



FACULTAD DE TEOLOGÍA
Máster Ignatiana 2014 - 2015

**IGNATIAN COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT
AND
THE JESUITS TODAY**

A reflection in the light of General Congregations 31-35

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DIRECTOR: Prof. Dr. José García de Castro Valdés, S.J.

Madrid-Junio 2015



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Trabajo presentado para la obtención del título en Máster “Ignatiana”
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ABBREVIATIONS

Au	<i>Autobiography</i> of Ignatius of Loyola
ARSI	<i>Acta Romana Societatis Iesu</i> . Roma
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos. Madrid
CJ	Compañía de Jesús
CIS	<i>Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis</i> . Roma
CN	<i>Complementary Norms</i>
Co	<i>Constitutions</i> of the Society of Jesus
D	decree
DEI	<i>Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana</i> . Bilbao - Santander
DHCJ	<i>Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús</i> . Roma - Madrid
ed	editor
eds	editors
Epp	<i>Cartas. Sancti Ignatti de Loyola Societatis Iesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones</i> (12 vols.), Madrid 1903 – 1911 (reimp. 1964-1968) (22, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42)
FCP	Formula of the Congregation of Procurators
FPC	Formula of the Province Congregation
FN	<i>Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis</i> (4 Vols.), Romae 1943-1965 (66, 73, 85, 93)
GC	General Congregation
GSP	Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. Anand
Icd	Ignatian communal discernment
IHSI	<i>Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu</i> . Roma
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
Man	Manresa. Madrid
M Cons	<i>Monumenta Constitutionum</i> (3 vols). (63, 64, 65)

M-ST	Mensajero- Sal Terrae. Bilbao - Santander
MHSI	<i>Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu.</i> Madrid - Roma
MI	<i>Monumenta Ignatiana</i>
p	page
PC	Procurator's Congregation
SpEx	<i>Spiritual Exercises</i> of Ignatius of Loyola
St	Saint
UPComillas	Universidad Pontificia Comillas.
Vol(s)	Volume (s)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the course of this year, some Jesuits asked me about the theme of my final work of my Masters studies in Ignatian Spirituality. Upon hearing that I was writing my paper on the theme ‘Ignatian communal discernment’ (Icd)¹, a few of them were highly cynical and negative in their immediate reaction in the sense that they seemed to believe that the practice of Icd has no significance for Jesuit life and mission today and some were of the opinion that the practice of Icd is almost forgotten by Jesuits today. I was quite amazed and disappointed by their immediate reaction and attitude towards the one of the important Ignatian practices that has been made use of by the Jesuits since the foundational days of the Society of Jesus. I have made an humble effort in this paper to highlight the significance of Icd for Jesuit life and mission today.

Ushering in God’s kingdom on earth is a divine-human project. Establishing God’s kingdom on earth is the ultimate mission of the Trinitarian God², the universal Church and the Society of Jesus. Kingdom of God is ultimately a pure gift of the Trinitarian God. The coming of God’s kingdom is a gift which purely human effort cannot establish it. God’s reign on earth is a reality which God alone must accomplish. In this sense, the creating God’s kingdom remains a divine project.

God is at work³ (Jn 5, 17; SpEx 236) in the world day in day out to establish God’s kingdom. Jesus, God’s human face in the world (Mt 1, 23; Col 1, 15) lived and proclaimed a vision of human life and society, which he called “God’s Kingdom”. The concept of Kingdom of God emerged in the Judeo-Christian

¹ Henceforth I use the abbreviation ‘Icd’.

² Fr Kolvenbach opines that St Ignatius of Loyola was probably the first in the history of the Christian spirituality who perceived the Trinity as God in action in all things for the salvation of the entire humanity. Cf. Kolvenbach, P. H., “Ignatius of Loyola: Experience of Christ”, in *The Road from La Storta*, California 2000, 23. as cited in Barry A. W., “Oración ignaciana” *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana(DEI)*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae (M-ST), Bilbao – Santander 2007, 1373.

³ García, J. A., “Mi Padre trabaja siempre’. El trabajo de Dios por mí en la contemplación para alcanzar amor”, *Man* 68 (1996), 47-60.

context⁴. God revealed himself in the midst of nations in historical context (Is, 19. 23f; Am 9, 7). In a pluralist religio-cultural context, the prophets of the Old Testament firmly affirmed the universality of one God and his concern for the well-being of his creation. Jesus came to give life, life in abundance (Jn10, 10). Jesus brought radical transformation in every sphere of human life both in sacred as well as secular spheres of human existence. Jesus was deeply concerned about the life of the oppressed and the marginalized. Jesus, as life giver and a sign of messiahship, brought spirituality of life and love to the needy and outcasts. His death on the cross was the consequence of his affirmation of human freedom, justice and fellowship. Jesus proclaimed God's unconditional love which alone will set human kind free from all enslaving and oppressive structures of the human society. This liberative dimension of the image of God is the foundational experience of the people of Israel in the Old Testament and the early Christian community in the New Testament (LG 6).

God, through the incarnation of his son Jesus, has founded the Church to bring all human persons to collaborate with him⁵. The Church is established on the life and preaching of Jesus as well as under the guidance of Holy Spirit to build God's kingdom of freedom, justice and fellowship. Second Vatican II says:

When Jesus, having died on the cross for men, rose again from the dead, he was seen to be constituted as Lord, the Christ, and as priest forever (cf. Acts 2,36; Heb 5, 6; 7, 17-21;), and he poured out on his disciples the spirit promised by the Father (cf. Acts 2, 23). Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility, and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom (LG 5)

Freedom, justice and fellowship are indeed the consequence of accepting the unconditional love of God. Freedom is the personal experience of inner freedom, fellowship is the communitarian dimension of the kingdom and justice is the social

⁴ For an elaborate study on the theme 'Kingdom of God' see Murray- Beasley., *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Michigan 1986.

⁵ "Seek his Kingdom, and the rest will be yours as well. (Luke 12:31 // Matthew 6:33) Since the coming of the Kingdom is the supreme concern of existence, Jesus calls on men to make it theirs also. They are not merely to *believe* in its coming, but *seek* it- to set their hearts on gaining it, and to set their hearts on serving it. This will liberate them from anxiety, since God extends his sovereign care to all who seek his kingdom". Cf. Murray- Beasley, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 154.

dimension of the God's reign. The Church is established and continues to exist today to give witness to the vision and mission of Jesus.

The Society of Jesus, the handiwork of God⁶, was founded through the instrumentality of St Ignatius of Loyola. Trinitarian God sought the collaboration of Ignatius⁷, the first Jesuits and continues to seek the partnership of the Jesuits today, the sinful human beings⁸ to labour for God's kingdom under the banner of Christ. The central focus of Ignatian Spirituality as well as Jesuit mission, therefore, is to be at the service of the Trinitarian God.

La espiritualidad ignaciana es un conjunto de fuerzas motrices que llevan simultáneamente a Dios y a los hombres. Es la participación en la misión del enviado del Padre en el Espíritu mediante el servicio siempre en superación, por amor, con todas las variantes de la cruz, a imitación y en seguimiento de ese Jesús que quiere reconducir a todos los hombres y a toda la creación a la gloria del Padre⁹

Since its inception, the Society of Jesus has been at the service of the Universal mission of Christ¹⁰ and the Church. In his address to the members of the GC 32 on 3 December 1974, Pope Paul VI appreciated the collaboration of Jesuits in carrying out the Church's mission. Pope Paul VI said: "Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and exposed fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the social trenches, there has been or is confrontation between the burning exigencies of humanity and the perennial message of the Gospel, there have been and are the

⁶ "The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it can be preserved and increased, but through the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord. Therefore in him alone must be placed the hope that he will preserve and carry forward what he deigned to begin for his service and praise and for the aid of souls" [Co 812].

⁷ It is evident for us through the life St. Ignatius of Loyola. In the vision of La Storta, God the Father speaks to Jesus: "I want you, my Son, to take this man as your servant." Jesus as mediator and revealer of the Father speaks to Ignatius what the eternal Father has desired and granted: "I want you to serve us"...

⁸ GC 32, decree (D) 2, 1 defines a Jesuit as "sinner yet called to be the companion of Jesus".

⁹ Arrupe, P., "Inspiración Trinitaria del carisma Ignaciana (8-2-1980)", *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 423. For the latest edition, see Mollá, D., (ed.), *Pedro Arrupe, carisma de Ignacio*, M-ST- UPComillas, Bilbao - Santander -Madrid 2015.

¹⁰ "To be placed with Christ was the earnest prayer and ardent longing of Ignatius of Loyola. It sums up his personal history and his spiritual legacy. He himself grew gradually in its understanding and realization, till it filled his whole life with a sense of mission". Cf. Divarkar R. P., *Placed with Christ, CIS*, Rome (1977), 5.

Jesuits”¹¹. GC 32 affirmed that the Society of Jesus has been at the service of the Church’s mission. Hence the decree 4 of GC 32 ‘Our mission today’ says:

The mission we are called to share is the mission of the Church herself: to make known to men and women the love of God our Father, a love that leads to life everlasting. It is from the loving regard of God upon the world that the mission of Jesus takes its rise... Ignatius and his First Companions, through the spiritual experience of the Exercises, sought to look upon the world from the same apostolic point of view, in order to discover its needs. Ignatius and his first band of apostles believed that the service they could give to the people of their time would be more effective if they themselves were more closely bound to one another as members of a single body, at once religious, apostolic, and priestly, and united to the successor of Peter by a special bond of love and service to ensure their availability for mission in the universal Church.¹²

God, the principle and foundation of the universe (SpEx 23), seeks human partnership to establish one loving human family on earth. God’s ultimate desire is to establish God’s kingdom with the active collaboration of human persons. Hence we could say that the God’s kingdom is a divine-human project.

Spiritual discernment (both individual and communal) is an important tool with which the Church and the Society of Jesus discern the will of God in order to collaborate effectively with the Trinitarian God to construct God’s kingdom on earth. Spiritual discernment is one of the most prominent themes of Christian spirituality and is also at the heart of the Ignatian spirituality.¹³ In the words of Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach:

“El discernimiento, en cuanto búsqueda de “lo que agrada a Dios” (Cfr., p.e., Rom 12, 2; Fil 1, 18), es una actitud espiritual constitutiva de toda vida cristiana y tiene un puesto central en la espiritualidad ignaciana”¹⁴

In this paper, based on the documents of GC 31-35, I make an attempt to point out that Icd, which the First Jesuits most successfully made use of to discern God’s will, continues to be the guiding force of Jesuit life and mission today. The paper contains three chapters. In the first chapter, I have briefly highlighted the

¹¹ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today, the decrees of the 31st-35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 2009, 384. I have taken all the references pertaining to the decrees of GCs 31-35 from this edition.

¹² GC 32, D 4, 13-16.

¹³ Futrell, J. C., *El Discernimiento Espiritual*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1984, 7.

¹⁴ Kolvenbach, P.- H., “Indicaciones teóricas sobre el Discernimiento Apostólico en común”, *Selección de Escritos I*, Provincia de España CJ, Madrid 1992, 58.

personal experience of spiritual discernment in the life of Ignatius of Loyola by going through the primary sources of Ignatian Charism. The second chapter throws light on the practice of communal discernment in the life and mission of the First Jesuits. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I would affirm that the practice of the Icd is essential to the renewal of Jesuit life and mission today as it enables the Jesuits of today to read the signs of the times particularly in and through its General Congregation. I conclude this paper by calling upon the Jesuits today to cultivate a discerning attitude in order to collaborate efficiently in the mission of the Trinitarian God and the universal Church.

I wish to place on record my sincere gratitude to the Jesuit Provincials of Karnataka, Britain and Spain for their encouragement and financial support. I am very much grateful to my guide Prof. Dr. D. José García de Castro Valdés, S.J. for his valuable guidance, suggestions and corrections. I am also indebted to all the professors who helped me to enrich my knowledge about the Ignatian Spirituality. Last but not the least, I render my heartfelt thanks to Father Elías Royón, S.J. and Father Gauthier Malulu, S.J. for their brotherly guidance.

Chapter 1

Spiritual Discernment in the Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Introduction

Ignatius of Loyola is widely known for his practice and propagation of discernment of spirits. Ignatius, starting from the time of his conversion till his death, was always sensitive to the promptings of the spirit of God. ‘Discernment’, the most significant Ignatian theme, runs through all the inspirational sources of our Jesuit Charism¹⁵.

‘Ejercicios’, Compañía y ‘Constituciones’ están acuñadas por una experiencia común, en un ambiente hondamente espiritual: es decir, la experiencia de continua oración, y el análisis de las mociones de espíritus, que, discernidas con temperamento rico, fino, organizador y sabio, orientan las vías de las continuas elecciones necesarias al Fundador¹⁶

In this chapter, I intend to bring out briefly the significance of spiritual discernment in the life and mission of Ignatius by studying the Ignatian primary sources namely Ignatius’ personal experience of discernment (*Autobiography*), his proposal of the dynamics of spiritual discernment (*The Spiritual Exercises*), his practice of spiritual discernment (*The Spiritual Diary*) and finally his propagation of the practice of spiritual discernment (*The Constitutions* and *The Letters*).

¹⁵ Pieri, F., *Pablo e Ignacio; testigos y maestros del discernimiento espiritual*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2005, 81- 190.

¹⁶ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”, *Man* 55 (1983), 212.

1.1 Personal Experience of Discernment; The *Autobiography*

The *Autobiography* of St Ignatius of Loyola was written during the years 1553-1555 in the last years of Ignatius' earthly existence¹⁷. The *Autobiography* was not written by Ignatius in his own hands because he never intended to do so. Ignatius yielded to the constant request of his fellow companions and at the fag-end of his life dictated it to Luis Gonçalves da Câmara. The *Autobiography* is the outcome of a process of personal discernment and decision of Ignatius.¹⁸ Hence, Câmara declared in his prologue to the *Autobiography*: "I have not a word of my own but what I heard from the father".¹⁹ Inigo of 1521 was a transformed person by the year 1555. The *Autobiography* is basically "the story of that change brought about by God and of Inigo's pilgrim search for God and desire to cooperate with God".²⁰

The *Autobiography* [Au 1]²¹ commences by stating that up till the age of 26, Inigo of Loyola's main aim in life had been to achieve fame and vain glory. He was highly conscious of his personal appearance. As a young knight, Inigo was persuasive, firm of will, tenacious and stubborn. However, God had his own plans for an ambitious young. Inigo was badly injured Ignatius in the battle of Pamplona. The reading of *Life of Christ* by Ludolph Saxony and the *Life of Saints* by Jacobs de Voragine while he was recuperating at Loyola and subsequent miraculous recovery brought about a profound conversion and change in the heart of Inigo [Au 5]. During his convalescence, Ignatius was deeply touched and inflamed by the God. We notice that the "don de discernimiento, se despertó en forma incipiente durante la crisis física y espiritual de Loyola. Vencido y herido y bruscamente sorprendido por

¹⁷ Jacob, P., Dullard M., *The inspirational sources of our Jesuit charism*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash (GSP) Anand 2003, 8. "It is not properly a writing of Ignatius. It is the story of part of his life as he shared it with Fr. da Camara in Rome over three periods: August – September 1553 [Au 1-27.3], March 1555 [Au 27.4- 79.2] and September – October 1555 [Au 79.3 – 101.2]. This last section is in Italian. Out of discretion it seems, da Camara has left out the story of Ignatius' first thirty years. He starts with his conversion and closes with his arrival in Rome, the last persecution there and his different apostolates. Thus it covers the period 1521-1539".

¹⁸ Rambla, J. M., *El Peregrino*, M-ST, Bilbao – Santander2003, 15. See 6th edition, Rambla, J. M., *El Peregrino*, M-ST- UPComillas, Bilbao – Santander - Madrid 2015.

¹⁹ See *Prólogo del P. Camara*, 2, note 4.

²⁰ Jacob, P., *Ignatian Discernment*, GSP, Anand 2008, 149.

²¹The number of the *Autobiography* as found in the book: Rambla, J. M., *El Peregrino*...

la acción de la Gracia, se despierta en él un mundo nuevo”.²² With desires entirely different from his former ones, Inigo responded to God by deciding to imitate the saints by living a life of rigorous penance and to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem [Au 9]. ‘The pilgrim’ was the image that Ignatius had of himself as the word ‘pilgrim’ has deep roots in biblical tradition as well as in the history of the Church²³. Ignatius consciously and constantly deemed himself as a pilgrim of God throughout the *Autobiography*. God remained his guide all through his pilgrimage in a special way during his stay at Manresa.²⁴

Ignacio comenzó a aprender el discernimiento de los diversos espíritus durante su convalecencia de Loyola y después en Manresa, donde Dios le trataba como a un niño de escuela [Au 27]²⁵

For Ignatius, the pilgrimage was much more than travelling to different places. Ignatius went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with a strong desire to see and touch the places where Jesus lived. His pilgrimage was the fruit of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and his deep quest for the living Christ and to imitate the saints [Au 14]. Studying the *Autobiography* of Ignatius, one can clearly notice that Ignatius had a strong element of self-will in his plans and action²⁶. Ignatius was basically narcissist²⁷. However, God was gradually helping him all along his pilgrimage especially at Manresa²⁸ to conquer his self-love, self-will and self-interest [SpEx 189] and thus become a person of discernment of spirits²⁹.

²² Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”, 213.

²³ For instance, see some biblical texts and the Church document: 2 Cor 5, 6-7; Ef 2, 19; Fil 1, 27; 3, 20; Col 3, 1; Heb 11, 13-14; 13, 1 Pt 2, 11; LG Chapter 7.

²⁴ Rambla, J. M., “Del ‘peregrino’ a la mínima Compañía de Jesús”, *Man* 54 (1982), 5-23.

²⁵ Buckley, J. M., “Discernimiento”, *DEI*, 611.

²⁶ “As a young man he is constantly getting caught up in unrealistic ambitions, and not even the sobering experience of a shattered leg can break the spell that holds him captive. But some accidental reading reveals to him the true object of his quest: it is Christ, who alone is worthy of absolute loyalty and can satisfy the loftiest aspirations-in a way that is not self-centred but out-going”. Cf Divarkar R. P., *A Pilgrim’s Testament; The Memoirs of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1995, 3.

²⁷ Meissner, W.W., *Ignatius of Loyola, The Psychology of a Saint*, Yale University Press, London 1992, 339.

²⁸ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”, 212. “Es una idea bastante común entre los autores históricos, que en la experiencia espiritual de Manresa recibió Ignacio el don de discernimiento, que le acompañó toda su vida”.

