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Cover Page Footnote

Elizabeth is originally from Lilburn, Georgia. She graduated from Belmont Abbey College in Belmont North Carolina in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts in theology. Continuing her Benedictine Education she is now pursuing a Master of Theology at Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary. Her current theological interests are Nouvelle Theologie, spiritual theology, Adrienne von Spery and Flannery O'Connor.

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The following reflection focuses on the unique relationship between Adrienne von Speyr and St. Ignatius of Loyola. I will begin by first describing the major ways in which von Speyr's life witnesses to the powerful influence Ignatius had in her mystical visions, shaping her understanding of her relationship with God and those around her. Secondly, I will investigate one of von Speyr's spiritual works in an effort to discover the ways in which her perspective reflects the influence of Ignatian spirituality. As the scope of this paper is limited, I seek only to explore some of the many ways in which this lay female mystic's writings reflect qualities of Ignatian spirituality.

A Spiritual Friendship: Ignatius and Adrienne von Speyr

Adrienne von Speyr was born in La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland on September 20, 1902. Raised in a family of four children, she grew up with a French-Swiss mother and German-Swiss Father.¹ Von Speyr tells many stories of her life from childhood through early adulthood in *My Early Years*, a book edited by her spiritual director, Hans Urs von Balthasar. In the preface of the book he describes the reason for the existence of such a book, since its publication did not result from von Speyr's initiative. When she was in her mid-forties, he requested that she recall and write significant memories of her childhood. Until the mid-1950s, von Speyr intermittently compiled the reflections contained in this book; von Balthasar states his astonishment at the "freshness and precision with which this woman of fifty years of age recalls the events of her youth, and one marvels at her facility at extracting the meaning and significance of these events within the broad scope of her life as well as their import when viewed in retrospect."²

¹ Adrienne von Speyr. *My Early Years*. Hans Urs von Balthasar, ed., Mary Emily Hamilton and Dennis D. Martin, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 17-18.

² Adrienne von Speyr. *My Early Years*. Hans Urs von Balthasar,

The memory in *My Early Years* that is most pertinent to the current reflection is von Speyr's recollection of her vision, at six years old, of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Von Speyr recounts her memory of Christmas Eve in 1908³ when she was walking through the street with her Aunt Jeanne, and decided that she take a different path than her aunt. During her detour, she remembers, "As I climbed the steps that went alongside a sort of lumberyard, a man was coming down the steps toward me. He was short and rather old, and he had a slight limp."⁴ The man took her hand, and Adrienne was frightened at first, "but then [she] began to look at him. He said, 'I thought you would come with me; don't you want to?' I said, with a kind of fear (was it good to say No to a poor person?): 'No, sir, but merry Christmas.'"⁵ As Adrienne reflected on this encounter in days following, she thought, "Perhaps I should have said Yes, but I really had to say No."⁶ In the rest of her account of the vision, von Speyr remembers not wanting to disobey her mother, and perhaps this explains her insistence in saying "No" to the older stranger with a limp whom she met on the street. Despite the simplicity of the story, it takes on more significance if it is considered as the first event of a long and meaningful relationship between von Speyr and Ignatius.⁷

Foreword., 9.

³ Von Speyr's memory, recorded almost half of a century later, of her vision of St. Ignatius begs the question about trustworthiness of memories. I find it helpful that von Balthasar, in the foreword to the book, defends the accuracy of her memory of events, despite the rather legitimate skepticism about the unlikely historical exactness with which most people remember events in their life, especially those separated by almost fifty years! However, this is the only written account of this event, and at the very least demonstrates the influence of Ignatius on her life if she remembers meeting him (either correctly or incorrectly) as a young child.

⁴ Adrienne von Speyr. *My Early Years*, 32-33.

⁵ Ibid., 33

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ At the end of *My Early Years*, von Balthasar draws conclusions based on von Speyr's autobiography. He says, "When I began to

The next most notable event in von Speyr's life in relation to Ignatius was her interaction with Hans Urs von Balthasar. The two met in the fall of 1940 while he was a chaplain at the University of Basel and she had recently married a history professor there. Shortly after meeting, she expressed her interest in becoming Roman Catholic and she entered the Church on All Saints' Day of that year.⁸ Von Speyr's baptism marked the beginning of an intimate relationship between the two.

