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Pope Francis and Ignatian Discernment

PETER J. BERNARDI, SJ

Next week marks the first anniversary of an unprecedented papal event in the modern era! On February 11, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI made the startling declaration that he intended to “renounce the ministry of the bishop of Rome,” effective the evening of February 28, 2013. Before an assembly of ecclesiastics, gathered for the official announcement of some scheduled canonizations, Benedict unexpectedly read in Latin a *declaratio*, written in his own hand, explaining in a firm, calm voice, the reasons for his decision, made “with full freedom,” and “after having repeatedly examined [his] conscience before God.”¹ He cited as reasons his deteriorating strength and the mental demands of the papacy. Benedict became the first pope in history to resign for reasons of infirmity due to aging.

Benedict’s resignation and its context made possible the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as the bishop of Rome, on March 13, 2013. This event was also anomalous: the first pope from the Americas; the first pope from the Southern hemisphere (from the “ends of the earth,” as he memorably put it), the global South where approximately two-thirds of the world’s Roman Catholics now reside. And the unprecedented choice of the name “Francis.” Excepting the combined papal name of “John Paul,” not

1. Glatz and Wooden, “Citing Health Reasons.”

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since the early tenth century has the bishop of Rome chosen a name not held by a predecessor.²

And Francis is the first Jesuit to be elected pope! In the long history of the papacy, only thirty-three vowed religious have been elected bishop of Rome: the first was the monk known to history as St. Gregory the Great (pope, 590–604); and the most recent, before Bergoglio, was the Camaldolese monk Bartolomeo Cappellari, who served as Pope Gregory XVI from 1831 to 1846.

On an ironic note, the Franciscan friar Giovanni Ganganelli, who became Clement XIV (pope, 1769–74), bowing to pressure from European rulers, suppressed the Jesuit order in 1773. But the Benedictine Luigi Chiaramonti, who became Pius VII (pope, 1800–1823), restored the order in 1814. In October 2014, there will be a major academic conference to commemorate this anniversary at Loyola University of Chicago!

The modest aim of my presentation is to highlight some aspects of Ignatian spirituality using the words and actions of Pope Francis. Of course, what characterizes Ignatian spirituality is part of the Church's spiritual patrimony and one need not be a Jesuit to be influenced by it. Furthermore, it would be fatuous to claim that the Ignatian Exercises are the only way these graces can be experienced. Nevertheless, there is a distinctive Ignatian spirituality discernible in the ministry of Pope Francis.

During the return flight to Rome from World Youth Day held in Brazil in the summer of 2013, Francis told reporters, "I feel a Jesuit in my spirituality; in the spirituality of the Exercises, the spirituality deep in my heart. I feel this so deeply that in three days I will go to celebrate with the Jesuits the feast of Saint Ignatius: I will say the morning Mass. I have not changed my spirituality, no. Francis, Franciscan, no. I feel a Jesuit and I think as a Jesuit. I don't mean that hypocritically, but I think as a Jesuit."³

For those unfamiliar with the formation a Jesuit receives, let's quickly review the formation of Jorge Mario Bergoglio:

- 1936 Born in Flores, Buenos Aires, to Italian immigrant parents.
- 1950 Starts six-year vocational course at the Escuela Nacional de Educación Técnica leading to a diploma as a chemical technician.

2. Lando (pope, 913–14) opted to keep his given name.

3. "Full Transcript of Pope's In-Flight Press Remarks Released."

