jesus and when its mission accords with that of the Society by a commitment to a faith that does justice through interreligious dialogue and a creative engagement with culture” (GC35, 6, 9–10). It would be fair to disqualify Balthasar for not having a clear and definitive relationship to the Society of Jesus (not because of his own choosing) but not for criticizing him for a lack of dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions. There have been few theologians who have engaged with so much of Western cultural tradition and with the Protestant tradition seeking always a symphonic reconciliation to the Gospel unity (Balthasar, 2012b).

2. Obedience as Readiness to Serve

The first feature of Ignatian obedience is the desire to “clothe ourselves with the same grab and uniform of the Lord” out of love, an availability that seeks to “fulfill the will of God” (GC 35, 4, 96). This open search for God’s will is discussed by Ignatius in the context of the Third Degree of Humility: “I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world” (Exx 167). It corresponds to the three classes of men mentioned by Ignatius. The first type wishes to retain his money, which he has received through questionable means, without changing his attachment to his possessions, seeing neither willingness nor need to change (Exx 153). The second type wishes to correct his attachment to money because he considers it a “disordered” attachment, but he seeks to do so “in such a way that they will keep the acquired money, so that God will come to where they desire” (Exx 154). The third type, which Ignatius praises, wishes to rid himself of his attachment and is willing for his money to be taken from him if that is what God disposes for him. This third type transcends through indifference to a higher good, beyond the desires of his lower nature, by denying even the act of choosing. Ignatius portrays this third man as being willing to dispose of the money yet having “no inclination either to keep the acquired money or to dispose of it” (Exx 155).

Balthasar situates Ignatius at an intersection between the ancient patristic understanding of asceticism and the medieval spirituality of the mendicant orders (the Franciscan tradition of preaching and ministering to the poor in particular), in continuity with the German mystical tradition of the Rhineland mystics (of the subjective kind of self-abasement) but adding a “correction” of their respective excesses (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 52). For example, Ignatius avoids the extreme of German mysticism that exalted passive contemplation. This can be seen in an overly literal interpretation of Meister Eckhart, who proposes an “annihilation of one’s own being”.² According to Balthasar, this tendency toward mysticism detached from apostolic work was evident among contemporary movements such as those led by Fr. Araoz, the Spanish *alumbrados*, and the Quietists. This trend “attained the height of subtlety in the teaching of P. Balthazar Alvarez (P. de Ponte was his biographer) and, dependent on him, in the Doctrine spirituelle of P. Louis Lallemant and his school” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 113). It is not that Ignatius turned away from representatives of medieval piety, but rather that these influences came to him more through his readings of meditations on the life of Jesus, such as in the *Life of Christ* by Rudolf of Saxony or the *Ejercitatoria de la Vida Espiritual* by Garcia de Cisneros.³ They all “understood this fundamental attitude as

‘becoming empty’ and as readiness to ‘transcend beyond all other creatures into immediacy with God’” (Schindler 1991, p. 117).

What Ignatius intends is to cultivate a contemplative attitude of readiness and obedience, always prepared to embrace the loving will of God, regardless of where it may lead, such as in the mission entrusted to us. This complements the attitude of self-ablation found in contemplatives, while also emphasizing “the spontaneity of human action in the analogy of freedom and election, and thereby brought active asceticism to the fore” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 113). These two aspects are unified in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius: the passivity of the contemplative, receptive to hearing the voice of God in indifference, and the active life that emerges from this encounter rejuvenated and invigorated to perform God’s will in apostolic work (*actione contemplativa*) (Barry and Doherty 2014, p. 238). Balthasar summarizes: “[The] Jesuit receives his mission in that school of abandonment and contemplation which is the Exercises and is thereby enabled to fulfil a particular task without any mental reservations and from a disposition of transcendent universality, being basically ready for anything” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 103). The two actions are often implemented together: the obedience of the contemplative, characterized by letting be and availability, which transitions into an obedience of self-giving love in action. As Balthasar states, “but we learn how to do this only when we love this self-giving love, and for that we will always need an attitude of pure receptivity, of letting be, that is, of contemplation” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 302). In the Ignatian sense, this contemplation is not purely passive; it requires a responsive element from the person (Balthasar, 1989, p. 227).

