

If You Meet Ignatius on the Road, Kill Him!

Michael R Carey

*A Presentation to the Jesuits of the Oregon Province and their Collaborators in Ministry
Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington
30th July 1992*

The title of my presentation, ‘*If you meet Ignatius on the road, kill him!*’,¹ probably catches a few people off-guard. I feel the need to reassure you that I come to praise Ignatius, not to bury him. The title is an allusion to the story of the Zen Buddhist master who struggled to bring his disciples along the road to the achievement of *satori*, or enlightenment.² His were good disciples, reflectively reading from the Buddhist scriptures, earnestly chanting their prayers, patiently sitting in *zazen*, or seated meditation, in front of a great statue of the Buddha. The master understood that the disciples’ focus on Siddhartha Guatama³ as the historical Buddha might stand in the way of their each individually becoming the Buddha (which means, simply, ‘one who is awake’), so he asked them, ‘What should one do if he should meet the Buddha on the road?’ A few of the disciples attempted answers while others sat in reflection over this new *koan*, or problem, of their master. Finally, the Zen master warned, ‘If you see the Buddha on the road, kill him!’ It was said that many of his disciples achieved *satori* on that day. Others, very possibly, became even more confused!

Their focus on Siddhartha’s Buddha nature prevented the Zen disciples from becoming buddhas themselves. As lay and Jesuit co-laborers looking toward the year 2000, perhaps our concentration on how Jesuits have accomplished their missions in the past also may prevent us from being able to accomplish our missions in the circumstances of our future. As we together draw upon our common Ignatian heritage, rather than offering us a particular tradition or frame of reference from which to view our work as companions moving into a new century, I think that what Ignatius really offers us is the possibility of a frameless reference point, the perfect freedom of what I will call a *reframing mind*.

¹ This paper is a revision of an earlier paper with the same title which was presented as the Arnold Lecture at Gonzaga University on 17th October 1990. The ideas of the author expressed in this paper may also be found in other articles, e.g.: *Transformative Christian Leadership* (Human Development 12.1 p.30, 1991), *Lay Partnership and Jesuit Mission: Vive l’indifference!* (Presence 1990 p.3), and *Confessions of a Lay Collaborator* (America 160.20 p.500, 1989).

² See Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968); also Sheldon B Kopp, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* (1974).

³ *Siddhartha Guatama (Sanskrit सिद्धार्थ गौतम) (c.563/480-c.483/400bc), the Nepalese monk, mendicant and sage on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.

In this presentation, I will suggest that it is the qualities of a *reframing mind* that make it possible for us to engage our God, dynamically present in creation and our history.

Through use of a *reframing mind*, we are able to discern the essential from the accidental and to transcend the limitations placed on us, whether by ourselves or by others. As St Paul said, 'When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free.'⁴ I think that what Ignatius has to offer each of us in each of our ministries is re-connection to that spiritual freedom through means of a *reframing mind*.

This spiritual freedom implies both liberty *for* us and a release of control *by* us. Just as in a dance between two partners, the desire for control by one partner over the moves of the other has disastrous effects, so too our desire for control over a ministry stands in the way of our working with each other and with God. Like a dance, God's will is dynamic, adapting to the circumstances of time and place and to the dispositions of individuals. Through a *reframing mind*, we join this dance as active partners, both serving and shaping the will of God.

Part One: Desperately seeking Ignatius

Allow me to share with you my own personal and intellectual development regarding my own involvement in the ministry of Jesuit education. It was about nine years ago that I attended my first national meeting of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association. As a newly appointed administrator in a Jesuit high school, I had been invited to this conference which for the most part was made up of Jesuits from throughout the country. About a fourth of the group was comprised of lay people, of which I was one.

The Jesuit who was the main presenter began with a joke. He said that the collaboration between Jesuits and lay people in the Jesuit schools of the United States is like the

⁴ Galatians 5:1

collaboration of a pig and a chicken in a breakfast of bacon and eggs: the chicken is involved but the pig is committed.

I remember all the Jesuits laughed and I laughed with them. I also remember thinking how progressive this particular Jesuit was to understand that the Jesuits, as members of a privileged religious community, could never be quite as committed to Catholic education as lay people, who had many other responsibilities beyond their work as teachers, and who more often than not had to make a financial sacrifice even to be a part of the schools.