²⁹ Domínguez M. C., “Ignacio de Loyola a la luz del Psicoanálisis”, *Proyección* 53 (2006), 33-36.

1.1.1 Ignatius' Discovery of the Building Block of Discernment of Spirits

God had been imparting on Ignatius many lessons on the movement of the spirits at the time of recovery at Loyola.

La primera experiencia religiosa de Iñigo, en orden su conversión, fue la del discernimiento de espíritus. Así lo atestigua su autobiografía. Y este primer discernimiento tiene su punto de arranque en la lectura del *Vita Christi* y del *Flos Sanctorum* que entretuvo a Iñigo, convaleciente en Loyola de la herida recibida en la defensa militar de Pamplona. Iñigo se sentirá atraído por el ideal de servicio a la persona de Jesucristo, a quien ambos libros presentan como capitán y Rey, modelo al que imitar, centro de toda la creación.³⁰

Ignatius narrates [Au 6-10] in a lucid manner about his awareness of the movements of different spirits and their immediate effect.

Había todavía esta diferencia: que cuando pensaba en aquello del mundo, se deleitaba mucho; más cuando después de cansado lo dejaba, hallábase seco y descontento; y cuando en ir a Jerusalén descalzo, y en no comer sino hierbas, y en hacer todos los demás rigores que veía haber hecho los santos; no solamente se consolaba cuando estaba en los tales pensamientos, más aun después de dejado, quedaba contento y alegre. Mas no miraba en ello, ni se paraba a ponderar esta diferencia, hasta en tanto que una vez se le abrieron un poco los ojos, y empezó a maravillarse desta diversidad y a hacer reflexión sobre ella, cogiendo por experiencia que de unos pensamientos quedaba triste y de otros alegre, y poco a poco viniendo a conocer la diversidad de los espíritus (10) que se agitaban, el uno del demonio, y el otro de Dios. [Este fué el primero discurso que hizo en las cosas de Dios; y después cuando hizo los ejercicios, de aquí comenzó a tomar lumbre para lo de la diversidad de espíritus]. [Au 8]

This was the first lesson Ignatius acquired about the interior movements of spirits, the building block of the discernment. At the beginning of the *Autobiography*, Ignatius mentioned that he “did not dwell on any interior thing” [Au 14] and that “he had no knowledge of spiritual matters” [Au 21]. During his stay at Manresa, Ignatius

slowly came to the realization that he was being stirred by opposite spirits; one was from God and the other from the demon. The acceptance of these opposite spirits at work in our hearts is the first step on the way to discernment. For Inigo this was a momentous discovery, that there was something outside of him that could affect him and later his thoughts and feelings; he was not totally in control. He was learning how God touches us

³⁰ Salvat, I., *Servir en misión Aportación al estudio de carisma de Ignacio y de las Constituciones*, CIS, Roma 1972, 3.

at the core of our being, and that we become aware of this from our thoughts and our feelings. This awareness of the interior movements of spirits, followed by the ability to discern became the basis for discovering God's genuine call to him.³¹

It was during the great illumination at Manresa, Ignatius felt that he received a decisive insight into spiritual matters and about his interior life. Ignatius clearly “understood much more about the methodology of discernment and the role of consolation as a conformation of discernment process”.³² Here Ignatius used the word “understanding” for about four times highlighting that it was “so great an enlightenment”; the eyes of understanding “began to be opened” and “the things of God that he had meditated upon and read about [Au 26]. It was at this stage of his life, Ignatius felt more intimately that God was teaching him like a school master [Au 27]. It is evident from the study of his *Autobiography* that Ignatius was gradually overcoming his will by being receptive to God's dealings with him, allowing God's will to conquer his entire being through the process of discernment of spirits.³³

1.2 Proposal of a Methodology of Discernment; The *Spiritual Exercises*

Discernment of spirits³⁴ is a significant contribution of Ignatius to the Christian spirituality³⁵.

We observe that two basic ideas constantly recur in connection with Ignatius's terms pertaining to discernment of spirits in the *Exercises* (discernir, discreción): (1) perceiving the respective spirits as good or bad, with a view to (2) separating or distinguishing them. These two ideas sprang naturally from the developing history of these words up to his death in 1556. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, first published in 1548, the word occurs only three

³¹ Coleman, G., *Walking with Inigo*, GSP, Anand 2002, 17.

³² Ibid. 66-67.

³³ Melloni, J., “Cardoner”, *DEI*, 282.

³⁴ The discernment of spirits “- al que Ignacio se refirió dos veces en los *Ejercicios Espirituales* como “discreción de [varios] espíritus”- responde a un profundo anhelo y responde a un problema real. La versión española de los *Ejercicios*, el texto conocido como *Autógrafo*, no las llama “reglas para el discernimiento de espíritus”. Este vocablo sólo se encuentra en los textos latinos de 1541 y 1547. El término mismo “dirección” aparece sólo dos veces en los *Ejercicios*: uno para encabezar las Reglas para mayor discreción de espíritus en la Segunda Semana [*Ej* 328] y otro en el Segundo Tiempo para hacer elección, en que se habla de “experiencia de discreción de varios espíritus [*Ej* 176]. Curiosamente el término “discernimiento” no aparece en los escritos ignacianos, tal y como nos lo demuestra la *Concordancia*”. Buckley, J. M., “Discernimiento” in *DEI*, 607. See *Concordancia Ignaciana*, Echarte, I., (ed.), M-ST, Bilbao – Santander, 1996.

³⁵ Futrell, J. C., *El Discernimiento Espiritual*, 11.

times: discernir in [336], and discreción in [176 and 328]. In the *Constitutions* the word occurs far more frequently. These considerations will also have an application to Ignatian discernment of God's will, In that connection, discernment pertains especially to clear perceptions of the options before one, with a view to distinguishing them and choosing the one likely to result in greater praise or glory to God.³⁶

It is definitely the Divine influence that made Ignatius to compose the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is precisely “out of his incessant search for God’s presence and will, Ignatius developed a way of proceeding. The way of proceeding is found in the pilgrimage of the *Spiritual Exercises*....”³⁷ Hence the *Spiritual Exercises* was the fruit of Ignatius’s personal experience as a person with deep longing for God, seeking God’s will and deeper union with God. He kept a journal as he gained spiritual insight and deepened his spiritual experience. Ignatius kept on adding to these notes as he directed other people and discovered what “worked.” Eventually Ignatius gathered these prayers, meditations, reflections, and directions into a carefully designed framework of a retreat, which he called “The *Spiritual Exercises*.”

The *Spiritual Exercises* is undoubtedly the best known work of Ignatius. He states in the opening paragraph of his book that the ultimate purpose of his *Spiritual Exercises* as “preparing and disposing the soul to get rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of one’s soul” [SpEx1]. In other words, the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* “is a ‘school of heart’, a learning how to relate a learning of how to read, find and do the will of the other, namely, God”.³⁸

What is most laudable in Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* is that “he has not developed a full-fledged ‘theory’ or abstract model of discernment. He has only formulated and proposed some practical principles and imaginatively expressed their dynamics. The experience gained in the practice of discernment makes one only a more skillful discerner; and not necessarily a theoretician producing theories and models of discernment.”³⁹

³⁶ Toner, J. J., *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius's rules for the Discernment of spirits*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1982, 20-21 (Foot note 15.)

³⁷ GC34, D1, *United with Christ on Mission*, 5.

³⁸ Jacob, P., *Ignatian Discernment*, 18.

³⁹ Lobo, J., “Discernment as a Hermeneutical Process: An interdisciplinary study”, *Ignis* 43 (2013), 35-70.

The notion of Ignatian discernment is mainly concerned with the inner movements of the spirits in the individual. In a well-written article on 'Ignatian Discernment', the author John Carrol Futrell points out the following:

“Discernment... involves choosing the way of the light of Christ instead of the way of the Evil One and living out the consequences of this choice through discerning what specific decisions and actions are demanded to follow Christ here and now. The *diakrisis pneumaton* – discernment of spirits- is a ‘sifting through’ of interior experiences in order to determine their origin and to discover which ones are movements toward the following the way of light”⁴⁰

In order to facilitate the greater awareness about the interior movements of the spirits, Ignatius presents to us two series of Rules for the Discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

1. Rules for the Discernment of spirits (First week); [SpEx 313-327]⁴¹
2. Rules for the Discernment of spirits (Second week); [SpEx 328-336]⁴²

1.2.1 The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits⁴³

The Ignatian discernment specially the ‘Rules’ for the discernment have their roots in teaching of the fathers of the Church⁴⁴ as well as in the New Testament, especially the Pauline and Johannine writings (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor 1:7 3:4; Gal. 5:13-26; 1 Thess. 5:19, 1 Jn 4:2-3). What is the particular contribution of Ignatian discernment? The

⁴⁰ Futrell J. C., “Ignatian Discernment”, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*2, St. Louis (1970), 47.

⁴¹ The content of these fourteen rules can be summed up briefly as below: “Title [313] Preliminary principles (Rules 1 and 2) Descriptive definitions of consolation and desolation (Rules 3 and 4) Ways of dealing with desolation (Rules 5 to 8) Why the experience of desolation? (Rule 9) Attitudes towards consolation (Rules 10 and 11) some common tactics of the enemy (Rules 12 to 14)”. Cf Ivens, M., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, Cromwell Press, Wiltshire 1998, 209.

⁴² The brief summary of these 8 rules are as follows: “Title, Opening principle (Rule 1) Consolation without preceding cause (Rule 2) Distinction between 'without cause' and 'with cause' (Rule 3) Possible deception in 'consolation with cause' (Rules 4, 5, 6) Action of the spirits in relation to the orientation of the person (Rule 7) Deception in the afterglow of consolation without cause (Rule 8)” Ivens M., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 227.

⁴³ Here I don't intend to discuss about the rules for discernment in depth. For a detailed discussion on the terms 'Discernment of Spirits, See Arzubialde, S., *Ejercicios espirituales. Historia y análisis*, M-ST, Bilbao-Santander 2009, 587-752; Toner, J. J., *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius's rules for the Discernment of spirits*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1982; Ruiz, J. M., *El discernimiento espiritual: teología, historia, práctica*, BAC, Madrid 1994; Buckley, J. M., “Discernimiento” *DEI*, 607-611.

⁴⁴ Rahner H., *Ignatius the Theologian*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1990, 165-80.

specific contribution of Ignatius was “his focusing upon the dynamic process of discernment as directed to the ceaseless response of a man in his whole life and in all of his actions to God’s word to him in every concrete situation”.⁴⁵ Therefore, the *Spiritual Exercises* that Ignatius completed around 1541 are of great help for anyone who desires to seek and to do God’s will.

Ignatius’ rules for the discernment definitely stem from his own God experience, both the personal experience of his conversion- and his experience in guiding his companions and others. Their importance in the *Exercises*, as well as the need to apply them appropriately is established in the Annotations [SpEx 8-9]; the two movements they deal with are of central significance in the prayer of the *Exercises* from the first day onwards [SpEx 62] and especially [SpEx 176] highlight the value and importance of these rules and at the same time the utmost need of appropriate application of them.⁴⁶

Commenting on the rules of discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Pierre Jacob says that the Title of the rule of discernment [SpEx 313], clearly points out the three steps in the dynamics of discernment. They are as follows:

The Rules “Teach a person how to trace the consolation and desolation in his feelings, and how to get in touch with them (313 (1))... how to understand these feelings and the thoughts or projects linked with them; how to perceive what they mean and where they tend, that is their dynamic relationship to the end (313 (2))... teach the retreatant to reflect on what these states are doing to him in terms of taking him towards God or taking him away from God. Finally they invite him to take a stand in the light of the end. (313 (3), 139)”.⁴⁷

Taking a stand here would mean that “the exercitant rejects what tends to take a person away from God and accepts what takes him/her towards God”⁴⁸. The *Spiritual Exercises*, if made with right disposition, help the person to encounter God in all things and all things in God. Living out the Ignatian spirituality today signifies that a person always chooses to praise, reverence and serve God by imbibing the

⁴⁵ Futrell J. C., “Ignatian Discernment”, *CIS*, Dossier ‘Deliberatio’ C, Rome (1981), 90.

⁴⁶ Ivens M., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 205.

⁴⁷ Jacob, P., *Ignatian Discernment*, 18-19.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 19.

spirit of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius because all the characteristic themes of Ignatian spirituality are grounded in the *Exercises*. These include a sense of collaboration with God's salvific action in the world, spiritual discernment in decision making, generosity of response to God's loving call, fraternity and companionship in service, and a great disposition to find God's will at all times. However one has to always bear in mind that

el discernimiento de espíritus no es lección que se aprende como la física o la historia. La iniciativa es de Dios. Dios es el Uno que se comunica a la su ánima devota abrazándola en su amor y alabanza y disponiéndola por la vía que mejor podrá servirle adelante⁴⁹

Let me conclude this section with the observation of Maurice Dullard:

In his *Autobiography*, we watch Ignatius living out the rules he formulated and placed at the heart of his *Spiritual Exercises* since those Exercises are basically a methodology of discernment. Ignatius does not impose his own experience of God or prayer on us. Rather he gives us methodology he evolved so that we can discern the direction God is leading us. We too can seek and find God in proportion to our transcending our own self-love, self-will and self-interest (SpEx 189.10)⁵⁰

1.3 Practice of Discernment; The *Spiritual Diary*

Ignatius of Loyola wrote his *Spiritual Diary* during the years 1544-1545 i.e. 22 years after his conversion and 12 years before his death. By way of introduction, it is profitable to look into the historical context of the *Spiritual Diary* or journal of Ignatius. Ignatius chalked out the first draft of the *Constitutions*, known as the *Formula of the Institute*, owing to the request of his companions. It was submitted to Pope Paul III in September 1539 which the pope approved on 27 September 1540 by the decree 'Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae'. The First Jesuits entrusted the task of preparing the final draft of the *Constitutions* to Ignatius and Codure. With the approval of the companions, the proposal was made in the *Constitution* of 1541 i.e. the Churches under the care of the Jesuits were allowed to have income, however

⁴⁹ Buckley, J. M., "Discernimiento" *DEI*, 611.

⁵⁰ Dullard, M., in his preface to the book of Jacob Pierre, *Ignatian Discernment*, XV-XVI.

strictly for the upkeep of the Churches. All the founding fathers of the Society of Jesus made their solemn profession on 22 April 1541.

When Ignatius was elected as the first General of the Society on April 19, 1541, he had to prepare the final draft of the *Constitutions*. While elaborating the *Constitutions* in 1544, Ignatius was indeed uncomfortable with the proposal of 1541. He was of the opinion that the Society should observe the vow of poverty (i.e. whether to have income for the houses and for Churches under the care of the Jesuits) more austere without tempering it in any manner. Since the first draft of the *Constitutions* was already approved by the companions and the Pope Paul III had given the ratification, Ignatius was unable to make any further corrections. Therefore, Ignatius desired to seek the will of God by making a spiritual discernment on poverty and other significant points of the *Constitutions*, jotting down⁵¹ day by day “what went on in his soul” [Au 100]. These recordings of his privileged encounters with the Divine are known as *Spiritual Diary* or Journal of Ignatius.

El primer cuaderno... es una fuente de excepcional riqueza para informarnos, tanto sobre la vida mística de Ignacio, como su manera de proceder en la elección⁵²

The *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius is unique among his many works that survive in the original hand written form and solely written by Ignatius without help from anyone.⁵³ The *Spiritual Diary* is a rather difficult text to understand because it explains the many different interior and mystical experiences of Ignatius in the context of his life and the many masses that he offered in order to come to a decision

⁵¹ The *Spiritual Diary* comprises of two copy books. The first written in forty days from 2nd February to 12th March, 1544, which focuses on the election of kind of poverty to be practiced by the Churches that will be under the care of the Society of Jesus. While the second spanning a longer period from 13th March 1544 to 27th February 1545; the first part was published in 1892, but it was only in 1934 that the first full edition came into existence: Codina, A., (ed.) *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu*, vol. 63 [= *Monumenta Ignatiana ex autographis vel ex antiquioribus exemplis collecta, Series Tertia, Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Jesu. Tomus primus, Monumenta Constitutionum Praevia*], Roma 1943.

⁵² Decloux, S., *Comentario a las Cartas y Diario Espiritual de S. Ignacio de Loyola*, CIS, Roma 1982, 81.

⁵³ Munitiz, A. J., *The Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, Inigo Enterprises, London 1987, 1.

or confirm a decision. As Munitiz says, “These pages are clearly the work of a man devoted to God, living an intense interior life, divinely endowed with special gifts.”⁵⁴

One of the significant lesson that we learn from Ignatius’ practice of discernment that is well documented in his *Spiritual Diary* is about the need of seeking confirmation in our discernment process. J. Toner writes: “Surprisingly Ignatius didn’t end his discernment on February 12. A disturbance and a temptation on that day initiated a long period of delay, a whole month. During that time Ignatius experienced confusion, temptation to doubt the decision he had reached and to see more confirmation. He finally came to see that seeking more confirmation was unreasonable, that he should have ended his discernment on February 12 instead of March 12”.⁵⁵ Hence the valuable lesson for the practice of discernment for our times is that too much insistence on seeking definitive confirmation at the time of discernment is not absolutely necessary. It would largely depend on, first and foremost, the time and energy the discerner has at his/ her disposal and secondly, if the decision is important enough to invest that amount of time and energy.⁵⁶

As a matter of fact, Ignatius was not so keen on passing these notes of his *Spiritual Diary* to any of his companions⁵⁷. Today, we are indeed very fortunate to have access to the *Spiritual Diary* which is considered to be one of the crucial primary sources to know about the mind and heart of Ignatius more especially about his practice of spiritual discernment.

1.4 Propagation of the Practice of Discernment; The *Constitutions* and the *Letters*

Ignatius not only practiced discernment in his personal life but also propagated the practice of discernment to all the members of the Society of Jesus through the

⁵⁴ Ibid. 2.

⁵⁵ Toner, J.J., *What is Your Will, O God*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1995, 30-31. See also Decloux, S., *Comentario a las Cartas y Diario Espiritual de S. Ignacio de Loyola*, 97-102.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 23.

⁵⁷ Gonçalves da Camara narrates toward the end of the *Autobiography* that he wished to have a glance at those papers and requested Ignatius, “to let me have them for a while; he would not”. [Au 101,2]

*Constitutions*⁵⁸ as they are imbued with the spirit of discernment right from the *Examen* up to 10th part of the *Constitutions*⁵⁹ as well as guided the Jesuits and others (for example Teresa Rejadell) by writing letters on various occasions.