Von Balthasar, at that time, had been a member of the Society of Jesus for eleven years.⁹ His desire to become a Jesuit was primarily due to his experience during a thirty-day retreat on the Spiritual Exercises, and this spiritual approach continued to shape his own spirituality and understanding of mission. Ten years after meeting von Speyr, von Balthasar left the Society of Jesus, "in obedience to a new mission, namely, the founding and leading (together with Adrienne von Speyr) of the community of St. John. He later wrote, 'What Ignatius wanted in his time clearly meant for me from then on, 'world community' (secular institute).'"¹⁰ Even after leaving the Jesuits, he continued to lead retreats and practice the spiritual exercises in his own spiritual life. Von Speyr likely attended some of his retreats, and as her spiritual director, they shared much in their common devotion to St. Ignatius and his spirituality. In fact, when describing the kind of spiritual reading that von Speyr enjoyed, especially later on in her life, von Balthasar says, "the letters of St. Ignatius set her completely on fire: this was it; this fit like a glove."¹¹ The relationship that both she and her spiritual director had with St. Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality is a practical example of how her understanding of and relationship with God was shaped by Ignatian spirituality.

instruct her in the Catholic faith in 1940, the harvest was ripe, almost overripe [...] directly after her conversion, on the Feast of All Saints, the heavens opened up over her soul and poured down streams of the most extraordinary charisms. Her spirit was led through all of the heights and depths, for it had been prepared from the beginning to give an unconditional Yes to everything. The vision of the virgin Mary and her encounter with Ignatius now revealed their existential meaning, the purpose to which her life had always been journeying: the absolute Yes of the Handmaid of the Lord, absolute loving obedience of the imitation of Christ." 400.

⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 30-31.

⁹ David L. Schindler, ed. *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and His Work*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 103-104.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 40.

Von Balthasar recognized the influence that St. Ignatius had on von Speyr's life and writings. In speaking directly of the saint's influence on von Speyr he says, "Adrienne's entire path and entire work is stamped by him, and for those who know him, the boldness of her project, the severity and intensity of its demands, the significance of what it makes known, bear his signature."¹²

Not only was von Speyr exposed to St. Ignatius through the exercises and their application in her life, but she came to know Ignatius in her mystical life. Three¹³ explicit examples of how St. Ignatius shaped von Speyr's mystical life are the prayer that Ignatius taught von Speyr to pray, her description of his spiritual life in *The Book of All Saints*, and her posthumous mystical book on Ignatius. Although von Speyr does not refer to any more specific visions with Ignatius, he clearly played an important role in her mystical contemplative prayer. One of the prayers found in *With God and with Men: Prayers* is entitled, "The Prayer that St. Ignatius Taught Adrienne." A rather short prayer, first written in Latin, reflects central Ignatian themes (more on which I will detail below). It reads:

Body of Christ, I adore you under your three forms, under the form of God in which you are equal to the Father, under the form of man, of sacrifice and of the Cross, in the form of the host which is round without beginning or end. Wherever you are is the eternal love that touches all that the Father created, all that the Son suffered, and all that the Spirit vivifies. Give me your love and your grace, then I am rich enough and wish for nothing further.¹⁴

This prayer is listed immediately after von Speyr's commentary on aspects of the traditional Ignatian prayer, the *Suscipe*. The very existence of this prayer evidences Ignatius' presence in her mystical life.

The second example of Ignatius' presence in von Speyr's mystical life is contained in

¹² Adrienne von Speyr, *Book of All Saints: Part One*, Hans Urs von Balthasar, ed., D.C. Schindler, trans., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 3.

¹³ Another good example of Ignatius' influence on von Speyr (and von Balthasar, for that matter) is the secular institute that they mutually founded, the community of St. John. This tangential mention of the institute must suffice for the current reflection, as the scope of this paper is limited and cannot discuss at length the history, mission, and community life of the community of St. John.