I mentioned this to my wife, Mary Ann, when I returned home and she told me that she didn't think that was what was meant by the Jesuit who told the joke. That caused me a bit of consternation because it gradually dawned on me that perhaps the Jesuits and I had very different perspectives regarding my work in the ministry of education. In any case, it was clear that I had become a part of a 450-year old tradition of education⁵ for which the Jesuits had been, until recently, the sole guarantors, so if I were to be a part of the future of this educational enterprise, I would need to understand this tradition as well as the Jesuits did.

Since the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius seemed to be key to the charism of the Jesuits and their ministries, I decided to experience them myself. A Jesuit friend of mine was able to direct me in the Retreat in Everyday Life.⁶ This particular version of the *Exercises* was designed to allow a working adult, such as myself, to spend about half an hour a day in personal prayer and then meet with a spiritual director once a week. Using this approach, I was able to spend six months working through

⁵ *The first Jesuit school opened at Messina in Sicily in 1548.

⁶ The version of the *Spiritual Exercises* that I experienced was based upon the book *Place Me With Your Son: The Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life* (1986).

a retreat program that Ignatius had designed four and a half centuries before.⁷

While I don't have the time here to talk at length about my experience of the Retreat in Everyday Life, let me say that it was instrumental to my discovery of relationship with God. And that is not to say I didn't have a relationship with God before my experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*; rather the *Exercises* helped me to have a new openness to the relationship which was already there. The reality of that relationship had been dimmed by the limitations of my view of God at work in the world around me, primarily caused by my biases and my preferences, by my fears and my anxieties. My experience of God through the *Spiritual Exercises* didn't make those aspects of me disappear, but it did make me realize in a very powerful way that I was loved by God, and that God was interested in working through me in spite of my limitations.

One very practical result of my experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* was a change in the way I view my relationship with my Jesuit colleagues. While, before, I had seen the Jesuits with whom I had worked as a kind of elite corps of professionals, after my experience of the *Exercises* I became much more open to an adult relationship with the Jesuits, one in which I could share with them their love and admiration for Ignatius, and one in which I, therefore, could struggle with them as an equal partner in determining how to carry on the mission that they and I had chosen to embrace. Through my experience of being in relationship with God, I began to see the essential purpose

⁷ During my retreat, I used David L Fleming, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (1978). Fleming's work is actually called 'a contemporary reading' rather than a translation. The other copy of the *Spiritual Exercises* that I had used before my experience of the retreat was Louis J Puhl's *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (1951). While I found Puhl's translation more difficult to read before my retreat experience, afterwards I found that I appreciated his precise translation of Ignatius' work. I think that my appreciation flowed out of my experience of the dynamics of the *Exercises*.

of any Jesuit work and of the *Exercises* was the same: to lead people to an experience of freedom from all that limits their ability to see, to experience, and to understand. Whether through a retreat program, catechetical instruction, or an educational curriculum, Ignatius and the early Jesuits strove to break down the influence of personal bias, prejudice, fear, anxiety, and desire on the individual's frame of reference, and this consequently led to greater discernment in understanding, judgement and action.⁸

I was now able to look at the whole enterprise of Jesuit education in a completely new way: where before I had only seen the reality of differences among those involved in the work at a Jesuit school, I now saw possibilities of unity in purpose and mission. I think that what I experienced was the fruit of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and I also think that the key element of that experience is a *reframing mind*.

Part Two: A funny thing happened on the way to the Holy Land

In order to develop the idea of a *reframing mind*, it might be helpful if I illustrate it with a story from the life of Ignatius.⁹ Before his conversion, Ignatius gave his complete loyalty to his king and country. He served both as a valiant soldier and on the battlefield, he maintained his post against overwhelming odds.¹⁰ After his conversion experience, Ignatius shifted his strong value system from

⁸ I have been helped in processing my experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* by the work of Bernard J Tyrrell, especially *Christotherapy II* (1982). Through Tyrrell, I have also been introduced to the work of Bernard Lonergan, especially *Method in Theology* (1978) and *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding* (1978); Lonergan's description of individual and group bias has been particularly helpful.

