



キリストにおける 新たなまなざし

Seeing All Things New in Christ

川中 仁／編

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*“Ver nuevas todas las cosas en Cristo”
Ignacio de Loyola*



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The Transformation of Ignatius of Loyola

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0 Introduction

On the third floor of the Santa Casa de Loyola (Azpeitia-Spain) there is a place known as the “*conversion* chapel”. In those, perhaps, 30 square meters it is believed that Ignatius’ room was there, where he spent a great part of the nine months that elapsed since he arrived wounded from Pamplona (May 1521) until he left full of dreams and utopias towards Jerusalem (end of February 1522).

In that chapel there is a phrase written in the central part of the ceiling that says: “Here Íñigo de Loyola surrendered to God”. The Jesuit tradition has been identifying the conversion experience of Ignatius with that internal process lived during his convalescence and motivated mainly by the pious readings he made (*Vita Christi* and *Flos Sanctorum*) and the motions they triggered.

Something very profound must have happened in the interiority of Ignatius so that in a relatively short time he produced such a great transformation in the sphere of his desires, his projects, his values and also his deepest feelings. Let us remember that Íñigo in 1521 was a mature man (perhaps 30 years old), with a consolidated personality and deeply in love with some lady of the court whose identity we still do not know today.

1 Conversion or Transformation / Mutation?

Conversion is the word that has passed into the Ignatian tradition to refer with, greater or lesser success, to what happened in the interior of Íñigo López at Loyola.

1.1. Conversion in the Ignatian writings and in the early "Lives" of Ignatius of Loyola

The first dictionaries of the Spanish language (Covarrubias, 1611¹) refer to *conversion* as an element proper to natural life, "the change of one being into another" and to the *conversion* of the sinner as "the conversion of the Magdalene" (Cov. s.v. Convertir²). "It also means change of life: and regularly from bad to good" and offers the example of St. Teresa in chapter 9 of the Life, where we read: "I was very devoted to the glorious Magdalene, and I often thought of her conversion, especially when she received communion" (*Aut.* s.v. *Conversion*).

Although we must recognize the evident and verifiable change of life that took place in Ignatius, we observe with curiosity and certain perplexity that the word *conversion* is not present in the Ignatian vocabulary. Ignatius never used this term to refer to a possible change of life (neither in the *Autobiography* [Au] , nor in the *Spiritual Diary*, nor in the *Constitutions*, nor in the *Spiritual Exercises* [Ex]³). In the *Exercises* it appears once in the section on the "Mysteries of the life of Christ" to in-

1 SEBASTIÁN DE COVARRUBIAS, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, Altafulla, Barcelona, s.v. Convertir.

2 The author gives as an example the change that "water undergoes when it becomes icicle or yelo".

3 I. ECHARTE (ed.), *Concordancia ignaciana*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae-Institute of Jesuit Sources, Bilbao-Santander-St. Louis 1996.

vite the retreatant to contemplate a true case of conversion, the "conversion of Mary Magdalene"⁴; it is not mentioned in the First Week, where it might be expected to provoke the *conversion* of the retreatant; but this is not the Ignatian key.

The surprise increases somewhat when we see that none of his early biographers use this term in their official writings to comment on this period of Ignatius' life in Loyola.

+ The first biography we have, that of Fr. Diego Laínez (a long letter written from Bologna July 1547 to Fr. Polanco) after alluding to the process of agitation of various spirits that Ignatius suffered during his convalescence, closes this time in Loyola in the following way:

"without another external master, nor communicating his deliberation to others, he **determined**, under the pretext of going to the court of the Duke of Nájera, to leave home and **totally** renounce his land and his own and his own body and to enter into the way of penance" [Ep. 4]⁵.

Laínez seems to avoid the word *conversion* as does Juan Alfonso de Polanco, a year later in his *Sumario* of 1548, who copies literally these words of Laínez [Sum 11]. But, twenty-five years later in his

+ *Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, [1574] he comments:

"he **firmly proposed** to himself to change his life and to surrender everything to God (although to no person he manifested it); he thought and **determined** to really do it: to march to Jerusalem, besides the punishment of his body, the abnegation of his honor and,

4 "Of the conversion of the Magdalene St. Luke writes" [Ex 282]. Explanation of this mystery in F. RAMÍREZ, *El Evangelio según S. Ignacio. La Vida de Cristo en los Ejercicios Espirituales y la tradición bíblica en la Vita Christi del Cartujano*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae-U.P. Comillas, Bilbao-Santander-Madrid 2021, 537-559.

5 A. ALBURQUERQUE (ed.), *Diego Laínez. Primer biógrafo de san Ignacio*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander 2005, 136.

in sum, all humility and asperity. He who wished to please God greatly, it occurred to him to **undertake** these means for his love, for he knew no better ones" [*Life* 9]⁶.

+ Finally, the work considered definitive about the founder of the Society of Jesus, Pedro de Ribadeneira's *Life of Ignatius of Loyola* (1585), in its Spanish version, does not include the word *conversion* either, although he is the author who in the most detail comments on "disordered" aspects of Ignatius' past:

"He hurried and went ahead, helping himself, in one hand, persevering in his readings [...] and he tried, being very honestly to himself, to change his life and to reorient the 'bow of his thoughts towards a more certain and safer port' than that he had reached till that moment." [*Life*, I, 2 [8]]⁷.