¹⁴ Adrienne von Speyr, *With God and With Men: Prayers*, Adrian Walker, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 50.

her posthumous work, *The Book of All Saints*, von Speyr's visions of the spiritual lives of holy (and not so holy) men and women in history. Primarily saints, priests, and theologians, each reflection is rather brief and identifies specific details of the person's relationship with God, struggles, fears, and strengths. Von Speyr writes the longest reflection contained in the book on Ignatius of Loyola;¹⁵ the reflection contains three of Ignatius' private prayers to God, all of which do not reflect the style of his prayers and publications, but of personal conversational prayers.¹⁶

Second, as part of her posthumous works, this book differs from other books published under von Speyr's name. Of the over seventy publications of which she authored, twelve are identified as posthumous, and contain various reflections ordered thematically.¹⁷ Volume eleven of these posthumous works is on St. Ignatius, beginning with a commentary on the autobiography of the saint and on selections taken from his diaries. In addition, the book contains various statements about St. Ignatius the person and a treatise on the Ignatian doctrine of obedience.¹⁸ Von Speyr's commentary on Ignatius' autobiography further evidences Ignatius' role in von Speyr's mystical life.

Von Speyr's relationship with Ignatius seems to be something more than a personal devotion to a saint and his tradition. He taught her a prayer, which she, in turn, published; her mystical visions inspired her to offer more detail to the text which, of all the writings on the saint, reveals the most personal information about him.¹⁹ This is evidence that their relationship was one of spiritual friendship rather than a personal devotion. The two mutually shared in a mission of promoting a spiritual vision of life. Von Speyr was a twentieth century disciple of Ignatius, and they shared the intention to promote the vision of Ignatian spirituality, for Ignatius did not leave a method for one's personal spiritual development, but he "offered a vision of life, an understanding of God, a reflective approach to living, a contemplative form of

praying, a reverential attitude to our world, and an expectation of finding God daily."²⁰

Precisely because Ignatius' spiritual writings and tradition do not promote a structured method, but instead encourage a vision that infuses all aspects of life, those interested in von Speyr can discover the Ignatian influence on her life and spirituality in and through her spiritual writings. In order to further demonstrate how Ignatius and his writings influenced her spiritual writings specifically, I will now turn to one of her books, *Man*²¹ *before God*, mentioning the images and concepts that are reflected in her writing. If von Balthasar is correct, that the spirit of Ignatius pervades all of her writings,²² then one of her many books, discussing the relationship between a believer and God, ought to point to some areas in which Ignatius and his spiritual tradition has influenced von Speyr.

Exploring Ignatius' Influence on Adrienne von Speyr's *Man before God*

Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in working toward the end for which they are created. From this it follows that I should use these things to the extent that they help me toward my end, and rid myself of them to the extent that they hinder me. To do this, I must make myself indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to my freedom of will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on my own part I ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honors rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. I ought to desire and elect only the thing which is more conducive to the end for which I am created.²³

St. Ignatius of Loyola provides his followers with the above "Principle and Foundation" of his spiritual vision which brilliantly touches on

¹⁵ Adrienne von Speyr, *Book of All Saints: Part One*, 388-396.

¹⁶ The conversational style of these prayers reflects the same style Ignatius promotes in the spiritual exercises, as I describe in the following section.

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 99.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹ Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 4.

²⁰ David L. Fleming, SJ, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), vii.

²¹ Von Speyr does not utilize gender-inclusive language in her writing, as the title of this book demonstrates. She is speaking in the book, however, to both men and women, lay and religious.

²² Adrienne von Speyr, *Book of All Saints: Part One*, 18.