⁹ See Joseph F O'Callaghan's translation of *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola* (1974).

¹⁰ *The battle at Pamplona on 20th May 1521 in which the French outnumbered and defeated the Spanish defenders of the town.

being centred in the world to being centred in God, and thereafter lived his life accordingly.¹¹ His post-conversion value now became to do the will of his new master, Jesus Christ, and for Ignatius, who was living in the sixteenth century, the ultimate way in which one followed Christ was very literally to follow in his footsteps and go to the Holy Land as a pilgrim. So Ignatius left Spain for Jerusalem, willing to offer his life to God in the Holy Land as he had been willing previously to offer his life at the battle with the French.

Working against great difficulties, Ignatius finally reached Jerusalem to begin his apostolic work: 'to help souls', as he put it.¹² At the time, the land around Jerusalem was a battleground for Christians and Muslims who were killing each other in the name of God. The Franciscan order had been charged by the pope with the administration of the Holy Land, and since things were so dangerous, Ignatius was told by them to return to Europe.

But Ignatius had experienced a conversion, and he knew God had wanted him to go to Jerusalem, and since he would not negotiate with his value of complete service to God, he knew that he must 'man his post' just as he had as a soldier on the battlefield. Ignatius' value system made him determined to remain in Jerusalem; the Franciscan's value system made them equally determined to see him go, and so they sent a rather burly Franciscan brother¹³ (who had, no doubt, prior to his conversion worked as a bouncer in a Naples bar) to literally

carry him to the next boat sailing for Italy, and that was that.

I wish I were an artist because I would love to make an icon of that scene: the big Franciscan walking to a waiting boat, lifting Ignatius off the ground by the back of his collar. Rather than showing a look of anxiety on Ignatius' face, I think that I would paint a portrait of sublime enlightenment, a look that would sum up the rest of Ignatius' work in the world, a look reflecting or the first time Ignatius' realization that God's will and his were not necessarily the same.

I think that when Ignatius was kicked out of Jerusalem, he didn't judge that he had been wrong to go there in the first place. He realized that when he journeyed to Jerusalem he had been doing God's will as much as when he left Jerusalem. I think that in this experience he discovered that God's will was mysteriously and dynamically connected to the changing circumstances of life; not just life in general but his life in particular. Rather than seeing God's will as a fixed, static plan which Ignatius had somehow to guess, he began to see that God's will and his life were in a kind of cosmic dance wherein each move was new and unique because it was affected by the moves of the partner, even as each move shared a pattern determined by a common rhythm. Ignatius had connected with the unchanging center of a changing world.

It is this awareness that I think is at the heart of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius' concept of indifference gets at this complete openness to God's will as God would have it. To be indifferent, according to Ignatius, is to hold everything loosely in the context of God's will: possessions, preferences, opinions, even values. It is this complete openness to God which allowed Ignatius to move fluidly in the changing circumstances of the world and to respond authentically to the people he encountered. Through indifference, Ignatius came to understand that God worked through all of creation; that God could work through the Franciscan bouncer or the captain of the ship

¹¹ Ignatius' conversion experience came during the nine months of convalescence at Loyola following the injuries he sustained at Pamplona.

¹² O'Callaghan p.49 [*Autobiography* n.45]

¹³ O'Callaghan p.51 [*Autobiography* n.48]: 'So as he was coming down from Mount Olivet he met a 'Christian of the belt' – that is a Syrian Christian who served in the [Franciscan] monastery. He has a large staff and with a great show of annoyance made signs of striking him. When he came up to him he grabbed him harshly by the arm but he let himself be led easily. The good man, however, never let him go.'

back to Italy as much as he could through Ignatius. In other words, Ignatius learned not to limit the way in which God works in the world. The Jerusalem experience taught Ignatius two things: one must discern the essential from the circumstantial, and that one must avoid placing limits on how God works. This is what I have identified as having a *reframing mind*.¹⁴

Clearly, all of us are limited in the way we understand the world around us. There is nothing wrong with that. It is simply the way things are. As we grow in wisdom, we see things differently. Recall when you were a child: you saw things through the eyes and mind of a child. As a teenager, and then later as a young adult, you saw the same events in a different way. At forty or seventy-five, the same things look different as well. From the standpoint of developmental theory, we all continually reframe our experiences as the 'self' which looks out at the world continually develops.

