



THE EXERCISES IN ORDINARY LIFE

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1. PRESENTATION

1.1 A challenge.

In around the middle of the year 1983 we set ourselves a challenge - to give the ignatian Exercises to suitable members of our 'Comunidad Popular' of the district of Collblanc (Barcelona, Spain). In this way, we hoped, too, to make it easy a closer relationship with the Christian Life Communities (CLC), especially for the young people of the 'Comunidad Popular'.

For many years we had been putting on regular meetings and celebrations, courses in scripture and theology etc. We had now to take a further step towards, promoting a truly personalized faith, firmly grounded in commitment. But neither for adults nor youth was there any possibility of making a retreat of four or five days. Nor, in any case, is a period of four or five days long enough to assimilate the ignatian experience at any depth.

To meet the concrete situation of the year 1983 as we saw it, we gathered seven married couples, young or in their middle years, and proposed to them a spring week-end retreat in which to have a first experience of prayer and silence. Over 1983-4 we then conducted with these the first programme of the Exercises in daily life; it would last for four months and be re-inforced by three retreats of 48 hours at the beginning, middle and end of the experience, as shall be explained in detail below.

Since then, we have offered the programme annually. Young people and adults of various Christian communities or movements, have passed through it. Participants have also included young people and adults of our Christian Life Communities, and individuals commended to us by former exercitants or Counsellors. It has always been important for us that the group should be made up half of young people and half of adults. The presence of an adult community turned out to be very significant for the young ; it is for them a living image of the possibility of a committed and credible adult christianity. For the adults, the presence of the young brings a distinctive note of hope into what is one of the most powerful experiences of christianity of their lives. In this type of Exercises, it can also be of value to add a group of five or six religious (young and adult) so that religious life be evangelized by young married couples, and that for the seculars, both young and adult, the reality of religious life be a background to their experience.

The group now consists each year of 25 persons (this year 35, which has proved, however, to be an excessive number for our resources). Each one has a Counsellor with whom they meet on a weekly basis. This means that each year some 15 people have to be mobilized as Counsellors.

1.2. Ignatian Exercises

There can be no doubt that our project - which claims to be very faithful to the ignatian methodology - has the limits of any adaptation. But it is Ignatius himself who in his 18th annotation encourages adaptation of the method so as to respond in a realistic way to the individual exercitant.

The experience of the ignatian Exercises, as we have come to propose them, takes as its starting point the supposition formulated by Ignatius in the 19th annotation, where he refers to persons prevented by their affairs from going into retreat for a sufficient time to make the Exercises. In this annotation he describes an adaptation through which persons such as these can make the authentic Exercises, even in their entirety.

Though the 19th annotation envisages adaptation for the reason of "available time", it opens the possibility of adaptation for reasons of "life-situation". The majority of our exercitants do in fact find considerable difficulty in getting away for a complete week (especially parents with young children when husband and wife are both working, but many young people also have difficulties arising from professional or scholastic or voluntary commitments). However, in the cases we are dealing with here, the idea of adaptation, which was first provoked by the 'time' motive, also enabled us to adapt better to the "situations" of our clientele, while remaining faithful - we believe - to the internal dynamics and the contents of the ignatian Exercises. To the search for God's will in one's own life, it has brought all the realism of the daily round and a large experience of four months of ordered prayer, spiritual accompaniment and discernment.

1.3 The method

In the course of nine years we have progressively modified our methodology, adapting it to the participants of each group and learning continuously from ongoing experience. In the following account there could therefore be a danger of filtering out the best of each year and giving a rather ideal picture of what we are trying to do.

We are concerned, as we said, with a programme of four months of exercises in ordinary life with a weekly meeting with the accompanying Counsellor and a reinforcement of three intensive retreats from Friday night to Sunday night. Let's look at all this in parts.

2. THE WEEKEND RETREATS

The first danger to be averted by both exercitants and Counsellors is that of giving greater significance to the more intense - and satisfying - experience of the week-end retreat than to that of making the Exercises in the more arid and difficult situation of ordinary life. It is mainly in the hard grind of ordinary life that the effects of the Exercises come into play.

And precisely for this reason we have the week-end retreats - that they become a support for the work in daily life.

In the first Retreat are proposed the ignatian themes

of the first week; in the second, the basic points of the second week. In the third, as conclusion we expound the paschal mystery not so much from the perspective adopted by Ignatius in his third and fourth weeks but rather as re-inforcing the perspectives of the second.

2.1. Four themes.

In each week-end retreat four themes are proposed, to each of which is assigned three times of prayer (two of an hour), which means a total of some five hours of prayer a day. This programme we must now consider in some detail

Each exercise begins with the giving of points -- half an hour maximum -- a short photo-copied outline of the points is provided, as well as a concrete methodology for making prayer.

There follows a complete hour of personal prayer.

A second time of community prayer in a small group which is led by one of the Counsellors (c 30 minutes). In the case of couples, it is recommended that this prayer be between the partners (for this they have been given beforehand a brief methodology, as we shall explain later)

After a break, the theme which has been exercised finishes in a third time of personal prayer for an hour in the style of the resume or repetition taught in the book of the Exercises [62,64].

Each theme occupies a morning or afternoon. For the evening, after supper, a broad period of time is given to an overall examen, in which the exercitant evaluates the entire day, and notes the principal movements during prayer and the other periods together with any difficulties of method etc. (Later we shall explain the content of these themes and the apprenticeship of prayer and examen)

2.2.The apprenticeship of prayer

Above all , it is indispensable to make an apprenticeship of prayer. especially with regard to personal prayer, but also. to communitarian prayer, and when relevant, prayer between partners.

2.2.1 Introduction to personal prayer.

At least at the beginning we propose a very concrete methodology which serves as a kind of prayer "go-cart" A sheet entitled "suggestions for prayer" is distributed and commented on. In this we propose a simple method. For many, it will be a wonderful discovery to realize that in prayer an hour can be filled easily and agreeably. The sheet indicates that prayer has three moments: 1) certain indispensable preliminaries 2) the central part 3) a conclusion.

The preliminaries . The exercitant must discover above all the pedagogy of the first additions[73-75] We make three points:

a that even before prayer there needs to be a time when one begins to centre oneself, turn one's thoughts towards prayer, desire to meet with the Lord (we remind them of the scene of the fox and the corn-gold hair of the Little Prince in St Exupery's fable);

b the need to become conscious of being in the presence of the Lord, to greet him cordially etc

c the necessity of the initial petition -- "asking for what I want" [48] - since all is gift of the Lord, and also because the petition fixes the objective of the exercise.

The body of the prayer: We suggest the exercitant that following on the above,

they try to remember, in dialogue with the Lord, the points which struck them personally in the exposition of the theme (this corresponds to the use of memory of the exercise of the powers [45]); that they reflect (use of the "understanding") and that they try to move from knowing to feeling, asking the Spirit to turn into flesh their heart of stone (response of the "will", the heart, in the exercise cited). They easily spend considerable time in this and tend by themselves to arrive at colloquy, without the idea being proposed to them.