²³ Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 130.

all aspects of his spiritual writings, especially *The Spiritual Exercises*. The “Principle and Foundation” is believed to orient us “toward viewing God’s plan of salvation as one extensive whole and toward fitting ourselves into our proper role within it as it evolves.”²⁴ Because of this prayer’s centrality in the spirituality proposed by St. Ignatius, I find it helpful to open the current investigation into the ways in which Adrienne von Speyr’s *Man before God*²⁵ reflect the influence of Ignatian spirituality. Published just a year before her death, von Speyr’s book witnesses to her beliefs on the way in which human persons relate to God. The method with which I will proceed in this section of my paper entails topically reviewing some basic tenets of Ignatian spirituality and the way they are reflected in von Speyr’s book. Furthermore, the following aspects of Ignatian spirituality in some way are reflected in the “Principle and Foundation,” demonstrating its significance in Ignatius’ thought.

The first aspect in which von Speyr’s *Man before God* reflects the influence of Ignatian spirituality is in and through one of the most significant Ignatian concepts, finding God in all things and in turn doing all things for God’s greater glory (*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*). According to Ignatius, “The one supreme and inspiring end, the keystone to which all the other elements in the arch were support, were the “greater glory of God,” with ‘glory’ meaning praise and implying service.” Serving the greater glory of God was the end to which Ignatius called the members of his Society, and was that which he constantly strove to actualize in his own life.²⁶

Von Speyr articulates the Ignatian concept of finding God in all things through her understanding of the infinite in the finite.²⁷ For von Speyr, all created and temporal things are imbued with God’s presence as a result of the Incarnation and Jesus’ life on earth. She speaks about this concept through the example of language, “The anchoring of the word in the Son is an expression of the vitality of the being and will of God, but also of the ever-present coming forth of the Son from the Father and also the Holy Spirit from

the Father and Son. The word is never tired or exhausted, never expelled or banished.”²⁸ Because the triune God continues to act in the world and give it meaning, all temporal actions, objects, and words are infused with divine communication. This concept is distinctly Ignatian and reflects the second sentence of the “Principle and Foundation,” “The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in working toward the end for which they are created.”

While other spiritual approaches might encourage the stripping away of that which is temporal (i.e. the process of the Dark Night of the Soul in St. John of the Cross), Ignatius and von Speyr embrace the ways of the world through which grace can be encountered. Through recognizing God’s presence in the world, all temporal reality gradually decreases in importance, leading to a feeling of indifference. God is wholly generous, according to Ignatius.²⁹ The times in which we as believers do not show gratitude for God’s generosity is the way in which sin invades the world.³⁰ Von Speyr conceives of this lack of gratitude through the image of total reliance, in hope, on the purpose of the world as oriented toward God. She notes,

Man [*sic*], however, has become accustomed to look at the things of the world with the eyes of memory and to judge them according to their past instead of creatively looking at their future and considering them in view of their purpose. So his [*sic*] spirit loses contact with the creative God...he [*sic*] must learn to meet God and to work where the creative act takes place: toward the purpose of things, into the future, into hope.”³¹

Because God acts in the world, infusing his presence into temporal reality, the human person ought to respond in hope and total reliance on God and God’s active loving in the world. This major concept is explicitly clear in Ignatius’ “Principle and Foundation.” The first sentence of the “Principle and Foundation” provides a sense of being created to fundamentally pursue God through praise, reverence, and service of God. Further, all created things on earth “help [believers] in working toward

²⁴ Ibid., 393.

²⁵ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, Nicholas J. Healy and D.C. Schindler, trans., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009).

²⁶ Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 12.

²⁷ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 63.

²⁸ Ibid., 64.

²⁹ David L. Fleming, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 8.

³⁰ Ibid., 25.

³¹ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 87.

the end for which they were created.”³² The times in which the believer does not appreciate or act in gratitude because of God and God’s love, are caused by sin. The Christian response to God’s activity in, through, and underneath the ways of the world is the second major concept in Ignatian spirituality, and I now turn to this topic.