These first four important testimonies of authors so close to Ignatius of Loyola seem to show a certain detachment from conversion when describing his experience. Verbs such as "he was determined", "he firmly proposed to himself", "he dealt very truly" suggest that the change that took place in Ignatius proceeded more from an act of his free will than from a spontaneous irruption of grace, as would be expected when speaking of conversion.

1.2. Biblical icons of conversion

Mary Magdalene or Paul of Tarsus are the characters to whom the late medieval spiritual tradition looked in order to understand what a case of conversion was: grace received from above, features of otherness,

6 J. A. DE POLANCO, *Vida de Ignacio de Loyola* (E. Alonso Romo, ed.), Mensajero-Sal Terrae-U.P. Comillas, Bilbao-Santander-Madrid 2021, 56-57.

7 P. DE RIBADENEIRA, *Vida de Ignacio de Loyola, Fuentes Narrativas IV*, IHESI, Roma 1965, 91. Modern English version: *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola* (C. Pavur, trans.) Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis 2014.

divine initiative, certain spontaneity, sudden change of life....

This was not how it happened with Ignatius. His process was slower, meditated, consciously assimilated where the evident protagonism of the "I" was confirming the silent work of grace. The way in which the inner process of transformation took place in Ignatius was different from the way conversion was understood in the spiritual literature of his time. The latter emphasized a sudden and intense irruption of God in the life of the person, who was reoriented in his freedom without being able, on the other hand, to resist or refuse the proposal of the Spirit. Let us look at two icons from the New Testament.

a. The conversion of Paul of Tarsus

The idea and the experience of conversion in the mentality of Ignatius, of his first companions and probably in the spiritual theological environment of his time was closer to what can happen in a first-time election as described in [Ex 175], than to what happened to Ignatius, more or less, in [Au 8-14].

Indeed, [Ex 175] describes the first time of election; it exposes in a very brief way how a person can reorient his life in a certain, consistent and indubitable way from a situation "of sin" or contrary to the values of the Kingdom to become a disciple and apostle committed to his Lord from the first line of the following of Christ. Ignatius illuminates this paragraph [Ex 175] with the vocations of Paul and Matthew. But this was NOT what happened in Loyola.

If by *conversion* we understand what happened to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, it is clear that we cannot understand as *conversion* what happened to Ignatius, because Ignatius and Paul went through different situations, both in their causes (why), in their contents (what) and in their modes (how). The first mode of choice [Ex 175] makes

conversion, vocation and choice coincide in the same instant of mystical lucidity due to an irruption or entry of God into the person, which reaches the depths of his being to connect will/affection [experience] with understanding/reason [interpretation of experience] and freedom in act [historicized decision] and all this with an unappealable lucidity, conviction and certainty.

b. The conversion of Mary of Magdala

Another biblical icon of primary importance for understanding what in Ignatius' time was understood by *conversion* is Mary Magdalene. St. Teresa of Jesus explains in these terms: "I was very devoted to the glorious Magdalene, and many times I thought of her conversion, especially when she received communion" (St. Teresa, *Life*, ch. 9). The *Tesoro* de Covarrubias includes this biblical woman to illustrate the meaning of conversion: "Conversion of the sinner, like the conversion of the Magdalene"⁸. Ignatius, as we saw, also directly links the Magdalene with a conversion experience [Ex 282], most probably taken from *Vita Christi* I [60]: "On the conversion and penance of the Magdalene". But, again, what happened to Ignatius was not an encounter with the Lord as this Gospel passage reflects.

1.3. "Rereading" the process of Ignatius of Loyola

So, if the first testimonies do not speak of a conversion, what happened to Ignatius of Loyola? By avoiding using the word *conversion* to describe the internal process of Ignatius in Loyola (1521-22), the authors of the time (Laínez, Cámara, Polanco, Ribadeneira) are telling us that what happened there was not a "conversion" in the usual religious

8 S. DE COVARRUBIAS, cit., s.v. Convert.

sense of the term, but rather an interior transformation of a person towards a more radical following of the Lord, which evolved amid doubts, shadows, lights, successes and errors; an authentic and Christian transformation, undoubtedly, but one that did not follow the usual or stereotypical paths of conversion, according to the patterns of the 16th century.

Therefore, how does the conversion represented in Mary Magdalene and Paul of Tarsus differ from what happened in Ignatius of Loyola? In three points:

- a. The vital and moral state from which the person comes. Ignatius is not situated in the moral sphere of sin as a persecutor of Christians (Paul) or a sinful woman (Mary).
- b. In how the relationship with grace and the transformation of the subject takes place. By divine initiative, direct and immediate in Mary and Paul and in close collaboration with the freedom and determination of the subject in Ignatius.
- c. How time intervenes in the experience of conversion or transformation: in an immediate way in Mary Magdalene and Paul and in a slower way in Ignatius (9 months).

Then, what should we call what happened in Loyola? It was not a conversion from one state "A" to another "B", but a gradual reorientation in the life of a person who was polarized or attracted in his affection, desire and project by a new horizon that little by little was emerging in his life and that had Jesus of Nazareth as the first and powerful attracting center of energy⁹.

9 Fr. García Mateo spoke of *mutation*: "The great mutation of Íñigo de Loyola in the light of the Carthusian Vita Christi." *Manresa*, 61 (1989), 31-44.

The action of the Spirit through consolation and the involvement of Ignatius' freedom through his resolutions and determinations were weaving a decision that had no turning back.