But it is also possible that for some, after a quarter of an hour, inspiration may come to an end. In this case, we suggest that they take their photocopy of the points and read it slowly and savouringly, underlining words, writing reflections, drawing applications, all in dialogue with the Lord; also that frequently they interrupt reflexion and take the photocopied psalm we have given them so as through it express their feelings before the Lord.

Often, we tell them, one will cease to use words and prefer to confine oneself to a silent contemplation, much as one might gaze upon the immensity of the sea or the beauty of the fire. We try to introduce them to already to a prayer of a more contemplative kind.

The idea of this central part of the prayer, we explain, is to enable the exercitant to penetrate the theme in depth

The conclusion of prayer. The exercitant must also learn that prayer concludes in a colloquy with the Lord which takes up everything that has been felt and understood during the hour of prayer, and that it is important briefly to write these down as a kind of 'log of the journey'. In this way, one can begin to introduce exercitants to the practice of examining the movements of prayer and to the fifth addition [77]

The first experiences of prayer made with a certain method usually proves to be highly gratifying. There are always some

among the exercitants who could never have imagined that they could remain an hour in silence and prayer, and in sharing their experiences in the times of evaluation, they give a very positive rating to the "suggestions for prayer" sheet.

This apprenticeship in prayer having been made in the course of this week—end, the exercitant will have to examine more in detail with their Counsellor what should their own form and style of prayer.

In the second week-end, which is an introduction; to the Second Week, the exercitants will give themselves to a new method of prayer, similar to the former but now no longer consisting in meditative prayer according to the use of the three powers [45-54] but in the method of contemplative prayer expounded by Ignatius in the first day of the second week [101-131]

2.2.2. Prayer in group.

In the first week-end we give this a larger role and more time; but as experience develops, its place is reduced in favour of personal prayer. The type of people who come to these Exercises are accustomed to meetings of various kinds - discussion, debate, study We are now helping them to enter into a new experience: that of meeting together before God (not in the simple dialogue, debate, study which consists basically in meeting before one another). Even more, they must be helped to discover that this encounter of community prayer is an epiphany of the Spirit: that where two or three are united in the Lord's name there He himself is present. The prayer of the group will be neither dialogue, nor study, nor mutual exchange etc. It will be the simple exposition of movements (what each has felt and understood in his or her personal prayer) In what the other declares each will be able to discover the presence of the Creator Spirit which, like in a new Pentecost, speaks through the mouth of one's companion. Here, too, each will have to learn to adore even here (through - dare one say this? - the particular face features of a companion) the Presence of God.

In connection with this type of exercise, two dangers, however, should be kept in mind: that the exercise becomes for some an experience of personal success, while producing feelings of inferiority in others , who believe themselves unable. to speak adequately. The team of counsellors must know the ways of overcoming such difficulties in a group which is diverse both in age and in culture.

It is also important that married people learn to pray as partners (prayer of the couple). They must experience the truth that the "subject" who stands before God is also another's partner. By way of beginning, with the purpose precisely of "prayer apprenticeship", a concrete method is proposed to them; it is suggested that this period of prayer begin with a mutual

greeting and a vocal prayer begging of the Lord the fruit of the exercise currently being made. After these preliminaries, the prayer consists in explaining to one another the movements of personal prayer (i.e. the things understood and felt) and seeing how these relate to the concrete realities of their life. The time of prayer can terminate with a final read prayer (e.g. a psalm, or a prayer of their own composition).

The prayer-of-the couple learnt during the Weekend and put into effect through the four months amid the hassle of ordinary life, is one of the major fruits of this way of making the Exercises. Without difficulty married exercitants come to share it frequently.

Though much of the foregoing section has been devoted to discussing group prayer, in conclusion let it be repeated that in exercises within the ignatian school, the principal element, and that to which most time should be given, is personal prayer.

2.3 Examen.

As implied in the above discussion, we propose that at the end of the day, the exercitants put in writing the principal movements of their prayer and in this way build up a kind of log of the journey. We also suggest that they see whether the prayer has gone well or badly and why. An attempt is made to introduce briefly the fifth addition [77]

In the evening after supper there is a general exercise on the examen. We introduce it by a brief informal talk on the value of the ignatian examen as a means of knowing and recognizing our interior movements, both in times of prayer and in the course of the day [316-317] At the same time, we set out the general lines of the fifth addition [77] and of the general examen [43]

With this introduction, the exercitants retire to make an examen lasting a good quarter of an hour. They are asked in a context of thanksgiving and prayer to recall their principal movements, look over their notes and papers, identify the elements of method which were helpful and those which did not seem to work. All this must take in the whole day.

After this, we gather again in the meeting room, where each is asked to share some aspect of the method which they found especially helpful (way of praying, silence, communitarian prayer in groups or couples, the occasional writing during prayer etc). This is usually an enjoyable stage for all, and one in which people learn from each other about the specific ways of making the various exercises. The Director can use the occasion to give brief explanations -- often taking the form of response to difficulties -- of annotations, rules etc. or to draw attention to particularly important details among the points that have come up.

In a week-end group retreat, which has to be a support for

the exercises in ordinary life, we have realized that the various (and few) moments of sharing are helpful and create a climate. But if these were developed too far, there would be a danger of people becoming dependent on the dynamics of the group, and losing out on the individual character proper to the exercises of Ignatius which tend towards "separation from friends and acquaintances" [20.2] Though in our case the element of solitude arises in ordinary life, even at this stage a balance must be found, and the person responsible for the group must keep an eye on this.

The day concludes in the chapel with a final prayer, vocal or silent, from which each rises to go to their room when they are ready. Some people remain in this prayer for a good length of time.

2.4. Silence

During the first years, for strictly practical reasons, we chose the Casal Borja, of Sant Cugat del Valles. This is not so much a house of silence and retreat but rather a multi-purpose centre for cultural and christian meetings, in which each week-end 100 to 200 persons can easily be brought together (christian communities, cultural groups etc) But at the same time, it provides sufficient opportunities for isolation and for finding places ideal for silence (room, park, woods, the two chapels of the Casal and the two in the Jesuit residence) On our side, the situation helped to clarify some points of principle. We realized that in the dynamic of exercises in ordinary life, there is no need, even in the week-end retreats, to try to get absolute silence. Moreover, for exercises of this kind, we felt that the classic retreat houses with the impression they can convey of elitism and spiritual luxury, were unsuitable. We saw as positively preferable a more popular place which might be hosting a parish group, a christian youth movement, even cultural meetings of a not specifically christian character, as well as our group of exercitants. Thus even during the retreat 'ordinary life' would be present.