Can some of these different frames of reference which correspond to different ages be described as 'wrong'? They are different but 'wrong' doesn't seem to be the right word to describe them. I think a better way to think of them is as limitations to our understanding which, if we do grow in wisdom, may eventually restrict our insight less and less. I think this is illustrated well by the life of Ignatius, from his pre-conversion nationalistic view of the world through his post-conversion spiritual view, through his experience at Jerusalem and on and on until the end of his life. The insight of Jerusalem for Ignatius, then, is the insight that limitations to what we see and understand exist, and that through active indifference, through letting go of our defence of our limitations, we allow God to interact with us in

¹⁴ My use of the term *reframing mind* is built upon the use of the term by William R Torbert in *Managing the Corporate Dream* (1987). The theory of the development of how individuals make meaning, which Torbert draws on for his own work, comes from Robert Keegan, *The Evolving Self: Problems and Process in Human Development* (1982).

a dynamic way. A *reframing mind* is constantly open to the essence of God active in the world; a *reframing mind* continually seeks to go beyond self-imposed limitations, continually seeks to transcend even its own operating logic.

This is the kind of mind that I think Ignatius had and it is the kind of mind which Ignatius saw as the fruit of the *Spiritual Exercises* for the retreatant. Ignatius saw his ministry of 'helping souls' specifically to be helping people to be open to God, helping them to be aware of, and identify, the frames of reference they used to understand the world around them; and more than that, helping them to break free of their limitations in order to be ever more perfect instruments of God's will. This openness, I think, implies more than just an ability to understand other people's frames of reference or the ability to hear 'different voices'. It goes one step beyond that to seeing a 'bigger picture', a frameless reference point a transcendent reality which integrates all differences into that cosmic dance I mentioned earlier.

It is my experience that the *Spiritual Exercises* is an instrument for developing that kind of *reframing mind*, and that it has been that for hundreds of thousands of people, non-Jesuits as well as Jesuits, since Ignatius first outlined its methodology in the sixteenth century. I also think that it is the fundamental reason that the work of the Society of Jesus affects the world so profoundly: at their best, the Jesuits are a community composed of many individuals, each of whom strives to develop a *reframing mind* and who teaches others to be fully open to God who is active in the world and in their lives; they are successful because they follow Ignatius in becoming 'contemplatives in action'.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Jerome Nadal SJ (1507-80), one of the first companions, spoke about Ignatius as a *contemplative in action*: '... in all things, actions and conversations, he perceived and contemplated the presence of God'. *MHSI Monumenta Nadal* V.162

Part Three: The handmaid's wail

Ignatius and the other early Jesuits who entered into the fields of missionary work, spiritual direction, or education, did so to assist others to share a fuller relationship with God. Indeed, evangelization, spiritual direction, ongoing formation within a parish community, and education, are all natural fields for the Jesuits; at their best, all of these apostolates enlighten people about themselves and open their minds to the truth which transcends ignorance, bias and prejudice. Such enlightenment is built upon the qualities of the *reframing mind*: that is, an ability to discern the essential from the accidental and the ability to transcend the limitations imposed by both the self and others. These two qualities of the *reframing mind* are essential also to us who co-labor together with God in the work of the Kingdom.

I think that this *reframing mind* is already at work within the apostolic endeavors sponsored by the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus. For example, as a parent of a student at Gonzaga Prep,¹⁶ I am impressed by the radical reframing that took place recently when the school decided to implement a 'fair share' approach to tuition, the first Jesuit school in the nation to do so, with families offering to the school an amount that they discerned through prayer and reflection. Actually, the high schools of the Oregon Province have a long history of reframing. For example, in 1965, Gonzaga Prep was the first Jesuit secondary school in the country to have a lay vice-principal; in 1974, Bellarmine¹⁷ was the first Jesuit school in the country to become co-educational; and, in 1993, the Oregon Province will be the first in

¹⁶ *Gonzaga Preparatory School is a Jesuit high school in Spokane, Washington, USA, founded in 1887. It has around 860 students, ages 14-18.