- 1953 Recognizes vocation during sacrament of confession on September 21.
- 1957 Nearly dies from lung infection.
- 1958 Enters the Jesuit novitiate on March 11.
- 1960 Takes first vows as a Jesuit; studies humanities in Chile.
- 1961–63 Two years of philosophy studies in San Miguel Seminary, Buenos Aires.
- 1964–65 Teaches high school literature and psychology in Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepción in Santa Fe.
- 1966 Teaches in Colegio del Salvador secondary school in Buenos Aires.
- 1967–70 Studies theology at San Miguel Seminary.
- 1969 Ordained to the priesthood on December 13.
- 1970–71 Makes tertianship (final stage of Jesuit formation) at University of Alcalá de Henares in Spain.
- 1971–73 Serves as novice master and vice chancellor, San Miguel Seminary.
- 1973 Takes final vows as a Jesuit on April 22; becomes provincial on July 31.
- 1973–79 Serves as provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina and Uruguay.
- 1979–85 Serves as rector of the Colegio Máximo and theology teacher.
- 1986 Spends six months in Germany researching thesis on Romano Guardini; returns to Argentina to teach and serve as confessor of the community of Colegio del Salvador of Buenos Aires, 1986–90.
- 1990–92 Pastoral work at Córdoba.
- 1992 Ordained to the episcopate; becomes auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires.
- 1997 Appointed coadjutor archbishop of Buenos Aires.
- 1998 Installed as archbishop of Buenos Aires.

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- 2001 Made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II; appointed relator at the Synod of Bishops in Rome.
- 2005 Attends papal conclave that elects Pope Benedict.
- 2005–11 Serves as president of the Argentine Bishops' Conference.
- 2007 Chairs the redaction committee of the Final Document of the CELAM Aparecida conference.
- 2013 Elected bishop of Rome on March 13.

Having studied and worked as a chemical technician (and moonlighting as a bouncer!), at the age of twenty-one Jorge Mario entered the Jesuit novitiate. Among the holy desires that attracted him to the Society of Jesus was becoming a missionary to Japan, but the Holy Spirit had other missions in mind! As part of his formation, like every Jesuit, he made two intensive thirty-day “long” retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola: the first time as a novice, before he took his first vows in 1960; the second time as a “tercian,” after having completed a combined seven years of studies in the humanities, philosophy, and theology, and having taught for three years, and after having been ordained to the priesthood in 1969. “Tertianship” is the six- to nine-month program that completes the formal training of a Jesuit. Following the completion of tertianship, a Jesuit awaits an invitation to take final vows, fulfilling a promise he made before God when he took his first vows as a novice. Jorge Mario made his final vows in 1973, just a few months before he was named the provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina and Uruguay at the unusually young age of thirty-six.

Besides his six-year term as provincial superior, Bergoglio also served as a “formator” of young Jesuits, first as novice master, when he directed many young Jesuits in the long retreat. Serving as a “formator” requires a deeper level of familiarity with Ignatian spirituality and skill in “discernment of spirits,” the ability to distinguish the movements of the good spirit from those of the evil one. Ignatian spirituality is based on St. Ignatius of Loyola’s own intense experiences of prayer during his stay at Manresa, Spain, when God led him, “like a patient teacher,” to grow in faith and freedom. Ignatius subsequently compiled these exercises in a spiritual handbook, including instructions for directors, in order to help others. They are an ordered series of meditations and contemplations grounded in Scripture that draw the retreatant into a profound encounter with Christ. The retreatant prays to experience a *conocimiento interno*, a deep “interior knowledge” of the

“heart of Christ.”⁴ St. Ignatius wrote, “It is not abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the inward sense and taste of things!”⁵

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola

The full Exercises have a “four-week” structure: the first week is devoted to the consideration of sin and the overwhelming Mercy of God; the second week focuses on the life of Christ as far as Palm Sunday inclusive; the third week meditates on the Passion and death of Christ; and the fourth on His Resurrection and Ascension. The graced fruits of making the Exercises include remorse for one’s sin; a transformative experience of God’s loving mercy; reverence for creation; humility and prudence, fidelity and compassion, joy and gratitude; and overall a spiritual freedom that enables one to respond to the Lord with generous, loving deeds.⁶

The trademark of Ignatian spirituality is “find[ing] God in all things.” Ignatian principles of discernment enable a person to recognize the genuine movements of God’s Spirit as well as the capacity to detect the spirit of the evil one, who sometimes masquerades as an “angel of light.”

