 SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

Among the many graces Ignatius received at his ‘primitive church’ at Manresa, significant is the illumination on the eucharist. He narrates:

... at the elevation of the Body of the Lord, he saw with interior eyes something like white rays coming from above ... he saw clearly with his understanding how Jesus Christ our Lord was there in the most holy sacrament ... (Autobiog, p. 38)

As his spirituality matured, its mysticism became increasingly eucharistic.29 His spiritual diary shows that the eucharist was the clear center of graces noted down for the rest of the day.

An analysis of the etymology of eucharist would draw out an essential characteristic of Ignatian mysticism. The greek word, εὐχαριστος, means grateful/thankful. As the eucharist was central to the Ignatian experience, its concomitant attitude of gratitude is therefore fundamental to Ignatian spirituality. This rootedness in the reality of the eucharist opens one’s heart for a fresh thanking for each gift and grace. The echo of this simple sentence is heard countless of times throughout the vast correspondence of the saint: “we must never cease giving thanks and praise to the Author of all good.”30 For Ignatius, ungratefulness is the greatest of all sins and source of all evil.31

Spirit of Gratitude pervades the whole Spiritual Exercises. Since thanksgiving is closely related to praise, it becomes a foundational theme of the Exercises, which are built on the Principle and Foundation of man being created to praise, reverence and serve God. In the meditations on personal sin (SpEx 61) and on hell (SpEx 71), giving thanks for God’s love and kindness is a primary response in the colloquies. In the nativity contemplation (SpEx 108-109), Ignatius asks that one be like our Lady who is filled with gratitude. Spirit of Gratitude builds one up and leads him to God.

Most of all, thanksgiving permeates the Ad Amorem. The id quod volo asks for the grace “to be filled with gratitude for all

The first point of the contemplation is “to recall the blessings of creation and redemption and the special favors received” (SpEx 234). All things are considered as gifts from God and as expressions of His love.

The Ad Amorem continuously transforms a person spiritually to the degree that he can bring everyday events into one’s consciousness as being gifts from God. Indeed, *toute est grace*: absolutely everything is a gift. Thus everything deserves gratitude. Experiencing the love of God in all things makes one sense the gratuitous nature of each single gift. This calls forth genuine thanksgiving. The “Take, Lord, Receive” confesses that one has nothing of one’s own and owe to God all that one is and has (SpEx 234). It is a deep genuine thanksgiving prayer.

In the portrait which Ignatius sketches in the constitutions, the contemplative-in-action is constantly aware of: “the incomparable graces and benefits with which God has anticipated us” (Cons 288).

The *contemplativus*—intimate union with God is also a relishing of the certainty that everything is grace and gift and it is but proper to refer all back to God in thanksgiving.

Spirit of Gratitude develops fully only on the occasion of and through activity in all things. Since it is in all things that reveals God freely gives to his creature. This continuous attitude of contemplative, loving gratitude inherent in seeing all as gift, becomes a fundamental life-motif and a way of finding God in all things.

- FIDELITY

The mystical graces at Manresa inebriated Ignatius with a heightened consciousness of God’s love: he was drawn to God and set up in Him. He saw that he was loved by God in all things desired to return all things to God in love and service. Thus lists as the third grace received in Manresa as appreciating “the fruit he brought forth in treating souls” (Autobiog, p. 34).

This mystical grace is shared by Ignatius’ sons through the contemplation to attain love. The Ad Amorem elevates one’s consciousness of divine love so that a man can “love and serve the Majesty in all things” (SpEx 233). Sensitive in every action to the Father’s love, makes one ready to respond in love to the Father’s desire. “The lover gives and shares with
the beloved . . . and vice versa” (SpEx 231). Because God’s love is so tremendous, one is moved to give himself to God as completely as possible.

Before one is carried away with a floating love which defies incarnation, Ignatius at the very start of the *Ad Amorem* reminds that “love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words” (SpEx 230). As God works and labors in all things, one’s love is manifested by cooperating with God’s very activity in the world. Love must be manifested in fidelity to activity/deeds, even in the most humble demands of duty. Activity is the natural means through which one adheres and submits one’s whole being to God who is actively leading the world in the building of His Kingdom.  

*Suscipe*, prayer of the *Ad Amorem*, is a recognition of divine love and submitting to it. This submission leads to complete surrender. This surrender is an unreserved readiness for the service of God and complete adherence to His will in all matters, great and small. To seek, find and perform the divine will at every hour and in every action—this is finding God in all things. The final stroke Ignatius makes in his portrait of the contemplative-in-action is: he is in “conformity with God’s holy and divine will” (Cons 288).