Whatever we call it, we must recognize that what happened in Loyola was a "princeps, first, primordial" experience that, on the one hand, assumed the previous trajectory, especially what Ignatius lived in 1517, at the age of 26, and, on the other hand, offered a framework for understanding what Ignatius was going to live in the thirty-five years that remained of his life.¹⁰

But where did this experience come from, what did it consist of? And where did it point to for his immediate future? Because not everything had begun in Loyola.

2 The Transformation of Ignatius of Loyola

2.1. Phase 1. Depth and density of life. (Arevalo / Nájera 1517)

If the battle of Pamplona occurred in 1521 and Ignatius was born, as we think, in 1491, we can conclude that at the time he was seriously wounded in Pamplona he was 30 years old.

Then the experience of understanding the vanities of the world, the exercise of arms and the vain desire to win honor to which the first lines

10 The translator into Basque of the phrase shown in the chapel of conversion got it right: he was not satisfied with choosing the case "norengan" or "norengana" (in this case: Jainkoarengan or Jaikoarengana) but made of it a verb: it is the verb to "orient oneself" vitally not towards a place or towards an idea, but towards the person of God (Jainkoarenganatu zen). With this verb, the sense of going in this direction here overlaps with the sense of "remaining," of being, we would say, polarized. There is, therefore, a notable difference between "to give oneself up" and "to remain oriented/polarized". Especially if we do not think of the pilgrim and his movement and the fact that God in the first case becomes the receiver (of an offering), and in the second the "magnet" that draws all things to himself.

of the *Autobiography* refer, seems to refer to an experience four years earlier, in 1517. What happened in Íñigo's life in 1517, when then, yes, he was 26 years old? Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, Chief Accountant of the Kingdom, benefactor and protector of Ignatius, was expelled from the palace of Arevalo and with him all his servants and followers, all his "team", as we would say today, had to leave the Castilian town.

The expulsion from Arevalo marked Ignacio forever. The first "cannonball" that had hit hard on his solid personality did not come from a French soldier, but from a Castilian failure that came to rethink his life. On his way to Nájera, Íñigo experienced a new understanding of a philosophical and metaphysical nature that, most probably, led him to ask himself about the profound meaning of life, about the inexorable passing of time, about the fleeting nature of the present and the density of each instant.

Leaving behind him a courtly, superficial environment, an environment of vanities and appearances, he felt called to reorient his life to begin to live it as an adult and responsibly. Perhaps he realized that life was not a game, but that it is something that "is serious"¹¹, like the train that only passes once, only one, unique and unrepeatable time. Leaving Arevalo, he would realize that sooner or later we must enter into the Mystery of life, if we really want to understand what this simple and radical sentence "I am alive" could mean.

11 Ignatius' first understanding could perhaps be poetically formulated by ceding the word to Jaime Gil de Biedma: "that life was serious / one begins to understand it later / like so many young people I came / to take life ahead of me".

2.2. Phase 2. Life and Mystery of Jesus of Nazareth (May 1521)

This first understanding laid the foundation and enabled Ignatius to receive with generosity and openness this *second understanding* that was waiting for him in Loyola four years later. If his first apprenticeship in La Rioja (1517) helped him to enter into the depths of life, this second one led him to the Source of life itself.

If we analyze the testimonies of his first companions (Laínez 1547, Polanco 1548, Cámara 1553, Ribadeneira 1585) we see that Íñigo experienced a double movement of the heart with respect to the world in which he lived, consolation and desolation¹². One of the two movements, *consolation*, took the initiative, and soon became responsible for the process. Once initiated, the two walked hand in hand; the two movements alternated one after the other, and oriented the affections in the opposite direction.

Something as simple, as elementary and even as “poor” as the magical exercise of reading, that which today we consider as the most basic level of any education (knowing how to read), became the detonator of a whole psychic and spiritual process that Íñigo could not even imagine and did not even know how to control. In his house in Loyola, says the *Autobiography*, “none of the books he used to read were found, and so he was given a Vita Christi and a book of the lives of saints in romance” [Au 5].

We cannot fail to appreciate the importance of the first reading in the conversion of Ignatius. We can never be sufficiently grateful to Magdalena de Araoz, his sister-in-law, for having offered him some pious

¹² I have tried to go into detail on the transformation that Ignatius may have undergone from the scarce data we have in J. GARCÍA DE CASTRO VALDÉS, “El proceso de simplificación de Ignacio”, *El Dios emergente*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander 2001, 220-240.

readings “to pass the time” of his convalescence.

The precious text of that Carthusian monk, Ludolpho of Saxonia, who told the stories and anecdotes of Jesus and his disciples, played its role. His words and images gradually captivated Ignatius. Ignatius read and read (1) “by which, reading many times...” he became fond (2) of what he found written until he came to affirm: “*tasting* much of those books”(3) [Au 11].

We can imagine Ignatius, turning the pages of the *Life of Christ*, from one chapter to another, without worrying too much about following a logical order. Once he closed the books, tired of reading, the stories of Jesus came to life in his imagination and fantasy (4), then in his dreams and desires. Íñigo found himself involved in “thoughts” about Galilee, apostles, beatitudes, loaves and fishes, lepers, blind men and Pharisees....

Through his imagination, Ignatius began to experience that a new world, so fascinating and unknown, began to emerge within him, and that it flowed freely through the channels of his psyche and his emotions; but, above all, the most radically new and surprising thing was the *emotional repercussions* (5) that all this began to awaken within him.