In the widely publicized interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, SJ, editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Pope Francis remarked,

Discernment is one of the things that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely. I was always struck by a saying that describes the vision of Ignatius: *non coerceri a maximo, sed contineri a minimo divinum est* (“not to be limited by the greatest and yet to be contained in the tiniest—this is the divine”). I thought a lot about this phrase in connection with the issue of different roles in the government of the church, about becoming the superior of somebody else: it is important not to be restricted by a larger space, and it is important to be able to stay in restricted spaces. This virtue of the large and small is magnanimity. Thanks to magnanimity, we can always look at the horizon from the position where we are. That means being able to do the little things of every day with a big heart open to God and to others. That means being

4. See Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*.

5. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, Annotations, no. 2.

6. Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, passim.

able to appreciate the small things inside large horizons, those of the kingdom of God.⁷

He continued:

This motto offers parameters to assume a correct position for discernment, in order to hear the things of God from God's "point of view." According to St. Ignatius, great principles must be embodied in the circumstances of place, time and people . . .

This discernment takes time. For example, many think that changes and reforms can take place in a short time. I believe that we always need time to lay the foundations for real, effective change. And this is the time of discernment. Sometimes discernment instead urges us to do precisely what you had at first thought you would do later. And that is what has happened to me in recent months. Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor. My choices, including those related to the day-to-day aspects of life, like the use of a modest car, are related to a spiritual discernment that responds to a need that arises from looking at things, at people and from reading the signs of the times. Discernment in the Lord guides me in my way of governing.

But I am always wary of decisions made hastily. I am always wary of the first decision, that is, the first thing that comes to my mind if I have to make a decision. This is usually the wrong thing. I have to wait and assess, looking deep into myself, taking the necessary time. The wisdom of discernment redeems the necessary ambiguity of life and helps us find the most appropriate means, which do not always coincide with what looks great and strong.

Finding God in all things is not an "empirical *eureka*." When we desire to encounter God, we would like to verify him immediately by an empirical method. But you cannot meet God this way. God is found in the gentle breeze perceived by Elijah. The senses that find God are the ones St. Ignatius called spiritual senses. Ignatius asks us to open our spiritual sensitivity to encounter God beyond a purely empirical approach. A contemplative attitude is necessary: it is the feeling that you are moving along the good path of understanding and affection toward things and situations. Profound peace, spiritual consolation, love of God and love of all things in God—this is the sign that you are on this right path.⁸

7. Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 17.

8. *Ibid.*, 30.

Pope Francis was asked, “So if the encounter with God is not an ‘empirical *eureka*,’ and if it is a journey that sees with the eyes of history, then we can also make mistakes?” He replied,

Yes, in this quest to seek and find God in all things there is still an area of uncertainty. There must be. If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good. For me, this is an important key. If one has the answers to all the questions—that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt. You must leave room for the Lord, not for our certainties; we must be humble. Uncertainty is in every true discernment that is open to finding confirmation in spiritual consolation.

The risk in seeking and finding God in all things, then, is the willingness to explain too much, to say with human certainty and arrogance: “God is here.” We will find only a god that fits our measure. The correct attitude is that of St. Augustine: seek God to find him, and find God to keep searching for God forever . . . We must enter into the adventure of the quest for meeting God; we must let God search and encounter us.

Because God is first; God is always first and makes the first move . . . We read it in the Prophets. God is encountered walking, along the path. At this juncture, someone might say that this is relativism. Is it relativism? Yes, if it is misunderstood as a kind of indistinct pantheism. It is not relativism if it is understood in the biblical sense, that God is always a surprise, so you never know where and how you will find him. You are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him. You must, therefore, discern the encounter. Discernment is essential.⁹

On the return flight from Brazil, Francis offered an example of how discernment had led him to change his mind:

You asked about the Charismatic Renewal movement. I’ll tell you one thing. Back at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, I had no time for them. Once, speaking about them, I said: “These people confuse a liturgical celebration with samba lessons!” I actually said that. Now I regret it. I learned. It is also true that the movement, with good leaders, has made great progress. Now I think that this movement does much good for the Church,

9. *Ibid.*, 30, 32.

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overall. In Buenos Aires, I met frequently with them and once a year I celebrated a Mass with all of them in the Cathedral. I have always supported them, after I was *converted*, after I saw the good they were doing.¹⁰

This illustrates the classic principle of discernment articulated by Jesus: “You shall know them by their fruits.”