For the last five or six years, however, we have preferred a more secluded situation, where there is only our own group and the ambiance is more conducive to creating silence. For the final week-end retreat we always now choose the retreat house next to the Cave where St Ignatius stayed at Manresa, for its quasi-sacramental value from which we try to benefit to the maximum. But even so, the principle remains that in the dynamics of the Exercises in ordinary life there is no need to try to achieve for the exercitants absolute silence. We try to procure a general climate of silence during the day, but we talk over meals and extend the dessert course so that exercitants can get to know each other. All this, together with the times of community prayer, Eucharist and the evening session - which includes the night examen as we shall explain - goes to produce a certain group dynamics, which, though in no way envisaged in the book of the Exercises, can be beneficial.

Despite its intensity, the retreat as a whole turns out to be a relaxing occasion. This can be due in part to the brevity of a week-end experience, but it arises also from the atmosphere of cordiality breathed in the moments spent together. Sometimes during the exercises, a need is felt especially among the young, to meet and chat in groups which easily become "clandestine" and as such bring tension rather than relaxation. In the situation described above, the need to "chat" is well contained by the method itself.

2.5. The points

As already explained, in the First Weekend we present a concentrated form of the first week ; in the second, the themes of the second week as far as the two standards - three classes; while in the third we present the paschal mystery, not from the perspectives of the third and fourth weeks but in relation to the objectives of the second.

In the four months, the exercitant generally reaches at most the level which Ignatius expects of the first half of the second week (often it is already a good outcome if the exercitant comes to reach seriously the objectives of the ignatian first week). When the "official" four months are ended it remains for an exercitant possessing the requisite qualities to move on with their counsellor to greater heights.

From the beginning exercitants are told that the matter proposed in the Weekend will be more than can be digested in this brief space of time. For the moment one has to "cram in" what must subsequently be slowly absorbed amid the realities of ordinary life, where the authenticity of ideas and feelings arising in the peaceful climate of retreat are ultimately ratified.

3. TWO PERIODS OF TWO MONTHS IN ORDINARY LIFE

Little by little, as the experience of the four months goes on, people discover that it is in ordinary life that the effects of the exercises mainly come into play. In these four months all that has been understood and felt in the retreat is digested out. And it is digested out in the midst of daily difficulties and contradictions, accompanied by frequent prayer and by meetings with the Counsellor. The resulting spiritual experience is in no way idealistic or ingenuous.

The dynamics of prayer in ordinary life leads the person to desire to return again to the longer periods of prayer made possible by the Weekend retreat, in the same way that the dynamics of the Weekend called for the ratification of its insights in day to day to realities.

The different exercises of this two month period pivot upon two axes: a) personal prayer, b) spiritual direction.

In the first years when we gave these exercises, we offered as a back—up some meetings of the whole group for a time of communitarian prayer (as to be explained below). We came however to drop this, because of the practical difficulty that means to burden the exercitants with an extra commitment, and also in order to maintain the primacy of personal (prayer, spiritual direction) over group elements.

Prayer

Each week the exercitant receives by post or from their Counsellor, a sheet with orientations for prayer. Each of these explains or amplifies one of the points of the Weekend Retreat.

3.1.1 Extended times of prayer

The exercitant has to find a number of extended times for prayer during the course of the week (whether four, five or daily will emerge from the examen, experience and dialogue with the Counsellor). These more extended times of prayer will be devoted to deepening the points from the Week-end recalled in the Orientations sheet. Above all, with the help of the Counsellor, the exercitant will have gradually to learn their own particular and personal way of praying.

If the personal prayer does not achieve the required minimums of quality and quantity - in spite of the aridities and desolations intrinsic to daily life - the Exercises will be greatly impoverished. In this matter, the Counsellor should provide considerable help. It is also worth bearing in mind that Ignatius expects an hour's prayer a day in the 19th annotation [19,4].

3.1.2. Prayer in the course of life

At the same time, the Orientations initiate the exercitant into prayer "in life". In particular, attention is drawn to three times of the day (note the correspondence with the method of the particular examen [24-31]).

a) In the morning a prayer should be made, perhaps very brief (while dressing, or going to work, or in the metro...) which marks the day with the point of the Exercises to be worked on during that week. For example, if the orientations sheet refers to the God's Fatherhood, recall that God is Father and Mother, and rejoice in this, ask to be able to recognize in the course of the day the times when the features of fatherhood or motherhood to be met with in oneself or in others. If the Orientations and the prayer of the week deals with the Principle and Foundation rule to use things in so far as they help ... and to be free of them in so far as they stand in the way... ("tantum/quantum"), note this in the morning and impress it on the day while asking the Spirit for light to see how I (and others) behave or fail to behave in this way. Following other Orientations, the exercitant might begin the day looking at the face of Christ on the Cross and seeking light to discover, throughout the day, Christ crucified for his/her own sins and for those of all persons; or to feel themselves called by Jesus to be with him during the day in the great labour of building the kingdom; etc.

This prayer of the morning, which can last for some time or only a few minutes, aims to bring into ordinary life a special quality of attentiveness.

Through the day, with naturalness, and without in any way forcing things, one tries to maintain this quality of attentiveness. For this, one has sufficient resource in the moments - or 'flashes'- of insight which, even if only very briefly, light up the present real life with the guiding light of the matter to be dealt with along the day. At the beginning, it will not be easy to get these insights and to pay attention to the ongoing life in the midst of the weariness and stress of the daily round, but this is essential precisely in order to achieve that the whole of life be converted into "exercise". In this way, through the examen and through dialogue with their Counsellor the exercitant will become aware week by week of an increasing quality of enlightenment throughout their life.

c) In the evening, for a few minutes, or perhaps a longer period, one tries to go over the day with the intention of interpreting it according to the gospel norms coming out of the material proposed for meditation in the Orientations sheet. One will rejoice or be sad before Jesus according to his life coherence or incoherence; one will recognize the presence or absence of the kingdom in the various situations, news—items, etc., that have appeared in the course of the day, and which one did not at the time see explicitly with the eyes of faith because there could be no pause for contemplation. (Within the methodology of the particular examen, to which we have referred, this would be the moment to recall the 'flashes of insight', jotting down the number, so as to compare one day with another as indicated in additions 2 to 4 of the ignatian particular examen [28-30].

Day by day, and slowly, the apprenticeship of prayer in the stream of life develops, and through it a good majority of exercitants come to live with greater depth in the presence of God. The basic points seen in concentrated form during the weekend retreat become gradually present in the consciousness of life.

Each will live out these times of prayer in their own way. For some, the easier and more important time may be that of the morning or the evening prayer; for others it will be the prayer during the day. But for all, there always comes about a progressive integration of prayer and life.

During the Exercises, at times a person gives greater importance to prolonged prayer, at other times to the prayer just described. These are two styles of prayer which exist in a dialectical relationship, each calling forth the other. We must not, however, forget the central place that belongs to times of spacious and extended prayer.

The Orientations, especially in the first two-month block, have more the purpose of a reminder (reminding that the prayer has to be done and how to go about it) than that of giving new material on what has been already explained during the Weekend retreat. Hence, they can sometimes be repetitious; but experience has consistently shown the value of this way of proceeding.