Indifference carries dual meanings within the context of the Spiritual Exercises. Negatively, it entails undergoing a phase of purification and acknowledging one’s sinful condition, that is, “we need to cleanse our readiness from the filth of our sins” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 46). This phase could be likened to the “purgative and preparatory ‘hell of self-knowledge’ (Theologia Germanica), which strips the sinner, as he stands before the cross of Christ, of any consciousness of his own goodness” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 103). As early as the “Principle and Foundation” or the “Introductory Explanations,” the purpose is to train the exercitant in this kind of indifference, the “extirpation of ‘disordered inclinations’, which are nothing other than an open or veiled striving for power, a drive to elbow one’s way to the first place” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 36). For instance, the exercitant is guided through cycles of consolation and desolation, learning to recognize disordered attachments and combat them by cultivating a desire for what opposes them. This process trains the exercitant to master his appetites, achieving “conquest of all ‘disordered affections’ that act as a prior constraint upon man, inducing him to seek the objects that attract him and to avoid those he finds unpleasant” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 38). Balthasar writes:

For the sake of indifference, a man who “feels an affection or inclination to something in a disordered way” should “strive with all possible effort to come over to the opposite of that to which he... is wrongly” “attached... [He] should try to bring [himself] to desire (*afectarse*) the opposite. [He] should make earnest prayers and other spiritual exercises and ask God our Lord for the contrary (Exx16) (Balthasar, 2014, p. 39).

Positively, the right attitude of indifference allows the exercitant to be liberated from disordered desires and to “seek and find” the “higher will of God” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 39). He derives this higher will not by elevating his human aspirations, but by adopting a form of life bestowed from above (*de arriba*), “man’s configuration to the image of his crucified Son... by remaining in the pure letting be of God’s downward movement, which leads to the Cross through kenosis, obedience, and common mortality (Phil 2:7–8)” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 37). By embracing this obedience (listening to the command of the Lord and being willing to carry it out) according to Ignatius, the exercitant may reach the center of the

living Christian form, which “secures for him true freedom.” (Balthasar, 1991a, p. 135). His freedom is not about self-actualization through individualistic progress toward perfection. Instead, it enables the exercitant to listen to God’s will, which directs one beyond oneself to the praise and service of God, directing all earthly goods “to order toward this transcendent goal” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 39).

3. Obedience as Election

The second feature of obedience in Ignatius refers to the acceptance of the call which we receive from God. We can relate it to the Two Standards. Here, the exercitant is asked to meditate on who they follow: “The one of Christ, our supreme leader and lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature” (Exx 136). Either to follow the army of Devil prioritizing worldly riches, pride, and honor or to follow the eternal King and choose instead: “first, poverty as opposed to riches; the second, insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; the third, humility as opposed to pride” (Exx 146). Obedience, therefore, is the response to an electing God.

Balthasar argues that the call or the election is a central part of the Exercises where the freedom of God and the freedom of the creature engage with each other in an encounter: “the central encounter with God is an encounter with an electing God” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 105). To choose the right goal and for the culmination of the Exercises (the election), the exercitant must achieve a higher indifference to desire God to make a decision about himself: “he should ‘beg’ God to deprive him of his treasure, ‘even though it is contrary to our lower nature’ (Exx 157)” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 40). According to the Exercises, this contemplation promises to provide the exercitant with a form of life from above, given as a gift of grace, to ensure that through this form of life he is “totally receptive to being conformed to God, can conform to his will and so attain the perfection of the Christian life” (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 103). There is a universal election to which all human beings are called, corresponding to the end for which human beings are created. This general election is the vocation to the perfection of Christian charity, and whichever state one might be called to, every election leads to “attain perfection” (Exx 135). This perfection is the commandment of love imposed by God: to love God and our neighbor and to fulfil this commandment by belonging to the Church. The first call to the Christian life is then defined by a second concrete call to each individual that commands the person to a particular state of life. The analogy of election and vocation, therefore, is a universal call to all human beings to share in the life of God, and for some to share in this life through a supererogatory vocation. There is an “analogy of the call, since God does not elect and call all men in the same way but sends forth his call in varying degrees of intensity and urgency” (Balthasar, 1983, p. 410).