The practice of discernment entails “listening,” which is a prominent theme in Francis’s utterances, especially his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*. Listening entails respect for the mystery of God’s grace at work in people’s lives, an attentive openness to human experience. In his address to the leaders of religious congregations in December 2013, the pope spoke of “the need to become acquainted with reality by experience, to spend time walking on the periphery in order really to become acquainted with the reality and life experiences of people. If this does not happen we then run the risk of being abstract ideologists or fundamentalists, which is not healthy.”¹¹

And in the Spadaro interview, he said, “I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person’s life. God is in everyone’s life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else—God is in this person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”¹² I detect here an echo of the theology of grace of Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904–84), who played such an important role at Vatican II. The year 2014 marks the thirtieth anniversary of Rahner’s death (March 30, 1984).

On various occasions, Francis has expressed respect for persons and their concrete spiritual experience. In the “Wake Up the World” reflections about religious life, recorded by Spadaro, Francis said, “In the end I cannot form a person as a religious without consideration of his or her life, experience, mentality and cultural context. This is the way to proceed. This is what the great missionaries did.”¹³

Notably, when asked about homosexual persons, Francis responded, “We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany

10. “Full Transcript of Pope’s In-Flight Press Remarks Released.”

11. Spadaro, “Wake Up the World,” 4.

12. Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God,” 32.

13. Spadaro, “Wake Up the World,” 7.

them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. When that happens, the Holy Spirit inspires the priest to say the right thing.”¹⁴

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio had played a major role in preparing the Final Report of the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Bishops’ Conference that met in Aparecida, Brazil. This document expressed these same concerns: “Personal conversion engenders the ability to make everything subject to establishing the Kingdom of life. We bishops, priests, permanent deacons, religious men and women, and lay men and women are called to assume an attitude of ongoing pastoral conversion, which entails listening attentively and discerning ‘what the Spirit says to the churches’ (Rev 2:29) through the signs of the times in which God is made manifest.”¹⁵

Pope Francis’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* reiterated these themes:

A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.¹⁶

Because the pope wants a “humble, listening, discerning Church,” he calls for a reform of consultative and collegial structures in the Church.¹⁷

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born

14. Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God,” 26.

15. CELAM, *Concluding Document: Aparecida*, no. 366.

16. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 46.

17. Gaillardetz, “Francis Wishes to Release Vatican II’s Bold Vision.”

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of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).¹⁸

And during World Youth Day, he said, "I want the Church to be in the streets; I want us to defend ourselves against all that is worldliness, comfort, being closed and turned within. Parishes, colleges, and institutions must get out, otherwise they risk becoming NGOs, and the Church is not a NGO [i.e., nongovernmental organization]."¹⁹

There is much in Francis's writings and interviews that reflects the First Week of the Ignatian Exercises. On more than one occasion, he has acknowledged his own sinfulness and his heartfelt experience of God's *mercy*. Indeed, God's overwhelming Mercy is a persistent theme in his preaching.

When Spadaro asked him, "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?" the pope responded, "I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner . . . Yes, perhaps I can say that I am a bit astute, that I can adapt to circumstances, but it is also true that I am a bit naïve. Yes, but the best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon." And he reiterated, "I am one who is looked upon by the Lord. I always felt my motto, *Miserando atque Eligendo* [By Having Mercy and by Choosing Him], was very true for me."²⁰

In the years before his election as bishop of Rome, Bergoglio often visited the Church of St. Louis of France in Rome to contemplate *The Calling of St. Matthew*, by Caravaggio. "That finger of Jesus, pointing at Matthew. That's me. I feel like him. Like Matthew . . . It is the gesture of Matthew that strikes me: he holds on to his money as if to say, 'No, not me! No, this money is mine.' Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze. And this is what I said when they asked me if I would accept my election as pontiff." Then the pope whisper[ed] in Latin: "I am a sinner, but

18. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 49.

19. "Pope Francis to the Youth and to the Aged."

20. Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance.”²¹

In fact, it was on the Feast of Saint Matthew, in 1953, that the seventeen-year-old Jorge Mario Bergoglio experienced a call to priesthood when receiving the Sacrament of Penance. He recalled more than fifty years later, “Something strange happened to me in that confession. I don’t know what it was, but it changed my life. I think it surprised me, caught me with my guard down . . . It was the surprise, the astonishment of a chance encounter . . . This is the religious experience: the astonishment of meeting someone who has been waiting for you all along. From that moment on, for me, God is the One who *te primerea*—‘springs it on you.’ You search for Him, but He searches for you first. You want to find Him, but He finds you first.”²²

At the end of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, there is a meditation titled “The Call of the King,” which concludes with a Triple Prayer Colloquy. Francis has remarked, “For me it is the memory of which St. Ignatius speaks in the First Week of the Exercises in the encounter with the merciful Christ crucified. And I ask myself: ‘What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What should I do for Christ?’”²³ “The Call of the King” meditation serves as a segue into the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises that brings the retreatant into a “*Personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus*.”²⁴ While not unique to Francis, he repeatedly focuses on the loving “gaze,” both the Lord’s merciful gaze fixed on us and the exhortation for us to “gaze” on Christ, especially the crucified Christ, who has emptied himself on our behalf. The “gaze” is a concrete expression of the saving, transformative “encounter” with the Lord that is frequently emphasized in the Final “Aparecida” Report (ninety-three times) and in Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (thirty-four times). This encounter is foundational for the “missionary disciple.”

“Knowing Jesus is the best gift that any person can receive; that we have encountered Him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and making him known by our word and deeds is our joy.”²⁵

21. Ibid. For a short presentation on this painting, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtnlkvsWTIw>.

22. Rubin and Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis*, 34.

23. Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God,” 38.

24. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 264.

25. *Concluding Document: Aparecida*, no. 29.

Authentic encounter with Christ energizes his disciples for mission. Francis, it seems to me, often has in mind, even if the term is unspoken, the Ignatian *magis* (Latin for “more”), namely, an appeal to bold generosity on behalf of God’s Kingdom. Francis exhorts the People of God, in virtue of their baptismal vocation, to be “missionary disciples,” not to be afraid to go to the “peripheries,” literally and figuratively, to make contact with the excluded, the alienated, and the marginalized. His pastoral ministry has exemplified many ways to encounter Christ in the poor and the excluded, to be with Christ at the margins, the periphery, the frontiers. Especially moving was the embrace he gave to Vinicio Riva, who has suffered horrifically from neurofibromatosis since he was fifteen years old.

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.²⁶

Francis imagines the Church as a “field hospital” that is present to people who are suffering and estranged. He criticizes viewing the Church as a secure enclave, safe from the contagion of the world. In Buenos Aires, Archbishop Bergoglio regularly visited the poorest neighborhoods, *villas de miserias*, both to get to know the poor and to encourage the priests who were missioned to live with the poor. The number of priests and seminarians who lived and worked with the poor doubled during his years as archbishop. He wrote in his apostolic exhortation, “There is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards.”²⁷ But going to the “periphery” also includes dialogue with those alienated from Christian faith, such as when the pope took the initiative to meet with the atheistic editor of *La Repubblica*, Eugenio Scalfari.²⁸

The Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises features two meditations that have deeply influenced Francis. In the “Two Standards Meditation,” the retreatant prays for the grace to understand and embrace the strategy of Christ, which is diametrically opposed to the insidious temptations of the evil one, the enemy of our nature. It is the stratagem of the evil one to tempt people with riches, then to vain honors, and finally to the state of “swollen pride.” In contrast, the strategy of Christ is first to draw people “to the

26. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 24.

27. *Ibid.*, 195.

28. See Scalfari, “The Pope,” but also see Gagliarducci, “Pope’s Words.”

highest spiritual poverty,” and if the Lord wills to choose them, “not less to actual poverty”; secondly, “to desire reproaches and affronts, because from these experiences comes humility. In sum, the strategy of Christ embraces poverty, not riches; insults and humiliations, not worldly honors; and humility, not egocentric pride; by these three stages, the disciples of Christ are to be led to all the other virtues.”²⁹ The meditation on the “Consideration of the Three Modes of Humility” similarly highlights the “third” degree of humility, which is to desire and choose poverty with Christ rather than riches; to experience insults with Christ rather than worldly honors; and finally, “to be accounted a good-for-nothing and a fool for Christ’s sake rather than to be accounted a worldly success.”³⁰ Gerry Fagin conveys the gist of these meditations: “Christ calls us to simplicity, poverty of spirit, selflessness, sharing, compassion, cooperation, concern for others, community, inclusion, and solidarity with the poor. In contrast, Satan calls us to consumerism, competition, narcissism, individualism, exclusion, and suspicion of others.”³¹