1.4.1 The *Constitutions*

El ‘libro de los Ejercicios’ revela un encendido de amor en el alma, una respuesta inefable a la llamada de Dios y un seguimiento enamorado de la persona y reino de Cristo. La Voluntad de la “mayor gloria de Dios” y “del mejor servicio” a su causa, de una manera eficazmente operativa y estructural, abre la puerta a la aventura de una Orden religiosa nueva, que nace abrazada al atractivo de Jesús, y embarcada con El en la voluntad del Padre. Para esta compañía elabora Ignacio, ayudado de alguna manera por todos sus Compañeros, el ‘Libro de las Constituciones’⁶⁰

As we noted earlier, the First Companions of Ignatius who had gathered in Rome entrusted the task of developing the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus to Ignatius and Codure on 4th of March, 1541. Immediately on 10th of March, both Ignatius and Codure started the process of writing the *Constitutions* which was approved and signed by Pope Paul III in the year 1541. Unfortunately, Codure died in the same year. So the entire burden of bringing out the *Constitutions* fell on the shoulders of Ignatius till the arrival of Polanco in March, 1547. While drafting the *Constitutions*, Ignatius reflected, prayed over and jotted down the fruit of his personal discernment⁶¹ on the following themes;

⁵⁸ I have referred the following editions; “*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Annotated and complemented by General Congregation 34*”, GSP, Anand 1996; Padberg, J. W.,(Ed.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis 1996.

⁵⁹ Palmés C., *Del Discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, CIS, Rome (1988), 46.

⁶⁰ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”, 212.

⁶¹ “He also had many visions when he said Mass; and when he was drawing up the *Constitutions* too, he had them very often. He can now affirm this more easily because every day he wrote down what went on in his soul and he had it now in writing. He showed me a rather large bundle of writings, of which he read me a good bit. Most were visions that he saw in confirmation of some of the *Constitutions*, at times seeing God the Father, at times all three Persons of the Trinity, at times Our Lady—who interceded and at times confirmed. In particular he spoke to me about precisions over which he spent forty days, saying Mass each day, and each day with many tears. The question was whether a church could have any fixed income and whether the Society should make use of that. The method which he followed while he was drafting the *Constitutions* was to say Mass each day and to present to God the point that he was treating, and to pray over it; he always had tears at prayer and Mass.” [Au 100-101]

- a. The practice of evangelical poverty (the central focus of his *Spiritual Diary* that we have already discussed)
- b. The mission of the Society of Jesus, in the *Constitutions* of Missionibus.
- c. The exclusion of dignities for the Jesuits (Contra ambitum)
- d. All the matters concerned with the entrance and formation of the candidates who aspired to enter the Society of Jesus. The redaction of the book of *Examen*, obviously was one of the main concern and preoccupation of Ignatius in the initial days of the existence of the Society of Jesus⁶².

One of the vital characteristics of the Jesuit *Constitutions* is that they are not just procedural but furnish a motive as well as a spirit with which procedures are to be observed and lived out in the Jesuit life and mission. Fr Antonio M. de Aldama, who has an extensive knowledge on the Jesuit *Constitutions* affirms that the *Constitutions* are the fruit of spiritual experience, aid to discernment as well as offer us criteria for discernment and at the same time are normative. Ignatius evidently urged all Jesuits to observe the *Constitutions* “in full”, though not under pain of sin [Co 602].⁶³ Ignatius not only practiced the discernment while writing the *Constitutions* but also made a proposal to all the Jesuits to cultivate an attitude of ever searching the Divine will. Ignatius vividly puts it in the *Constitutions*; in preamble [Co 134] and in other part of the *Constitutions* [Co 414, 812].

Ignatius recommends strongly to all Jesuits to go through a proper discernment process in order to seek and find God’s will while taking any major decision such as for the admission to probation [Co 142], the same for the demission [Co 209, 219]; In times of difficult and doubtful circumstances, the superior who has the authority to dismiss has to discuss the matter with other member who can be helpful toward perceiving the divine will in the matter [Co 211]. Proposing to all the Jesuit superiors to take recourse to discernment, Ignatius writes: “He [superior] should foster spiritual discernment in common where the proper dispositions for it exists, according to our way of proceeding in the Society. Superior should keep them united in love and

⁶² Arzubialde, S., Corella, J., García –Lomas, J. M., (eds.), *Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús. Introducción y notas para su lectura*, M-ST, Bilbao – Santander 1993, 41.

⁶³ Aldama, A. M., *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, GSP, Anand 1989, 12-13.

obedience” [Co 403.2]. Jesuit superior general has to make a proper discernment at the time of granting the concession of the vows [Co 522, 523]. Ignatius insists on the practice of discernment when superior has to undertake a vital decision of sending Jesuits on mission [Co 618]. The Jesuit superior has to strive hard to acquire spiritual wisdom for the sake of mission [Co 622-623]. Meanwhile, the Jesuits have to exhibit greater disposition to the will of the superior [Co 628]. Evidently, throughout the *Constitutions*, the spirit of discernment is applied especially to the obedience [Co 547-552].

The main purpose of all the proposals made by Ignatius in the *Constitutions* is to help every Jesuit to be a “man of discernment” by the grace of God’s Spirit⁶⁴.

A lo largo de las *Constituciones* puso juntos la iniciativa divina anterior y el discernimiento humano posterior, manteniendo de continuo en una u otra formulación que “esto sola la unción del *Spirito Sancto* pueda enseñarlo, y la prudencia que Dios nuestro Señor comunica a los que en su divina Majestad confían, a lo menos avisos que ayuden y dispongan para el efecto que ha de hacer la gracia divina” [Co 414]; este mismo énfasis en la acción divina al enseñar el discernimiento aparece también en otros pasajes de las *Constituciones* (cf. [134. 161. 219.624])⁶⁵

Bearing this in mind, at the conclusion of work of revision mandated by GC 34, then Superior General Father Kolvenbach called upon the Jesuits of today to be faithfully observe the spirit of the *Constitutions*.

Our renewed *Constitutions* and their *Complementary Norms*, to be considered in your personal and communal prayer and to be observed in the spirit in which they have been written. Thus, with the help of God, may these, as Master Ignatius proposed, be a certain path to him in our enthusiastic following out of our mission in the Church, as servants of the mission of Christ under the leadership of the Roman Pontiff, for the greater praise and glory of Christ and for the good, the salvation, and the consolation of our fellow men and women, to whom we are sent in any region of the world whatsoever.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Palmés C., *Del Discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, 47.

⁶⁵ Buckley, J. M., “Discernimiento” *DEI*, 611.

⁶⁶ Kolvenbach, P.- H., in his preface to the book, Padberg, J. W., (ed.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, St Louis 1996, xiii.

1.4.2 The *Letters*

Ignatius of Loyola ‘era muy buen escribano’ [Au 11]. By studying his *letters*⁶⁷, one can notice that God had endowed Ignatius with the gift of expressing his thoughts and ideas in a clear manner. Ignatius used his ability to plan and organize the Society of Jesus as he was blessed with the talent for neatness and orderliness⁶⁸. The *letters* of Ignatius are undoubtedly one of the primary sources and the founding documents of the Society of Jesus. The *letters* of Ignatius have great value and significance for our times. The *letters* of Ignatius continue to enhance “the mutual consolation and edification” [Co 673] among the Jesuits as well as offer valuable guidelines for the healthy governance [Co 674-675] of the Society of Jesus today.

Ignatius wrote numerous *letters* to people of different walks of life such as kings, dukes, bureaucrats, fellow Jesuits and scholastics, benefactors, ordinary people, women, his relatives, cardinals, bishops, priests, religious etc.⁶⁹. The themes and topics covered in these *letters* are diverse and the tone of the *letters* distinct. Some of these *letters* are personal, suggestive and advisory. Others are instructional, like on spiritual direction, social transformation etc... These *letters* were either written by Ignatius himself or by his secretary Polanco under his direction.

According to William Young the *letters* of Ignatius give us some idea of his varied interests and they show us how he found God in everything.⁷⁰ One of the varied interests of Ignatius was indeed to motivate and help his fellow Jesuits and others to practice discernment in daily living.⁷¹ Let us now go through briefly two *letters* of Ignatius where Ignatius propagates passionately the practice of spiritual discernment.

⁶⁷ Ignatius wrote about 6800 letters are preserved in the twelve volumes of MHSI (Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesus). See *Epistolae et Instructiones Sancti Ignatii Loyolae* (12 Vols.), MHSI, Madrid 1903-1911.

⁶⁸ Coleman, G, *Walking with Inigo*, 23

⁶⁹ García de Castro, J., “Cartas”, *DEI*, 301-302.

⁷⁰ Young, J.W., *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola*, Loyola University Press, Chicago 1959, iv.

⁷¹ García de Castro, J., “Cartas”, 299.

Letter to Teresa Rejadell (Venice, June 18, 1536)⁷²

This is one of the earliest letter written to Teresa Rejadell⁷³ in which Ignatius brings out the significance of discernment. “Esta carta se ha considerado siempre como un comentario y aplicación de las reglas para discernir y notas sobre los escrúpulos dadas por San Ignacio en los *Ejercicios*”.⁷⁴ Ignatius wrote this letter offering spiritual guidance to Teresa.

In this *letter*, Ignatius communicates the following significant lesson on discernment to Teresa Rejadell. Ignatius writes:

Agora resta hablar lo que sentimos leyendo de Dios Nuestro Señor, cómo lo hemos de entender, y entendido saber- nos aprovechar. Acaece que muchas veces el Señor nuestro mueve y fuerza a nuestra ánima a una operación o a otra abriendo nuestra ánima; es a saber, hablando dentro della sin ruido alguno de voces, alzando toda a su divino amor, y nos otros a su sentido, aunque quisiéramos, no pudiendo resistir.⁷⁵

Here Ignatius is reiterating what he teaches in the in the *Spiritual Exercises* about “First way of making a good and correct choice” [SpEx 175] and at the same time, about the “consolation to the soul without any previous cause” [SpEx 330]. Ignatius proposes to Teresa another lesson about the deception of the evil spirit at the time of consolation without previous cause:

hartas veces nos podemos engañar es que después de la tal consolación o espiración, como el ánima queda gozosa, allégase el enemigo todo debajo de alegría y de buen color, para hacernos añadir lo que hemos sentido de Dios N. S., para hacernos desordenar y en todo desconcertar.⁷⁶

Ignatius is restating again the rule for discernment of spirits for the second week where he says that a spiritual person who has received a consolation without previous cause must consider it very attentively, and must cautiously distinguish the actual time of the consolation from the period which follows it [SpEx 336]. This

⁷² MI Epp. I, 99; see *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, Ruiz, J. M., (ed.), BAC, Madrid 2013, 662.

⁷³ Teresa Rejadell was a religious who was living in the monastery of Santa Clara, Barcelona. For some more letters which Ignatius wrote to Rejadell see MHSI, *Epistolae et Instructiones Sancti Ignatii Loyolae*, Madrid, 1903, vol. I (doc. 73, p. 274; doc. 214, p. 627); vol. II (doc. 630, p. 374; doc. 685, p.412).

⁷⁴ “Cartas e instrucciones” in *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 662.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 666.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

letter is considered to be a precious commentary on the rules for the discernment of spirits and on scruples, which Ignatius elaborated in his book of the *Exercises*.

Letter to Francis Borgia (July, 1549)⁷⁷

With an ardent desire of reforming the Church, Onfroy, a Jesuit who was residing at Gandia, Spain, had prophesied that Francis Borgia would become pope and reform the Church, and to achieve this end one would make use of the new religious order founded by Ignatius. On learning about this development, Ignatius writes to Francis Borgia urging him to proceed with great caution. The document is indeed long. However, it is highly instructive in the matter of the discernment of spirits⁷⁸. In this *letter*, Ignatius asserts:

It is clear that we are not bound to refuse acceptance to all prophecy made after the time of Christ, as is clear from St. John, Agabus, and the daughters of Philip, St. Paul warns us, "Despise not prophecies." Neither must we give credit to all who claim to be prophets nor accept their prophecies, seeing that there are so many ways in which we can be deceived in this matter, according to the warning of the apostle John: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God?"

Polanco wrote this *letter* on behalf of Ignatius to Francis Borgia communicating vividly the mind of Ignatius. This *letter* is indeed significant for the fact that it contains an interesting application of the rules for the discernment of spirits that Ignatius talks about in the book of *Spiritual Exercises*⁷⁹.

Ignatius concluded most of his *letters* by begging the Holy Trinity to bestow plentiful grace to know God's most holy will and perfectly to fulfill it. Hence it is evident that seeking and responding to God's will was one of the central concerns of the Ignatian *letters*.

⁷⁷ MI Epp. XII, 632- 654; see *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 776.

⁷⁸ Young, J. W., *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola*, 196.

⁷⁹ Decloux, S., *Comentario a las Cartas y Diario Espiritual de S. Ignacio de Loyola*, 47.

Conclusion

After having gone through the Ignatian primary sources, we can conclude that the theme ‘spiritual discernment’ was indeed highly relevant and played a significant role in the life, writings and mission of Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus. We would also notice that Ignatius greatly desired that discernment of spirits (individual and communal) should be the guiding force of the members of the Society of Jesus. Hence, in all his writings, Ignatius strongly proposed to his companions that they give prime importance to the discernment in their Jesuit life and mission. In the ensuing chapter, let us look into the impact of spiritual discernment on the life of the First Jesuits with a special focus on their practice of Icd as they went about collaborating with the Trinitarian God and the universal Church in the construction of God’s kingdom.

Chapter 2

Communal Discernment and the First Jesuits

Introduction

The Society of Jesus came into existence by the internal force of the Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*.⁸⁰ It is of course through the instrumentality of the *Exercises*, Ignatius “won and trained the first followers with whom he founded the Society of Jesus”.⁸¹ The book of the *Spiritual Exercises* contains Ignatius' method for individual discernment of God's will (SpEx 6, 8, 313-336) whereas the method for communal discernment which Ignatius and his First Companions fashioned is found in a document known as “The Deliberation of the First Fathers of 1539” (*Deliberatio primorum Patrum*).⁸² The method of communal discernment to find God's will was developed and fruitfully put it into practice by Ignatius and his companions.

La vida naciente de la Compañía de Jesús, fue aprobada por el Romano Pontífice poco tiempo después de la ‘Deliberación’ de 1539, y confirmada por la Bula de Paulo III. Había surgido esa vida del alma de los Ejercicios, y se había establecido en la Iglesia como fruto de un Discernimiento comunitario⁸³

In this chapter, let us look into the practice of communal discernment by the First Jesuits and its impact on their life and mission.

⁸⁰ GC 31, D 1, 2.

⁸¹ Ganss, E.G., *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, GSP, Anand 1995, 8.

⁸² “*Deliberatio primorum Patrum*” (1539) is found in *M Cons* I, 1-7.

⁸³ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”, 216.

2.1 Ignatius' Longing for Companionship

It is significant to note that Ignatius had begun his pilgrimage (1521) vehemently insisting that he do it without human companionship because of his staunch desire to have God alone as his refuge. [Au 13, 35, 73]. However Ignatius returned to Barcelona from Jerusalem in the year 1524 with a threefold longing; “to help souls, to study and to gather some companions”. Ignatius gradually became convinced of the fact that he could be of help to others that had remained a top priority since his conversion [Au 26, 45, 50] and that he could accomplish great things for God with the help of some companions. Ignatius couldn't succeed in his first attempt to gather companions during his stay in Barcelona (1525) and the following year in Alcalá (1526). His First Companions Calixto, Arteaga Cáceres whom Ignatius encountered in Barcelona and Jean Reynalde in Alcalá failed to respond to him positively [Au 56-70] and they went on their own way [Au 80]. However Ignatius continued to persevere in his desire and toiled intensely to gather companions from the time he arrived in Paris on 2nd of February, 1528 [Au 71, 82, 84, and 85].

2.2 Gathering of Companions by Means of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Conversations

During his stay in Barcelona as well as in Alcalá, Ignatius engaged himself vigorously in helping souls by way of spiritual conversations and teaching catechism. While being imprisoned, as the *Autobiography* points out, Ignatius began to give the *Spiritual Exercises* to those who visited him [Au 60], although the method of giving the *Spiritual Exercises* was not well developed. Ignatius continued to give the *Exercises* even while studying at Salamanca. However Ignatius was prohibited to impart spiritual teaching to people as he had not done his philosophical and theological studies [Au 60, 65, 66]. Hence in order to pursue his further studies, Ignatius decided to move to Paris [Au 70-71]. Ignatius always longed to talk about his God experience to people. Years later, Ignatius wrote about it to John III, the king of Portugal: “In Spain, one was wondering as not having done studies, I was able to strike a spiritual conversation such a long duration”.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Letter to John III, King of Portugal, Rome 15 March, 1545 (MI Epp 1, 296-298)

In Paris, Ignatius through the instrumentality of spiritual conversations⁸⁵ succeeded in gathering his First Companions [Au 71, 82, 85]. “The *Autobiography* narrates the evolving power of grace which moulded Ignatius into a man who opened himself to the needs of others. This simple reality, to help others, spurred Ignatius to study and training, to the gathering of companions, and, eventually, to the founding of the Society”⁸⁶. Ignatius succeeded in gathering 9 companions⁸⁷ namely Pedro Fabro, Francisco Javier, Diego Lainez, Alphonso Salmerón, Simon Rodriguez and Nicolás Bobadilla, who formed the nucleus of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius had been their “master” teaching them and leading them through the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*⁸⁸ [Au 82]. The *Spiritual Exercises* were “para cada uno de ellos y para todo el grupo, el método para la amistad que los llevaría a Cristo; en Él se fundamentada el sentido y el sentir del grupo; en Él se hacía fuerte su fragilidad”.⁸⁹

2.3 The First Jesuits and their Practice of Communal Discernment

At the outset, it is worth mentioning of what Father Kolvenbach highlights in his document⁹⁰ on ‘Apostolic discernment in common’.

Antes de la fundación de la Compañía y en el momento mismo de decidir sobre la fundación, los primeros Padres buscaron juntos la voluntad de Dios, a través de un proceso que aplicaba las indicaciones dadas en los Ejercicios sobre la elección. Se trata de la “*deliberación de los primeros Padres*” de 1539, precedida de los discernimientos hechos en común ya antes, en Montmartre y en Vicenza⁹¹

Generally when one speaks of the Icd, the normal tendency is it to highlight mainly about the ‘Deliberation of the First Fathers of 1539’ forgetting about the practice of communal discernment by the First Jesuits prior to the deliberation of

⁸⁵ See García de Castro, J., “Los primeros de París. Amistad, carisma y pauta”, *Man* 78, (2006), 263.