On the other hand, in the second two month block, the weekly Orientations, besides being a reminder, they also help to unfold and amplify the main ideas of the second week which were expounded in somehow summary fashion during the second week-end retreat. They provide too fresh material for meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ.

3.2. Spiritual direction

Here we have one of the most essential characteristics of every kind of ignatian exercises, and specifically of the present "adaptation". Each Exercitant has his or her own Counsellor, an arrangement which requires, in our experience, that some fifteen people be available for accompaniment: Over the years we have been helped by Jesuits of all ages and ministries including Jesuit scholastics, religious of the Company of Mary and of the Sacred Heart, and some secular priests. The interview takes place on weekly basis and as a general rule, it is brief, lasting for more or less half an hour.

It is not our intention here to expound the method of interviewing in the Exercises; what follows is simply a broad outline of certain features that seem specially appropriate for the kind of Exercises here under review.

The visit to the Counsellor in middle of the daily life desert, bears a certain similarity to the visit paid to the Abbot by an anchorite, living in solitude in the wilderness in the time of Antony and the desert Fathers. The Spiritual Father brings an ecclesial dimension to the personal, individual 2.1. Four themes. experience of the one who lives the aridity and solitude of the desert of ordinary life, populated even today by an infinity of ambiguous spirits needing to be discerned. It gives an ecclesial dimension to the life of the solitary, and thus frees him or her from specious or idealistic elements of an immature or over—subjective outlook. In the past, the visit to the Abbot established a rhythm in the monotonous life of the desert, and it also establishes a rhythm in the journey of the Exercises today.

The visit to the Counsellor calls for preparation. It obliges the exercitant to recognize and name numerous movements experienced perhaps unreflectively through the week.

The exercitant must articulate things to themselves. This would alone be of value even if there were no response on the part of the Counsellor.

But more than this, in the type of Exercises which we are describing the Counsellor is (if the word be allowed) the authentic director of the experience. Even if there is a supporting frame provided by the weekly Orientations and by the Week End retreats with their element of group dynamics, the four months of Exercises are an actual personalized retreat, a continuous personal dialogue between Exercitant and Counsellor. It is for the latter to accommodate the experience of the Exercises to the needs of the exercitant and to have enough freedom and creativity to depart from or adjust the Orientations, directives etc which mark the general programme.

3.2.1. Apprenticeship in prayer

In the beginning, it will be the special concern of the Counsellor to help the exercitant so to organize the week as to set aside extended times for prayer, and he or she will have to help them find their own particular way of doing this. In the first weeks this matter will have to be gone into in detail.

The Counsellor will also have to help the exercitant to learn to pray throughout the day, as described above. In the course of their weekly meetings, the Counsellor will help the exercitant to understand that 'spiritual exercises' include not only the exercises of prayer, examen etc., but also a wide range of other spiritual activities, as Ignatius indicates in the first annotation, and that the exercitant must come progressively to discover that in the end everything is 'spiritual exercise'. Thus, when the week is being reviewed the Counsellor will try to enable the exercitant to realize that many of their actions have been done under the movement of the Spirit. The exercitant must be helped to encounter God in all the things that make up their personal, domestic, professional and social life.

3.2.2. First discernment rules

Quite often, the Counsellor will have to come out to meet the exercitant in their moments of discouragement, aridity and desolation; for the harshness of ordinary life, its contradictions and difficulties of every kind, may be experienced as blocks on the spiritual road that the exercitant wants to follow. At such moments the Counsellor will have especially to support the exercitant, acting gently and with kindness, 'giving courage and strength for the future' [7]. This will be the time to read through with the exercitant, at a leisured pace, the first week discernment rules. These, in a slightly updated version, the exercitant has received by post, together with the Orientations...

3.2.3. Preparing for the interview

With the second of the mailed Orientations, the exercitant receives a general schema to help them prepare for the visit to the Counsellor. This is way to emphasize the importance of the interview from the first weeks on, as well as to ensure its quality. It is also a way to provide further assistance in making the examen of the week.

In this scheme the importance and the objectives of the interview are recalled and certain elements are suggested (only suggested, for the interview does not have to be fitted into the restrictions of a programme) It is suggested that the week be given a title encapsulating its content or salient theme in two or three words, like the title of a film or a novel.

In connection with prayer, whether in set times or in the stream of life, the exercitant is asked about methods adopted, movements experienced etc, and to check whether the various movements of prayer exhibit any common denominators.

With regard to the more significant events of the week, the exercitant is asked about their response to these, and whether they were able to convert them into 'exercises'.

The exercitant is also asked whether the objectives of the Exercises they are dealing with are achieved. Etc

3.2.4. Initiation into discernment

This is an essential part of the Counsellor's role, for the whole process of the Exercises is an initiation into the practice of discernment. The exercitant learns to read their life in the light of faith, to discover within it the callings of the Spirit, and to respond to these not out of willed decision (as might happen after the meeting of a task or 'revision de vie' group), but from a more interior experience. This discernment process can be divided into three moments

a) The daily praxis of the relationship between faith and life. At the end of the Weekend retreat, the exercitant has come to the point where he or she must transpose into terms of daily life everything that has been lived in the situation of prayer in retreat. Many elements of daily life will bring to his or her memory one or other of the points previously meditated upon. Conversely, many of these points the exercitant now finds them living out in the situations to be undergone in daily life. In this way, he or she is knitting a simple interior texture of related elements.

b) Experiences of consolation and desolation. These situations are experienced in various ways: interior peace, the appetite for life, the increased desire to serve, pray, forgive, love, believe etc.; or against these, the experiences of sadness, fear, impatience, doubt, sin, personal confusion. In short, consolation or desolation.

c) The thematizing of experience. The experience of consolations and desolations, often neither identified nor reflected on, is made explicit in personal prayer and in the meeting with the Counsellor. In these times especially, the exercitant learns to identify, evaluate and discern them. In this way, a certain habit to read the concrete situations of life in relation to the following of Jesus and to give an evangelical response to such situations is achieved. In these moments of exploitation, the Counsellor will comment on some of the discernment rules according to the text received with the Orientations; and thus try to help the exercitant deal with the fantasies and deceptions which arise in everyday experience, and to respond to desolations in such a way that they become growth-points.

3.2.5. Election, reformation of life.

During the second two-month block in ordinary life, it will be for the Counsellor to help the exercitant to clarify where the dynamics of the exercises is taking them. The Orientation sheets can deal with these themes only as, a very extrinsic aid; it is for the exercitant themselves to set forth the question and if he or she does not, the Counsellor himself should suggest the matter. There is a limit to what can be said here in general terms, for the diversity of states and situations of our exercitants calls for highly personal approaches. In the case of young exercitants faced with the discernment of vocation or with a choice of studies or profession, it proves difficult completely to resolve these questions in the four months of exercises, but the exercises should be a decisive stage in the ripening of these questions.