¹⁷ *Bellarmine Preparatory School is a Jesuit high school in Tacoma, Washington, USA, founded in 1928. It has around 850 students, ages 14-18.

the American Assistancy¹⁸ to have *only* co-educational high schools. In general, the Jesuit high schools in the United States had been involved in a collaborative concept of governance almost two decades before that concept was even seen as an issue by the Jesuit universities.

I am also impressed by the creative reframing of those involved in the Native mission, where the focus has changed from a 'banking method' of teaching, as educator Paulo Freire¹⁹ terms it, to a new model of empowerment. Through the Kateri Institute²⁰, Jesuits are working to bring natives together to learn how to minister to the needs of their own communities, thus empowering them to take charge of their lives on their own terms. The Jesuit involvement in the diaconate and ministry training programs in Alaska are other examples of this ministry of empowerment, where people in the local villages call forth those individuals whom they want to serve them. This is at the heart of what priesthood means, yet to implement it in an institutional, bureaucracy-bound Church requires *re-framing*. This re-framing of what it means to be Church is also taking place at the parishes within the Oregon Province, where Jesuit priests and lay ministers are coming together to develop new models for the parish.

Another example of reframing in a different context is the renewal of the *Spiritual Exercises* undertaken by both Jesuits and non-Jesuits. The origin of the *Exercises* was the experience of a lay person, Ignatius of Loyola,²¹ and the work of lay people and Jesuits in collaboration

¹⁸ **Assistancy* is a Jesuit term used to refer to a group of Jesuit provinces in a particular part of the world.

¹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/1970).

²⁰ *The Kateri Northwest Ministry Institute (KNMI) is a training program in leadership for Native American Catholics. Its mission is to empower Native American Catholics to serve their People and affirm their cultural and spiritual identity.

²¹ *Ignatius wrote the first drafts of his *Spiritual Exercises* at Loyola and Manresa in 1521/23 but was only ordained priest at Venice in 1537.

has produced much spiritual fruit among both Jesuits and lay people. The Retreat in Everyday Life and Christian Life Communities²² are themselves a reframing of the 'traditional' retreat, and have been successfully implemented in many of our apostolates.

I am especially encouraged by the movement present at Gonzaga University²³ to share the responsibility for the mission of the school with all faculty and staff. The Council for Partnership in Mission has grown from a grassroots collection of interested Jesuits, religious,²⁴ and lay people to take on a more institutional role which, I hope, will develop a new model of what it means to be a Jesuit university.

These examples of a creative *reframing mind* are just those from my own knowledge or experience; I am sure that you could share more from yours. There are also examples we both could share of areas where reframing is desperately needed. We are still struggling with a paradigm that existed up until the Second Vatican Council,²⁵ where Jesuit and other Church apostolates were judged to be successful primarily because of the work of Jesuits or other priests. Since the Vatican Council, the view that the Jesuits are the key component of these apostolates has evolved to include Catholic lay men and women as well;

²² *The Christian Life Community (CLC) is an international association of lay Christians who have adopted an Ignatian model of spiritual life. CLC is present in almost sixty countries. It has its origins in the Marian Congregations founded in 1563 and adopted its current name in 1967.

²³ *Gonzaga University is a Jesuit university founded in 1887 at Spokane, Washington, USA. It has around 7,500 students.

²⁴ *ie. Members of religious orders or congregations who take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

²⁵ *The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was a meeting of all the Catholic bishops of the world which reformed the Catholic Church and sought to engage with the modern world. Among other things, it called upon religious orders to rediscover the spirit of their founders and to adapt themselves to the needs of today. The Society of Jesus embarked upon this process of renewal at its 31st General Congregation in 1965/66.

although, to be honest, lay people are still viewed by many as being ancillary to clerics, and unfortunately that includes the Jesuits. It wasn't too long ago, for example, that the idea of lay-Jesuit collaboration was always brought up in the context of the dwindling numbers of Jesuits in the United States: what one gathers from that is that if there were sufficient Jesuits to man the missions, parishes and schools, then there wouldn't be a serious attempt at collaborating with lay people, the nuance being that that would be preferred.