⁸⁶ GC34, D 1, *United with Christ on Mission*, 6.

⁸⁷ The group had members from different nations. Ignatius of Loyola, Francisco Javier, Diego Laínez, Alphonso Salmerón and Nicolás Bobadilla (Spain); Simão Rodrigues (Portugal); Paschase Broët and Jean Codure (France); Pierre Favre and Claude Jay (Savoy).

⁸⁸ Cf. Osuna, J, *Amigos en el Señor. Unidos para la dispersión*, M-ST, Bilbao-Santander 1998, 78-89.

⁸⁹ García de Castro, J., “Los primeros de París. Amistad, carisma y pauta”, 268.

⁹⁰ The document can be found in *Acta Romana SI*, 19, Roma, (1987) in Spanish, English and French.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 707. (Emphasis is mine)

1539. Various studies undertaken on the deliberation of the first Jesuit describe the significance of the meetings and consultations of, Paris, Venice, Rome, and Vicenza because the companions had observed already part of the method they employed in 1539⁹².

Desde la etapa parisina, y camino de Roma, la futura Compañía va teniendo su etapa de convivencia, muy constantemente discernida entre los compañeros. Antes de que pudieran referirse a ninguna otra postura de compromiso en común fuera de la honda experiencia de los votos Montmartre, sin duda practicaron el discernimiento en común aún sin tener todavía un claro lazo vinculante⁹³

The First Jesuits practiced the communal discernment on four different occasions prior to the decisive deliberation 1539⁹⁴ Let us briefly look into each of them.

2.3.1 1534, Monmartre, Paris

We do not have much information about the deliberations of the First Companions held to discern about the future of the group during their stay in Paris. Simon Rodrigues, one of the First Companions, has left us the chronicle of the meetings and discussions of the First Jesuits held for many weeks in one of their rooms during the free hours of their university studies⁹⁵. The fruit of their informal deliberations was that on 15th of August, 1534⁹⁶, in the Eucharist presided by Peter Faber, the First Jesuits made a vow to spend their lives in service either in Jerusalem or if that doesn't come true, go to Rome and dispose themselves to the Pope, Christ's vicar on earth, so that the pope could send them on mission for the greater glory of God and for the service of God's people [Au 85].

⁹² Cf. Dumeige, G., "Communal discernment of spirits and the Ignatian method of deliberation in a General Congregation", *The Way Supplement*, 20(1973), 58, (see foot note9).

⁹³ Arroyo, J., "La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento", 214.

⁹⁴ Palmés C., *Del discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, 24-29.

⁹⁵ Cf. Osuna, J., *Amigos en el Señor*, 83.

⁹⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the vows of Montmartre, see Lécivain, P., "Montmartre", *DEI*, 1287-1291; Kolvenbach, P.- H., "En el 450 aniversario de los votos de Montmartre", *Selección de escritos* (1983-1990), Provincia de España CJ, Madrid 1992, 33-36.

2.3.2 1537, Venice

At the completion of the university studies in Paris, the nine First Companions arrived in Venice on January 8, 1537. Ignatius who was in Loyola⁹⁷ joined them soon. Since almost 6 months were left to embark upon their journey towards Jerusalem, they decided to undertake two things after a group deliberation: 1. To divide themselves into two groups of five members each to take care of the sick in the hospitals 2. To get the “blessings and permission” of the Pope to make their pilgrimage to the holy land. So on March, 16, 1537, the nine companions proceeded towards Rome without Ignatius as he opted to stay back in Venice⁹⁸. After a favourable encounter with Pope Paul III, all nine companions returned back to Venice in May, 1537 and where five of the companions were ordained to the priesthood on June 24, 1537 [Au 93]. On hearing the news that there was no possibility of their travel to the Holy Land because the ships had cancelled the voyage to Jerusalem for the first time in 38 years, the First Companions “de nuevo se ven precisados a reunirse para deliberar. ¿Cómo leer este "signo de los tiempos"? ¿Qué querrá el Señor indicarles con este fracaso? Las conclusiones son dos: esperar un año más y, si en este tiempo no había pasaje, ir a Roma [Au 94] y prepararse para sus Primeras Misas. La demora no les hace dudar todavía de lo que consideran una clara voluntad de Dios, la ida a Jerusalén”⁹⁹.

2.3.3 1537, Vincenza

The First Companions now as ‘pilgrim priests’ nurtured great zeal to sail to the Holy Land hoping to celebrate their first Mass over there. As their dream did not come true as no ship dared to sail to the east due to the rumour of imminent war with the Turks. The most significant fourth deliberation of the First Jesuits was held in Vincenza. After engaging in communal deliberation, the companions agreed on the following: 1. No longer to wait to celebrate their First Mass (except Ignatius) 2. To disperse themselves to various universities of different Italian cities to invite

⁹⁷ In 1535, on the recommendation and the insistence of his companions, Ignatius had returned to Loyola to recuperate from his ill health

⁹⁸ The relationship of Ignatius with both Doctor Ortiz [Au 77-78] and Cardinal Caraffa [Au 92] who were in Rome was not cordial. Hence Ignatius preferred to remain in Venice itself.

⁹⁹ Palmés C., *Del discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, 26.

candidates to join them and also to check the spread of Lutheranism 3. To call themselves as members of the ‘Company of Jesus’ [Au 94 -96]¹⁰⁰.

2.4 Decisive Deliberation of 1539¹⁰¹

The Deliberation of the First Jesuits in the year 1539 played a pivotal role in the founding of the Society of Jesus. Joseph Conwell brings out the significance of this document in the formation of the Society of Jesus.

La expresión "deliberación de los primeros compañeros" se refiere a un hecho y a un documento en latín, que narra sucintamente ese hecho (MCo I, 1-deliberaciones 1539 7). El documento se titula *Deliberatio primorumopatrum* (LI), y es el documento más antiguo entre los que se consideran como antecedentes de las *Constituciones* de la CJ, y fundamento de todos ellos. El hecho que describe es el proceso de discernimiento a través del cual Ignacio de Loyola y sus compañeros peregrinos decidieron fundar la CJ.¹⁰²

The document on the deliberation of 1539 is one of the original sources of inspiration of the Jesuit Charism.

2.4.1 What Provoked the Deliberation?

After pronouncing the vows at Montmartre in 1534, Ignatius and his companions unanimously made a decision to “go to Venice and to Jerusalem, and spend their lives for the good of souls, and if they were not given permission to remain in Jerusalem, then return to Rome and present themselves to the Vicar of Christ, so that he could make use of them wherever he thought it would be more for the glory of God and the Good of souls.”[Au 85]. As their staunch desire of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem did not come true, as per their decision made in Paris the First Jesuits

¹⁰⁰ Lainez, Epp. FN I, 120.

¹⁰¹ I have used here the text of Deliberation 1539 from the following book; Pierre J., Dullard M., *The Inspirational Sources of Jesuit Charism*, GSP, Anand 2003, 15-28. For a deeper understanding see, Conwell, J., “Deliberaciones 1539”, *DEI*, 549-553; Schurhammer, G., *Francisco Javier. Su vida y su tiempo, I*, Mensajero, Bilbao 1992, 589-606; Osuna, J., *Amigos en el Señor*, 142-159; Salvat, I., *Servir en Misión Universal*, M-ST, Bilbao- Santander 2002, 77-84; Toner J.J., “The deliberation that started the Jesuits”, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 6(1974), 179-212; Futrell, J. C., “*Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, (1970), 47-88.; González Hernández, L., “La deliberación de los primeros compañeros”, *Man* 61 (1989), 231-248.

¹⁰² Conwell, J., “Deliberación 1539” *DEI*, 549.

proceeded to Roma to present themselves to the Pope¹⁰³. When the First Companions presented themselves to the Vicar of Christ for mission of the Lord Jesus Christ in November 1538, then Pope Paul III approved of their decision and allowed them to engage in apostolic work in Rome¹⁰⁴. There was a lot demand for the service of the First Jesuits from the bishops and various emperors.

This is the way that events affected the little group: pressures were brought to bear upon the Pope. Charles V wanted them to go to the Spanish Indies, John III wanted them in the Portuguese Indies, the bishops and princes of northern Italy, who had witnessed the group's behavior in their first apostolate, wanted them to return to them. It was evident that the group was about to split apart¹⁰⁵

In fact, the sending of Broët and Codure on mission to Siena by Pope Paul III provoked the convocation of the 'Deliberation of the First Jesuits' to figure out the future of the group in 1539.¹⁰⁶

2.4.2 Attitudes Cultivated for the Deliberation

The First Jesuits through the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* i.e. by means of prayer, examine of conscience, meditation and contemplation had acquired the right desire, intention and indifference that are so fundamental to know and experience God's will.

- 1) Cada uno debería prepararse interiormente, y orar y hacer penitencia, de tal forma que tuviese confianza que encontraría paz y gozo en el Espíritu Santo [Ej 5.180], intentando en cuanto esté de su mano inclinarse más a obedecer que a mandar, siendo igual gloria de Dios (d. [Ej 16.157.179.189]).
- 2) Que ninguno tratase la cosa con otro, para evitar ser convencido por argumentos humanos, buscando únicamente la respuesta a través de la oración [Ej 15]
- 3) Cada uno debería considerarse ajeno y no afectado por el resultado, para poder así dar su opinión libremente sobre lo que sería de más servicio de Dios y más eficaz para conservar la unión entre los compañeros [Ej 185].¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ González, L., "La Deliberación de los primeros Compañeros", *Man* 62 (1989), 232.

¹⁰⁴ Conwell, F. J., *Impelling Spirit*, Loyola press, San Francisco 1997, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Ravier, A., *Ignatius Loyola and the founding of the Society of Jesus* (Trans. by Maura, Joan and Carson), Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1987, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Salvat, I., "Misión" *DEI*, 1243.

¹⁰⁷ Conwell, J., "Deliberaciones 1539", *DEI*, 551.

However, at the time of deliberations, confronted with some difficulty to arrive at some decisions due to lack of proper disposition among them to know and experience God's will, they proposed some methods that would help them to cultivate right attitude and also a proper disposition to make the right decision.

2.4.3 The Method followed during the Deliberation

The decisive deliberation of the First Jesuits commenced towards the end of Lent on 9th of April and lasted until June 24, 1539, the feast of John the Baptist. The deliberations were held at the home of Antonio Frangipani, near the Tower of Melangolo.¹⁰⁸

Towards the end of Lent, the time was approaching when we would have to be dispersed and separated from one another. We were eagerly looking forward to this, with great expectation, in order to reach more quickly the goal we had already fixed upon and thought about. We decided to gather together for a number of days before the day of dispersal and to discuss with one another our vocation and manner of life.¹⁰⁹

The opening paragraph of the deliberation reveals the great excitement of the First Jesuits; "We were eagerly looking forward to this, with great expectation, in order to reach more quickly the goal we had already fixed upon and thought about".¹¹⁰ In times of their struggle to arrive at a conclusion due to lack of proper disposition to find God's will. The following three methods were proposed to possess or cultivate a required attitude to make the right decision.

"All of us to withdraw to some hermitage and to remain there for thirty or forty days, spending all our time in meditation, fasting and penance, of that God might respond to our desires"¹¹¹

"Whether three or four, in the sake of all, should undertake this for the same purpose".¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ravier, A., *Ignatius Loyola and the founding of the Society of Jesus*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ Deliberation 1539, 1.

¹¹⁰ Deliberation 1539, 1.

¹¹¹ Deliberation 1539, 5. We could also see that the First Companions applying to the context of group discernment what Ignatius recommends to the exercitant that "he or she withdraws from all friends and acquaintances, and from all earthly concerns" [SpEx 20] in order to grow in the intimacy with God, the creator.

¹¹² Deliberation 1539, 5.

“Or whether although no one would go to a hermitage, all remaining in the city we should devote ourselves for half a day to this one affair of ours, so that we might give a larger and more ample place to meditation, reflection and prayer, spending the rest of the day in our usual works of preaching and hearing confessions”.¹¹³

The First Jesuits were very much conscious of the necessity of greater solitude, silence, personal prayer, spiritual freedom and indifference in order to discern and deliberate the will of God for the group.

“Los hombres del grupo eran apasionados en sus deseos y perspectivas, con individualidades radicalmente diferentes: Ignacio y Javier eran vascos, Laínez, Salmerón y Bobadilla castellanos, Rodríguez portugués, Fabro y Jayo saboyanos del sur de Francia, Broët de Picardía en el norte de Francia, y Coduri de la Provenza, al sur de Francia. Persuadidos de que podían encontrar al Espíritu Santo en la oración y que el Espíritu Santo les ayudaría a encontrar la voluntad de Dios, decidieron entregarse a la oración, a la mortificación y a la reflexión, y a poner toda su esperanza en Dios.”¹¹⁴

All were of the conviction that if they cultivated proper disposition God will graciously manifest his will to them. To attain these they practiced prayer, meditation, penance and the Eucharist.¹¹⁵ “El método que siguieron no es el de los debates parlamentarios, sino el aprendido en los *Ejercicios Espirituales* [Ej 178-183]”¹¹⁶ Given their earlier experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the First Companions very well knew the need of right disposition to discern the will of God.

2.4.4 The Process of the Deliberation

The First Jesuits began the process of deliberations with a firm desire and with a right disposition to know God’s will. Within a few days, however, they were confronted with a plurality of opinions.

After doing this for several days and as some of us were French, Spanish, Savoyards or Portuguese we all were different views and opinions concerning our state of life. While there was one mind and purpose common to all of us, namely, to seek the gracious and perfect will of God according to the scope of our vocation, nevertheless there was a plurality of views

¹¹³ Deliberation 1539, 5.

¹¹⁴ Conwell, J., “Deliberaciones 1539”, 550.

¹¹⁵ Deliberation 1539, 5.

¹¹⁶ Conwell, J., “Deliberaciones 1539”, 551.

concerning the more effective and more successful mean both for ourselves and or our fellowmen.¹¹⁷

The document of Deliberation of 1539 “contains the minutes of the discernment process that leads Ignatius of Loyola and his companions to found the Society of Jesus”.¹¹⁸ This vital document consists of just 9 paragraphs. It is the minutes of their discerning process concerning two questions-Companionship and the vow of obedience.

The First Question: Should the companions stay together or Not?

Now that we had offered and dedicated ourselves and our lives to Christ Our Lord and to his true and legitimate vicar on earth, so that he might dispose of us and send us wherever he might judge we could carry greater fruit, whether to the Turks or to the indies, or to the heretics or among any of the faithful or among the pagans-would it be more expedient for us to be so joined and bound together in one body that no cleavage in the body that no, cleavage in the body no matter how severe, could separate us? Or, on the contrary, would this be inexpedient?¹¹⁹

The Second Question: Should the companions profess obedience to someone in the group?

We now asked whether it would be expedient to pronounce a third (vow) namely, to obey one of us (obediendialicui ex nobis), in order that we might carry out in all things the will of Our Lord God more sincerely and with greater praise and merit, and, at the same time carry out the will and command of His Holiness to whom we had most willingly offered our all: will, understanding, strength and the like.¹²⁰

2.4.5 The Outcome of the Deliberation

The First Companions arrived at a crucial decision that as one body they would profess a vow of obedience to the Pope bearing in mind the universal mission of the Church.

Después de examinar con detalle las razones más importantes en pro y en contra, llegaron finalmente con la ayuda de Dios a una conclusión unánime: que era mejor y más necesario prestar obediencia a uno del grupo para: 1) lograr mejor y con más exactitud el deseo primario de cumplir la divina voluntad en todas las cosas; 2) para preservar la Compañía con más

¹¹⁷ Deliberation 1539, 1

¹¹⁸ Conwell, F. J., *Impelling Spirit*, 12.

¹¹⁹ Deliberation 1539, 3.

¹²⁰ Deliberation 1539, 4.

seguridad; y 3) para cuidar debidamente de los asuntos espirituales y temporales, que pudieran surgir (L1, 8). Para servir al Papa era necesario prestar obediencia a uno del grupo.¹²¹

The First Companions also decided to obey one of them and thus elected Ignatius to lead the group as the first general of the Society of Jesus and who would send them on mission as per the wish of the Pope. The document¹²² ‘The deliberation of the First Jesuits of 1539’ is considered today to be “a model which can serve as a guide to every authentic process of community discernment or deliberation”.¹²³

2.5 Impact of Communal Discernment on the Life and Mission the First Jesuits¹²⁴

2.5.1 Servants of the Universal Mission of Christ and the Church

On 19 of March, 1539, Cardinal Carafa signed a letter communicating to Broët the order of Paul III to go on a mission to Siena to collaborate in the reform of a monastery over there as we have seen that this was the first mission received by the order of Pope Paul III. As we have noted that decision of Ignatius and his First Companions to offer themselves to the Pope for the service of the universal mission of Christ and the Church was indeed the outcome of their communal discernment and that decision was finally ratified by the Triune God in the vision of La Storta.

2.5.1.1 Ignatius’ Vision of La Storta

Toward the end of October, 1537, Ignatius decided to travel to Rome accompanied by Faber and Lainez. When they were a few miles away from Rome, in a small Chapel at La Storta, Ignatius had a visitation from God where he was placed with

¹²¹ Conwell, J., “Deliberaciones 1539”, 552.

¹²² Some Ignatian scholars say that all the ten companions took part in drafting the document. However, the final redaction could be the work of John Coduri. For example “Dalmases sigue la opinión de Schurhammer, quien “tras una cuidadosa investigación del manuscrito”, mantiene que lo escribió Antonio Estrada, que vivía con los compañeros por esas fechas”. Conwell, J., “Deliberaciones 1539”, *DEI*, 549. See Schurhammer, G., *Francisco Javier. Su vida y su tiempo*, 590.

¹²³ Dumeige, G., “Communal discernment of spirits and the Ignatian method of deliberation in a general congregation”, 57.

¹²⁴ Cf. Palmés C., *Del discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, 37-42.