This choice confronts us with two options and is only made once, requiring the exercitant to enter the exercises with a commitment to listen voluntarily and to accept God’s vocation for him (Balthasar, 2014, p. 41). The first vocation is to follow the commandments imposed by God, as exemplified in the married state, while the second stage consists in the perfection of the Gospel as demonstrated in Jesus’ adult life. Ignatius distinguishes between these two states of life as “the way of the commandments” and the “way of the counsels” (Exx 135), so that we might “arrive” at perfection “in whatever state or way of life God our Lord may grant us to choose” (Exx 135) (Balthasar, 2014, p. 46). This decision must be made with indifference [total availability] toward one or the other state of life. Therefore, from an Ignatian standpoint, it is crucial to enter this election without a preconceived notion of one state of life being more elevated than the other, or any impediments that would make the decision impossible. Balthasar summarizes the spiritual exercises as follows:

The sole purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive meditation on the foundations and background of St. Ignatius’ contemplation on the “Call of

Christ", and the answer we must give if we want "to give greater proof of our love" (Exx 97), and on the choice explicitly demanded of us: either to follow Christ our Lord to "the first state of life, which is that of observing the commandments", of which he has given us an example by his obedience to his parents; or to follow him to "the second state, which is that of evangelical perfection" of which he has given us an example by leaving his family, "to devote himself exclusively to the service of his eternal Father." And this so that we can "arrive at perfection,"—which is, of course, the perfection of Christian love- "in whatever state or way of life God our Lord may grant us to choose" (Exx 135) (Balthasar, 1983, p. 9).

The paradox of this election lies in understanding how individual freedom is found in the response to God's call, specifically in obedience to God's election. We choose what God chooses for us. The Spiritual Exercises tell us that we "have to prepare (*disponer*) ourselves, so that in every state or life which God our lord gives us to choose (*nos diere para elegir*) we may come to perfection" (Exx 135). This perfection is only possible if the calling we receive aligns with what God has created us for from eternity, as Schindler explains: "by choosing God's choice we realize our own idea as it exists in God, and this is supreme freedom" (Schindler 1991, p. 109). Obedience is the response of man who, in praying with the Incarnate Word, discovers God's specific will for his life (Servais 1994, p. 370). Depending on whether the Lord's call is to a distinct mission or the common mission of all Christians, those who are called are placed either in a state of election or in *religio*. This state could be marked by the external taking of vows or by the internal vow of love (obedience to the commandments) (Balthasar, 1983, pp. 162–63). Either option requires obedience to God's will and the acceptance of a more or less specific mission which involves an action. Balthasar writes:

Man's calling is to action because the grace of God always charges him with a mandate or task to be carried out by his own efforts. In thus charging him, however, God draws the recipient of his grace into his confidence, reveals to him a part of the divine plan, and commissions him to realize a part of it by his own strength and ingenuity. But man's calling to action is likewise a calling to contemplation because the recipient of grace can understand and complete the task assigned to him only by holding all the more closely and exclusively to the thought of God in gratitude for the trust God has shown him, by undertaking no deed independently of God ... (Balthasar, 1983, p. 80).

4. Obedience to Mission

Especially in the early stages of the Society of Jesus, obedience became a key concept in the organization of the Society. The Constitutions, for example, emphasized the importance of being obedient to one's Superior, to be effectively sent. In other words, the mission the Jesuit is given is made known to him through the vow of obedience, which involves renouncing one's decision making to receive the will of God through the command of his Superior: "the religious recognizes and embraces the will of God manifested to him by one who has authority to send him in the name of Christ" (GC 32, 11, 31). As the *Constitutions* say: "It is very helpful for making progress and highly necessary that all devote themselves to complete obedience, recognizing the superior, whoever he is, as being in the place of Christ our Lord and maintaining interior reverence and love for him. . . They should obey entirely." (Constitutions, 284) Furthermore, Ignatian obedience to the Superior is extended, through the Fourth vow, to an ecclesiastical obedience to: "our blessed Mother Church" (Exx 363), insofar as Ignatius recognizes the unsurpassable authority of "Christ our Lord," her "Bridegroom" (Exx 365).