The all-embracing plan of life presented in the Spiritual Exercises is: humble readiness to the will of God. The most important response one makes is to surrender to the will of God in loving service. This means searching for the will of God in all that happens in one’s life and to carry it out with joyous outburst of love and a profound respect for God’s infinite majesty.

The placing of oneself at the disposition of God’s will is known as Availability. This attitude leads one “to carry out every action with the conviction that it is God himself who wishes it, makes it possible and completes it.”  

33 Complete and constant Availability is the best offering one makes to God for this is what He asks. He acknowledges His absoluteness and manifests a deep confidence in His Divine Providence.

Arrupe states that availability is the characteristic attitude of the contemplative-in-action. It marks the inner unity and integration of contemplation and action. Availability indicates that “all experience of God is action for others and all action for others:

is such that it reveals to them the Father and draws them closer to him in affection and commitment." The contemplative-in-action is a man who remains permanently and joyfully available, a man ready at all times to do God's will. Availability is a restless seeking after the will of God, ever ready to do what God desires, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

C. SUMMARY

*Simul in actione contemplativus* is an identity of being alive to God in all things. Five inter-related key elements dynamically constitute this identity. The essence of this identity is Interior Knowledge: an inner awareness and relish of finding God present and active in all things.

Certain prerequisite elements are required for Interior Knowledge to develop. There must be a Sense of Devotion: finding God beyond all things by being alive to His absoluteness. This being alive is a natural characteristic of one who is caught up in the love of God. Another prerequisite is Constant Conversion. Amidst the human condition of sinfulness, finding God in all things requires simultaneously self-abnegation and constant turning more fully and totally to God. Dying to self in all things in order to become more alive to God in all things.

Two natural consequences constitutive of finding God in all things flow from Interior Knowledge. One is the Spirit of Gratitude. When one finds God in all things, one realizes that everything is gift that calls forth thanksgiving. Gratitude for all things becomes a way of being alive to God present in His gifts. Another consequence is Availability. As God is present, active and struggling in and through His creatures, one must be ever-ready to cooperate in doing His most holy will. Being entirely at the disposition of the divine will at every hour, in every action, in all things is the distinguishing mark of the contemplative-in-action.

III. DYNAMICS OF EXAMEN

Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
And find the uncreated light.

34. Ibid.
A. EXAMEN AS PRAYER

Examen is a formal prayer in which the person for a quarter of an hour, considers how much God had loved him in the very existential details in the most recent hours. He also considers how God could have loved him more in certain situations if his inner spiritual decisiveness and external presence had been a bit different.\(^{35}\)

Examen is not minute fault-finding. It is not a narrowly moralistic checking of the good or bad actions done during the day. It is not time set aside to see what one has done wrong. It is not delineating between good and bad actions done during the day.

Rather the examen is a matter of Spirit-guided insight into one's life.\(^{36}\) What is sought in this formal prayer is the ever growing appreciation into the mystery of each person. It is to continually discover a loving God who works uniquely in and through and beyond the person. It also attempts to get in touch with God's activity in the depths of one's heart in order to more fully focus and follow the workings of God.

The process of examen is a discerning process. One consciously senses the 'drawing' of the Father through His interior invitations deep in the person's heart. These invitations guide and deepen the ordering of one's life in its concrete details according to His will. Likewise it allows one to sense how one's sinful nature is quietly tempting and luring one away from God through subtle insinuations. These oppose the ordering of the details of one's life according to God's will. Examen is a time of sifting through interior movements and differentiating between them.

Hence the examen presumes one is sensitive to his affective consciousness. This means an in-touchness with one's interior feelings, moods and slightest urgings. One is not frightened by them but has learned to take them very seriously. It is in the


Boths of one's affectivity, so spontaneous, strong and shadowy at times that God moves us and deals with us most intimately.

3. FORMAT OF IGNATIAN EXAMEN

The format of the examen as presented by St. Ignatius is found in Ex 43. The method has five parts. Each part will be discussed—its purpose and dynamics will be explained. Unless otherwise acknowledged, all the explanations about the examen are drawn from the article "Consciousness Examens" by George A. Aschenbrenner, S.J. This article finds in the format of examen a formal prayer exercise which allows continuous growth in Ignatian discernment.