Jesus carrying the Cross and God, the Father said to Jesus: “I desire you take this man for your servant”. Jesus then turned to Ignatius and said “It is my will that you serve Us” [the Trinity]. At La Storta, Ignatius received a call to be at the service of Christ’s universal mission in a more definitive manner and labour for the greater glory of God. Thus the vision of La Storta indeed marked the confirmation of the following choices Ignatius made all along his life journey:

- to give himself totally, with the Lord, to the service of the Trinity
- to be with the Lord who was humiliated and suffering
- to live a particular life style of poverty
- to devote himself to service by ‘helping souls’
- to gather companions for the same purpose
- the companions would call themselves the "company of Jesus"¹²⁵

The following chart¹²⁶ traces the gradual growth in Ignatius’ personal knowledge of God as well as his understanding of mission.

1.	Place of Experience	Loyola	Cardoner	La Storta
2.	Image of God	King	Center of creation	Trinity
3.	Self -Realization	Soldier	Pilgrim	Mystic
4.	Personal spirituality	Ascetic	Beggar traveler	Missionary
5.	Mission strategies	Personal prayer and mortification	Giving <i>Spiritual Exercises</i>	Any work assigned by the Roman Pontiff

¹²⁵ Coleman, G., *Walking with Inigo*, 192-193.

¹²⁶ I came across this chart while participating in a course on ‘Ignatian Spirituality’. I regret my inability to acknowledge its source.

6.	Ultimate vision	Self-perfection	To help souls	All for the greater glory of God (AMDG)
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2.5.1.2 Significance of La Storta vision for Ignatius' Companions

Let us now focus on Ignatius' First Companions in whom he successfully instilled the same vigor and commitment for the service of Universal Mission of Christ and the Church¹²⁷. Some historical conclusions prior to the *Deliberatio primorum Patrum* reveals the following:

(1) Ignatius and the “nine friends in our Lord” were a close-knit group who had one common goal in life; (2) Ignatius truly founded the “nine friends” in the evangelical life by way of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatius himself; (3) the continuum of the mystical life of Ignatius ostensibly sprang, at least in intensity, from the illumination beside the Cardoner, and was confirmed by the vision at La Storta pertaining to an apostolic service of the companions who were placed “at the side of Christ.”¹²⁸

In his exhortations to the Jesuits in Cologne in March 1567, Jerome Nadal speaks about his cherished account and interpretation of the La Storta grace:

We ought to have Christ before our eyes as our Leader. For this was shown to our father Ignatius when he was on his way to Rome: he saw God placing him definitively in the service of Christ carrying the cross and saying to him: ‘I shall be with you’, etc. *The very same is our vocation also, viz., to serve Christ who still bearing his cross – not in himself, but in his Church, for Christ makes his very own the sufferings and persecutions of the Church.*¹²⁹

Nadal points out clearly that in the person of Ignatius, all his companions too have been bestowed the same grace. It signifies that “all Jesuits have been given by God the Father to Christ bearing his cross as is servants and companions – all Jesuits have been ‘placed with the Son’”.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ For an elaborate study of the missionary activities of the First Jesuits, see O’Malley, J. W., *The First Jesuits*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge - Mss 1993; Osuna, J., *Amigos en el Señor*; Salvat, I., *Servir en misión universal*, M-ST, Bilbao-Santander 2002.

¹²⁸ Orsy, L., “Toward a theological evaluation of communal discernment”, (Dossier ‘Deliberation’ C, Essays on discernment, 2nd ed), CIS, Rome (1981), 140-141 (Foot note 2)

¹²⁹ MHSI, *Mon. Nadal V*, 789.(Emphasis is mine)

¹³⁰ Alphonso, H., *Placed with Christ the Son*, GSP, Anand 1993, 135.

2.5.2 Friends in the Lord; ‘Koinonia’

The vows pronounced at Montmartre on 15th of August, 1534 which they renewed on the same date the subsequent years 1535 and 1536 assured the First Jesuits the greater conservation and the growth of the communion among them.¹³¹ In his article on the First Jesuits of Paris, José García de Castro says:

La experiencia compartida en la capilla de los mártires (San Dionisio, Rústico y Eleuterio) a las afueras de París cristaliza y el deseo que había ido emergiendo en cada uno de ellos desde hacía varios meses. En Montmartre se explicitan varios elementos germinales presentes en el deseo de este grupo que, todavía sin saberlo, pasarán a formar parte del núcleo carismática de la futura compañía de Jesús: Compañeros *de Jesús*, centro y sentido del grupo en una triple dimensión: en su humanidad – Jerusalén; en el Sacramento – Eucaristía y en su eclesialidad por su ofrecimiento a su Vicario, el Romano Pontífice; además la pobreza y la gratitud, la itinerancia apostólica y a “ayuda a las ánimas” como horizonte de sentido de todo ministerio que había comenzado en Ignacio tempranamente [Au 11.29.45]. Así mismo, en Montmartre empieza a perfilarse un estilo original de vivir juntos (koinonia) integrando en Cristo la tensión resultante de una inherente vocación a la “dispersión apostólica” construida desde una “vinculación mística”¹³²

All of the companions were not living together in Paris. However they never failed to maintain mutual communication. From time to time, the First Jesuits used to come together for a common meal as well as to resolve common matters and also to find an amicable solution for their petty problems of daily living. Thus since the pronouncement of their vows at Montmartre, the First Jesuits were growing courageously, first and foremost, in their fellowship and togetherness in the Lord¹³³

Aunque la Compañía no nació en Montmartre, el voto allí pronunciado “delante del Cuerpo de Cristo” crea entre los primeros compañeros una “Koinonia”, “una participación de bienes y de vida, con la Eucaristía como centro: el sacrificio y el sacramento de la Obra de Jesús, que amó a los suyos hasta el fin” (GC 32, D 2, 18)¹³⁴

¹³¹ Osuna, J., *Amigos en el Señor*, 91.

¹³² García de Castro, J., “Los primeros de París. Amistad, carisma y pauta”, 269-270.

¹³³ José García de Castro clearly points that when Ignatius gave the *Spiritual Exercises* to the First Jesuits i.e. to Faber (January- February 1534); to Lainez and Salmeron (May 1534); to Simon Rodriguez and Bobadilla (July 1536); to Xavier (September 1534); Faber in turn gave the Exercises to Jay (November 1534) and to Codure and Broët (1536) they were not following Ignatius but the Lord Jesus certainly imbibing the method and spirit of Ignatius to labour for the universal mission of Christ as friends in the Lord. See García de Castro, J., “Los primeros de París”, 269.

¹³⁴ Kolvenbach, P.- H., “En el 450 aniversario de los votos de Montmartre”, 35

Secondly, in their commitment to serve Christ and his Church by practicing the communal discernment.

El voto de Montmartre se renovará incesantemente mediante el discernimiento apostólico, lejos de cualquier radicalización en las opciones apostólicas por muy valiosas que en sí sean; lejos también de toda rigidez en los varios campos en los que la Iglesia está en plena búsqueda de la voluntad de su Señor, lejos, por último, de la tentación de procurarse seguridad en el inmovilismo del miedo, en lugar de atreverse a mirar cara a cara el porvenir de la Iglesia y de la humanidad.¹³⁵

When the companions were reunited with Ignatius in Venice, Ignatius called the group as ‘friends in the Lord’ because all ten companions were united in Christ possessing union of minds and hearts¹³⁶ more specially after the decisive deliberation of 1539.

En esta primigenia ‘Deliberación de 1539 se comenzó por afirmar el germen, ya sembrado en tierra con lluvia de cariño de entrega, y repetidamente consagrado en varios ocasiones desde Montmartre: la obediencia al Romano Pontífice, “nuestro principio principal fundamento”, fue lo que dio consistencia de un solo cuerpo.¹³⁷

2.5.3 Importance Given to Consultation and Dialogue

Ignatius insisted that his companions give prime importance to group consultation and mutual dialogue in their life and mission. In a letter sent to Father Araoz, Ignatius writes:

“De una cosa todavía os diré: que, como yo uso el consultar y conferir con algunos de cada una de las cosas que he de ordinar que algo importen., así querría que lo hiciédeses vos..., acordándonos de aquel espíritu de benignidad y caridad, que en las bullas de la institución de nuestra Compañía el Vicario de Christo nuestro señor nos encomienda”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Ibid. 34.

¹³⁶ In a letter of July, 1537 written to Juan Verdolay, Ignatius used the term ‘Friends in the Lord’ while describing about the journey of his companions from Paris to Venice. Apparently the only time he used it. Cf. Coleman, G, *Walking with Inigo*, 181. “In the Middle of January, nine of my friends in the Lord arrived here [Venice] from Paris; they all have MA degrees and are quite well versed in theology. Four of them are Spaniards, two French, two from Savoy and one from Portugal. They had cope with many threats, from wars, long journeys on foot and the worst of the winter”. See MI Epp I, 118-122.

¹³⁷ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús,” 215.

¹³⁸ MHSI, MI 8, 225.

Ignatius approved of the suggestion made by Polanco: “the greater a particular difficulty, the more consultation should be sought – perhaps of all those that live in the same house”.¹³⁹ The Jesuit *Constitutions* lay emphasis on the scope of official consultations.

2.5.4 Nurturing Communion and Discernment through Correspondence

In a letter written to Peter Faber,¹⁴⁰ Ignatius had highlighted the importance of communication and sharing of news among the Jesuits working in different parts of the world. Ignatius had requested his companions to make it a point to write a *principal letter* describing above all about their spiritual activities once in two weeks that could be shown to the Church authorities as well other members of the Society. In this letter, Ignatius complained of the neglect of this practice by his companions and therefore went on to admonish them.

The *Constitutions* say that the regular correspondence would enhance greater consolation and mutual edification [Co 673]. The custom of writing annual letters by the Jesuit Superior to Provincial and Provincial in turn to General certainly facilitates communal deliberation and also helps the General and the Provincials in their spiritual government of the Society.

2.5.5 Communal Discernment through General Congregation

The First Jesuits continued to seek and find the will of God all through their life and mission. This we notice particularly in the procedures for a GC established by the Jesuit *Constitutions* [Co 711 -715]. Since the time of the promulgation of the first draft of the *Formula of the Institute* in 1539 which was presented to the approval of Pope Paul III, the First Companions foresaw the need of having a collective body which would elect the Superior General as well as make norms for the future life and mission of the Society of Jesus through communal discernment process involving all

¹³⁹ MI, ser. III, v. 1, 128 s. This reference is taken from the document of Father Kolvenbach, *Acta Romana SI* 19, Roma, (1986), 728.

¹⁴⁰ Letter to Peter Faber, 10 December 1542 (Epp. 1,236-238). Faber was one of the First Jesuits to initiate Jesuit apostolic work outside Rome once the Society of Jesus came into existence in 1541. When Ignatius wrote this letter, Faber was in the court of Charles V in Germany at the request of Pope Paul III.

the Jesuits spread all over the globe.¹⁴¹ The GC 31 in the light of the *Deliberatio primorum Patrum*, reiterated the following:

Therefore, after many deliberations in which they tried to distinguish between various spiritual inspirations and weigh the reasons for each side carefully, these first Fathers decided that they should not break up “a society united in God,” but rather gradually strengthen it and stabilize it by making themselves into a unified body. Indeed they judged it more expedient to give their obedience to one of their number that they might more successfully and perfectly carry out their first desire of fulfilling the divine will in all things. Thus also the Society would be more securely preserved¹⁴²

Conclusion

The *Spiritual Exercises* and *Deliberatio primorum Patrum*, widely known as the founding documents, are the source and inspiration of the charism of the Society of Jesus. On the one hand, the rules for the discernment of spirits that we come across in the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* (SpEx313-336) aid the individual discernment process. These rules are the outcome of the deep spiritual experience of Ignatius. On the other hand, the document *Deliberatio primorum Patrum* which contains the practice of communal discernment by the First Jesuits offers a significant method for the communal discernment. This method emerged from a fruitful practice of the communal discernment by the First Jesuits. Undoubtedly, as it is brought out in this chapter, the practice of communal discernment by the first Jesuit companions on various occasions more particularly the crucial deliberation of 1539 has had a vital influence on the Church as well as on the life and mission of the Jesuits since its inception till date which we would discuss in the next chapter in the light of the practice of Icd during General Congregations 31-35.

¹⁴¹ Martínez de la Escalera, J., “Congregaciones” *DEI*, 397.

¹⁴² GC 31, D 1, 3.

Chapter 3

Ignatian Communal Discernment and the Jesuits Today

Introduction

On 21st February 2008, in his speech to the General Congregation 35, Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged the service rendered by the Jesuits to the universal mission of the Church:

“I very much hope, therefore, that the entire Society of Jesus, *thanks to the results of your Congregation*, will be able to live with a renewed drive and fervor the mission for which the Spirit brought it about and has kept it for more than four centuries and a half with an extraordinary abundance of apostolic fruit”¹⁴³.

Thanks indeed to the outcome of the last 35 GCs held so far since the foundation of the Society of Jesus that have aided the Jesuits to remain loyal to the universal mission of the Trinitarian God and the Church. One of the factors which has greatly enabled the Jesuits to be at the service of God’s kingdom as well as the universal mission of the Church is undoubtedly the Icd practiced successfully in the Jesuit GCs.

In this chapter, I wish to point out in the light of the post- Vatican II GCs 31-35 that the practice of Icd is nurturing the Jesuit life and mission today. However, GCs 31-35 and the Jesuit Generals,¹⁴⁴ especially Fr Pedro Arrupe, have strongly felt that the Jesuits today need to show greater faithfulness to the practice of Icd to be more fruitful in their life and mission as well as to implement the outcome of the

¹⁴³ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 822. (Emphasis is mine)

¹⁴⁴ See Arrupe, P., “Sobre el discernimiento espiritual comunitario (25.12.71)”, *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 247-261 (It was this letter through which Fr Pedro Arrupe recommended strongly the practice of “communitarian discernment” in more explicit terms for the first time); Kolvenbach, P.- H., “Sobre el discernimiento apostólico en común”, *ARSI*, 19, Roma, (1987), 700-720; Nicolas, A., “Discernimiento apostólico en común”, *CIS* XL (2009), 9-21.

GCs 31-35 by undergoing a radical renewal of life and attitudinal change both at a personal as well as communitarian level and thus be effective collaborators of Trinitarian God to usher in God's Kingdom on earth.

3.1 Process of Icd before the Commencement of a General Congregation (GC)¹⁴⁵

3.1.1 Procurator's Congregation (PC)

It is the reunion of the Procurators elected by the Provincials Congregations, with Father General, the General Assistants, and the Regional Assistants. It has its origin in the GC II (1565). The first PC was held in 1568. The last PC before the suppression (1773) was organized in 1749. The first PC after the restoration was convoked in 1832. Recently the 70th Congregation of Procurators took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 9th of July, 2012

The main task of the PC is to survey the status of the Society of Jesus by resorting to Icd. The PC will deliberate on whether or not to convoke a GC. It will also be an important occasion for discussion and consultation on "the overall state and affairs of the Society,

The GC 32 (1974-1975) declared that the PC would have present a survey of the status of the Society of Jesus and if it is necessary, suspend some decrees of the previous GC until the next GC is convoked.

3.1.2 Provincials Congregation

The GC 31 constituted the Congregation of Provincials. It is a meeting of all the Jesuit Provincials with the Superior General, Assistant Generals, General Council and all the Regional Assistants. The PC and the Congregation of Provincials have to organized alternatively once in 3 years after a GC is concluded. In the congregation of Provincials too through the Icd process, the delegates discern on whether or not to

¹⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion see Echarte, I., "Congregaciones", *DHCJ I*, IHSI – UPComillas, Roma – Madrid 2001, 907-914; Martínez de la Escalera, J., "Congregaciones" *DEI*, 397-399.

convoke a GC and also make an overall survey the state of affairs of the Society of Jesus and its governance. The first and the last Congregation of Provincials was celebrated in Loyola, Spain (20-27 September 1990). The GC 34 abolished the Congregation of Provincials and that "aproximadamente cada seis años desde la última Congregación General el Padre General convocará una reunión de todos los provinciales para tratar del estado, problemas e iniciativas de la Compañía universal, así como de la cooperación internacional y supra provincial" [NC 396].

3.1.3 Province Congregation

A GC is preceded by a Province Congregation wherein a limited number of Jesuits chosen by the members of a Province come together to discern the will of God. "La función de la Congregación Provincial, tal y como aparece en las Constituciones, es solamente electiva, esto es, elegir a los dos miembros que vayan como electores a la CG juntamente con el P. Provincial (Co 682, 684)".¹⁴⁶ On ending the election process, the members of a Province Congregation deliberate about different themes that the Province would wish to propose to Father General or to a GC.

In his letter¹⁴⁷ to all Major Superiors announcing the Convocation of the 70th Congregation of Procurators for 9 July 2012, Father Adolfo Nicolas wrote underlining the significance communal discernment during the Province Congregation:

While the consideration of *postulata* remains part of the agenda of a Province Congregation, discussions at GC 35 indicated the need for a process of wider and deeper apostolic discernment (Cf. GC 35, D 5, 2-6). Therefore, I ask that the upcoming Provincial Congregations, in addition to considering *postulata*, devote a substantial amount of time to reflection on the state of the Society, the more important opportunities and needs the Society faces today, and how the governance of the Society might address these conditions. A summary of the results of this reflection should be included in the *Acta* of the Congregation to be forwarded to me. I hope that this kind of **communal reflection and discernment** will promote a richer and more fruitful experience of the Province Congregation, enabling it to be of greater service to the universal mission of the Society.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Echarte, I., "Congregaciones", *DHCJI*, 913.

¹⁴⁷ See <http://www.sjweb.info/news/ensPDF.cfm?PubNumID=83&DownLang=1> (accessed on 19.05.2015)

¹⁴⁸ Emphasis is mine.

Province Congregations propose important matters for later consideration in a GC through the discussion, approval, and submission of *postulata*. A *postulata* “Es la propuesta que los miembros de la CJ presentan al P. General o a la CG para que dicho tema se estudie o resuelva en el seno de la CG. Han de acompañar al postulado las razones que justifican su estudio; normalmente es presentado a través de las Congregaciones Provinciales y sólo en casos especiales se pueden enviar directamente a la CG [Co 712-714]”. According to the *Formula for Province Congregations*, a *postulata* to the General should be “such that they offer him useful knowledge about those matters that should be corrected or encouraged in the province, touch on personal perfection or the help of souls, or propose to him suitable means to achieve this same goal.” (FPC 78 § 1, 2°; GC 29, D 38, 74). A Province “Congregation is also competent to discuss, under the leadership of the Provincial, questions he has proposed concerning the state of the Province” (FPC 85 §4; Cf. GC 34 D 23, 8).