Balthasar interprets the relationship of the obedience between the inferior and the superior away from categories of subordination such as the master–slave dialectic. For example, he stresses the importance of obedience to bind both superior and inferior. In the case of the superior, it would ensure that the leadership is done responsibly, in the inferior that the command is followed reverently. They both must obey the demands of the mission established by the Order and Church: “although both superior and subject must realize that it is the mission that binds superior and subject in obedience to the Lord” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 166). The commands received are also not a passive obligation that renders the discerning Jesuit submissive in a negative sense, denying active cooperation. For example, while the Jesuit is asked to submit in perfect indifference to the command received, he should do so with “fidelity to God, to the truth and to a well-formed conscience” (GC 33, 11, 31). Therefore, while Ignatius repeatedly mentions in the Constitutions that obedience should be blind and total, it cannot exclude the Jesuit’s prayerful discernment and contemplation of the action to be followed. “Obedience, then, cannot exclude our prayerful discernment of the course of action to be followed, one that may in some circumstances differ from the one suggested by our religious Church superiors” (GC 33, 11, 31). It is important to stress that Balthasar thinks of legitimate obedience as being necessary for true and authentic freedom. To illustrate it, he argues that Jesus receives the Father and hence eternal freedom in the same sovereign manner as the Father but in “the mode of obedience” to the Father, and this mode of receiving freedom and exercising freedom in light of the pursuit of happiness becomes “the concrete norm [with] universal application” (Balthasar, 2013b, p. 267).

Moreover, the Ignatian vow of obedience is somehow further specified by stressing “the openness of the Society of Jesus to the Pope (as its real superior),” highlighting that obedience is not limited to the interests of any particular order or its superiors. Instead, all these orders and superiors are ultimately accountable to the universal mission of the Church, and the obedience vowed to Christ, safeguarded in the vow of obedience, is “concretized for everyone in the Pope” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 164). The particular instance of obedience, as Balthasar calls it, as regulated by the attitude of the counsels, needs to be ultimately put at the service of the “universal obligation in the Church” to which it is ultimately already open” (Balthasar, 1995, p. 165). Later in the development of the order, the concept of availability to be sent on a mission by the superior was expanded to encompass readiness for the Church’s mission as a whole. Balthasar explains this evolution:

Obedience only became prominent in the thinking of the founder and his first companions at a later stage, that is, when, with their new Christian disposition of being ready for anything, they began to offer themselves openly to the visible hierarchical Church as instruments at her disposal. The Pope became the administrator of this store of ‘readiness,’ the real ‘general’ of the new society, which became the outstanding instrument of the Counter-Reformation (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 109).

The obedience to the Church hierarchy and her teachings, however, is more fundamentally a sharing in the obedience of the faith of the Church. Balthasar argues that the role of Mary is very important in this regard, as seen in the repetition of the *suscipe* prayer (“through Mary to Jesus, and through Jesus to the Father”). “This insistence can only mean that Mary—and of course Jesus—archetypally embody the governing idea of the Exercises, the ideal to which they aspire” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 41). He understands this obedience of faith as an imitation of the obedience of the Son through the archetype of Mary: “We can easily show that Mary belongs to the ideal,” Balthasar points out, “because if, as Catholic dogma teaches, she was conceived immaculately and remained sinless ever after, then she has always already attained the perfection of the creature’s attitude of *indiferencia vis-à-vis* God.” (Balthasar, 2014, p. 41)

This could be perceived, for example, when the preaching of the Church might not match our own understanding of things, which requires that the individual Christians “pass beyond [their] personal ‘views’ and ‘opinions’ (2 Cor 10:5) into the perspective of the Church (where she truly obeys, and her obedience is guaranteed)” (Balthasar, 2017, p. 60). This is not only intellectual but also pertains to the will. There could be a diversity of opinion about the will to love and how this is realized. However, if this interpretation is done outside the Church, then there arises a difference of opinion that is not proper to the unity of the Lord himself