The stories of Jesus filled him with life, enkindled his illusion and gave him a new joy that perhaps he had never felt before. To imagine Jesus and with Jesus was already in itself a cause of life and new life. It was different from what court life had been offering him for the last 15 years and what he would later call “delight” or “delectation” [Au 1. 8; Ex 35]. This joy was different.

When fifteen years later in Venice, already in 1536, he will be putting the finishing touches to his precious book the *Spiritual Exercises*, he will write in paragraph 329:

“It is proper to God our Lord and his angels in their motions to

give *true joy* and spiritual joy”, this is the first rule of discernment of the second week. Ignatius was not speaking from a theory learned in some sermon of St. Bernard, in a lecture of John Cassian or in one of the treatises of John Gerson who influenced him so much. No. Ignatius was speaking from his *experience*, from feelings and motions that can only come from God. God, in giving them, arouses joy, communicates the joy of his presence. It was the first time he had experienced something like this.

Where can we situate this conversion? If the first experience of 1517, leaving Arevalo behind him, was a conversion of philosophical, existential or metaphysical content, this one of Loyola was descending slowly but unstoppably towards the *religious* dimension of his life. What is the difference? The difference lies in the appearance of otherness and transcendence as the horizon of meaning and the Principle and foundation of a whole life. God is here.

If in philosophical conversion the subject finds himself alone before the truth of himself and of his own life, which makes him ask himself “What do I do or what must I do to become a better person?”; religious conversion invites us to ask ourselves: “What do you want from me, Lord, to be a better follower of yours, to remain closer to you?”.

Although Ignatius had received a traditional Christian religious formation as a child, religion now began to mean something else. This experience consisted in having personally, experientially and *consolingly* discovered Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus in his humanity, Jesus as Lord, as friend, as companion... Ignatius began to enter into the vital and experiential dimension of religion; he began to “feel and taste” the joy of being with Jesus.

But Loyola’s experience was not satisfied with having triggered an affective attraction and fascination for Jesus. Ignatius did not remain

paralyzed in his admiration for his new Lord and his Project, but he entered with impetus and energy into the dynamics of imitation and following of Christ without any other support or methodologies than imitating the apostles or the saints of his readings.

Ignatius decided to involve his freedom in a disproportionate and still indiscreet way, “this soul that was still blind” [Au 14]: “he *firmly* proposed to himself to change his life and to give everything to God (although he did not manifest it to any person); he thought and *determined to really* do it”¹³ [Life P. 9] and, in the opinion of friends and relatives, in an indiscreet and imprudent way [cf. Au 12].

Íñigo could have stayed in Loyola and Azpeitia, collaborating actively in the pastoral plan of his parish¹⁴; he could have dedicated himself to animating the spiritual life of the simple people of the surroundings or to organizing small structures of support and solidarity, charitable works for the most needy, perhaps some kind of NGO of the 16th century.

But no. Íñigo interpreted that in this chapter of his life he had to do something great for Christ and he set his sights on the greatest possible feat: not Montserrat, not even Santiago de Compostela or Rome... he sought to go to the first sources, there where everything had begun: “Jerusalem”.

So, what did Ignatius convert to? The question is not the right one. At this point in his life it is more appropriate to ask: *To whom* did Ignatius convert? Above all, it was a conversion to a Person, to Jesus, for whom he felt attraction, fascination and unstoppable friendship. But it was the first and primordial, sufficient and necessary experience that

13 The words of Polanco recall those of the Ex 98: “I want and desire and it is my deliberate determination...”.

14 Parish of San Sebastian de Soreasu, which his parents ran and financed.

made possible and gave consistency, memory and meaning to the whole subsequent process.

This incipient friendship with Jesus led him to take a gentle distance from what until then had been shaping his world. Allowing himself to be attracted by Jesus led him to distance himself from his past life. Without knowing it, he was entering into what the anonymous author of the 14th century English classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, has called the cloud of forgetfulness: "he was already *forgetting* his past thoughts with these holy desires that he had" [Au 10].

The Holy Spirit had done much of the work, perhaps the most difficult work: to disaffect him from the banner of vainglory in order to draw him affectively into the new ecosystem of humility that flowed from closeness to Jesus.

2.3. Phase 3. Reconfiguring the "I" (Manresa 1521-Jerusalem 1523)

We encounter Ignatius converted to the seriousness of life (1517), converted to friendship with Jesus and determined to go to Jerusalem.

But we would be naive, indiscreet and optimistic if we were to say that Loyola's experience had achieved everything. Ignatius lost sight of Itzarraitz (Loyola's mountain) with his gaze fixed on Tabor. But his transformation was not as radical or as total as he himself thought. What he *thought* he had become and what he had *truly become* coincided in part, but it was far from affecting the whole.

The process of configuration to Christ was a longer and more painful task than he could have imagined. Dreaming of Jerusalem, changing his clothes or shoes, buying a pilgrim's staff, growing his nails or hair, or even reorienting his affective-sexual world was not enough to transform a consolidated person into an inner world of worldly values, desires and

aspirations. His "I", already 30 years old and with a complex psychoemotional structure, was something harder to conquer than the fortress of Pamplona.