3.2 The Significance of a Jesuit General Congregation

A GC has its origin in a foundational experience of the First Jesuits. The document of the ‘Deliberation of the first Fathers says:

La Congregación General está concebida, ante todo, como un acontecimiento cristiano, que sirve a la edificación de una comunidad viva mediante la comunicación extraordinaria entre cabeza y miembros de un mismo Cuerpo que «consagra» el Señor: (Haciéndose dignado el clementísimo y piadosísimo Dios de unirnos y congregamos recíprocamente ... »¹⁴⁹

To Ignatius, there are only two ways that a Jesuit can feel a part of the Society [Co 655]:

- (1) By the union of hearts and minds, maintained by a wide exchange of information—correspondence—and by reciprocal visits.
- (2) By means of the visible and tangible union of the companions in a GC

The *Constitutions* of the Society is the primary source of information about a GC with regard to its occasion, membership, place and time of gathering, and method of arriving at the major decisions. A GC should be called “for example,

¹⁴⁹ Deliberation 1539, 3.

every three or six years, more or less” [Co 678]. The *Constitutions* recommend strongly that “it does not seem good in our Lord that such a congregation should be held at definite intervals or very often; for the Superior General through the communication which he has with the whole Society and through the help he gets from those near him, can spare the Society as a whole from that work and distraction as far as possible” [Co 677]. Apostolic work always prevailed in Ignatius’s thought. By the nature of his vocation and mission, the Jesuit belongs to an apostolic body scattered almost all over the world. It is on the foundations laid down by the *Constitutions* the last 35 GCs have elaborated and modified progressively detailed formulae or procedural norms we come across in the decrees of the GCs. In the *Constitutions*, Ignatius creatively characterizes how the ordinary government must serve the whole Society.

The GC is of course the supreme authority, the highest level of power in the Society; but for Ignatius the congregation was above all a “corporal union” [Co 677], an encounter of persons. To Ignatius, the GC as a gathering of the whole Society which could help “toward uniting the distant members with their head and among themselves” [Co 655]. For this reason Ignatius preferred the term, “Congregation,” to “Chapter” not only to evade any monastic tendency in the Society but also to indicate clearly that the general congregation represents the whole Society. The GC 33 (1983) decided that each Province should elect minimum one delegate to maximum 6 depending on the size of the province. According to the *Constitutions*, all the provincials participate in a GC due to their responsibility [Co 682].

A GC is held essentially for two purposes: first, to elect a new superior general of the Society if the former one has died or has asked permission to resign; secondly, to deal with matters of prime importance in the life and mission of the Society [Co 677-681, 774, 782]. In almost four hundred and fifty years the Society has called 35 GCs, and only seven of those without an election.

A GC convoked for the purpose of electing a new general will last for about 5-6 months and in the case of a GC called to deliberate matters of greater importance

then its duration will be fixed by the Superior General [Co 691]. Father General or the Vicar General will preside over a GC [Co 694, 712].

GC plays a pivotal role in the life and mission of the Jesuits today. On the occasion of the promulgation of the entire work of GC 34 Father Kolvenbach invited the entire Society to give thanks to God for the following gifts received in and through the GC 34:

- For Spirit's gift of discernment
- For the gift of an inspiring diversity in the delegates, which enriched our common path to God.
- For the gift of union in our apostolic body, which was strongly expressed in the renewal of the *Constitutions*.
- For the gift of courage by which, through its decrees, the Society responded to all that was ambiguous or erroneous in our way of praying, working, and living in our Society.
- For the gift of energy, with which on the threshold of the third millennium the Society has affirmed and renewed its vocation of serving the mission of Christ.
- This act of giving thanks must include all those who by their prayer or work, by their abilities or availability, proved to be the hand of God at work in the general congregation.¹⁵⁰

The afore-mentioned act of thanksgiving of Father Kolvenbach lucidly highlights the relevance of a GC for the life and mission of Jesuits today. In a nutshell, a GC “is the highest authority, the ultimate governing body in the Society of Jesus. It is also the most representative instance of the Society's current understanding of itself, its life, and its mission in the context of its *Constitutions*, its history, its spirituality, and the world in which it seeks to serve the Lord”¹⁵¹. It is in the GC, Icd is practiced by the Jesuits today to discern the will of God for their life and mission. It is therefore during the audience for the delegates to GC 34, Pope John Paul II said underlining the relevance of a GC for the world, Church and the Society of Jesus:

Your general congregation certainly understands the particular importance of this present historical moment, since *it is essentially dedicated to discerning the specific contribution your Institute is called to make to the new evangelization on the brink of the third Christian millennium, as well as to updating the internal organization and legislation of the Society of*

¹⁵⁰ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 495.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* xi.

*Jesus so that it can render ever more faithful and effective service to the Church*¹⁵²

3.3 The Outcome of Icd Process during GCs 31-35

The Deliberation of the First Fathers of 1539 is a model and a guiding light for all the proceedings of a GC.

La deliberación de los primeros compañeros, que tuvo decisiva influencia en la historia y vida de la Iglesia, es todavía hoy de gran importancia como *modelo de discernimiento comunitario* para conocer la voluntad de Dios¹⁵³.

It is beneficial to go through the general proceedings namely the manner of reaching about matters other than election of a general¹⁵⁴. The members of a GC adhere to the following norms prescribed by the First Jesuits in the *Constitutions* [Co 711-715].

[Co 711]: When the business of the congregation is not the election of a general but other important matters concerning the state of the Society, the enclosure will be unnecessary, although an effort should be made to conclude whatever needs to be treated as speedily as possible. But since the light to perceive what *decisions should be taken must come down from the First and Supreme Wisdom, Masses will be said first of all and prayer offered in the place where the congregation is being held as well as throughout the Society*, for as long as the congregation continues and the matters it needs to settle are being discussed, in order to obtain grace to decide these matters as may be for the greater glory to God our Lord.

[Co 712]: Later the congregation will meet in one or several sessions. The superior general first and after him the provincials, rectors, and other persons summoned to the congregation will, in the presence of all, *propose the matters which they think should be discussed, briefly giving the reasons for their opinions; and after they have seriously pondered all this and commended it to God our Lord*, each one ought to put it in writing [A]. When he has spoken his opinion he may place his written text in the center [B], so that those who wish to see it may state what they think in the following session.

[Co713]: [A] Those who come in the place of an absent provincial will speak in the same order as he would. However, the order to be observed is that the first to speak will be the one longest professed, from whatever province, who is a provincial or comes in the place of a provincial. After him the rest from his province will speak in the order of seniority from profession or of vows as a spiritual coadjutor. Then the longest professed among the remaining provincials will speak, and with him those from his province. After these, if there are any who are not under a provincial or who were called extraordinarily, they too will speak in the order of seniority.

[Co 714]: [B] He will place his written text upon the table which will be placed in the center. The secretary will be responsible for having copies made if necessary, or each one will bring

¹⁵² Ibid. 667.

¹⁵³ Joseph Conwell, "Deliberación 1539" *DEI*, 549.

¹⁵⁴ For the manner of reaching a decision in the election of a Jesuit General, See [Co 694-710].

already prepared copies of his arguments so that they may be read by those who are to express their opinion about them.

[Co 715]: When the questions have been discussed from one side and the other during one or more sessions, if a solution in favor of one opinion does not become manifest and win agreement from all or nearly all, then four definitors ought to be chosen by majority vote from among those present and having the right to vote in the congregation. These, authorized by the rest as arbiters, will meet with the superior general as often as needed and conclude whatever matters are to be treated. *Should they not all agree, the side to which the majority inclines will prevail and the whole congregation will accept it as from the hand of God our Lord.*

The GC, therefore, “como sigue diciendo la *Fórmula del Instituto* y concretan las *Constituciones*, se convoca para estudiar asuntos particularmente importantes, como por ejemplo la elección del P. General (677), cambiar las *Constituciones*, cerrar casas o colegios (420). Se podría decir que la CG se convoca para tratar aquellos negocios que por su importancia requieran la presencia de toda la CJ, en este caso reunida en Congregación (Co 677-718; *Mon Const* 1:17, 27, 377)”¹⁵⁵.

The post-Vatican GCs 31-35 categorically state after having engaged in an Icd process that Society of Jesus today is convinced of its mission namely the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. The renewal of Jesuit life and mission has been the central focus of the post-Vatican GCs.

In recent years a renewed consciousness concerning our religious life has been felt throughout the Society. The decrees of GC 31 (8, 13–17, 19) and GC 32 (2, 4, 11) as well as the writings of Father Arrupe have developed a spiritual doctrine at once profoundly rooted in the Gospel and our tradition and yet one which responds to the challenges of our times. This renewal manifests itself especially in the new impetus given to the Spiritual Exercises and to apostolic discernment. The commitment to faith and to justice, the service to the poor, and especially the willingness to share their life, have been an invitation to the whole Society to embrace a more evangelical way of life ¹⁵⁶

The commitment of the Jesuits for the service of faith and the promotion of justice has deepened over the decades since the GC 31-35 which once again reiterated precisely and clearly that the service of faith is the aim of our mission, and the link between faith and justice integrates our ministries into one mission.¹⁵⁷ Let us

¹⁵⁵ Echarte, I., “Congregaciones”, *DHCJI*, 907.

¹⁵⁶ GC 33 D 1, 10.

¹⁵⁷ *Promotio Iustitiae* 110, 2013/1, 82-83.

briefly look at the unfolding of Jesuit life and mission which is the outcome of the process of Icd during the GC 31-35.

3.3.1 GC 31

The GC 31 was held while Vatican II was still in session. The Vatican Council undoubtedly infused new vigor and hope into the life and mission of the Church by recognizing as well as acknowledging “the failings and faults of the modern world, the council also vigorously recognized and acknowledged that world’s positive characteristics and said that the church could in many ways learn from that world and put the Church at the service of such a world”.¹⁵⁸

GC 31 had to deal with to an unprecedented two thousand *postulata* sent from all over the Society. Responding to all the concerns expressed through the *postulate*, GC 31 proclaimed its desire that the Society “take a very close look at its own nature and mission in order that, truthful to its own vocation, it can renew itself and adapt its life and its activities to the experiences of the Church and the needs of contemporary humankind.”¹⁵⁹

In his initial discourse delivered to the delegates of the GC 31 on 7 May 1965, Pope Paul VI called upon the Society of Jesus to take up a special mission against the onslaught of atheism. The Pope urged the Jesuits with these words: “We ask the Society of Jesus that is by nature called to be at the defense of the Church and the religion, that in these difficult times need to gather force to counter courageously the atheism”.¹⁶⁰ Heeding to the special request of the Pope, the GC 31 dedicated the decree number 3 to the acceptance of this mission mandate which the Vicar of Christ wanted to be undertaken by the Jesuits.

¹⁵⁸ Padberg, J. W., “The General Congregations and the world around them”, *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 37 (2006), 22.

¹⁵⁹ GC 31, D 1, 1

¹⁶⁰ GC 31, discourse of Pope Paul VI, 14.

GC 31 certainly made an effort to revitalize the missionary work, pastoral and educational apostolate of the Society through Icd process. The GC 31 produced abundant fruit due to the newly elected Superior general Father Pedro Arrupe's extraordinary fidelity to the teachings of the second Vatican and his dynamic leadership.¹⁶¹

3.3.2 GC 32

Exhibiting greater fidelity to the original charism of the Society expressed so candidly in the *Formula of the Institute* and later in the *Constitutions*, GC 32 reaffirmed that our service rendered in mission as one apostolic body, which is at the centre of the intuition of Ignatius, helps a Jesuit to become a true companion of Jesus. Hence the decree 4 of GC 32 'Our mission today' says:

The mission we are called to share is the mission of the Church herself: to make known to men and women the love of God our Father, a love that leads to life everlasting. It is from the loving regard of God upon the world that the mission of Jesus takes its rise... Ignatius and his First Companions, through the spiritual experience of the Exercises, sought to look upon the world from the same apostolic point of view, in order to discover its needs. Ignatius and his first band of apostles believed that the service they could give to the people of their time would be more effective if they themselves were more closely bound to one another as members of a single body, at once religious, apostolic, and priestly, and united to the successor of Peter by a special bond of love and service to ensure their availability for mission in the universal Church.¹⁶²

The GC 32 was indeed very fruitful because it knew to look at the world learning from the contemplation of the incarnation and by following the footsteps of Ignatius put into practice the discernment to seek and find the will of God in the disposition of its mission¹⁶³. There was some uneasiness experienced between the Pope John Paul II and the delegates of GC 32. Stemmed from the expressed desire of the GC 31 as well as the large number of *postulata* it had received on the subject, the congregation thought it had to take up included the desirability and possibility of extending the so-called "fourth vow" to all the members of the Society. The Holy See wished the congregation not to discuss this matter. Due to some unclear

¹⁶¹ Salvat, Ignacio., *Servir en misión universal*, 264

¹⁶² GC 32, D 4, 13-16.

¹⁶³ Salvat, I., *Servir en misión universal.*, 268.

communications and missed signals and misunderstandings between the congregation and the Holy See brought tensions and hurt feelings on both sides.

Fr Pedro Arrupe contemplated, in his final allocution to the Procurator's Congregation of 1978, on the evolution of the Society of Jesus in the post-conciliar period i.e. between GC 31 (1965/66) and the GC 32 (1974/75) considering it as a historical process in true fidelity to the original charism of the Founding Fathers and at the same time with a profound comprehension of world's needs by calling the Jesuits to be men of Ignatian discernment needless to say both individual and communal discernment.

No es suficiente "empeñarnos en la revisión de nuestros ministerios... a la luz de las Constituciones, decretos de las Congregaciones Generales e instrucciones de los Prepósitos Generales", tal como pedía la Congregación General 31 (D 21, 4). Es preciso dar con la CG. 32 un paso más y con una óptica nueva: *reasume el más profundo principio vital de la Fórmula de nuestro Instituto y de las Constituciones y, al aplicarlos a las necesidades de la Iglesia y del mundo de hoy, se decide por una «opción fundamental», «la lucha por la fe y la lucha por la justicia que la misma fe exige» (D2, 2), y señala un método de conversión personal y reconversión de nuestras obras. Es a la luz de esa opción, y con ese método, como quiere la Congregación que, en función de las necesidades presentes y previsibles en el futuro, se revalúen nuestras solidaridades y compromisos apostólicos (D 4, 74) y se haga un discernimiento ignaciano, con todo lo que ello comporta*¹⁶⁴.

3.3.3 GC 33

GC 33 was convoked by Fr Paulo Dezza, appointed by Pope John Paul II. In his homily, the Pope requested the Society to assist the Church in effective implementation of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

Pay ever greater attention to "the initiatives which the Second Vatican Council especially encouraged," like ecumenism, the deeper study of the relations with non-Christian religions, and the dialogue of the Church with cultures...¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Arrupe, P., "Discurso inicial a la Congregación de Procuradores (27. 09. 78). Informe sobre el estado de la Compañía", *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 24.

¹⁶⁵ John Paul II, Homily to the Members of GC 33, 6. See Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 468.

The Pope once again affirmed the mission entrusted to the Society of Jesus by his predecessor Pope Paul VI, namely the mission to resist atheism.

I wish to recall the mission that my venerable predecessor Paul VI committed to you on May 7, 1965, "to resist atheism vigorously with united forces," a mission which I urgently repropose to you, for as long as this "tremendous danger that hangs over humanity" continues...¹⁶⁶

The GC 33 was held only for a short period. It was constantly preoccupied to show greater allegiance to the Spirit who helps the Society to look at the world and discern the ways of responding to challenges of the world. The GC 33 confirmed the mission of the Society articulated by the previous Congregations 31 and 32.

we confirm the Society's mission expressed by the 31st and 32nd General Congregations, particularly in the latter's Decrees 2 and 4, which are the application today of the *Formula of the Institute* and of our Ignatian Charism...¹⁶⁷

3.3.4 GC 34

The major task of GC 34 has been the revision of the law and the orientation of our mission for today. The first project had two goals: to provide an annotated text of the *Constitutions* capable of influencing the present-day life of the Society and to make available a set of Complementary Norms to the *Constitutions*, derived for the most part from General Congregations, to enable Jesuits to put the character and mission of the Society into daily practice. The orientation of our mission for today appears particularly in the decree "Servants of Christ's Mission" and its three companion decrees: "Our Mission and Justice," "Our Mission and Culture," and "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue."

Speaking about the theme 'Jesuit mission' in the GC 34, then superior general Fr Kolvenbach pointed out:

GC 34 voted unanimously in favour of the decree on Our Mission and Justice, and the vast majority of Jesuits have integrated the social dimension into our Jesuit identity and into the awareness of our mission in education,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ GC 33, D 1, 38.

formation and social communications, in pastoral and retreat work. In many places the concern for justice is an essential part of our public image in both Church and society, thanks to those ministries of ours which are characterized by love for the poor and the marginalized, defending human rights and ecology, and promoting non-violence and reconciliation¹⁶⁸

Here we can synthesize briefly the progress of the last GCs 31-34

the contemporary Jesuit mission is the service of faith and the promotion in society of that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God's love and saving mercy ... This mission is 'a single but complex reality, which develops in a variety of ways'¹⁶⁹ in the very varied fields and activities (Justice, culture and interreligious dialogue) in which Jesuits are engaged throughout the world. Despite the considerable difficulties and our many failures, we look back with gratitude to the Lord for the gifts received on this "journey of faith as we committed ourselves to the promotion of justice as an integral part of our mission."¹⁷⁰

3.3.5 GC 35

GC 35 reiterated that the service of faith and promotion of justice are "indissolubly united" and "remain at the heart of our mission"¹⁷¹. GC 35 introduced the language of reconciliation and the demands of relationship as constitutive elements of the promotion of justice. The documents of GC 35 also recall our Jesuit heritage as reconcilers and insist on reconciliation by labouring zealously for the establishment of right relationships with God, one another, and creation as pivotal for an authentic vision of justice¹⁷².

The GC 35 adopted six decrees. Pope Benedict XVI's address to the delegates were characterized by expressions of great affection for and confidence in the Society of Jesus. By way response, the congregation responded in its first decree with a promise to serve the Church with renewed vigor and zeal. The remaining five

¹⁶⁸ See the letter of Father Kolvenbach on 'the Social Apostolate' dated 24 January 2000, Rome. See http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/pj/docs_pdf/PJ_073_ENG.pdf (accessed on 09.06.2015).

¹⁶⁹GC 34, D 2, 3 (quoting GC 33, D 1, 2) and NC 245 § 2; (quoting Redemptoris Missio, 41) and NC 245 § 1.

¹⁷⁰ GC 34, D 3, 1.

¹⁷¹ GC 35 D 2, 32.