3.3. Meetings of the group.

In the first years of our experience, we would offer fortnightly meetings, of some two hours, to young and adult groups separately. These were prayer gatherings highly enjoyable (it should be remembered, that most people had not known one another before the Exercises); the ambience of such a prayer was then the joyfulness of reunion – in a sense a paschal joy. The sharing of prayer that arose in these groups was similar to that of the retreat weekends. Each explained how things had been with them in their daily lives both in the extended times of prayer and in the moments of insight, together with 'movements' experienced and so on. The married would also comment on their prayer as a couple.

The group Counsellor would take advantage of the occasion to underline significant points made during the meeting, and to offer some remarks about method etc.

In recent years, for reasons partly of principle and partly of practice, we have not always held these meetings. While the support provided by the dynamic of the week-end group important, it has become apparent to us that what best fits the Exercises in ordinary life is fully to live the elements of individualization and personalization, without dependence on the immediately gratifying contribution of the group meeting; with the increasing value we have set upon the weekly interview with the counsellor, the significance of the support group has diminished. The practical reasons have to do with the difficulties encountered in adding another 'exercise' with the time and travel entailed, to the various 'exercises' - prayer, interview etc - already undertaken. Nevertheless, on later occasions we have sometimes run a small group.

In proportion as a person grows in aptitude for the Exercises, external back-up, resources diminish in importance.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE EXPERIENCE

On our side the objective is double. In the first place, to help to make adult and committed christians, as distinct from passive 'consumers of the christian product', men and women responsible for making Jesus a force in the world. In the case of the young, this has especial relevance to the time of life-choice. (It must be admitted, however, that it is less easy than we might sometimes have imagined, in four months of ordinary life to come to the 'situation' of the second kind of humility [166] which makes it possible to enter upon the elections [169, 5-8]

In the second place we aimed through these Exercises to bring a quality to the christian communities to which the exercitants belonged.

On the side of the younger exercitants, their motivation in coming to the Exercises, whether expressed or implicit, turns rather around the interest in going through a strong Christian experience within a maturing process which has already been promoted through various experiences of community and retreat. They sense intuitively that in this process the Exercises will constitute a specific new step.

Their objective is also found in their desire to integrate faith and life. Their lives tend to be marked by a sense of persisting lack of integration between two realms of experience, on the one hand, the deeply felt prayer of the meetings of their christian communities, on the other the daily round of their lives. Sometimes, the two appear to them to run on parallel lines. It is their hope that making some of the Exercises in ordinary life will be an experience of integration.

The intention of older exercitants is usually to be found in a desire, on reaching the age of maturity and after living with a certain sense of holding back on the way of christian commitment, once again to take up the christian life in a radical way.

5 FIRST WEEK END

5.1 Objectives

5.1.1. The first objective is that of apprenticeship in various kinds of prayer: personal, matrimonial, in group, as has been already explained.

5.1.2. Another basic objective of this first Week End is to begin to discover the value of interior silence (even in an ambiance which is not especially silent and when no great insistence is placed on "exterior silence"). Having had the experience of silence will be of immediate help in the exercises. Made amid the pressures of ordinary life.

It is important to have learned through experience that one does not suddenly pass from ordinary noise to the serious atmosphere in which a person meets themselves in the presence of God.

Those in charge of the retreat should not speak excessively about the theme of silence and still less should they force exercitants into a sense of silence; but they should help to create a climate of interior silence and they should to increase little by little the times

of exterior silence. It is well to remember, however, that in the week-end retreat one is preparing for making exercises in Ordinary Life and not for a life of monastic silence.

5.1.3. Together with this silence, and to be understood in dialectical relationship with what has just been said, it is a need to initiate and facilitate a certain group dynamics. In our judgment, this is indispensable in the kind of adaptation of the exercises here proposed, in spite of the fact that it sidesteps the provision of the twentieth annotation regarding separation from friends and acquaintances [20,2] (In our case, separation will be precisely in the harshness and solitude of ordinary life). The elements which constitute this group dynamics have already been stated: a) presentation of participants on the Friday evening, b) group prayer c) Eucharist d) the sharing of elements of the night examen.

5.1.4. If this has not been already done, this week-end

is the moment to fix a spiritual counsellor for each exercitant. At this time, it might be possible to hold a preliminary conversation which will help the exercitant to get a personal grasp of the method, points etc (especially important when exercitants come from various cultural backgrounds and some may need particular support) and to explain the first steps in the examen and in discernment. This will usually help the exercitant a lot to obviate initial blocks. However, it is not possible to ask all the Counsellors (a group of fifteen) to spend half a day in the retreat house. The programme directors must decide how to meet this situation.

5.2. Themes

The aim of this first retreat is to provide the exercitant with an overall sense of Ignatius' first week. There is no question at this stage of the exercitant trying to digest this dense material in all its implications; at this stage all that is needed is a global vision. This is communicated by an intensive presentation of the 'points' which the exercitant will later have to interiorize in their prayer-in-life over the next two months. This presentation is divided into five themes, the first three on the Principle and Foundation, and the fourth and fifth on Sin.

1. The name of the unfathomable mystery of existence is Father. The exercitant needs to experience this truth. To help them do so, we suggest that they pray the Our Father according to the second method of prayer [249-257]; dwelling especially on the first words, on which we give points and a photocopied sheet. It is important that the first experience of the Exercises should be that of the Abba who seeks me out personally, an experience of the Fatherhood/Motherhood of God. This in our judgment can be a good way of approaching the first part of the Principle and Foundation.

2. The life of the human person has its meaning in praise and service. A person needs to know what they want to do with their own life, and not to be held by any project that the world would have imposed on them. It is necessary to be orientated: the human person is defined by his or her long term aims, by, their "utopia". The role of the human being in the world, according to Jesus, is to make the world into the kingdom of God, a place where the presence and goodness of God reign. A human life is praise, reverence and service; we are concerned with a new attitude in relation to persons, nature and

God; an ecological attitude of appreciation, heartfelt joy, respect, gratitude ... The human person exists in order to be happy, and happiness is precisely in this. As a basic text for these themes we use Genesis 1 and 2.

3. To bet for the liberty of Jesus. This third moment of prayer moves into the second part of the Principle and Foundation, drawing three conclusions from the preceding material.

a) In the face of created things, we are lords and never slaves. b) We are to arrive at a state of liberty in relation to all 'means'. c) We are to go through life "desiring and choosing only what is more conducive to the end".

Among other basic texts, the following serve to show, how Jesus called forth freedom in those who lived with him. In various ways he called them to freedom from slavery: the slavery of money (Zaccheus, Lk 19,8), sex (Magdalen, Lk 7,39) presumption and superficiality (Peter, Jn 13,37-38; 21,15) violence (James and John, Lk 9,54-56), prestige and fear of suffering (Acts 5,41), death itself (Acts 7, 54-60) It was his wish to free the Pharisees from pride in good works (Mt 6,1-18); the rich young man from putting his trust in possessions (Mk 10,21) The disciples he made free in relation to "home, father, family" (Mk 10,29) and capable of a life of celibacy (Mt 19,12)...

