

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 47 *The Spiritual Exercises as Foundation for
Jesuit Higher Education*

Article 15

March 2015

Personal Experiences of the Exercises: On Becoming a Jesuit

Thomas Curran

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

Curran, Thomas (2015) "Personal Experiences of the Exercises: On Becoming a Jesuit," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 47, Article 15.

Available at: <https://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol47/iss1/15>

Personal Experiences.....

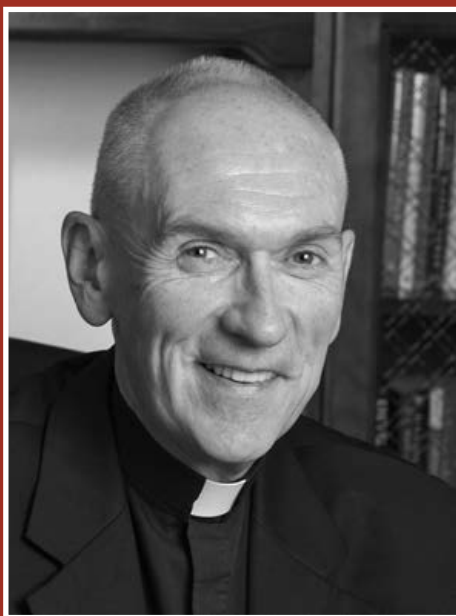
So, where do I live? In whom or what do I abide? Since beginning the process of entering the Society of Jesus a few years ago and subsequently following the Spiritual Exercises, I have encountered these questions as central to my spiritual life. Initially, I thought I was being asked about my association or membership. I discovered, however, that I am being asked how I proceed, live my life, and lead others.

When I consider the Contemplation on the Love of God, I am reminded that love is shown in deeds and in the mutual sharing of goods. In short, the Exercises invite me to live in love, to proceed in love, and to lead always in love, never in fear, resentment, anger, or regret.

Where I live impacts how I proceed. If I live in fear, I will act and respond in fear. However, when I live and abide in love, I act accordingly. During my experience of the Exercises, I spent a significant amount of time with the Gospel according to John in which one's abode and dwelling is a recurring theme. Here I revisited the Greek words, *mone* and *meno*. *Mone* (νομισμα-) is a noun meaning room, dwelling, or abode. *Meno* (παραμένω - μένω) is a verb meaning to remain, stay, and abide. Throughout the Gospel, the Greek words are used to describe the call to discipleship which is modeled upon the relationship and community of the Trinitarian God: "In my father's house, there are many dwellings" (14: 2); "I abide in the Father and the Father abides in me (14: 11); "Abide in me as I abide in you" (15: 4). This recurrence of "abide," "dwelling," "abide in," and "live in" brings forth an intense call to rest in God, to make my home in God, to

On Becoming a Jesuit

By Thomas Curran



recline as a child does in the arms of a parent. Additionally, the call challenges me to release the past, future, and even my professional and self-development.

Where I live, abide, and dwell directs or animates how I will proceed and lead. As the president of a Jesuit university, awareness of where I dwell and in whom I abide is essential. Such awareness is essential for everyone. The fact is that we all lead through the examples we provide and share with others. Where I live, in whom and what I abide, provide predictable indicators of how I will proceed in life and lead others. I recall the phrase "where one is coming from." It can be used literally and metaphorically. For me, the

Exercises ask me to consider where I have lived and where I make my home today, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The answers provide predictable indicators of how I have responded in the past and how I will act in the future.

Jerome Nadal, an early Jesuit, is credited the expression that "the world is our home." For me, the Exercises transform Nadal's phrase into questions: In what world do I live? Where do I abide? Where do I make my home, my dwelling place? On a daily basis, my colleagues and companions in the Jesuit enterprise of higher education should be able to know and understand "where I am coming from."

If I live, abide, and move in God's love, the tasks, both significant and quotidian, don't become easier, but my way of proceeding will be consistent and clear. Clarity, after all, is not such a bad thing. That's what happened to Ignatius at Manresa. After almost a year in reflection and composing the Exercises, while overlooking the Cardoner River, he received clarity. God wanted him to live, dwell, and abide...in his love and grace. I join him in prayer and with the belief that it will be enough. ■

Fr. Thomas Curran, president of Rockhurst University, entered religious life as an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales and is currently in a transitional period as part of a process to become a Jesuit. Previously, he served as associate vice president for university relations and assistant to the president at Regis University.