Responding to God’s active presence in the world is a central way of categorizing the following Ignatian concepts which appear in von Speyr’s book, *Man before God*. Of primary importance for the Christian response to God’s unending generosity is closely following Christ’s example. Ignatius refers to a meditation of a battle between Jesus and Satan, in which the believer can choose which side in which she or he would like to fight.³³ Battle imagery appears nowhere in von Speyr, but she clearly states her strong belief in the Christian imitation of Christ. “The ordering of all things to the Son is a powerful and permanent reality that cannot be denied.”³⁴

The concept that von Speyr brilliantly articulates is that it is distinctly in the Christian’s actions in imitation of Christ that she or he becomes more intimately in relationship with the triune God. Von Speyr concludes, “Thanks to the Son’s path, his Father has become our Father as well. And since the Son’s return took place in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is given to us as the moment when the circle of love between the Father and Son closes again, this time right through the world.”³⁵ Following Christ’s example, we are brought into the loving relationship of the triune God. Despite the fact that Christ is not mentioned in the “Principle and Foundation,” it seems that the major content of the goal of the Christian life, such as pursuing everything that helps the believer toward her or his created end, being indifferent to all created things, and regarding everything left to the freedom of will all describe the actions of Jesus of Nazareth while on earth. Ignatius’ emphasis on the imitation of Christ is therefore expressed in and through seeking these three major goals of the Christian life as noted in the “Principle and Foundation.”

Further aiding the believer’s pursuit of the Son and, in turn, the triune God, is the life and actions of Mary, Mother of God. Ignatius’ own

spirituality and the Ignatian tradition are influenced to a certain degree by his devotion to Mary.³⁶ Von Speyr seems to possess a much stronger devotion to Mary, and further, identifies her actions as an archetype of the Christian conversion in Christ.³⁷ Von Speyr’s use of the person and actions of Mary is a great example of the ways in which von Speyr departs from Ignatius. She adopts many of his central principles, but she is not simply elaborating on his spiritual and theological insights. Von Speyr’s inclusion of Mary as a central figure in her spiritual writings is not characteristically Ignatian, but her writings reflect explicitly Ignatian concepts in many other ways, specifically in the discernment of spirits.

For Ignatius, discernment of God’s will is not an act of discernment of the intellect, but, “through a discernment of the meaning of the emotions and feelings.”³⁸ Von Speyr discusses the meaning of joy in the Christian life, and in so doing, reflects the influence of Ignatius’ trust of the emotions in discernment. She explains that we as humans experience suffering in life differently from the way that Christ experienced utter isolation from God in his passive descent into hell after his crucifixion,³⁹ and so because we experience a mélange of emotions, such as suffering with a semblance of joy, we as Christians ought to grasp on to the joy we experience and pursue it. She reflects, “Because we are only human, and sinners as well, we do not experience the separation between joy and suffering in the same way as the Son... [but] we are never without hope. God can encounter us in his whole light, so that we, out of pure joy, no

³⁶ Mary is an essential character in multiple contemplations throughout the four weeks of spiritual exercises. Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 114. She is not explicitly mentioned in the two major secondary sources to which I refer. It seems that Ignatius himself had a strong devotion, but that Marian devotion is not primary in the larger tradition of Ignatian spirituality. Mary is central to von Speyr’s theology of Christian conversion, as she understands Mary’s *fiat* to be the best example of our Yes.

³⁷ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 69.

³⁸ David L. Fleming, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* 89.

³⁹ The Son’s extreme suffering on the cross, as traditionally celebrated liturgically on Good Friday, as well as the Son’s total isolation from God on Holy Saturday is one of Adrienne von Speyr’s most unique and central insights. She experienced visions of the Son’s suffering, and one could posit that her experiences mimic the suffering, emptiness and darkness that John of the Cross discusses in *The Dark Night of the Soul*. For more information on the importance of the Son’s suffering on Holy Saturday in her spirituality, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 64-68.

³² Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 130.

³³ David L. Fleming, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* 72.

³⁴ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

longer know who we are and what we should do.”⁴⁰ One important way to work through the many emotions that arise in the course of our lives is by external processing. Speaking about one’s feelings and emotions can be more than simply therapeutic if done so with God. Another similarity between von Speyr and Ignatian spirituality is their encour-

saying thank you, asking for help, crying out in pain, begging forgiveness, expressing love, [and] just spending time together.”⁴¹ These are all aspects of conversation that enhance the intimacy of a person’s relationship with another; seeing prayer as this type of communication, in turn, promotes an intimate relationship with God.