In one of his “morning meditations” given in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta, where he resides, Pope Francis expressed the graces of these meditations: “The sign that ‘a Christian is a true Christian’ is his ability to bear humiliation with joy and patience . . . [to] look upon the Lord and ask for humiliation in order to be more closely conformed to him.”³² The humility and simplicity of Francis have touched people well beyond the Church’s membership!

In contrast with the strategy of Christ are the deceptions of the evil one. Francis has repeatedly expressed the need to guard against the temptation to “spiritual worldliness,” a phrase taken from Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac’s work *Splendour of the Church*.³³ In an address to the priests after the Aparecida meeting in 2008, Archbishop Bergoglio highlighted the special capacity of the People of God to sniff out pastors who have been corrupted:

The faithful People of God, to whom we belong, from which we learned and to whom we are sent, has a special sense of smell,

29. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 146.

30. *Ibid.*, no. 167.

31. Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, 103.

32. Pope Francis, “On the Path of Jesus.”

33. See de Lubac, *Splendour of the Church*, 377–78. The Spanish word for “worldly,” *mundano*, is found in the Two Standards Meditation.

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which comes from the *sensus fidei*, to recognize when a shepherd of the people is turning into a cleric of the State, into a bureaucrat [*funzionario*]. It is not the same case as a priest sinner, [which] we all are, and we remain in the flock. Instead, the worldly priest enters in a different process, a process—the term comes to mind—of spiritual corruption—that attacks the spiritual nature itself of the shepherd, perverts it and gives him a status different from the holy People of God. Both the prophet Ezekiel and St. Augustine in his Sermon 46 *De Pastoribus* identify this type of shepherd with the one who takes advantage of the flock; he takes the milk and the wool. Aparecida, throughout its message to priests, aims at the genuine identity of the “shepherd of the people,” and not that of an adulterated “cleric of the State.”³⁴

This perspective informed Cardinal Bergoglio’s address to the cardinals before the conclave that resulted in his election as the bishop of Rome. His dynamic missionary vision of the Church, not obsessed with her own security, is said to have galvanized the cardinals.³⁵

We have to avoid the spiritual sickness of a self-referential church. It’s true that when you get out into the street, as happens to every man and woman, there can be accidents. However, if the church remains closed in on itself, self-referential, it gets old. Between a church that suffers accidents in the street, and a church that’s sick because it’s self-referential, I have no doubts about preferring the former.³⁶

In response to the pervasive ecclesial “desolation” resulting from well-publicized scandals and curial infighting that threatened to impede the action of the evangelizing Spirit, Bergoglio effectively applied St. Ignatius’s rules of discernment.³⁷ The spiritual strategy in such circumstances is “to go against” (*agere contra*) the temptation to self-preoccupation. What is needed is for the Church to recover its missionary élan! This inspiring vision evidently struck a nerve with the cardinal electors.

The Third and Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises focus on the death and resurrection of Christ, respectively. The grace of the Third Week

34. Bergoglio, “Il messaggio.”

35. “The church on earth is by its very nature missionary . . .” See Vatican Council II, *Decree Ad Gentes*, 2.

36. “Havana Prelate Shares Notes.”

37. See Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 313–36. I am grateful to Bill Creed, SJ, for this insight.

is epitomized in the experience of St. Ignatius in a chapel at La Storta, then on the outskirts of Rome. Ignatius saw Christ carrying his cross and heard a heavenly voice: “Take this man to labor with you.” Ignatius received confirmation of his desire to labor at the side of the Son under the standard of the cross, which is a “standard of poverty and humility and self-abdication.”³⁸

Joy is the special grace of the Fourth Week: “The Resurrection of Jesus is the source of our joy, our peace, and our hope.”³⁹ Needless to say, *joy* is patent in Francis’s ministry! And joy is a central theme in his apostolic exhortation!

