



St. Ignatius left almost nothing in writing about the Holy Spirit, except in his personal notebook during his deliberations on poverty. Now, maybe he was just being prudent, because, after all, some of his contemporaries thought he looked and sounded like one of the *alumbrados*. You remember them from history class in the novitiate: the enlightened heretics who claimed to have direct channels of communication with and direct revelations from the Holy Spirit. Based on the appearance of things, various Inquisitors investigated St. Ignatius in at least eight formal processes before 1545, when he informed the king of Portugal that he had spent 64 days in different prisons as a suspected heretic.

Since St. Ignatius referred to the Holy Spirit so seldom in his writings, the few times we find a quotation are all the more precious. In the *Spiritual Exercises* he refers directly to the Holy Spirit six times, and five of these references are quotations from the Scriptures that occur in the supplemental material for contemplating the Mysteries of Christ our Lord. One of those direct quotations presents points for praying over the Gospel passage we just heard. Let me quote #304 this morning, because in the three points that St. Ignatius presents, we have a good lens for considering the Holy Spirit whose aid we seek during this Eucharist. (1) the disciples were assembled “through fear of the Jews,” (2) “Jesus appeared to them when the doors were locked. He stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you,’” and (3) “He gives them the Holy Spirit, saying to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you forgive are forgiven them.’”

We can see that the movement Ignatius proposes in these three points is quite simple: a journey from Fear to Joy and from Gift to Mission, a journey for every Jesuit and for every General Congregation.

One might say that there is some fear involved in what we do today and throughout the coming days. Maybe we are afraid of spending the rest of our lives in small group discussions or sitting in the Aula with headphones. The *De Statu* report outlines daunting challenges might fill us with fear—the problems of the individual human heart, the Society of Jesus, the Church, and the world today can frighten us. Maybe we are afraid of asking one of those among us to bear the office of General on behalf of all the rest, or maybe I am afraid of what the new General might have to say about my next assignment.

However, fears are as numerous as they are useless. More important is the joy that accompanies every experience of the Risen Lord who displaces whatever fears we might feel. Time and again, in life and ministry, we have experienced the Risen Lord in his wounded hands and side, in the least of our brothers and sisters, in the brokenness of our companions and friends in the Lord. We joyfully experienced the Lord Crucified and Risen in one another during the past week of reflection and prayer together, in meeting old friends and making new friends in the Lord. In spite of, or perhaps even because of our fears, the Jesus fills us with joy.

Joy is only one of the gifts we receive from the Risen Lord. This past week we received the gift of recognizing the action of the Spirit in the Society and the Church and the world, in every human heart. We have deepened our appreciation of the gift of membership in a group committed to struggle beneath the banner of the Cross. The *Contemplatio ad*

Amorem asks us to reflect on the gifts we have received so that we can freely put them at the service of the Giver who so wants to heal and bless a fallen world. So many gifts, like the ceaseless flow of a waterfall or the fountains in St. Peter's Square!

As if the gifts of creation, redemption, and sanctification were not enough, the Gospel recounts the great gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of reconciliation that has special meaning for members of priestly religious order like ours. Whether or not we are ordained, through baptism and religious profession we are agents of the God of Mercy, "ready to reconcile the estranged," as we read in the Formula of the Institute. During this Year of Mercy, today's Gospel has special relevance for reminding to collaborate with the God who seeks out the lost sheep; who sweeps every corner of the house for the lost coin; who never ceases to put sandals on our feet, robes on our backs, and rings on our fingers.

Our mission this morning is to elect a General. We will be locked into an upper room, not for fear but for concentrated listening to the Spirit's whisper. We are not afraid because we believe so strongly that the Spirit guides the balloting that according to Formula 84 "The man elected cannot refuse the election." Our mission is to listen carefully, but also to trust that even if I need batteries in my spiritual hearing aid, I can trust that through this band of brothers the Spirit will identify the man he has chosen. We can trust that Jesus will give us his Spirit, no matter how locked we may feel.

Actually, I doubt that cautious prudence kept Ignatius from referring to the Holy Spirit, for the Inquisition never intimidated him—he was joyful in what we would call Third Week moments. Writing to the Portuguese king about the Inquisitions procedures, he said, "not for all the temporal power and riches under heaven would I wish that all this had not befallen me; indeed, I wish far worse would befall me for the greater glory of his Divine Majesty."

I believe Ignatius said so little about the Holy Spirit because he did not want words to distract doubters and Inquisitors from the deeds of the Spirit, from experiencing joy, gifts, and mission the Holy Spirit. Ignatius's silence about the Spirit leaves more room to contemplate the deeds of that Spirit. As we celebrate the Eucharist at this altar this morning, may the Spirit fill our silence with the joy and all the gifts we need to embrace the special mission this day of choosing the one the Lord has chosen.

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