The eleven months spent in Manresa (March 1522-February 1523) confronted him with a whole world of disorders and temptations that the Benedictine monk of Monserrat (Juan Chanones) knew how to accompany with patience, wisdom and prudence.

It is striking to see how, in a few weeks, Ignatius went from an optimism and vital euphoria capable of overcoming every obstacle before one of the most "heroic" undertakings of a pilgrim (Jerusalem), to a radical poverty and misery, submerged in meaninglessness, tempted to suicide and humiliated to the point of being willing to follow a little stray dog, if that could bring him a little light. "Show me, O Lord, where I can find it [relief], for even if I have to follow a little dog to give me the remedy, I will do it." [Au 23].

a. The memory of Jesus, the rock of permanence

Today we are also struck by the fact that this man in love with Jesus, but immersed in such a deep crisis, did not decide to return to Azpeitia. In the middle of the night, the memory of the past would shine brightly. *Why not return home?* The memory of a peaceful and Christian home where he could also live his relationship with Jesus would emerge strongly. *Why not go back?*

The temptation is clothed in good sense and good thoughts: "Íñigo, go back to Loyola, manage properties, attend to the family business; Íñigo, go back to Azpeitia, improve the situation of your fellow countrymen, work for the needy. Your good training in Arevalo can be very effective in Loyola. Íñigo, come back, you can get married, surely some responsible and attractive woman from Azpeitia, Bilbao or San Sebastián

could become a good wife; ...". Many thoughts, all good, very human and religiously healthy.

But Íñigo did not return, and this *non-return* also speaks to us of the depth of his experience in Loyola. Why did Ignatius not abandon his project?

Perhaps because he relied again and again on the *consolation* he had felt in Loyola; that *true joy* that could only come from God [Ex 329]. The experience of Loyola inhabited his memory and Ignatius returned to it again and again to discover in the past the light for the present and the meaning of the future¹⁵. The experience of Jesus that Ignatius had in Loyola was the rock of the foundation of his new life; the waters and the storm came but the house resisted. Ignatius stood the test of the night of meaning and the temptation of abandonment. It was true, it was Truth.

Ignatius did not return because he trusted in what he had experienced; he trusted in his own strength in which he recognized the presence of God. He trusted in the faith that God was still there, even if he did not feel it as the consolation he had sensed in Loyola. The ego and the bad spirit made it difficult, very difficult, but Íñigo's psychology withstood the onslaught.

b. The ego, the hardest and most persistent combat

Meister Eckhart says: "there was never greater virility, greater war, nor greater combat, than to forget oneself and lose oneself."¹⁶ This was the battle that Ignatius now had to fight and that sooner or later is presented to every follower of the Lord. Perhaps the hardest, the conversion

¹⁵ Resonates the tenth rule of the first week [Ex 323]. The memory of consolation offers energy to go through the trial of desolation: "taking new strength for then".

¹⁶ M. ECKHART, *El fruto de la nada*, Siruela, Madrid, 2001, 150.

of one's own love, of one's own judgment... the conversion that demands to surrender one's life and, above all, to surrender oneself. It was easier to reach Jerusalem than to reach the depths of oneself.

b.1 Discerning poverty

Following the example of the saints, Íñigo trusted again and immersed himself in the praxis of an actual, material poverty; a visible, quantifiable, objective poverty. Food, drink, fasting, clothing, sleep and vigils, disciplines and penances... but what in itself can be interpreted as an objective virtue, could also act as a camouflaged impediment to attain the intended holiness.

One could see a man dressed in sackcloth, but what was underneath the rough, coarse cloth? Poor, torn sandals were visible, but what was supporting, or perhaps concealing, this obvious barefootness?

In time, Ignatius realized that such visible and evident poverty also needed to be discerned. This first poverty also contained an "egoic" or self-centered component that could be feeding him a narcissistic ego satisfied by experiencing austerities and sacrifices as so many saints had done.

If he was not careful, I quote the text, "this soul that was still blind... not looking at anything interior, nor knowing what humility was, nor charity, nor patience, nor discretion to regulate nor measure these virtues..." [Au 14], if he was not careful, his own relationship with poverty could be interpreted as one more conquest in his curriculum vitae of victories, nothing further from what he indeed intended, to walk humbly with Jesus and towards Jesus.

b.2 His desire, his way, his purpose... God's way?

In referring to Ignatius, the *Autobiography* speaks frequently of his

way [Au 17], *his* custom, *his* resolutions [Au 17], *his* firm purpose [Au 45], *his* beads, *his* desired dress [Au 18]. Already in Jerusalem the text insists: "*his* firm purpose [Au 17], *his* intention [Au 45], *his* good intention [Au 46], *his* purpose, that which he would not give up for any fear" [Au 45-46].

The inclusion in the text of this repeated "his" is a deliberate and conscious choice of the author to help us realize that Ignatius is still largely being led by *his* own will and desire, always in process, on the way, in the ever-pending task of overcoming himself and entering (the gerund is important) into the consoled surrender to the Will of God.

Seeking in everything to respond to what God was asking of him, Ignatius learned by observing himself meticulously to distinguish what he would later write in that famous paragraph [Ex 32] of the *Exercises*: "I presuppose three thoughts in me: one that comes from myself, from my mere freedom and will, and two others that come from outside, one from the good spirit and the other from the evil one".

From the analysis of experience, Ignatius learned to separate that which came from his own desire, will and will from that which came from the desire or will of God.