The thesis of this research paper is that specific parts of the examen are formative prayer moments which heightens one's sensitivity of specific key elements of contemplation-in-action. Each particular part is related to a particular key element.

PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Examen seeks a Spirit-guided insight into the way God has been moving the person in his intimate affective core. This insight is not possible without the help of God's grace. Human natural powers not suffice. Thus the examen fittingly begins with an explicit petition for that enlightenment which will occur in and through human power but which one's own natural powers could not be capable of, all by themselves. The help of the Spirit is needed to enter one's own unique mystery. This first part bears similarity to the 'preparatory prayer' of the Spiritual Exercises (Exc. 12).

The Prayer for the Enlightenment one gets in touch with the impenetrableness of Him without whom nothing is possible. Before doing anything else, one finds God beyond all, including one's affective consciousness. Before anything else one turns to Divine Majesty and acknowledges his omnipotence. The person is likewise reminded that all is done purely for God alone. One's intention in all that one was, is and will be doing, is that there is a correspondence between Prayer for Enlightenment and Sense of Devotion.
REFLECTIVE THANKSGIVING

In the second part of the examen, the person is asked to rest his heart in genuine faith-filled gratitude to God for His gifts in every detail of the most recent part of the day. One’s gratitude centers on the concrete, uniquely personal gifts that each one was blessed with, whether large and obviously important or tiny and apparently insignificant.

There is much that one takes for granted. Often in the spontaneity of the happening one is not aware of God’s gift. Reflective Thanksgiving helps one become more aware and discover the gift more clearly. Constantly doing this leads one to the deeper realization that all is gift and all deserves praise and thanks. This deep realization is the Spirit of Gratitude. Reflective Thanksgiving leads one to constant thanksgiving because everything is grace and gift.

PRACTICAL SURVEY OF ACTIONS

The purpose of the third part of the examen is to consider what has been happening in us, how the Lord has been working in us, what He has been asking from us. The first concern is with the subtle, intimate, affective ways in which the Lord has been dealing with the person the past few hours. The second concern is with one’s actions insofar as they are responses to God’s workings in one’s heart. In the light of faith, the quality of responsiveness of the activity is examined. Quality is determined whether it follows the invitations of God or the insinuations of the evil spirit. In this general survey there is no strain to reproduce every second since the last examen; rather the concern is with specific details and incidents as they reveal patterns and bring some clarity and insight.

Often one does not recognize instantly God’s gentle and intimate dealings with the person right at the very action. Practical Survey of Actions makes one’s vision clear and direct. Activity, likewise becomes primarily a responsiveness not self-moved or motivated but Spirit-led. Recognizing the interior movements of God in one’s affective consciousness develops one’s capacity for Interior Knowledge. One becomes more and more aware of God’s presence and activity in one’s heart, in one’s actions, in all things. And one can then merge fully with God’s very activity.

Sorrow and Sorrow

The part of the examen consists of a meeting with the Lord as one encounters Divine Mercy that changes have to be as duties’ handled at once. Usually which especially calls for conversion challenges that this one aspect for deeper conversion to every day. The process may take a constant thing is the sensing of reality.

The admission of sin or failure as the gentleness which refrains from itself, but rather grieves over the out, as fountain and light, in such occasion because He is all good and action and Sorrow bring awareness either as mortification and one’s action in so far as the awareness to God’s promptings in one’s awareness over one’s weaknesses but is an awesome love desires that him.

RESOLUTION FOR FUTURE

After a consideration of the most with renewed vision and sensitize more alert in recognizing the the existential situation of humble and courageous in is an intimate experience of the, Hugh Campbell, “The Particular Be Spirituality,” Review for Religious 30 1955.
CONTRITION AND SORROW

Fourth part of the examen consists of a reverent, honest and personal meeting with the Lord. Amidst one's deficiencies and defects one encounters Divine Mercy. Serious in loving God, he realizes that changes have to be made. God does not want all negativities handled at once. Usually there is one area of one's heart which especially calls for conversion at a particular moment. God calls for deeper conversion to Him in the concrete details of everyday. The process may take a long period of time, but the important thing is the sensing of His personal challenge in all its practicality.

The admission of sin or failure or guilt is done in the spirit of coeur:

Tears are part of the reconciliation because He is all good and deserving of all love.

Contrition and Sorrow bring about the process of Constant conversion either as mortification and/or metanoia, to the specifics of one's action in so far as they were selfishly inadequate responses to God's promptings in one's heart. It is not shame nor expression over one's weaknesses but a faith experience that the Father's awesome love desires that one becomes more fully alive in Him.