At the same time, we give them for this period of prayer a sheet with a slightly modernized form of the Principle and Foundation, so that they can pray the text by the second method of prayer and make a prayer of petition.

4. Frustration of God's project. Here the object is to understand what happens when God's plan is not accomplished, to feel the God's sorrow and of the condemned-ones of the earth, to be perplexed on realizing the extent of one's own cooperation in this frustration of God's plan. We suggest that these three graces be insistently sought at the beginning of the prayer.

We present this material in three points. First point: recall the legend of the earthly paradise, in which the Bible imagines, with poetic nostalgia, a humanity without frustration, living according to God's plan. Second point: some glimpses of the modern world: events and statistics with regard to hunger, wars, unemployment, migration etc. These realities are to be faced and pondered with objectivity; they are to be seen through the eyes of the Father and those of the condemned-ones of our world. Third point: the phrase of Nathaan to David "That man is you". The exercitant is invited to survey the world of sin and discover themselves in it as collaborators, fifth columnists... and to list their principal ways of collaboration with this.

They are given, again in slightly adapted form, the text of the three colloquies [63], which they are encouraged to make.

5. Looking at the face of Christ crucified. It is proposed to the exercitant first that they recall the history of their own sin, of their collaboration in the world's frustration. This must be done with sincerity, and the point must therefore be given sufficient, but not excessive, time. It can be helpful to take some objective classification such as the "thoughts, word, deeds, and omissions" of the penitential act of the eucharist.

In this recall, it is essential to see oneself through the eyes of the Father, never with self-hate; realizing that the Father, who is the Father of the parable of the Prodigal Son, looks on us with love. (As a base-text, the parable of the Prodigal Son could be used). May God grant that like the Prodigal we may enter the deepest of Christian experiences, that of knowing ourselves gratuitously loved by God and not because of our qualities or virtues; an experience which enables us in our own relationships to accept others gratuitously and not on account of their importance, sympathetic qualities or whatever... In this context, Psalms 51 or 130 could be recited.

Finally, we propose that the exercitant should gaze attentively on the cross of Christ, coming to see in it, as in a fusion, the features of all the crucified - of those we ourselves have colluded in crucifying - in order to become aware that our lives are bathed in mercy. And in front of this cross they should put to themselves the Ignatian questions: what have I done for Christ etc [53] which we give them in photocopy.

5.3. Timetable

The following is the normative table followed in the weekend; it is amenable at any moment to adaptation in view of circumstances.

8:45 Short prayer meeting in the chapel

9:00 Breakfast

FIRST EXERCISE

9:30 Presentation of theme and method

10:00 1st prayer (personal)

11:00 2nd prayer (group or couple)

11:45 Break

12:30 Meeting for reflection in hall or chapel.

12:45 3rd prayer (personal prayer of resume))

13:45 Free time / lunch / rest.

SECOND EXERCISE

16:00 Presentation of theme and method

16:30 1st prayer (personal)

17:30 2nd prayer (group or couple)

18:15 Break

18:45 Meeting for reflection in hall or chapel.

19:00 3rd prayer (Personal. Resume)

20:00 Eucharist / supper / rest.

EXAMEN

22:00 Examen - evaluation (Retire about 23:00)

Note, again, that this is a tentative timetable, which has to be adjusted according to the circumstances of each day or period of exercises, and to levels of fatigue etc. in such a way that the whole experience turns out to be at once intensive (the two days should be well-spent) and relaxed.

6. FIRST PERIOD IN ORDINARY LIFE

6.1. Objectives

6.1.1 The exercitant must appreciate very clearly that when the Exercises are made in this way it is in this period that their essential function is realized. It is now that the condensed material of the week-end retreat must be personally assimilated, day by day, week by week in the everyday courses and stress of life. The exercitant has personally to discover that prayer throughout the day, and a continuing attention to the quality of one's life, is as essential as the times of prayer in withdrawal and silence.

6.2.2. The apprenticeship of prayer through the course of the day. This is not going to be completed on day one. It is to help this apprenticeship that the exercitant receives the weekly Orientations. As we have seen, they require only a brief

moment in the morning and evening; (even on the metro or bus). In these the exercitant Attention to them is required throughout the day to be attentive to the moments of insight ('flashes') in which the day is illuminated in a new way. In the course of the ongoing experience of the exercises many exercitants do acquire this habit of attention to the quality of life, and hence an ability to live their lives not on the surface but with a certain depth.

6.3.3. The exercitant should find a number of extended times of prayer within the week. Though not easy at times, to do this is indispensable. However, the Counsellor must not become excessively anxious .. on seeing- the exercitant's difficulties in finding these times. He or she must help the exercitant gently, and this will not always be easy. If the exercitant does not give at least the minimum the Exercises can remain greatly impoverished. Our initial suggestion is that there should be a set time of prayer each day, and candidates to this kind of Exercises should know it.

6.2. Themes

The Orientations sheets will continue to recall the basic points of the Weekend. In the course of ordinary life these will have to mature and be tested amid the hard and complicated situations of each day.

1. Service and praise. The content of the first of the Orientations sheets, explained in detail in the final stage of the weekend, seeks a) to teach the prayer exercises in the mornings, along the core of the day and in the evening; and to deal further with the longer periods of prayer (see 3.1); b) to fill out the second theme of the weekend. Attention is drawn to the importance of starting the interview with the accompanying Counsellor promptly.

2. Principle and Foundation. The same methodological notes of the preceding Orientations sheet are repeated (indeed they will be repeated in practically all the sheets). For the longer times of prayer the exercitant is referred to theme three of the Week-end. For prayer throughout the day, it is suggested that they take one of the points of the P and Fn (e.g. "all things are created for human beings"; "creatures are to be used /avoided in so far as....we must be free before all created things" etc.

The principle is that in the morning the exercitant should open the day with an act of recall, so that throughout the day there should be moments when he or she sees their life as illuminated precisely by this text, and that at night they should go over the day with the Lord in the light of it. Thus ordinary life is gradually converted into "exercises". For this process no special time is required beyond a few minutes in the morning and evening, and a few seconds in the course of the day.

3. To be sensitive to evil (I). Each of the Orientations contains new directives regarding aspects of method: dialogue with the Counsellor, preparation for the longer periods of prayer, ways of praying in them, etc

In this week special emphasis is laid on the need to be attentive and sensitive (theme 4) : to the "power of evil" active and death-dealing (whether on the large scale: wars, hunger, poverty, unemployment)...or the more trivial scale of the aversions or jealousies towards those whose paths we cross in daily life); attentive to one's own small ways of colluding in the power of global evil. The objective is to gain sensibility, become aware [25,43] share the sorrow of the Father who sees his children wounded and killed (or better, who sees his own Son who himself dies in these sufferings).