It is the learning that points towards dispossession, towards surrender and, more dramatically, towards our own death. It is the learning to take up the cross every day that guarantees that we do not carry only our desires, our intentions or projects, however evangelical or good they may be or may seem to us, but that we live surrendered to assume with faith the desire, the will, the project and the action of God in us. Our life is not as much ours as we think, it is first and foremost, *His* Life, *His* life in us.

This conversion of the "I", of the "self" has no end, it is an experience of asymptotic character. As our Lord did with Peter, we are open to

Jesus at any moment calling us aside and asking us repeatedly about love: "Íñigo, do you love me?" (Jn 21). Much more important than my own devoted deeds for Christ is to de-center myself from the ego and remain willingly and resolutely in his love, deeds or no deeds, this is secondary.

2.4. Phase 4. The desire and will of the Church (Jerusalem, 1523) [Au 45-48].

This third conversion to the more *anthropological-theological and essential dimension of poverty* acquired a sudden and unexpected new light at the end of September 1523. The Provincial of the Franciscans, custodians of the holy places, threatened Ignatius with excommunication if he did not leave Jerusalem within the agreed time limit and return to his place of departure. Much more than a historical anecdote, no doubt unpleasant for both parties, it was a new shock, as if another new "cannon shot" hit Ignatius and once again invalidated the direction of his new life.

Ignatius had invested two hard years in arriving in Jerusalem with his firm intention [Au 45.46] to remain there; now, after only twenty days of cultural and spiritual visit he had to return to his homeland without the possibility of discussion or dialogue.

It is interesting to note that it is precisely after this new crisis in Jerusalem that the expression "God's will" appears for the first time! in the *Autobiography*; I quote: "after the said pilgrim understood that it was God's will that he should not be in Jerusalem" [Au 50].

With the ecclesial authority, a new variable in the process of Ignatius' conversion burst in with evidence and energy. Until now, the religious experience had two protagonists: Ignatius and Jesus, and these were found in the interiority/subjectivity of the pilgrim, in a close, inti-

mate and affective relationship.

But now Ignatius has to open his experience to a third element, a source of authority not only juridical, but also theological and mystical. But Ignatius does not understand this. In 1523 it was enough for him to obey in order to get out of the way and integrate into his historical moment what the Franciscan provincial indicated to him. In the midst of his bewilderment and his new failure, he accepted the link *Church - obedience - will of God*, but it would still take him some time to understand internally the mysticism that inspired and founded this trilogy.

What he believed until now to be the only and sufficient criterion: the movements (motions) discerned from his interiority, in order to succeed in his particular following of Christ, came to be resized by a higher instance that asked for an urgent step in his discernment processes.

The solid Egoic character of his way of proceeding continued to open up to new ways of understanding the relationship with God, in this case to what he would later formulate as "our holy mother hierarchical Church" [Ex 353].

This Jerusalem crisis opens the way to our next point. The Spirit dosed the elements of conversion according to *Ecclesiastes*: "there is a time for everything and a season for everything under the sun" (Eccl 3:1).

2.5. Phase 5. The Gaze of the Other, the Face of God (Barcelona 1523-Paris 1534)

It seems that Ignatius entered Jerusalem on September 4, 1523 and left the Holy City for Jaffa, to return to Venice, on the 23rd. Barely twenty days had been enough to dispel the dream in which he had invested so much hope and energy. What happened in Jerusalem and what might this brief lapse of time have to do with the exploration we

are doing on the conversion of Ignatius?

We do not have much information about Ignatius' time in Jerusalem. The *Autobiography* surprises us again and devotes only four paragraphs to this episode of Ignatius through the holy places [Au 45-48] and of these, it turns out that the last three (!) are devoted to explaining the conflicts with his departure. Ignatius is very sparing in speaking of his inner experience: "the same devotion he always felt in the visitations of the holy places" [Au 45]¹⁷.

To enter into this fifth understanding/conversion we must go back again to Loyola and approach another of "his" resolutions, another of those initiatives that Ignatius took on from the beginning without stopping to think too much about whether or not it was God's will.

On leaving his father's house, Íñigo was convinced that God was calling him to a solitary undertaking, to reorient and restart his life in solitude and to live his newfound vocation in an exclusive relationship with his new Lord, with Jesus.

The *Autobiography* allows us to conclude what we are saying: as soon as he could, "he left his brother in Oñate" [Au 12] and a little later "dismissing [in Navarrete] the two servants who were going with him" [Au 13] he continued on his way to Montserrat; "he set out *alone* on his mule", and later, when already from Barcelona he is on his way to Venice, "although some companies were offered to him, he did not want to go but *alone*" [Au 35] and Ignatius himself seems to explain why:

"because he wished to have three virtues: charity and faith and hope; and taking a companion with him, when he was hungry he would

17 Something else we know from Polanco: "he was filled with so much pleasure and feeling of spiritual consolation, that what he had first thought of, he then with much more certainty determined, namely, to remain there" (*Vita*, 82 [30], the only paragraph he dedicates to Ignatius' stay in the Holy Land).

expect help from him; and when he fell, he would help him up; and so he would also trust him and be fond of him in these respects; and that this trust and fondness and hope he wished to have in God alone [...] he had a desire to embark, not only alone, but without any provision" [Au 35].