The Ignatian Exercises conclude with “The Contemplation to Attain Love.”⁴⁰ The retreatant is asked to consider “how all good things and gifts descend from above, as my limited powers from that power sovereign and infinite above, and so justice, goodness, pity, mercy, etc., as from the sun come down the rays, from the spring the waters, etc.”⁴¹ This contemplation relates to Ignatius’s Cardoner River experience. In his “Autobiography,” he recalled, “He [Ignatius] sat down for a little while with his face to the river which was running deep. While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; though he did not see any vision, he understood and knew many things, both spiritual things and matters of faith and learning, and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him . . . After this had lasted for a good while, he went to kneel before a nearby cross to give thanks to God.”⁴² In the Spadaro interview, Francis said,

Prayer for me is always a prayer full of memory, of recollection, even the memory of my own history or what the Lord has done in his church or in a particular parish . . . It is the memory of which Ignatius speaks in the “Contemplation for Experiencing [Attaining] Divine Love,” when he asks us to recall the gifts we have received. But above all, I also know that the Lord remembers me. I can forget about him, but I know that he never, ever forgets me. Memory has a fundamental role for the heart of a Jesuit: memory of grace, the memory mentioned in Deuteronomy, the memory of God’s works that are the basis of the covenant between God

38. Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, 78.

39. *Ibid.*, 197.

40. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 230–37.

41. *Ibid.*, no. 237.

42. Ignatius, *Autobiography*, 39–40.

and the people. It is this memory that makes me his son and that makes me a father, too.⁴³

As Francis succinctly expressed in his apostolic exhortation, “The believer is essentially ‘one who remembers’” with gratitude.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Since becoming the bishop of Rome, Francis’s Jesuit formation has surely influenced a special papal act, namely, the “equivalent” canonization of Peter Favre (1506–46), one of St. Ignatius’s first companions and a founding member of the Society of Jesus.⁴⁵ Echoing Jesuit scholar Michel de Certeau, Francis considers Favre the model of the “reformed” priest. The pope admires “[Peter Favre’s] dialogue with all . . . even the most remote and even with his opponents; his simple piety, a certain naïveté perhaps, his being available straightaway, his careful interior discernment, the fact that he was a man capable of great and strong decisions but also capable of being so gentle and loving.”⁴⁶ And in his homily for the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus at the Church of the Gesù in Rome, Francis held up Favre “as an apostolic model, a person of great desires, with a holy ‘restlessness’ for the sake of Christ’s Kingdom” who united an ‘exquisite’ sensibility with the capacity to make decisions.”⁴⁷ The pope cited from Favre’s autobiographical *Memoriale*: “That the first movement of the heart must be that of ‘desiring what is essential and original, that is, that the first place be left to the perfect solicitude of finding God our Lord’ [no. 63]; Favre demonstrates the desire ‘to let Christ occupy the center of our heart’ [no. 68].”⁴⁸ Francis added, “Only if one is centered on God is it possible to go to the fringes of the world! . . . Favre was devoured by the intense desire to communicate the Lord. If we do not have this same desire, then we need to pause in prayer

43. Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God,” 38.

44. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 13.

45. The canonization was announced on December 17, 2013. An “equivalent” canonization means that the requirement of a second miracle was waived. This was also the case with the canonization of Hildegard of Bingen by Pope Benedict and of Pope John XXIII by Pope Francis. See “Pope Francis Declares Sainthood of Early Jesuit.”

46. Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God,” 20.

47. See “Pope Francis’ Homily at Mass.”

48. See *ibid.* The numbers in brackets refer to the section numbers of Favre’s *Memoriale*.

and, with silent fervor, ask the Lord, through the intercession of our brother Peter, that he fascinate us again: that fascination of the Lord that led Peter to all his apostolic ‘lunacies.’⁴⁹ As St. Peter Favre wrote, “We never seek in this life a name that is not connected with that of Jesus” (no. 205). I think that this is the key to understanding Francis’s Petrine ministry.

49. See “Pope Francis’ Homily at Mass.”