I think that this is an example of confusing the accidental with the essential. The incredible success of Jesuits ministries throughout the last 450 years has not been due to the wonderful qualities of Jesuits; they indeed had wonderful qualities, but while that fact is important, it has not been the essential reason for their success. If they were successful, it was because they assisted others to develop *reframing minds*, to see clearly, to understand the dynamics of each new situation faced, to decide on the proper courses of action. And I argue that they have had the most success when they have used a *reframing mind* themselves, when they have been completely open to God's will at work in the changing circumstances of life. They allowed God to work through them, and no servant is greater than his or her master.²⁶

The fundamental issue in all of the places where Jesuits and non-Jesuits co-labor is one of power: ours or God's. I think that when we focus on the differences between priests, religious and lay people, or on the particular way of proceeding that has characterized the Jesuit apostolates in the past, that our real struggle is with God: we must let go of our concern with control if we are to be able to let God work in us as he did with Ignatius. We must not let our feet get in the way of the dance.

²⁶ *cf. John 13:16 (NJB): 'I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him.'

By saying this, I do not mean to denigrate the concerns of Jesuits for the mission that they indeed have been key in shaping over the past 450 years. But when the Jesuits equate the number of Jesuits with protecting the mission of a Jesuit apostolate, it is because numbers and percentages are measurable, and therefore provide some sense of concrete security in the shifting sands of a real, dynamic world. But if the Second Vatican Council demonstrated anything, it was that God's Spirit moves where it will, and that what is necessary on our parts is a radical trust in God's grace at work in the present circumstances. That kind of trust in God is the fruit of a *reframing mind* which can see God's hand even in the dwindling numbers of Jesuits and the increasing numbers of lay people involved in Church ministries and, in the case of many ministries, of increasing numbers of non-Catholics and non-Christians. I am not suggesting that it is an easy task to form community among so many diverse individuals while still protecting and celebrating the distinctiveness of each. It is indeed an almost impossible assignment; made possible, however, by a *reframing mind* which understands likeness by understanding differences.

I will step beyond my sphere of responsibility for a moment to offer this challenge specifically to my Jesuit brothers: what consequences does being completely open to God's will have for your community? When Ignatius helped to create the Society of Jesus²⁷, he broke all the rules for how a religious order was to be set up. Where other communities were monastic, yours was active; where others had a rule, you had a constitution; where others stressed an other-worldly view, yours was grounded in the Kingdom present in everyday life. Ignatius didn't let the limits proposed by others in the Church keep him from responding authentically to God. What is God's authentic call to you today? As you look towards the next millennium, can you respond as courageously as Ignatius and his early companions did 450

²⁷ *Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1540 with nine companions.

years ago? Can you hold onto the essential and let go of the accidental?

As you search for creative ways to continue as the Society of Jesus, you must not allow traditional models to limit your possible options for action. You must remain open to what is the best possible approach: you must adapt your way of proceeding to the circumstances of the time and place and to the dispositions of the people you serve.²⁸ No method or way of proceeding is sacred, literally, if we really believe that God is dynamically active in the world; all things are understood in their relation to God's will. That was the whole point of Ignatius' idea of remaining indifferent, and it is as applicable to 450-year old traditions as it is to more contemporary ideologies. I think that Ignatius would be slightly embarrassed to think he had created something we now call Ignatian spirituality or Jesuit spirituality. For him, spirituality was simply relationship with God, and it took different forms because God was in relationship with different people. What does your relationship with God require of you in the contemporary world?

I have been arguing that the Jesuits should not allow who they are, and where they have been, to get in the way of where they are going. The same holds true for non-Jesuits who co-labor with the Jesuits in their apostolates. In my apostolate of education, for example, lay teachers often bring with them the baggage of their disciplines, namely that the discipline's particular frame of reference on reality is the best or only really valid frame of reference. As a result, the integration of multiple perspectives which is necessary for a view of the 'bigger picture' may be resisted, consciously or unconsciously, and the search for truth may be fragmented into a structured, systematic bias. This same fragmentation exists, I think, when Jesuits or non-Jesuits exclude the perspective of

²⁸ *The principle of adaptation according to 'circumstances of times, places, persons, and other such factors' (*Constitutions* n.351 and elsewhere) is an important characteristic of the Ignatian 'way of proceeding'.

the other in determining the way of proceeding in any apostolate.