Von Speyr builds on this insight by discussing how conversational prayer can enhance a believer’s understanding of God. “At first, perhaps, he [sic] sees only the life by which God administers and guides the world and providentially orders its course. Then in a deeper sense, he [sic] sees the eternal life as a triune exchange of love within God himself [sic]. This is a life that creates itself in love—a love that is both question and answer at once in an eternal circulation.”⁴² Von Speyr nuances the Ignatian conversational style of prayer through her understanding of the active triune God. For von Speyr, conversational prayer leads to an intensification of the infinite triune God’s activity in the finite world.

Conversational prayer as it aids the believer in discernment of spirits is only implicit in the “Principle and Foundation.” Ignatius uses verbs such as “should” and “ought” and in so doing, infers a disconnect

agement of conversational prayer.

Prayer, for any Christian must be central to deepening her or his relationship with God; the different ways of praying greatly influence the way that a believer experiences and understands God (*lex orandi lex credendi*). Ignatius encourages prayer that is conversational, which allows the person to openly admit her or his true feelings, in an effort to overcome the emotions that are detrimental to a person’s relationship with God. In other words, conversational prayer entails “sharing experience,

between that which the believer is supposed to do and the actions she or he might actually do. The “Principle and Foundation” is written in such a way that concepts such as conversational prayer which leads to discernment of spirits can be discovered through the very word choice of the text.

A consequence of a heightened sense of God acting in the world through emotions and daily activities is the importance of right action as

⁴⁰ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 122.

⁴¹ David L. Fleming, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* 53.

⁴² Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 22.

an active cooperation with God's freely given and active grace in the world. Right action is central for Ignatius,⁴³ and also for von Speyr. As a woman who spent many hours in prayer, she saw the intrinsic relationship between the time she spent in prayer (conversation) with God, and her actions in the world. In her own words, "We may encounter the word in the liturgy, in the homily, or in the contemplation of Scripture, but the full meaning of the encounter always lies in future: Love one another! The preached word is only a stimulus to action, and action is the way in which the believer gives back to God the word he [*sic*] has received."⁴⁴ She insists on the inherent link between contemplation and action, and that scripture leads a believer into the lived actualization of it. The return-gift that believers offer to God in appreciation of God's love and offer of salvation is moral action. David L. Fleming, scholar in Ignatian spirituality, simply and beautifully sums up the human loving response to God's love, "It is our generous response to the limitless love that God pours onto his creation. It draws us into the loving relationship of Christ that satisfies our deepest desires and fulfills our grandest dreams, the dreams that our loving God has for us."⁴⁵

Action is identified as a central aspect of the "Principle and Foundation." Praising, reverencing, serving, working toward her or his created end, becoming indifferent to created things, seeking the opposite of that which is glorified in this world (e.g. wealth, long life, honor, and health), and desire for anything which is more conducive in reaching the goal for which human persons are created are all verbs that describe the Christian life. Right action is necessary for Ignatian spirituality as it is repeated frequently in the "Principle and Foundation," the basis for Ignatius' vision of the Christian life.

Action in response to God's love is central in Ignatius' thought, but these actions are seldom performed independent of implications on or restrictions from the community. The communal life of the Church and the lived sacramental life are two final points common to the spiritual insights of both von Speyr and Ignatius of Loyola.

In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius identifies "rules for thinking, judging, and feeling with the Church."⁴⁶ The eighteen rules, or guidelines,

directives, or norms⁴⁷ are rather strong statements about the role of the Church and one's relationship with it. For Ignatius, the greater Church holds a prominent place as it provides a path for living out one's relationship with Christ. Von Speyr agrees with this and builds upon it in *Man before God*. She says that God "built [the Church] as a communal, public place, right next to the street where everyone passes by and can enter when he [*sic*] wishes."⁴⁸ Further, believes von Speyr, the Church is God's "workshop,"⁴⁹ in that it provides a place for God to act in not only calling people, but shaping, forming, and hopefully repairing them from the painful experiences they experience in life.