5. A Trinitarian Interpretation of Ignatian Obedience?

The distinctively Balthasarian impute is not to highlight the military and knightly context of obedience by tracing it to the biography of Inigo, the soldier and noble man (Rahner 1953, p. 112). He, instead, believes that Ignatian obedience has a Trinitarian theological background that animates it. An intuition that has no clear support except in the form of pointers. One is the connection between Divine Majesty, as the service to an eternal King, and Ignatius’ first vision of the Trinity. Ignatius says: “he felt a great devotion to the Divine Majesty whenever he prayed to the Blessed Trinity” (Olin 2024, p. 15). In his letter to the Portuguese Jesuits, when Ignatius invokes the Trinity in reference to the potential of self-surrender to God, he says: “Look also at the people around you and realize that they are an image of the Holy Trinity. They have potential for the glory of Him to whom the universe is subject” (Ignatius, 1996, pp. 495–510). Finally, we also find suggestions in the recent General Congregations that the Jesuit imitates the Trinity in his being-sent to mission: “In the Spiritual Exercises, we contemplate the mission of Christ as a response of the Blessed Trinity to the sins which afflict the world” (GC34, 2, 26). To illustrate this innovation, we will look at Speyr’s Trinitarian interpretation of Ignatian obedience first, and then, briefly provide Balthasar’s account of Trinitarian obedience.

Balthasar’s encounter with Speyr and his witnessing of her mystical ecstasies, during which she dictated profound spiritual interpretations of Scriptures, particularly the Gospel of John, profoundly impacted his life as a Jesuit priest. Her extraordinary charisms deeply shook his Jesuit spirituality, leading him to interpret these mystical revelations as a profound extension and deepening of Ignatian spirituality. This extension broadened the Ignatian charism of apostolic mission into the secular world, as exemplified by Speyr and her community’s formation of a secular institute. He acknowledged Speyr’s works as inseparable from his own, attributing to them and to the community of Saint John, which they co-founded, an importance that he, in his humility, did not attribute to his own publications: “my own publications I would put third and last” (Balthasar, 1993).

Balthasar met Speyr at a social gathering in her house in Basel while he served as a student chaplain at the University of Basel (Balthasar, 2017, p. 117). Their encounter unfolded on the balcony of her picturesque home, which offered views overlooking the main square and church. It was there that Speyr approached him with questions about her desire to convert to Catholicism. Speyr had a lengthy history of experiencing extraordinary graces and visitations, yet she grappled with the clause from the Lord’s Prayer: “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” She approached Balthasar, inquiring about how human beings could discern and fulfill God’s will. Balthasar assumed the role of her spiritual director and confessor, guiding Speyr in this pursuit. After he received her into the Catholic Church through conditional baptism, their collaboration deepened. The struggle with the clause of the Lord’s Prayer became the distinctive characteristic of her spirituality, like in other saints, the aspect most misplaced about the person is transformed by God’s grace to become something distinctive of his personality, just like the misguided desire for military glory, which is motivated by a sense of self-love and pride of Ignatius, lead

him to a conversion that resulted in a dedication of his life for the much humbler and less elegant service and praise for the glory of God. In Speyr, her struggle to understand how to carry out the divine will led her to center her charism on obedience that is “is entirely a question of ‘not my will but thine be done’” (Speyr, 1986, p. 84). Balthasar was called upon to witness Speyr’s one-hour-long mystical interpretations, often focused on the scriptures. This experience profoundly influenced him, prompting him to dedicate a significant portion of his illustrious academic career to editing and publishing the content of these revelations in a manner that was intelligible within ecclesiastical circles. His mission in the Church became secondary to Speyr’s charism of “deepening and enlivening” of the existing dogmas (Balthasar, 2017, p. 57).

Part of this expansion of theological understanding involved a profound development of Ignatius’s concept of obedience, which aligns with the analogical-Trinitarian interpretation of obedience. The deepening was facilitated by the influence of mystical insights, both from Ignatius himself and from other spiritual sources, and by integrating Ignatius’s notion of obedience with the Trinitarian foundation of obedience found in Johannine literature.

The encounter with Adrienne gave all this a special depth. What was theologically implicit in Ignatius began from then on, with full fidelity to the spirit of the Ignatian initiative, to become explicit in the biblical commentaries that were dictated, especially in those referring to John. The theology of the Exercises acquired a formidable Christological-Trinitarian transformation and at the same time, evidently, a Mariological-ecclesial background (Balthasar, 1988, p. 49).