Within the context of our role as lay co-laborers, then, what are the consequences of our own openness to God's will? Are we really willing to commit ourselves to a mature relationship with the Jesuits, one which challenges our way of proceeding as much as it challenges theirs? Can we reconcile through *reframing* what it means to be both world-oriented and faith-oriented, to have commitment to our families and to an apostolic work? Are we really willing to share our experience of God, our own spiritualities, with others and to dialogue with Jesuits, religious, and other lay people about our common faith? In actively challenging the oppression present within our Church, can we do so under the standard of poverty, humility and powerlessness, discerning God's will for us in the midst of our fears, anxieties and resentments? Instead of waiting for the Jesuits to ask us to dance, can we take the first step and ask them?

Just as Ignatius and the early Jesuits did when they took all that was best and left all that was superfluous from their educational experience at the University of Paris,²⁹ so we also must move in the current situation with a discerning eye, holding on to what is useful and letting go of that which is not. We must refuse to be straightjacketed into ways of proceeding that are static, whether the binding occurs at the hands of the culture, the magisterium, or even each other. We must give ourselves completely to the dance with God, attuned to God's movements and to our responses. We must make use of a *reframing mind*.

²⁹ *Three of the founding members of the Society studied at Paris in the early 1530s (Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier and Pierre Favre) and took from their experience a template which they used in moulding a Jesuit approach to teaching and learning.

Conclusion

I think that the focus of Companions/2000³⁰ on who we are becoming appropriately follows the Ignatius Year³¹ focus on who we have been. During the Ignatian Year, we celebrated 450 years of work by the Society of Jesus. We celebrated schools and colleges, missions and parishes. We celebrated great Jesuits like Xavier,³² De Smet,³³ Lonergan,³⁴ and Rahner.³⁵ We celebrated less well known educators and missionaries who have labored long to bring the reality of God's love to people of every part of the world. And, most of all, we celebrated Ignatius.

But when we celebrate events and institutions and people, we do so within a historical context. We celebrate things which happened in certain ways, institutions which developed along certain paths, people who were effective in certain situations. Because the idea of a *reframing mind* is a difficult concept on which to get a good hold, because, as TS Eliot said, 'human kind cannot bear very much reality',³⁶ we sometimes forget that what is truly worth celebrating is not how things turned out but *why*.

³⁰ *An initiative in the Oregon Province to explore apostolic co-operation between Jesuits and lay people.

³¹ *1991 marked the 500th anniversary of the birth of St Ignatius of Loyola.

³² *St Francis Xavier (1506-52) Spanish Jesuit, co-founder of the Society of Jesus, missionary to India, Japan and the Far East.

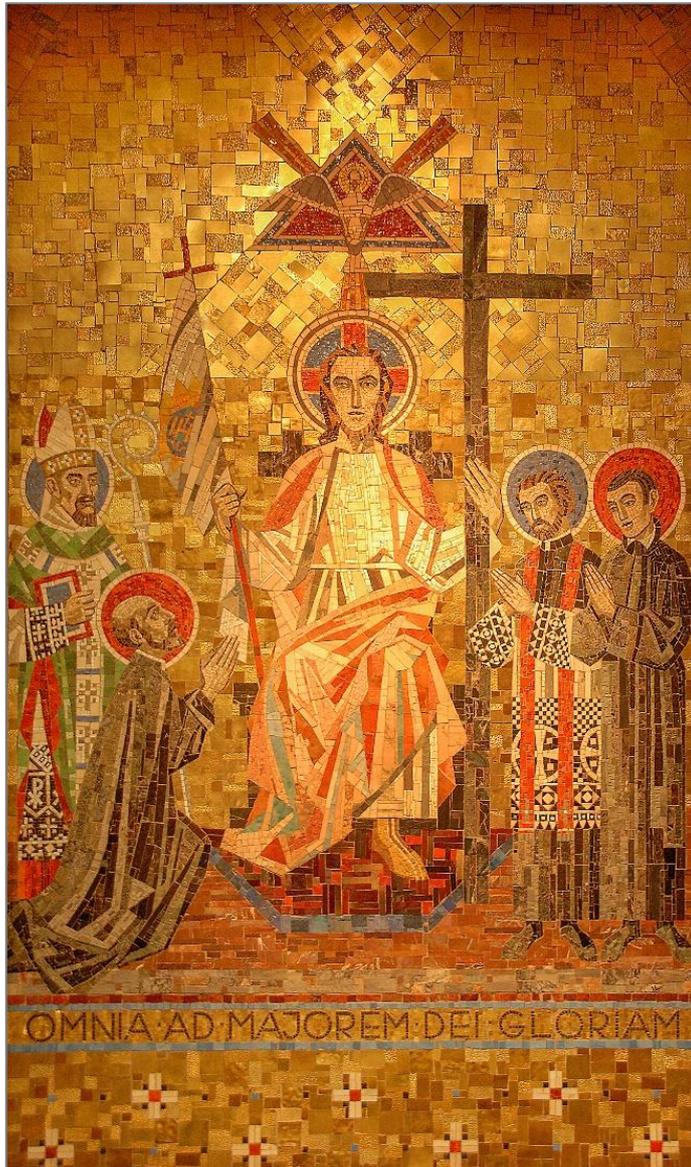
³³ *Pierre-Jean De Smet (1801-73), Belgian Jesuit missionary who worked among Native American peoples of the mid and north-west USA.