¹⁷² GC 35, D 3, 56-80.

decrees treated identity, mission, obedience, governance, and collaboration respectively.

To conclude, the GCs 31-35 took place in the aftermaths of Vatican II, and they infused new vigour to the life and mission of the Society by practicing Icd. GC 31 took seriously the recommendation of the Vatican council II that religious congregations return to their sources for inspiration and bring up to date the structures of their communities to date the structures of their communities and apostolates. GC 32 affirmed that the “mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement,” and it oriented in a special way the external or apostolic life of the Society. The illness of Father Arrupe prompted GC 33 that elected Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach as General. GC 34 both strongly reaffirmed that earlier mission statement and broadened it to include interreligious dialogue and inculturation and provided for the Society a set of contemporary norms that are complementary to the Jesuit *Constitutions* themselves. GC 35 accepted the resignation of Fr Kolvenbach and elected the new general, Father Adolfo Nicolas. GC 35 moved the Society forward with renewed zeal to build on the accomplishments of four decades for Jesuit life and mission today¹⁷³.

The Jesuits of 21th century live and work in a world which is changing more rapidly. Icd is highly important to read the signs of our times. The incumbent Superior General Fr Adolfo Nicolas says:

The discernment is “la manera de vivir en medio de un mundo cambiante. Tiene que ser comunitario, porque nadie por sí mismo puede controlar todo, y Dios no se permite a si mismo ser cautivado por cada uno”¹⁷⁴

After having discussed with his Council, Father Nicolas through his circular issued on 20 May 2014 informed the whole Society about the convocation of the 36th General Congregation to be held during the final months of the year 2016. He concluded his letter with these words: “Let us ask Our Lady of the Way to place the

¹⁷³ Cf. Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, xix.

¹⁷⁴ Nicolas, A., “Discernimiento apostólico en común”, *CIS*, 14.

Society with her son on this journey of discernment that we now begin”. Icd is indeed an on-going journey. Icd plays a significant role not only during a GC but also once a GC is concluded. In the ensuing section, therefore, I wish to elaborate on the relevance of practicing Icd after a GC.

3.4. The Significance of Practicing Icd after a GC

GC decrees that are promulgated after a thorough deliberation serve as the matter for Icd once a GC is concluded.

Si por un lado son inspiradores, los Decretos dan también normas concretas, lo suficientemente generales para que puedan aplicarse en toda la Compañía. Esto exige de cada Provincia, Comunidad o individuo, un esfuerzo de elaboración y de aplicación en función de las condiciones concretas en que se encuentra, por medio de un discernimiento tanto personal como comunitario, que prepare las decisiones de la autoridad competente. Tal proceso, que es característico de la Compañía, garantiza la necesaria uniformidad en lo esencial, la variedad en lo accidental y armoniza el dinamismo del carisma personal y la acción del Espíritu en la Comunidad con la obediencia debida al Superior. Y todo ello requiere como condición previa la disposición que los Ejercicios piden para el momento de la elección: una indiferencia activa, que busca siempre el "magis"¹⁷⁵

The finality of the publication of the decrees of a GC is “dar a conocer a toda la CJ tales determinaciones para que se cumplan en todas partes... Los decretos de las CG son de valor universal y perpetuo, y solamente pueden ser cambiados por otra CG (Co718).”¹⁷⁶. On the occasion of the promulgation of the entire work of GC 34 Father Kolvenbach said: “Through its decrees, the Society responded to all that was ambiguous or erroneous in our way of praying, working, and living in our Society”¹⁷⁷. Thus each Jesuit and Jesuit community has to carry forward the communal discernment process for the renewal of Jesuit life and mission and to chalk out ways and means for an effective implementation of the decrees of a GC by practicing Icd always bearing in mind the life-situations in which Jesuits labour in different parts of the world today.

¹⁷⁵ Arrupe, P., “Acerca de la ejecución de los Decretos de la Congregación General XXXII (27. 09. 75)”, *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 18-19.

¹⁷⁶ Echarte, I., “Congregaciones”, *DHCJI*, 910.

¹⁷⁷ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 495.

The General Congregation cannot provide the programs each region will need to reflect upon and implement the decisions and guidelines presented there. Each province or group of provinces must undertake a program of reflection and a re-view of our apostolates to discover what action is appropriate in each particular context” (GC 34, D4, 71)

We observe that GCs 31-35 have called upon the Jesuits today to be faithful to the practice of communal apostolic discernment so central to “our way of proceeding,” a spiritual practice deeply rooted in the *Exercises* and *Constitutions*. Interestingly, the GC 34 invites the Jesuits for the first time to involve the laity who collaborate in Jesuit apostolates in discernment of apostolic priorities and objectives, and practical strategies for their realization (GC 34, D 13, 11) as Icd truly promotes a common seeking of God’s will, bring spiritual joy, encouragement, and apostolic fruitfulness to all.

3.4.1 Icd; Crucial for Jesuit Life and Mission Today

Both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II have exhorted the Jesuits to take spiritual discernment certainly they mean both personal and communal discernment seriously in the Jesuit life and mission especially for the better implementation of the GC decrees.

Address of Pope Paul VI to the Members of the GC 32:

Discernment, for which Ignatian spirituality especially trains you, must always sustain you in the difficult quest for the synthesis of the two charisms, the two poles of your life [the two charisms to which the Pope refers here are Charism of fidelity and service]... We recall always that a supreme criterion is the one given by Our Lord: “You will be able to tell them by their fruits” (Mt. 7:16); and the effort which must guide your discernment will be that of being docile to the voice of the Spirit in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22).

Pope John Paul II on receiving the decrees of the GC 34:

“What has been decided in this Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society must be implemented in fidelity to the spirit and original intention of the founder... my hope is that *all the members of the Society of Jesus may welcome with religious spirit the documents issued by General Congregation 34 and that they may implement them with faithful*

generosity, striving to be ever more authentic sons of St. Ignatius, living your original inspiration and charism to the fullest...”

We see in the appendix of this paper (p. 84), how the GC 31-35 through their decrees give a clarion call to every individual Jesuit and Jesuit community to give prime importance for the spiritual discernment both Individual as well as communal discernment. However, unfortunately the growing negligence or disinterest (It was one of the concerns of the former Superior General Father Pedro Arrupe as we would see in the next section) for the spiritual discernment particularly for Icd by Jesuits today is indeed a matter of real concern.

3.4.2 Lack of Practice of Icd by Jesuits Today; A matter of deep concern

Ignatius greatly desired that the Jesuits constantly grow in an attitude of discernment and creative fidelity to the will of God [Co 134, 414, 812]. The First Jesuits have left us with a well experimented method for communal discernment particularly developed in the deliberation of 1539.

La ‘Deliberación’ de 1539 se desarrolló a un alto nivel, fruto de aquella “gran claridad de entendimiento” que iluminó a Ignacio desde Manresa. La postura de los “Amigos en el Señor” puso a contribución unas actitudes de sinceridad y libertad, de búsqueda humilde y colaboración incondicional. La mucha oración, la aplicación continua de las directrices de un discernimiento rigurosamente metódico, la prolongada duración de las normas que se fijaron desde el principio, y que plasmaron en una sabia ciencia y eficaz praxis de la técnica del discernimiento espiritual, nos han dejado una referencia paradigmática, que hoy, después de cuatro siglos de vida de la Compañía, se estudia con fruición y se intenta aplicar con fruto, allí donde la experiencia primitiva encaja en las estructuras constitucionales del gobierno¹⁷⁸

However, Father Pedro Arrupe’s observation throws light on the lack of the practice of Icd by the Jesuits today:

Discernimiento ¿Está realmente en uso? ¿Cuántas comunidades, a pesar de los numerosos estudios, cursillos, etc. que loablemente se tienen por doquier, son hoy capaces de realizar el verdadero discernimiento ignaciano? Con el conocimiento que puedo tener de la Compañía, yo os diría que

¹⁷⁸ Arroyo, J., “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús,” 215.

proporcionalmente son muy pocas las comunidades cuya dinámica espiritual o apostólica está basada en un discernimiento propiamente dicho¹⁷⁹

Second Vatican Council has strongly urged the religious congregations to return to their spiritual sources or foundational experience (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2). For the Jesuits, the ‘Deliberations of First Jesuits of 1539’ is one of the founding documents of Society of Jesus that contains the foundational experience of the First Jesuits namely their method of communal discernment which we need to revisit today because the renewal of Jesuit life and mission and implementation of the decrees of the GC depends largely on the practice of Icd. For that to happen, the Jesuits today have to undergo an attitudinal change towards practicing Icd.

3.4.3 Attitudinal change towards Icd; the need of the hour

Speaking about the practice of communal discernment by Jesuits today, Father Paramananda Divarkar points out that the attitudinal change towards practicing Icd is indeed the need of the hour.

There is a danger that discernment and in particular, community discernment becomes just a popular game, complete with a handbook of complicated rules. Community discernment does not appear in the Exercises at all but it is quite Ignatian, provided it is done in the right spirit; and whilst a definite method is useful, and even necessary for a group that wants to work in harmony, *the important thing is the attitudes we bring to this practice*. And these attitudes cannot be just put on for the occasion. There must be constant sensitivity to the Spirit of Christ, delicately nursed by a ceaseless quest of interior knowledge of the Lord, and the discipline that it demands.¹⁸⁰

In his homily at the closing mass of GC 35, Father Adolfo Nicholas said:

Everything the general congregation has tried so hard to elaborate *needs to pass through our hearts*, so that for today and for tomorrow in the service of our brothers and sisters we more effectively resemble the Lord Jesus, often by becoming in the eyes of our contemporaries fools and madmen for him who first became such for us (*Sp Ex* [167]) and who nevertheless labors only for life, the true life of the world.

¹⁷⁹ Arrupe, P., “Discurso inicial a la Congregación de Procuradores (27. 09. 78). Informe sobre el estado de la Compañía”, *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Divarkar, R. P., *The path of interior knowledge; Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*, GSP, Anand - CIS, Rome 1990², 90.

In order to put into practice the teachings of GC, every Jesuit today need to undergo an attitudinal change towards the spiritual discernment in general¹⁸¹ and more particularly towards practicing Icd as urged by the GC 31-35. In the light of the decrees of the GC 31-35, the Jesuits of today need to revisit the Ignatian charism in order to undergo constant renewal at two levels; both personal as well as communitarian level in order to practice Icd effectively.

3.4.3.1 At Personal Level: Practicing ‘Ignatian Indifference and Ignatian Examine’

a. Ignatian Indifference

GC 31-35 on the practice of Ignatian indifference

- There are *prerequisites for a valid communitarian discernment*. On the part of the individual member of the community, a certain familiarity with the Ignatian rules for the discernment of spirits, derived from actual use; a determined resolution to find the will of God for the community whatever it may cost; and, in general, *the dispositions of mind and heart called for and cultivated in the First and Second Weeks of the Exercises.*”(GC 32 D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 22)
- Clearly, the requisite dispositions for true communitarian discernment are such that they will not be verified as often as those for ordinary community dialogue. Nevertheless, every community should seek to acquire them, so that when need arises it can enter into this special way of seeking the will of God. Indeed, inasmuch as it should be characteristic of *a Jesuit to be in familiar contact with God and to seek his will constantly in a spirit of true Ignatian indifference.* even ordinary community meetings and house consultations can incorporate elements of true communitarian discernment, provided we seriously seek God’s will concerning the life and work of the community (GC 32 D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 23)
- *We cannot attain this discerning attitude without self-abnegation.* Sign of our joy at the approach of the Kingdom and result of a progressive identification with Christ, who “emptied himself being born in the likeness of man,” this abnegation is required by the Spiritual Exercises: to divest ourselves of “self- love, self-will, and self-interest.” *It is only through detachment from all we have and are, that we can receive all from God in faith and give ourselves wholly to others in love. Without such an attitude we cannot present ourselves as interiorly free enough for the authentic service of Him who calls us*(GC 33 D1, *Companions of Jesus Sent into Today’s World*,13)

Indifference is not only for good election but also it is to be the fundamental attitude of a human person before God. Indifference is an attitude of life.

¹⁸¹ See “El discernimiento ignaciano: Actitudes, autoengaños, prácticas”, *Man* 82 (2010).

La Indiferencia mira a las cosas. Es una distancia crítica que a la vez objetiva y sumerge más y más en las circunstancias y acontecimientos de la vida, donde es preciso hallar la voluntad divina oculta entre múltiples posibilidades. Es ahí donde Dios nos manifiesta su voluntad, dándola a sentir. La Indiferencia no es, pues, una actitud dirigida exclusivamente a la elección concreta de estado, sino una «disposición fundamental» que afecta a todas las dimensiones del ser humano frente a Dios, frente a sí mismo y frente a todas las cosas; una llamada que le obliga al hombre a salir de sí (Gn 12,1) para adentrarse en el misterio de Dios. Y esto acontece necesariamente en lo concreto y cotidiano de la vida.¹⁸²

The attitude of indifference is vital for the practice of Icd. According Father Santiago Arzubialde, indifference is a means to live existentially the openness and docility to the Spirit's action of God. “La Indiferencia, por consiguiente, en cuanto actitud existencial humana, lleva en sí la imagen del Hijo. Es el modo dinámico de pasar de la imagen a la semejanza, de la libre disposición a la obediencia-amorosa a la voluntad del Padre, la forma Christi.”¹⁸³The disposition of indifference is the state of detachment that enables a Jesuit to be radically attached to God and thus cultivate greater apostolic availability. GC 34 categorically points out:

“What is required is not so much a research program as a process of reflection and evaluation inspired by the Ignatian tradition of spiritual discernment, in which the primary stress is on prayer and the effort to attain “indifference,” that is, an apostolic readiness for anything.” (GC 34, D 4, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice*, 72)

How can a Jesuit cultivate this attitude of Ignatian Indifference? Ignatius right at the commencement of his book the *Spiritual Exercises*, urges the retreatant to strive hard to attain the attitude of Indifference.

El hombre es criado para alabar, hacer reverencia y servir a Dios nuestro Señor y, mediante esto, salvar su ánima; y las otras cosas sobre la haz de la tierra son criadas para el hombre, y para que le ayuden en la prosecución del fin para que es criado. De donde se sigue, que el hombre tanto ha de usar dellas quanto le ayudan para su fin, y tanto debe quitarse de- Has quanto para ello le impiden. Por lo cual es menester hacemos indiferentes a todas las cosas criadas, en todo lo que es concedido a la libertad de nuestro libre albedrío y no le está prohibido; en tal manera, que no queramos de nuestra parte más salud que enfermedad, riqueza que pobreza, honor que deshonor, vida larga que corta, y por consiguiente en todo lo demás; solamente deseando y eligiendo lo que más nos conduce para el fin que somos criados [SpEx 23].

¹⁸² Arzubialde, S., *Ejercicios espirituales. Historia y análisis*, 120.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

The disposition of indifference allows the Jesuit to be more disposed and attentive to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁴“Para explicar lo que entiende por indiferencia, Ignacio, utiliza la imagen de una balanza bien equilibrada, no inclinándose ni de un lado ni de otro, sino permaneciendo en el medio, como la aguja de una balanza, se trata de dejar "al Criador con la criatura y a la criatura con su Criador y Señor" [EE 15] Y de "seguir aquello que sintiere ser más en gloria y alabanza de Dios nuestro Señor y salvación de mi ánima"[EE. 179].”¹⁸⁵

Pope Benedict XVI while addressing the delegates of GC 35 on 21st February 2008, said: “The *Exercises* are the fountain of your spirituality and the matrix of your *Constitutions*, but they are also a gift that the Spirit of the Lord has made to the entire Church: it is for you to continue to make it a precious and efficacious instrument for spiritual growth of souls.”¹⁸⁶ So The Jesuits today need to make use of the *Spiritual Exercises* to bring about attitudinal change towards Icd. In order to imbibe the attitude of Ignatian indifference that is deemed to be one of the prerequisites for Icd, each Jesuit need to be deeply rooted in the spirit of the *Spiritual Exercises* in order to partake in the Icd process.

b. Ignatian Examen

GC 31-35 on the Practice of daily *Examine*

• The exercise of prayer known as *examination of conscience, aptly designated by St. Ignatius to develop purity of heart, spiritual discernment*, and union with God in the active life, should be made twice daily. The Society, following its approved tradition, recommends that it last a quarter of an hour. (GC 31 D 14, *Prayer, 13*)

• Certain features of our Ignatian heritage can be given a communitarian dimension; provided, of course, the personal practice for which they were originally intended is not abandoned. For instance, *the examination of conscience could, at times, be made a shared reflection on the community's fidelity to its apostolic mission*. Similarly, fraternal correction and personal dialogue with the superior can usefully become a community review

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Rovira, J., “La indiferencia” *Man* 8 (1932), 328-329.

¹⁸⁵ Emonet, P., “Indiferencia”, *DEI*, 1016-1017; Rovira, J., “La Indiferencia”, 328.

¹⁸⁶ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 825.

of community life style. (GC 32 D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*,20)

• Our entire apostolic life should be examined with the spiritual discernment proper to the Exercises, so that we might increasingly put into practice what God expects of us and purify the motivation of our lives. One means available to us is the daily examination of conscience, which was recommended by St. Ignatius so that we might be continually guided by the practice of spiritual discernment(GC 32 D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 38)

• If we are to hear and respond to the call of God in this kind of world, then we must have a discerning attitude. For us Jesuits the way of discernment involves: the examination of conscience, prayer and brotherly dialogue within our communities, and the openness superiors that facilitates obedience (GC 33 D 1, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 12)

GCs 31-35 have urged the Jesuits to practice faithfully the Ignatian *Examen*. However, “Sheer meaningless routine”¹⁸⁷ will probably be the response of some Jesuits to the question; ‘What is your take on the Examination of Conscience?’ For many Jesuits, the *Examen* is “usually the first practice to disappear from the daily life of the religious” observed George Aschenbrenner in his well-known article called ‘Consciousness Examen’¹⁸⁸. Some others are of the opinion that the practice of the *Examen* is “largely an experience of morbidity; death-dealing and not life-enhancing”¹⁸⁹. All this type of negative experience of the *Examen* is the outcome of an inadequate understanding of the practice of *Examen*.

Examen of Conscience; The Fruit of Ignatius’ daily Practice

The exercise of the *Examen of conscience* is indeed the result of Ignatius’ faithfulness to the practice of it in his daily living. In the words of Ribadeneyra:

He [Ignatius] has always kept this habit of examining his conscience every hour and of asking himself with careful attention how he had passed the hour. If at the end of it he happened upon some more important matter, or a task which prevented this pious practice, he postponed the Examen, but at the first free moment, or the following hour, he made up for this delay.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ See Alphonso, H., *The Personal Vocation: Transformation in Depth through the Spiritual Exercises*, CIS, Rome 1990, 63.