4. To be sensitive to evil (II). Repetition of foregoing theme.

5. My life is bathed in mercy. This refers to the fifth theme, which will be more deeply entered into in the extended times of prayer. The dynamic of attention to life continues. In the morning, throughout the day and in the evening, the exercitant is to see the Evil of the World which crucified Jesus and to see his own ways of colluding in this; he is to feel pain for the Crucified One and for all the crucified; to see him or herself forgiven and loved. "My life is bathed in mercy". All that should arise the great question: what have I done for Christ? what am I doing for Christ? what should I do for Christ?

6. The prodigal son. This week the Orientation sheet gathers up the experience of the previous almost two months with its two prayer forms of a)the extended times of prayer and b) the prayer throughout the day.

The parable is a help towards synthesis. In it the broad themes already worked through are prominent. We propose that the exercitant reads Luke 15. 11-23, but we also send them the adaptation made by the book "Un tal Jesus" (J.I. y M. Lopez Vigil, Ed Loguez 1982 Salamanca vol 1 p 245-252). Long familiar texts take on a new significance when read on the basis of fantasies such as these. It is suggested that the exercitant ask themselves whether, like the prodigal son, they find themselves disconcerted by the unconditional love of the Father, whether they live their life in the world with a heart like the Father's or whether with the mean-heartedness of the elder son.

6.3. Role of the Counsellor.

Now begins the serious work of accompanying the other in prayer and discernment. It will be the function of the Counsellor to review with the exercitant whether the latter has obtained the fruits of prayer, if he or she has observed the specific ways of prayer (e.g. with regard to places, times, methods, more intellectual or affective types of prayer, etc). The interview normally should be brief and on a weekly basis.

7. SECOND WEEKEND

7.1. Objectives.

7.1.1. On reaching this point, the exercitant will already be wanting another retreat in order to be able to dedicate long and tranquil periods to prayer. They will also want to meet with the group again. The Friday night sharing when each relates some detail of their experience, will be especially important. It will usually be found highly invigorating, and it provides the directors of the Exercises with a basis for comment, advice etc.

In these two days, the second period in ordinary life is prepared for. The exercitant will receive a global vision of the second ignatian week up to the Two Standards, so that this material can be gradually assimilated in the course of the next two months and its daily tasks.

7.2.2. The essential for this period is that it be an apprenticeship in a new and more contemplative style of prayer [101-109], the "contemplation of the mysteries of the life of Jesus". With the first points after the exercise on the 'Earthly King' the exercitant is given a second paper containing "suggestions for prayer".

7.3.3. At this stage increased time of personal prayer is called for, which in practice entails shortening or cutting out some of the communitarian prayer.

For any exercitant it will be of benefit to increase his or her own "silence". It may be suggested to them to take a more especial period of recollection for half a day (for instance to retire in the countryside up to the evening points or the eucharist). If this requires absence from one or other of the lectures, the counsellor will fill the exercitant in, so that they will not be at a disadvantage in the exercises in Ordinary Life.

7.2. Themes

The exercitant must take away from the Week-end a general outlook of the course proposed by Ignatius up to the Two Standards/Three Classes. (The numbering of the themes continues from the first week-end)

6.1. The parable of an ideal king calling his subjects to an idealized campaign. We explain the parable and distribute photocopied forms of it, very summarily adapting the ignatian text to contemporary language. It can be presented on the evening of the day of arrival as a preparatory "warming up" for the points to be given the following morning. The parable aims to challenge the exercitant against great deeds, being a person of grand ideals and firm character. Ignatius' parable, may be easily replaced by more contemporary substitutes, but in our experience the original turns out in the end to be the most effective. It must be proposed, however, as an ancient text, in a sense a museum piece - as a noble fantasy of the young Inigo as he prayed in the cave at Manresa still imbued by the chivalrous climate of his time.

6.2. I have need of you in particular for the greater tasks. The parable is to be taken up again so that it becomes clear that it is 'me', me in particular, that the Lord calls. We

then follow the three points of the second part which we illustrate by the proclamation of Jesus and the call of the first disciples (Mk 1. 14-20)

7. With Jesus for the world, building the Kingdom. The object of this hour of prayer is to accompany Jesus through the course of a complete day. For this we propose an extensive text of Mark: Jesus' first day in Capernaum (Mk 1, 21-45) There are six vivid scenes in which it is easy to be with Jesus in his public life, and the scenes are easily transposed into terms of our own time, enabling us to see how Jesus is our own companion in our apostolic tasks. The exercitant is advised not to work the text thoroughly but to take a panoramic view and to choose certain details. In this first prayer period on the life of Christ, it is important, though, that none should feel himself short of prayer materials.

8. My talents at the service of the greatest of all causes. The parable of the talents is presented (Mt 25,14-30) and with the help of this the exercitant is invited to hear Jesus telling them that they themselves have talents, to hear their own talents enumerated on the lips of Jesus himself. They must hear from Jesus himself that these talents are not to be buried but put at the service of his cause. It will be good that Jesus speak to them, too, about the talents of others, especially of those closest to them. For some this exercise is far from easy. For some people, it costs little to look at their sins while only with difficulty can they look at their talents.

To ensure the validity of this exercises it must conclude with a reading of the parable of the pharisee and the publican (Lk 19, 9-14) Our talents are given us not to be pride oneself on them before others, or indeed God; but to be placed at the service of the greatest of all causes, the building of the Kingdom.

9. Under which standard do I place myself? The following of Jesus is characterised by a certain style. Its marks are the option for the Kingdom, for Freedom, for Solidarity, for Justice; a willingness to share from an attitude of heart poverty (with real poverty should the Lord so choose), and of humility (not excluding humiliations). It consists in an acceptance to enter into contradiction, sacrifice and struggle...in short to carry one's own cross; an acceptance, too, to give heart to others, to create hope in the possibility of the kingdom, to go with Jesus through the world with a creative and generous heart.

The style presented by the 'world' is quite other than this. It may indeed be an option for change and freedom, but

only in word. (We criticize with our lips but not with our lives; the world's real option is to change nothing, so that the 'established disorder' which suits us can continue.) The style of the world consists in accumulation, in being above others, in taking flight from difficulties and from the experiences of the cross which inseparably accompany the struggle for the kingdom. The style of the world is to take one's stand in comfort, lassitude, consumerism. In this connection, use can be made of the blessings and woes of Luke 6; 20-26.

10. Jesus in times of trial. We propose the temptations of Jesus in Luke 4, 1-13.

8. SECOND PERIOD IN ORDINARY LIFE

8.1. Objectives

8.1.1. To assimilate the material of the Week-end in the course of ordinary life. (The weekly Orientations, now deliberately repetitious in style, aim to keep the exercitant in mind both of method and of key points).