Now, how long does this desire, *his* desire, to build *his* vocation in solitude last in Ignatius? In my opinion, Ignatius most likely rethought this aspect of his life during his return journey from Jerusalem. Knowing Ignatius, it is very likely that from October 3 leaving Jaffa until mid-January 1524 arriving in Venice (a little more than three months), our pilgrim were remembering and praying, "feeling and tasting internally" all that he had seen and experienced in the Holy Land.

And in remembering... Ignatius understood that going in the same places as Jesus carried the implication of walking in the same places as his disciples. Ignatius understood that Jesus rarely walked alone and that, therefore, to be counted among Jesus' friends and disciples meant to begin to be part of a community, a group.

To think of Jesus and to desire to be part of his friends necessarily meant being recognized as a member of a group, a group of friends, of his disciples, of companions. Although he could not and should not renounce the personal and original relationship that he was building with his Master, he began to understand the social dimension of the following, its collegial, societal structure, its *ecclesial* character.

Yes, it was probably from his experience in the Holy Land that Ignatius rethought and understood his new way and style of being with Jesus. Perhaps he felt resituated, less in a self-centered way of discipleship, but more as a part of a group of followers, of a small church that he would end up calling "Societas Iesu", "Minimal Society of Jesus".

That is why, although so brief, the Jerusalem experience was key in

this regard and marks a before and after in Ignatius' way of understanding and understanding himself in discipleship. He had to find companions. Back in Barcelona (1524) and thanks to the generosity of his good friend Isabel Roser, he was able to acquire the level of Latin necessary to be admitted to the University of Alcalá and to begin studies "to help souls", but the time in the city of the Cathedral of the Sea [Barcelona], was also the beginning of the first attempts to consolidate a group of companions.

Barcelona, Alcalá and Salamanca offer not little information about the adventures that Íñigo lived with Calisto de Sá, Diego de Cáceres, Juan de Arteaga and Juan Reynalde, who was called Joanico. Together they lived episodes typical of university students, the first adaptations of the spiritual exercises and other chapters a little harder with the authorities of the Inquisition. We know that they were good friends and loved each other. Ignatius shared a cell in Salamanca with Cáceres in a truly uncomfortable situation and all together they planned a new stage of their lives in Paris, but the dream was never realized. "Determined to go to Paris, he agreed with them that they would wait there [Castile] and that he would go to see if he could find a way for them to study" [Au 71].

It is common knowledge that this first group of companions did not succeed; although Ignatius wrote to them frequently [Au 80] from the city on the Seine, none of them went to Paris. "Calixto went to the court of Portugal and from there to the Indies" from where he returned rich; Cáceres returned to Segovia, which was his homeland" and Arteaga died "in a strange accident" having been named bishop in Mexico.

But Ignatius' conversion to the group was another point of no return. He wanted to continue his following of Christ with other companions and so, after a short time of searching in Paris he came to coin-

cide in the college of Santa Barbara with a Savoyard and a Navarrese, Pedro Fabro and Francisco de Jasso; from Javier, who as is well known formed the first nucleus of what twelve years after Ignatius' entry into the Sorbonne would be the Society of Jesus.

After Faber and Xavier, four other companions would join the group. Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón, Nicolás de Bobadilla and Simón Rodrigues. This is neither the time nor the place to dwell on the life of this group, nor to analyze the internal keys to its functioning, nor to compare it with the first group of Alcalá. It is enough for us now to affirm that Ignatius' conversion process was joined by this new piece that slowly and silently, but harmoniously, together with all the others, was configuring a new charism in the Church.

This group came to seal their commitment to remain together after their studies in the liturgy of the chapel of St. Denis in Montmartre, outside Paris, and promised to travel together to Jerusalem if circumstances permitted. On that August 15, 1534, none of them could have imagined that 6 years later they would kneel in front of Pope Paul III asking him to recognize them as a new *group* in the Church, a new religious order (one more!) and that they would be sent as missionaries of the pope to unsuspected places.

Perhaps on leaving Paris in early April 1535, on the way to his native Azpeitia, yet another farewell, Ignatius was able to recall the fruitfulness of what he had experienced twelve years earlier as a painful failure in Jerusalem. On the mule that his companions had rented him, he could remember his forced departure from the Holy Land against his will, as the work of a hidden providence that was guiding an itinerary that no longer belonged to him.

From a geographical and temporal distance, that Franciscan provincial, Fr. Marcos de Salodio, appeared to Ignatius as part of a design of

God that never ceased to surprise him.

The failure and death of *his* firm intention to remain in Jerusalem was resurrected in a fruitful period of studies in Paris and, above all, in a group of "friends in the Lord" who had entered his life and his history to remain for ever.

2.6. Phase 6. "The conversion to the world and its things".

I have left for the end of this process the conversion called "to the world and its things" because it seems to me that both in the spiritual and mystical process of Ignatius and in his systematic proposal in the *Spiritual Exercises* it constitutes the port of destination towards which he wishes to direct every person who recognizes him-/herself as a disciple of the Lord from this Ignatian perspective.

As in previous conversions in which Ignatius was reorienting his life towards the density of living, towards friendship with Jesus, towards poverty of the heart or towards the other as mediation of the Other, he also experienced a profound turn without return towards the world and its things. What did this conversion consist of?

The starting point. Perhaps inspired by the example of some of the saints, Ignatius felt at the beginning an inclination to leave the world, to make a vital retreat... something in him seemed to suggest insistently that he might leave the world, "take it out of the world"; he wanted to be part of that spiritual current "*fuga mundi*" that encouraged him to find the true meaning of life, peace and with it God, in the silence of some religious cloister or some cave far from any hint of secular bustle.