HOPEFUL RESOLUTION FOR FUTURE

After a consideration of the most recent past, one faces the future with renewed vision and sensitivity. There is the resolution to be more alert in recognizing the ways in which the Lord will work in the existential situation of the future and to be more...ful, humble and courageous in responding to the Divine Will.

There is an intimate experience of the Lord calling for conver-

sion in an area of one’s heart or for response to action in service in a particular detail of one’s life.

A great hope is planted in one’s heart at this point. The more one will trust God and allow Him to lead one’s life, the more one will experience true hope in God, painfully in and through and beyond one’s weak powers. The resolution is hopeful and firm if it is an attitude of Availability. The resolution is a son’s filial and loving service of his Father in the specific details of one’s life. It is the disposition of watchful attention for opportunities of greater service. This attitude of active readiness to do the will of God in all things is an experience at times frightening and emptying but ultimately joyfully exhilarating.

C. SUMMARY: DISCERNING VISION OF HEART

Examen aims at developing a heart (i.e., affective consciousness) with a discerning vision. The five steps of the exercise are to be seen and experienced in faith, as dimensions of a Christian consciousness formed in the heart by God and His work. This Christian consciousness in the charism of the Ignatian vocation is finding God in all things. This Ignatian faith-view confronts and grows within the world and all of reality. The practice of each particular part of the examen develops one’s sensitivity of a particular key element of contemplation-in-action.

Prayer for Enlightenment heightens Sense of Devotion: being alive to His absoluteness beyond all things. Reflective Thanksgiving is easily correlated with Spirit of Gratitude: intimate knowledge and thanksgiving for all things. Practical Survey of Actions develops one’s capacity for Interior Knowledge: inner awareness and relist of finding God present and active in all things. Contrition and Sorrow enables Constant Conversion: self-mortification in order to turn more fully to God in Christ. Hopeful Resolution for Future ensures Availability: being entirely at the disposition of the divine will in all things.

With the five parts integrated together, the examen becomes a daily repetition of the Ad Amorem, that faith-experience which forms the contemplative-in-action.
For Ignatius, finding God in all things was almost instantaneous in his mature years. For the beginner striving to be a contemplative-action, what was almost instantaneous for the mature saint, requires the effort of a formal prayer process. In order to achieve a personalized integration of simul in actione contemplativus, regular examen is very valuable.

Examen is not contemplation-in-action in the full sense. Examen does not find God right on the spot or at the heart of the very happening. Instead it tries to recollect and review the presence and activity of God after the action has elapsed. Examen is a formal prayer whose constant practice can provide regular formative experiences which will develop one's capability to find God in all things.

As a formal method of prayer, it is not spontaneous. It is even scored and stylized. But it is necessary if one desires to develop a discerning vision of heart. To reach this ideal it is necessary to practice steadily, gradually and patiently. There are three types of formative experiences when one uses the examen as the vehicle of which towards the Ignatian ideal.

First is the reliving experience. Often one is unable to recognize the presence and activity of God in the spontaneity of the event. Once the quiet and peace of examen, one can slowly recollect and review the significant details and incidents and relish God's presence in each of them. One can also carefully consider the actions of the three recent hours and discern its responsiveness to the promptings of God.

Second is the particularizing experience. There are five key parts in the dynamics of contemplation-in-action. An analysis of the dynamics of examen show that each particular part of the examen can correspond to a particular key element. Each particular heightens one's sensitivity for a particular key element. Regular practice of the five parts develops the key elements not for two quarter-hours in a day but continually.

Third is the organic experience. Each one striving towards the ideal must exercise habitually in finding God. One learns to find God by finding Him in the here and now. Habitual and regular practice of examen with its separate elements will grow
into integrated dimensions of a consciousness of finding God in all things. This consciousness slowly becomes more a part of the person and less contrived. Inherent in the dynamics of union with God is the stage of being always 'on the way'. One is essentially in process. One never arrives fully as the riches of God’s love is inexhaustible. Patient and infinitessimal growth day by day of one’s faith sensitivity will continuously increase one’s capacity to discover the mystery of Divine Love in all things.

These three types of experiences make the Ignatian examen an excellent formative prayer. Its daily and intensive dynamics forms one towards becoming a contemplative-in-action. Examen is the daily central prayer-experience necessary for the person who strives to grow in the ideals of St. Ignatius.