³⁴ *Bernard Lonergan SJ (1904-84), Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian.

³⁵ *Karl Rahner SJ (1904-84), German Jesuit and theologian.

³⁶ T S Eliot, *Four Quartets: Burnt Norton* (1935).

My point has been that, if we immerse ourselves in the history of Ignatius and the Society of Jesus, we will be justly impressed and engaged by how these men behaved and what they accomplished, and we may try to follow in their footsteps, perhaps too literally, just as Ignatius did at Jerusalem. If we focus too much on the historical Jesuit frame of reference in these apostolates, we may run the risk of confusing what God's will for us was in the past with what it is for us now and in the future. The dance disintegrates when the moves become forced, and if we allow our focus on what has been to limit our view of what will be, we may find that the celebration of the Ignatian Year was actually nothing more than a wake for the Ignatian mind.



In the chapel of the Jesuit residence on this campus, there is a beautiful mosaic on the wall behind the altar. As one sits in the chapel, one faces an enthroned Christ the King in the mosaic, flanked by Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Robert Bellarmine³⁷ and Aloysius Gonzaga.³⁸ Xavier,

³⁷ *St Robert Bellarmine SJ (1542-1621), bishop and cardinal, patron of scholars and universities.

³⁸ *St Aloysius Gonzaga SJ (1568-91), Jesuit in studies, pupil of St Robert Bellarmine, died while ministering to plague victims.

Bellarmino and Gonzaga all face the onlooker, standing next to the seated Christ. But Ignatius is on his knees, his eyes on Christ and his back almost completely turned on the onlooker, as if to say, 'Don't look at me; look at him!'

If we are to learn from Ignatius, we must take this to heart. At the same time that we celebrate the life of Ignatius and the history of the Society, we must view them as Ignatius viewed the Jerusalem out of which he was being booted by his Franciscan brother. We must develop an attitude of indifference to all things, even to ways of proceeding which have borne much fruit in the past. We must realize that while what we hold valuable may be good, it can also serve to prevent us from being effective instruments of God's will. Every so often we need the spiritual

equivalent of a Franciscan bouncer.

If we are to be like Ignatius, we must realize that we can never be like Ignatius. We can only be like ourselves. Being like ourselves means being open to how God is working in the very specific circumstances of the world we live in. Being like ourselves means trusting that God is actively working through the individuals who have been drawn together to work at this particular mission, retreat house, parish or school: Jesuits, other religious men and women,

and lay men and women of many faith experiences. By having that trust in God, we can *reframe* the differences among us into a deeper experience of authentic community and we can allow God to move with us in the ever-changing circumstances of ours and everyone's lives. And in doing that, we can truly be like Ignatius. And then, if we meet him on the road, we can embrace him and join him in the dance.

*Additional footnotes have been added to this article for those less familiar with Ignatian and Jesuit history, language and ideas. Footnotes that are not the author's are indicated with an *asterisk.*



If You Meet Ignatius on the Road, Kill Him!

Text © 1992 Michael R Carey

Photograph © 2011 Brad Reynolds SJ

Text and photograph used with permission

© 2019 Jesuit Institute London