8.1.2 In particular, to experience oneself as called to journey with Jesus in his work of bringing about the Kingdom, discover how the world continuously puts before us another vision, and how sometimes even our own 'yes' to Jesus is in reality a 'yes, but'. To try to become closer friends with Jesus in contemplating the mysteries of his life, which should also be seen as realities of one's own life.

8.1.3. The exercitant must conclude the period on a specific, practical note, by trying to specify what he or she is going to do with their life as response to the Jesus' call. For the unmarried young, this might involve the election of a state of life (celibate life for the Kingdom/married life). For all, it means focusing one's life from the standpoint of the Kingdom, becoming 'responsible' for the work of Jesus in the world, and no longer a simple 'consumer'. The implications of all this must be specified in a way that bears on the.. real problems.

8.2. Themes

To help exercitants progressively to interiorize and amplify the content of the Weekend, the orientations contain the following themes. (The numeration resumes that of the preceding two-month period)

7. Companions of Jesus. The exercitant should re-read, in relation to ordinary life, texts 6 and 8 already considered during the Week-end. The purpose now is to know oneself as accompanying, and being accompanied by, Jesus in following the habitual programme of prayer both in set times and in the course of the day. In the morning: hear the Lord who needs me and brings to my mind the talents I have to put at the service of the Kingdom; in the day experience moments of light or insight that occur; during the evening go over the day. If one understands his or her day as an accompaniment of Jesus in his work of building the kingdom, it is obvious that in the evening, when the work assigned has been done, one will wish to reflect back on it with Jesus and ask whether its aims have been attained.

8. Jesus, the friend. The exercitant comes progressively to realize that Jesus on his side makes himself present during the day and that he/she, the exercitant, should be present to Jesus day, as it is narrated in the gospel. We propose a repetition of theme 7 or a reading of. Luke 6,20 - 8,3 or other texts which may have made an impression on other occasions. Texts should be narrative rather discursive, the narratives serving more effectively to foster the sense of being accompanied by and accompanying Jesus.

9. Road to Jerusalem. Mark 11 to 13 with the three prophecies of the Passion. Thus, the central message of the Two Standards is taken up again.

10. The rich young man. Mark 10, 17-31. Serves as a statement of the theme of the Three Classes as a preliminary to the exercitant's entry into the election or reformation of life.

11. Week of resolutions, applications, choices. This is an important stage in prayer and in the dialogue with the accompanying Counsellor; the exercitant gathers the many movements and decisions which have come up in the journey so far. Some points may be given to him to help him to specify, both in the case of reformation and of election.

12. The man born blind. Jn 9, 1-38 will help the exercitant to see that Jesus is the Light of the world by which we are shown the world's darkness. Increasingly the exercitant is becoming aware with Jesus that he is their companion.

13. Jesus' solidarity. Mk 6, 30-52 will bring to a close this series of Orientation sheets, by showing Jesus as the man-for-others.

8.3. The Counsellor's Role.

To accompany the exercitant's discernment, to help them understand what God is asking in their life. He or she must

try to keep the exercitant in good heart, and if the exercitant has the capacity, discreetly to accompany them in approaching the election of a state of life.

In the matter of reform of life, the Counsellor must help the exercitant to undertake this task seriously and with attention to the particular, focusing on what is really important without escaping into areas of secondary significance.

9 THIRD WEEK-END

The objective of the last 48 hours of retreat is that of re-affirmation and confirmation

It will not, certainly, be possible at this stage to pass on to the objectives envisaged by Ignatius for the third and fourth weeks of the Exercises; here, the objectives are still those of the second week to know, to love, to follow – but to know, love and follow a Jesus whose love leads to the total surrender of the Last Supper and the Cross, a Jesus whom the Father constitutes Lord of the Universe through the Resurrection.

For this we propose the following themes:

11. The key to the Kingdom, the new Alliance is the gift of self

to others. Washing of the feet (Jn 13: 1-60) and the Supper (Mk 14: 22-26). The encounter with Christ therefore continues. The object in this case is to be captured by his testament, made in so pedagogically explicit a form in these two sequences, and by the revolutionary character of the actions narrated. At the same time this is an important moment for the exercitant to renew their appreciation. of the Eucharist.

12. The failure and frustration of Jesus and of the Kingdom(I). Mk 14,26-15,20: the Garden and the religious and civil trials. Although (in most cases) the perspective remains that of the second week, here one would indeed enter into Jesus and be with him in the process of stripping to which he is now progressively to be subjected. The scenes of the religious and civil trials should be contemplated as revelations of Christ, in which he is shown first as Messiah then as King precisely in circumstances where he appears the very opposite of either. Again, the central theme of the Two Standards makes its appearance.

13. The failure and frustration of Jesus and of the Kingdom (II). Mk 15,21-47, the death of Jesus, King and Son of God. In the total despoliation of his humanity, Jesus is revealed as Son of God. The exercitant prays to feel overwhelmed before this central event in the history of humanity.

14. The crucified has risen (The other face of commitment to the Kingdom). We take the text of Mark 16,1-8. Mark indicates that it is in Galilee, when they have returned to ordinary life and resumed the struggle for the Kingdom, that the followers of Jesus will see him and experience his resurrection. It is our aim that the paschal experience should coalesce with that of the contemplation to attain love and with finding God in all things.

15. A day in the life of the apostles. (Quality of Jesus' presence). John 21 is like an extremely beautiful audio-visual catechetical montage, designed to show the presence of Jesus with us each day in our own Galilee, in our own work of announcing and making known the kingdom. After any day of apostolic life and no-way-easy labour, the enlightened disciple can see that 'it is the Lord'. Already Jesus has made ready for us the fraternal christian meal(the Eucharist) to which we are invited to bring the fruits of our labour. And now the disciple (the exercitant) is asked three times to affirm the sincerity of their love. The triple question is a resume of the whole Exercises.

The response to this question must not, of course, have any note of arrogance about it. It must consist, rather, in the humble and supplicant prayer of one who has known their own weakness yet knows themselves loved unconditionally, the prayer of one who has experienced their sin but at the same time the fact that their life is bathed in mercy. (These dispositions are the resume of the first week).

Such a person, who has descended into the depths of their own weakness can be entrusted with sharing in Jesus' work of going through the world proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. (Second Week)

There needs only to be integrated into this vision the fact that in the mission one is often not a person who 'girds themselves', but a person girded by another to be taken where they would rather not go, even to death like Jesus and with Jesus. (The theme of the third week—end retreat)

The issue in this final retreat is to grasp the two aspects of discipleship (death/resurrection). The retreat proposes, therefore, a new way of repeating the key points of the Two Standards/ Three Classes, and if the exercitant is ready for it, the third kind of humility.

It will also be appropriate to insist on the theme of experiencing the call to work for Jesus's cause, a central component of the apostles' experience of the paschal mystery.

Finally, it will be necessary to consider with the exercitant — sometimes also with the group — ways and means to assure perseverance. This is a especial job for the Counsellor. A Christian Life Community (CLC) would be one of the ideal situations in which to continue the experience initiated in the Exercises.

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