This experience of Christian obedience kept Speyr’s personal charism; it was a principle that she embodied throughout her life. Balthasar says that “Adrienne’s obedience is perfect and complete, with both natural and mystical trials powered over and over again. All the subsequent themes were able to be elaborated only on the basis of this absolute obedience. Her soul was pliant clay out of which God could fashion whatever form he wished, without resistance.” From this spiritual experience of obedience in her life, Speyr was able to place obedience at the core of her spiritual mission. Despite the sheer number of perspectives and angles through which the Bible is approached, one can easily identify a fruitful leitmotif. It is the desire for Speyr to obey God in everything and in all possible ways that is not motivated by rigidity to the letter of the law nor by tepid observance of commandments that come to us as external impositions: there is a mysticism of obedience that results from a total love to God and results in supreme joy. Balthasar recounts: “for her it was a supreme grace and supreme joy to be allowed to obey—God, Christ, the Church—regardless of the severity of what was demanded. From her experience of obedience, she was able to give the most discerning descriptions of the obedience of Christ and also that of the Church” (Balthasar, 2017, p. 60).⁴

She offers three scriptural interpretations of obedience. The Pauline tradition denotes for her imitation and mediation. The Johannine refers to the primacy of obedience as love. The Marian highlights obedience as availability and assent. The three are incorporated across Speyr’s corpus, in various degrees of specification to give shape and form to the Ignatian obedience. Balthasar summarizes thus Speyr’s influences on her understanding of obedience:

- (1) It was part of the mission of the new foundation, in which Ignatian spirituality was to be traced back to its Johannine sources and origins;
- (2) Adrienne tended towards a certain feminine quality of the Johannine attitude, which, moreover
- (3) is itself closely related to the Marian one. She related least well with Paul; there is much to read in her diary on this subject: the placing of his own personality in

the forefront, the exhortation to imitate him (as he imitates Christ) was difficult to reconcile with Adrienne's spirit of "effacement" (Balthasar, 2017, pp. 81–82).

Obedience as Imitation: Obedience is closely linked with imitation, where Paul serves as a model of imitation of Christ ("Be imitators of me as I am of Christ", 1 Corinthians 11:1). The mission that shapes his entire life is filtered through his personality, because his "mission is embodied in him." To the extent that he becomes identified with the mission, there is a double movement: the more he grows into the mission, the more the mission grows into him (Speyr, 1956, p. 31). This is because the Lord has given him a very "personal" task, the message being only comprehensible when the listeners are aware of his personality: what he does, why he does it, and to whom he does it. He knows that when he invites the audience to obey him, and he obeys the Lord, that he is only a mediator and no away is he replacing the God as the rightful authority. The crux is "it is part of his mission to be able to imitate the Lord in such a way that, on the basis of this imitation, he can make the truths he is to preach come alive to others" (Speyr, 1956, pp. 312–13). What Paul, however, transmits to the followers is not his own truth or his own personality but the tradition (1 Corinthians 11:2). An obedience that accepts certain aspects of the individual person that is obeying but which nonetheless is firm in what it is to be obeyed and how it ought to be done. Speyr suggests that Paul is in this way prefiguring the importance of obedience to a Canon, and to the ecclesial authorities, which he is himself being commissioned to embody. It is important to see his authority not as something which he himself claims but something that is God given and obey his exhortation not because of his insightful interpretation of the Gospel but insofar as they are God given. It reinforces the importance of hierarchy and representation in obedience, which according to Speyr, was necessary at those communities that did not have the apostles and their testimonies of having walks along Jesus to contrast the daily life exigencies.

Obedience as Love: Johannine obedience stresses less intensely the element of representation/mediation of obedience since John never presents himself as a model to be imitated. However, there is, certainly, a level of mimesis here as well, since every obedience is an imitation of the obedience of Jesus to the Father. The priority for John is the new commandment: to love God and the neighbor, which come down to essentially the commandment to love God through our love of neighbor. The way to obey God, however, is to observe all the commandments and keep them all as being part of the one new commandment. Nothing more is demanded, nothing but love, but to love is to desire his will, to observe what he has commanded. Speyr writes: "demanding nothing but love, he demands that those who love him walk his path, and that means keeping his commandments" (Speyr, 1993, p. 112). The bottom line is that one ought to love God, and that because of this love, one also loves the neighbor. Obedience is not seen as constrictive, repressive; it is not strictly speaking a rule imposed from without but instead it should emanate as the natural expression of the lover. To the point that the more one loves the beloved the more wishes to obey, and the more this obedience is seen as perfect union of will, and thus as love. Speyr writes: "But the dichotomy within him between his will and the Lord's will must disappear. This dichotomy eclipses the Lord's love as well as his will, thus thwarting his working too" (Speyr, 1993, p. 112).