One of the most powerful ways that the Church acts as a workshop of God is through the sacraments. Both Ignatius and von Speyr promote frequency of the sacraments. Ignatius, in the first of the four week spiritual exercises,⁵⁰ encourages a deeper realization of God's love for us and our need for mercy for the times that we have not been generous in response to God's love for us.⁵¹ In order to do this, Ignatius recommends a thorough examination of conscience and receiving the sacrament of confession which also prepares the believer in participating in Eucharist.⁵² By recommending the sacraments of confession and communion at the beginning of the exercises, Ignatius demonstrates his understanding of sacraments as that which aid in the spiritual life, especially as a believer longs to enter more deeply into her or his relationship with God and can do so, in a particularly powerful way, through the sacraments.

Von Speyr agrees and expounds on this idea, for as the Church is the place in which God works in loving believers, the sacraments are central means for communicating that love. She explains,

The power of the ever-constant newness of the Eucharist, the power of each absolution, the

and *Selected Works*, 211.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁴⁸ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 94.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁰ The Spiritual Exercises are laid out in four increments called weeks. The exercises ought not to be limited to four weeks, however, but are actually a rather flexible way of "ordering one's life to God." Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Work*, 51.

⁵¹ Michael Harter, SJ, ed. *Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 1.

⁵² Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 135.

power of each baptism, the power of each confirmation, the power is one with God himself. There are many different sacraments, but their origin is one and the same. They are like different life preservers that are being thrown to a drowning man from the same shore.⁵³

The sacraments, for both Ignatius and von Speyr, help a believer along the narrow path of salvation because they make the divine present in a particularly special and real way. The sacraments are that which are conducive for the end for which humans are created, as the concluding sentence of the “Principle and Foundation” states and therefore, the believer should desire to receive and participate in them. As individuals who actively pursue this life of praising, reverencing, and serving God, believers form the communal entity that is the Church.

Throughout this exploration into the spirituality of St. Ignatius and Adrienne von Speyr, it has become clear that the “Principle and Foundation” is, in fact, a foundational text for St. Ignatius because “It briefly presents God’s plan in creating human beings for their spiritual growth and human self-fulfillment: their being happy by glorifying him both on earth and in the beatific vision. Thus it sketches the worldview of the worldview of Christian faith as the background in which everything else in the *Exercises* and in life should be viewed.”⁵⁴ This central text briefly summarizes the numerous insights into the spiritual life provided by St. Ignatius. And in helping to understanding the spirituality put forth by St. Ignatius, we come to a deeper understanding of his follower and spiritual friend, Adrienne von Speyr.

Through her mystical visions, von Speyr encounters Ignatius and shares a strong bond with him that is beyond that of simply a devotion to his life and writings. Ignatius and von Speyr shared a unique spiritual friendship throughout her entire life, beginning with her vision of him at six years old. She has shared the fruits of her spiritual friendship with him through accounts of her visions, and commentaries on his life and spirituality. Moreover, her writings are inspired by and infused with his spiritual insights into doing all things for God’s greater glory, imitation of Christ, discernment of spirits, conversational prayer, action inspired by contemplation, and an active life in the Church and sacraments. Von Speyr is not a commentator on Ignatius and his writings, however, as her own spiritual writing builds on his concepts and possesses its own style, and themes. Some ways in which von Speyr differs from Ignatius are, the important role of exemplar, whose *fiat* all Christians ought to imitate. In addition, von Speyr, particularly in this text, does not speak about the lowliness or poverty of Jesus, or the image of Christ the King, which are central images in Ignatian spirituality. In and through the investigation into the relationship between von Speyr and St. Ignatius, as well as the aspects of his spirituality that exist in her book, *Man before God*, I hope to be in conversation with the larger body of scholarship on the awe-inspiring life and writings of the lay Catholic female mystic, Adrienne von Speyr.

⁵³ Adrienne von Speyr, *Man before God*, 144.

⁵⁴ Ganss, George E., ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 393.