Let us return to our text. In the *Autobiography*, we read: "And when he had counted what he would do after coming from Jerusalem, he offered to go to the Carthusian monastery in Seville, without saying who

he was, so that they would have him as little as possible" [Au 12]. In spite of the fact that Íñigo sent a house servant from Loyola to get information about the rule of the Charterhouse of Miraflores de Burgos, "and the information that he got had seemed good to him" [Au 12], this option, which he still saw as a distant possibility, did not worry him any more.

What did occupy his time and inner space was the search for solitude, to the point of trying to build a personal life project so naively trusting in God that he could dispense with all contact with human structures and means of proceeding: Familiar with palace accounts and budget, Ignatius moved to the other extreme and avoided all possible contact with money; accustomed to living in abundance, he now preferred to live in today without providing for tomorrow; accustomed to having his plots of fame and recognition (his followers on Instagram or Twitter, we would say today), he now preferred to let himself be carried away by the sincere desire to go unnoticed as a way of withdrawing from public scenarios too well known to him.

That stage as a devout anchorite in Manresa was necessary for his personal process, but he soon understood that it was only one more station on the road and the Spirit was pulling him towards other horizons of meaning beyond penitence and excessive [and indiscreet] austerities....

How did this transformation take place? How can we understand this transformation from an initial desire to flee from the world to an institution, the Society of Jesus, turned to the world and its things? All began in a devout walk along the banks of a river, perhaps in August 1522.

Little do we know of that experience known as the "illustration of the Cardoner". As a cognitive and intellectual experience, Ignatius had a

metaphysical-mystical intuition in which he understood that "all things seemed new to him" [Au 30]. We could ask Ignatius what this "newness" might have consisted of and what he saw that evening in *things* he had not seen before.

At such an early date, a few months after leaving Loyola, Ignatius could not understand what happened to him as he sat facing the river, although it was one of the experiences that most intensively marked his life and that he would remember as primordial and inspiring one thirty years later in Rome.

In my opinion, this experience of the Cardoner laid the historical-mystical foundation for one of the central elements of the Ignatian-Jesuit charism: its constitutive and structural option for the world, its things and its people; the option for history and time and what happens in them, especially to their inhabitants.

As the years went by, Ignatius changed his way of interpreting the world, moving from an initial look of distrust, suspicion or even a certain fear, to include it as an inalienable element of his spiritual experience. Following Jesus includes *trans-ported* the world with oneself, assuming it as a pneumatological parcel of my Christian responsibility. The world and its things and its diversity of persons... are always something new. "All things seemed new to him" [Au 30, Cardoner] and this newness consists in the loving and divine foundation that inhabits everything and sustains everything.

Ignatius gradually elaborated an implicit spiritual theology about this religation of the world with its Creator or this linking of the Divinity with the things of the World. God looks at the world and by looking at it He loves it, and His love inhabits everything and gives it new meaning.

For a deeper understanding of what we are saying, now we can only

point out very briefly two keys. The first is offered to us by the second member of the first part of the definition of consolation that Ignatius offers in paragraph 316 of the *Exercises*: "I call consolation..." Ignatius adds: "and consequently, when no created thing on the face of the earth can love in itself but in the Creator of them all".

For Ignatius, experiencing consolation as an immediate experience of God's love entails a *referral* also as necessary as it is immediate towards the world and its things. To have been reached *in this way* by the love of God implies a loving bond with the world and its things, *all* its things (no created thing... the face of the earth), because from the key of consolation they offer themselves to us in their ultimate identity, in what they truly are, creatures like me, inhabited by the same love that sustains and founds me.

The other key that justifies this turn toward the world and its things, as could not be otherwise, is found in the contemplation to attain love that closes the *Spiritual Exercises* [Ex 230-237]. God dwells, works and labors in this world. This is the point of arrival. Since that first conversion to life in 1517, Ignatius has been integrating two fundamental realities: God and the World. Far from presenting themselves as two components of an irreconcilable dialectic, the relationship with Jesus gently led Ignatius to enter into the creaturely dimension of the world in order to involve "all that he has and possesses" [Ex 234] in its progressive dignification of history. Thus, the mission born of friendship with Jesus (Eternal King [Ex 98]) is directed to the World, where God himself is waiting, filling everything with his Spirit.

Conclusion. 5 points to "reflect on and profit from".

- + Ignatius' experience shows us that God and man sometimes have different hermeneutics: what for the human understanding can be read as a radical failure (wound) for God can be the beginning of a new life full of Meaning.
- + Ignatius' conversion fills us with optimism by making us see that the energy of grace is always greater than the resistance we put up to the Spirit.
- + The conversion of Ignatius encourages us to see ourselves in permanent construction, in a process silently built by the Spirit whose logic we sometimes fail to discover, but which is revealed retrospectively, thus discovering the loving and unrepeatable mystagogy of God with each one of us.
- + The conversion of Ignatius invites us to look at ourselves with patience and mercy and helps us to enter into the time and processes of God, whose Clock, so often, advances at a different rhythm from ours.
- + The conversion of Ignatius, in short, encourages us to live from *consolation* as the Word pronounced by Jesus in the depths of our hearts, the only Word that remains as an Echo in the crisis of meaning, as a Light of memory in the night of Faith.