Obedience as Assent: Obedience takes the form of the attitude of the handmaid as openness, availability, and readiness to the commands and revelations of God in Mary. Her whole being is marked by these traits: "she is indivisibly and forever a handmaid, and her whole being endeavors to meet the expectations of the divine Lord. The loftiest or the most meagre thing can reside in each and every gesture that obedience demands of her, and yet she pays no attention to this" (Speyr, 2003, p. 14). Her identity as handmaid, places her availability and assent to the Holy Spirit as the central feature of her being and

everything steams from it: “In freedom she said Yes, and everything now develops out of her assent, it all develops after her freedom” (Speyr, 2003, p. 46). The centrality of assent permeates, according to Speyr, her unique way of integrating the three vows: her virgin body is complete availability for the Incarnation of the Son of God, her poverty guarantees the space to receive “all the blessings of heaven” (Speyr, 2003, p. 26), and her obedience is perfect to the extent that it seems to define her entire existence, since there is no “painful obedience” in the person that is all assent, that the assent proceeds the deliberation of the commandment given “Her very existence is obedience” (Speyr, 2003, p. 25).

According to Balthasar, Speyr’s take on obedience is characterized by a clear preference for the Johannine emphasis on love and mission, finding its synthesis in a characteristically Ignatian interpretation of obedience: “the Ignatian, in a new, bold, and powerful expression intended for our time, expounded in the medium of the Johannine as the concluding interpretation of biblical revelation.” What is then this new expression of an Ignatian understanding of obedience? Balthasar answers quite decisively: “Ignatian obedience (which was always understood in the scope as love) will now be interpreted in the context of Johannine love; this love gives its stamp not only to Christology, but (which is ultimately the same thing) also penetrates the very heart of the doctrine of the Trinity”. The trinitarian obedience is deduced by looking at the mission of the Son: a mission of loving obedience to the Father. This loving obedience becomes everything that comes the way of the Son enduring, and it is not lukewarm or tepid. It is a steadfast commitment to serve the mission of the Son: “a love that is ready to take everything on itself, even the Cross, [...] a love that fully renounces itself and therefore bears everything. It bears the whole sin of the world” (Speyr, 1993, p. 68).

This participation, according to Speyr, takes the more concrete form of mission as an extension of the Ignatian obedience, which is always fundamentally about mission, about action in contemplation, about ministering to the world and serving the Church. The acceptance and living of this mission that is entrusted to us therefore facilitates the final step of the trinitarian obedience. To allow a mode of life modelled after the trinitarian infinite exchange of love, whereby the persons are modes of subsistence, being themselves in their tending to the other, proving the infinite substantial unite in the difference of the missions. Speyr writes commenting on John:

From the Son to the Father, the Son transforms us, and the Father receives us as his children; and on the way from the Father to the Son the Father perfects our childhood by allowing us to participate in the Son’s mission. The mission with which we are sent out is an echo of the Son’s trinitarian mission. Once the trinitarian life begins to unfold in us and we have become children of God, once the Trinity comes into our souls, and the three Persons have lovingly become one in us, we are sent out on the trinitarian mission (Speyr, 2023, p. 124)

6. Discussion

The spiritual intuitions of Speyr are systematized in Balthasar’s dramatic theology. He also locates in the dynamic of obeying the command of the one sending the very heart of Johannine theology and as a participation in the “intra-trinitarian relationship of the Son to his Father” (Servais 1996, p. 370). He acknowledges the challenges in understanding “how his trinitarian being and action can be translated into something that (by grace) can be imitated by creatures” (Balthasar, 2013b, p. 120). Nonetheless, the trinitarian analogy from the economy (the Son’s mission) to the immanent Trinity (the eternal life of God) gains depth by establishing the measure between these two analogical poles. The convergence of the two axes of the concrete analogy is found in the obedience of the Son: “the making present of the life of the Trinity and the ultimate foundation and perfection of the attitude

distinctively characteristic of the creature before his God meet together in the miracle of the God-man's archetypal obedience" (Balthasar, 1963, p. 42). Obedience thus serves as a means to partake in the Son's filial relationship with the Father. Participation in the Trinitarian life is dynamic; it necessitates not only involvement in the divine attributes but also in the intimate relations among the divine persons. These relations, as previously explained, are rooted in a principle of loving obedience. To Balthasar:

It is insufficient, therefore, to portray the life of grace in terms of a special "presence" and "indwelling" of the Persons of the Son and the Spirit (sent by the Father) in the souls of the recipients of grace; the purpose of this indwelling is to enable men to participate in the relations between the Divine Persons; and relations are precisely what these Persons are, wholly and entirely (Balthasar, 1998, p. 428).

In other words, the dual call to emulate Christ's obedience and to partake in the divine life manifests concretely through sharing in Christ's mission, and consequently, in the mission of the Church. The Christological mission of the Son inherently reflects the Trinitarian nature analogically, and by participating in Christ's obedient mission, we also participate analogously in the Trinitarian life of love. Balthasar summarizes this perspective succinctly:

If grace grants us a share in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), and if this elevates and transfigures the created imago into a *similitudo*, it follows that the person thus endowed with grace must participate in the triune life in ways that are ever new and ever more profound (...) the rigid statue of the *imago*, which somehow has a form, comes alive; it lives and moves in the realm of the Son's mission (Balthasar, 2013b, p. 528).

This essay has argued that Balthasar can be considered an Ignatian theologian despite his personal decision to abandon the Society of Jesus. He offers a rich and complex treatment of the notion of obedience in the Exercises by relating it to indifference, election, service, and mission. Balthasar's interpretation, enriched by Speyr's mystical theology, situates Ignatian obedience within the Trinitarian life of God, where the Son's loving submission to the Father becomes the paradigm for Christian discipleship. This obedience is not passive but a dynamic readiness to be sent, to serve, and to love. It is contemplative and active, ecclesial and personal, rooted in the discernment of God's will and the joyful surrender to it. Thus, Ignatian obedience, when viewed through a Trinitarian lens, emerges as a profound participation in the divine mission of love.

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Notes

- ¹ (Rahner 1953, p. 111) citing Ignatius Spiritual Diary, MI 3, I, 131: "dadme humildad amorosa y así reverencia y acatamiento."
- ² The practice of indifference, as understood by Ignatius, does not therefore mean the inevitable annihilation of man's own being and will. That interpretation, which is to be found in varying degrees of strength in spirituality from Eckhart to Fenelon, is the symptom of a latent Monothelitism, not to say eastern-style pantheism:" (Balthasar, 2012a, p. 104).
- ³ To be precise, there are three books that impacted him. "*The life of Christ* by German Carthusian, Ludolph of Saxony, was that which had been translated into Spanish by Fary Ambrosio Montesino and published at Alcala in 1502–03. He read *The Golden*

Legend by Jacopo de Voragine in the Spanish translation by the Cistercian Goberto Maria Vagad, which appeared at Saragossa in 1493 and was reprinted at Toledo in 1511. Concerning *The Imitation of Christ*, ... ascribed at the time to Gerson, the one-time chancellor of the University of Paris" (Rahner 1953, pp. 24–25).

- 4 She identifies obedience with similar Ignatian themes that we have previously discussed. On the intention of the First Week of the Exercises, she writes: "Moreover, this effort, which runs like a thread through the whole of the Spiritual Exercises, is supposed to bring me to the point where I can elect what God has elected for me (Exx135)" (Speyr, 2022, p. 30). On the meaning of prayer, contemplation and action, she writes: "obedience and contemplation interpenetrate one another. It is altogether impossible that someone who is disobedient might practice genuine contemplation. Contemplative prayer is grounded in and fructified by obedience" (Speyr, 2022, p. 30). Finally, on the Ignatian theme of "Thinking with the Church", she writes: "The unity of the development of doctrine is preserved in this attitude of obedience to its teachings and exhortations: 'where unity is to reign, there must be order, and therefore, for the attainment of this order, there must be obedience'" (Speyr, 1993, p. 185).

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