¹⁸⁸Aschenbrenner, G. A., “Consciousness Examen” *Review for Religious*, Vol 31, 1, (1972), 14.

¹⁸⁹Townsend, D. K., “The Examen Re-examined”, *CIS*, (1987), 12.

¹⁹⁰ De Guibert, J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice, A Historical Study*. The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis (1964), 66.

We also read in the *Autobiography* where Ignatius candidly speaks to Luís Gonçalves da Câmara about his God experience, his personal spiritual practices. Câmara writes:

He [Ignatius] told me that he had not composed the Exercises all at once, but that when he noticed some things in his soul and found them useful, he thought they might also be useful to others and so he put them in writing, for example, the examination of conscience with that arrangement of lines, and so forth [Au 99]

Ignatius not only made *the Examen of conscience* part and parcel of his daily living but also propagated in the *Spiritual Exercises* so that spiritual life of all is enriched through the practice of the *Examen*.

Los *Ejercicios* atribuyen enorme importancia a la experiencia religiosa, entendiéndola como una interacción constante con Dios en la que intervienen la afectividad y el conocimiento interno, la meditación, la contemplación, el examen de conciencia y otras formas de oración, la consolación y la desolación, la consideraciones y la elección, todas las cuales son sintomáticamente importantes para buscar, encontrar y elegir la voluntad de Dios¹⁹¹

Ignatius has proposed a method¹⁹² (The Five-Point Method [SpEx 43]) for making the general examination of conscience. The five steps proposed by Ignatius are some kind of help to enrich the God consciousness in the daily living¹⁹³. However, as the years roll by in the Jesuit life, the practice might turn out to be routine, boring and not life enhancing exercise. If the *Examen* is practiced for the sake of the religious obligation without understanding the chief purpose of the Ignatian Exercise, then the end result would be that over a period of time the *Examen*

¹⁹¹ Buckley, J. M., "Discernimiento" in *DEI*, 607.

¹⁹² "The five steps of the exercise of Examen are to be seen, and gradually experienced in faith, as dimensions of the Christian consciousness, formed by God and His work in the heart as it confronts and grows within this world and all of reality". See Aschenbrenner, G. A., "Consciousness Examen" 16.

¹⁹³ Over the years we see that many Jesuits and others have adopted this Ignatian method to enhance spiritual life of people. "The five-point *Examen* given in the *Spiritual Exercises* is meant for beginners, that is, for those going through the *ejercicios leves*, the brief simple exercises of Annotation 18. The Examen of those who are more practiced, Aschenbrenner proposed, reached into the discernment of spirits. After that development the Examen as an exercise continued to expand: Anthony De Mello designed some Gestalt practices to help self-examination. John English, in the "awareness Examen," accommodated the Examen to the way people currently perceive the self". Cf. Tetlow J. A., "The Examen of Particulars", *Review for Religious* 56 (1997), 231.

might shrink into “a quick, superficial reflection over the day, and the five traditional elements of the Examen thus collapse into the third element by itself--a general survey of the day’s activities”¹⁹⁴. Ignatius formulated five-step method of making daily *Examen* not just to facilitate a quick thinking-over of the day. Instead Ignatius intended that the *Examen* be a prayer in which the person chiefly savours God’s love, the gratitude stems out of a sinner at peace with a tremendous awareness that s/he can do on his/her own. The *Examen* is a time for wonderfully learning how God’s love turns everything to good even his/her own sinfulness. Ignatius certainly practiced the *Examen* with this type of positive attitude and purpose in mind.

Ignatian *Examen* increases God Consciousness/ Awareness

Luís Gonçalves da Câmara closes the *Autobiography* with the following words:

“He said he was quite sure that he had not exaggerated; and that, although he had committed many offenses against Our Lord after he began to serve him, he had never consented to mortal sin. Rather, he had always grown in devotion, that is, ease in finding God, and now more than ever in his whole life. Every time, any hour, that he wished to find God, he found him.” [Au 99]

It becomes evident while going through the *Autobiography* of Ignatius that the *Examen* was an important spiritual tool which Ignatius made use of on daily basis to be in touch with God’s spirit. The mature Ignatius almost towards the fag end of his life was able to find God whenever and wherever he wished to do so. This was possible mainly because of his daily practice of *Examen*. The Jesuits who make the *Spiritual Exercises* today, the *Examen* remains to be one of the powerful means to find God in all things and all things in God and thus the practice of *Examen* contributes greatly to live a life enveloped by the gracious presence of God. Hence Ignatius very much insisted¹⁹⁵ that all Jesuits make the *Examen of conscience* twice a day [Co 342] as it is a time of prayer and Ignatius strongly recommended this exercise for the retreatant right at the start of *Spiritual Exercises*.

¹⁹⁴ Aschenbrenner, G. A., “A check on our availability; The Examen” *Review for Religious* 39 (1980), 322.

¹⁹⁵ “Over the centuries Jesuits have kept recalling, as a dictum of St. Ignatius, that even if one is too sick to meditate one does not omit the daily Examen of conscience.” Cf. Tetlow J. A., “The Examen of Particulars”, *Review for Religious*, 230.

Ignatian *Examen* enhances daily Spiritual Discernment

The Ignatian exercise of *Examen of conscience* has to be looked at in context of discernment of spirits¹⁹⁶ because “la actividad básica de la persona de discernimiento, la infraestructura que sustenta todos los demás procesos de discernimiento, no es otra que el “examen” ignaciano”.¹⁹⁷The practice of daily *Examen* will help us to gradually cultivate or develop a discerning heart. In the words of Aschenbrenner:

The specific exercise of Examen is ultimately aimed at developing a heart with a discerning vision to be active not only for one or two quarter-hour periods in a day but continually. This is a gift from the Lord -- a most important one as Solomon realized (1 Kings 3:9-12). So we must constantly pray for this gift, but we must also be receptive to its development within our hearts. A daily practice of Examen is essential to this development¹⁹⁸.

The *Examen* brings the discernment of spirits into daily life when a Jesuit begins to ask himself where he has responded or neglected to respond to God’s unconditional love rather than focusing extensively or making a list of right or wrong actions. When a Jesuit approaches the *Examen* to respond generously to God’s love, then the exercise of Ignatian *Examine* helps to

Recognize the often subtle drawing of the 'good' spirit, and the (again, often subtle) influences of the 'bad' spirit within everyday experience; to become familiar with the processes through which these operate (cf. especially [333, 334]), While this interpretation might seem at first sight to exceed the thoughts. Words and deeds of Ignatius' text, it must be remembered that 'thoughts' include the 'movements of the spirits'.¹⁹⁹

I would wish to highlight two significant points. First of all, the *Examination of Conscience*, if approached with a positive frame of mind and practiced it daily as a form of prayer, would certainly help us to grow day by day in our God consciousness and thus cultivate a discerning heart in order to contribute to the Icd process. Secondly, apart from strengthening our spiritual life, the *Examen* would also enable

¹⁹⁶ Townsend, D. K., “The Examen Re-examined”, 11.

¹⁹⁷ Mollá, D., “El discernimiento, realidad humana y espiritual”, *Man* 82, (2010), 13.

¹⁹⁸ Aschenbrenner, G. A., “Consciousness Examen”, 16.

¹⁹⁹ Ivens, M., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 40.

us to increase our apostolic zeal. Father Pedro Arrupe concluded his letter to the Society of Jesus on "apostolic availability," by making the following observation:

Llegar a cierto inmovilismo por falta de los individuos, y el consiguiente temor de los Superiores a dar las "misiones" que hoy exige nuestro apostolado, constituirá una gravísima lesión a la raíz misma de nuestra vocación... "la disponibilidad ignaciana es garantía y 'conditio sine qua non' de la praxis", de la única praxis salvadora que verdaderamente interesa la Compañía y a la Iglesia²⁰⁰

The *Examen* is "the primary means to maintain apostolic availability"²⁰¹. Hence the practice of *Examen* is vital to experience fruitfulness in Icd and in the Jesuit apostolic life as well.

3.4.3.2 At Community Level: Fostering 'Union of minds and hearts'

GC 31-35 on Nurturing 'Union of minds and hearts'²⁰²

- Since the Society wishes that the brothers be brought closely into both the social and liturgical life of the community as well as into its works, as befits companions who live the religious life in the same family, **fraternal union and communication are to be fostered more and more among Jesuits by all the means which a discerning love may dictate.** (GC 31 D 7, *The Brothers*, 5)
- The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the life of the apostolic religious community, bringing fraternal union to its perfection and blessing every apostolic endeavor with the waters of holiness. (GC 31 D 14, *Prayer*, 5)
- The Society "can neither be preserved nor governed, and so it cannot attain the end to which it aspires for God's glory, unless its members be united to each other and with their head." This will be effected mainly by "**the bond of obedience, which unites individuals with their superiors, and these among themselves and with the provincials, and all with Father General.**" But union and obedience are founded on charity, for "if the superior and his subjects are strongly united with God's sovereign goodness, they will easily be united with one another. (GC 31 D 17, *The life of obedience*, 13)
- The union of minds of the members among themselves and with their head, leading to

²⁰⁰ Arrupe, P., "Sobre la disponibilidad (19.10.1977)", *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1981, 246.

²⁰¹ Aschenbrenner, G. A., "A check on our availability; The Examen", 322.

²⁰² See GC 31 D 19, 3; GC 32, the whole D 11 deals in great length on the *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*.

personal holiness and at the same time to apostolic activity, flows from a love for our God and Lord, Jesus Christ,⁶ and is sustained and governed by the same love. When it is strengthened by mutual understanding, this love gives a community a way of finding God's will for it with certainty. For this dialogue between superiors and subjects or between the members of the Society, whether it takes place man to man or as a community effort, becomes supernaturally meaningful when it is directed towards finding the divine will, cultivating fraternal love and promoting our work as apostles. (GC 31 D19, *Community life and religious discipline*, 3)

• **The Jesuit community is also a community of discernment. The missions on which Jesuits are sent, whether corporately or individually, do not exempt us from the need of discerning together in what manner and by what means such missions are to be accomplished.** That is why we open our minds and hearts to our superiors and our superiors, in turn, take part in the discernment of our communities, always on the shared understanding that final decisions belong to those who have the burden of authority. (GC 32 D 2, *Jesuits Today*, 19)

• **The community is also a privileged place for the practice of apostolic discernment, whether through formally structured communal discernment or through informal conversation that has the more effective pursuit of the mission as its goal.** Such discernment will help us not only accept our personal missions but also rejoice in and support the missions received by our brothers. In this way, our common mission is strengthened and the union of minds and hearts confirmed and deepened. (GC 35 D 4, *Obedience in the Life of the Society of Jesus*, 28)

Father Kolvenbach points out: “the last General Congregations have urged Jesuits to adopt a certain style of community life in which they agree to live in a *continual attitude of searching for fidelity to the will of God*. The more the conditions for such a search is deepened, the deeper will be community life itself, and its apostolic effectiveness”.²⁰³ Hence, Icd, if practiced with right attitude as it was practised by the First Jesuits, is a powerful instrument to build up the community as well as to foster the union of minds and hearts of Jesuits today.

At times, a question might prop up in some Jesuits regarding the need of discernment at the level of a Jesuit community. Some would ask that for us Jesuits, is it not sufficient to discern the will of God individually? Current Jesuit General Father Adolfo Nicolas gives a fitting response to this type of query.

El discernimiento es un proceso donde cada factor cuenta: toda experiencia, todo acto positivo y dato informativo. Para esto necesitamos una comunidad. Recuerden el libro de Hillary Clinton sobre educación, *It Takes a Village*. De la misma manera, hace falta una comunidad para discernir.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Kolvenbach, P.- H., *Sobre el discernimiento apostólico en común*, 731.

²⁰⁴ Nicolas, A., *“Discernimiento apostólico en común”*, 14.

GC 35 has emphasised candidly that a Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission.

Jesuit identity and Jesuit mission are linked by community; indeed, identity, community, and mission are a kind of triptych shedding light on how our companionship is best understood. (GC 35, D 2, 19); Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission. (GC 35, D 3, 41).

GC 35 further adds that “in order to live our mission we need fraternal and joyful communities, where we can nourish and express with great intensity our only passion that can unite our difference, and give life to our creativity” (GC 35, D 2, 27) The joyful and vibrant mission-community can come into existence only if the companions have already possess the union of minds and hearts. That is the reason why Ignatius would delay the incorporation of new members in Rome²⁰⁵.

It is highly impossible to engage in Icd or “share a mission if there is not a companionship of identity, and as this identity gets constantly reformulated, it demands ongoing renewal. Likewise, there cannot be union in dispersion if there does not exist a bonding around identity. Moreover, there should exist relations between the community and the life of those sent on mission”²⁰⁶. However often times “due to overwork, to a kind of monotony in our religious life, to a lack of spiritual vitality within our communities—all of which impoverish our encounter with God. This means we must continually renew our efforts if we are to enter more deeply into the meaning of our life as Jesuits: men totally committed to the glory of God and the service of others”. (GC 33, D1, 10). It is opined that “community is the privileged place for collective witness where we live our personal and communal relationship with the Lord, the mutual relationship as friends in the Lord, the solidarity with the poor and marginalized and with a lifestyle responsible to creation” (GC 35 D 3 41). Community life “must foster fraternal love and unity so that we may be recognized as disciples of Christ” [CN 316]. It is essential that “We must go way beyond sharing a roof, a table and rules. We must share our faith, reason for living, and work as companions of Jesus, our experience of profound encounter with Him who sends us. It is a community style known for simplicity and compassion,

²⁰⁵ Osuna, J., *Amigos en el Señor*, 127.

²⁰⁶ Sariego, J. M., “A body on mission. The Ignatian way to apostolic community”, *Promotio Iustitiae* 112, (2013), 9.

solidarity and gratuity, preferential love for the poor. Being communal witnesses of the poor Christ and his love for the poor” [CN 327].

Father Kolvenbach acknowledges honestly that all the Jesuits communities will not be able to practice Icd, however, every community need to make an effort to grow²⁰⁷. Father Kolvenbach lists some of the community practices that could help a community to practice Icd. They are as mentioned below.

- a) *Shared community prayer* based, for example, on a text of Scripture or of the *Constitutions*
- b) *Faith-sharing in common* on experiences connected with a determined aspect of our life (for example, our apostolic mission)
- c) As a variation on the preceding, *sharing in community of the personal spiritual discernment* of the members of the community. This exchange could also be related to the apostolic mission.
- d) “*Review of Life*” or a communal faith-sharing on certain elements of community life or discipline, according to the familiar process of “observe” (facts), “judge” (in the light of the Gospel and, for us, in the light of our specific vocation), “act” (a problem of action).
- e) *Evaluation of apostolic work* in the light of, for example, province apostolic planning. This is really the Ignatian examination of conscience applied by a community to its apostolic work: a kind of “Review of Life” dedicated to its own apostolic mission.²⁰⁸

The above enumerated community practices if put into practice as suggested by Father Kolvenbach, a Jesuit community today will be able to reconcile humanity with itself, God and nature as well as live evangelical values and thus make present the Kingdom of God (GC 35, D 2).

The Role of each Jesuit in the Icd Process

- On the part of the individual member of the community, a certain familiarity with the Ignatian rules for the discernment of spirits, derived from actual use; a determined resolution to find the will of God for the community whatever it may cost; and, in general, the dispositions of mind and heart called for and cultivated in the First and Second Weeks of the Exercises. (GC 32, D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 22)

²⁰⁷ Kolvenbach, P.- H., “Sobre el discernimiento apostólico en común”, 731.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 731-732.

As we have seen in the previous section that the daily practice of Ignatian indifference and Ignatian *Examine* help a Jesuit to cultivate a right disposition to carry out Icd in any Jesuit community meaningfully.

communal discernment is for strong persons. Each must go through a thorough preparation, reflection, and prayerful consideration, as if he had to decide the issue for himself. If the majority is weak or not well prepared, one or two may carry the others with them, and there will be no communal discernment.²⁰⁹

The individual preparation of every Jesuit through personal spiritual reflection is fundamental for the success of Icd. If any member of a Jesuit community participates with an ulterior motive or with some hidden agenda then the entire Icd process will not achieve its fruitfulness. Hence, Father Kolvenbach writes,

in order to obtain and maintain the spiritual dispositions proper to the first weeks of *Spiritual Exercises* requirements are: the practice of personal prayer, examination of conscience, and spiritual direction, and the repeated experience of the *Exercises* themselves, made under expert guidance. In addition, the importance of a consciousness and historical awareness of the human and social reality which forms the context of our apostolic commitment needs underlining²¹⁰

The contribution of every Jesuit to nurture the union of minds and hearts of all in the community is indeed essential for the practice of Icd. GC 34 in its complementary norms says “the most potent means for building up true communion in the whole Society is a basic attitude of mind and heart that makes us regard and accept each of our companions as a brother and friend in the Lord [CN 313]. On March 12, 1998, Father Kolvenbach wrote a document on community life in response to *ex officio* letters from the previous year. Father Kolvenbach in his letter written to the entire Society urges the Jesuits to contribute each one’s mite for the building up of the communion in the community by guarding against the onslaught of individualism;

Nuestra vida comunitaria, por tanto, ha de caracterizarse por una lucha constante contra los aspectos negativos del individualismo ambiental (todo lo que sea encerrarse en sí mismo, en sus trabajos, en sus propias ideas o inquietudes) y por un esfuerzo incesante orientado a crear un clima fraternal de escucha e intercambio mediante la convivencia y el discernimiento

²⁰⁹ Orsy, L., “Toward a theological evaluation of communal discernment”, 145.

²¹⁰ Kolvenbach, P.-H., “Sobre el discernimiento apostólico en común”, 731.

orante, al servicio de una comunidad apostólica que permita a cada uno abrirse responsablemente a la misión de Cristo. La vida comunitaria no puede emerger entre personas que sólo se buscan a sí mismas; pero es capaz de compaginar el florecimiento de la personalidad y la pertenencia a un cuerpo apostólico mediante la fuerza de Quien "nos congrega en un cuerpo... para cumplir la voluntad divina, en orden a una vida apostólica muy diversificada" [NC 314]²¹¹.

GC 31-35 on the Role of a Jesuit Superior during Icd Process

- But in order that he may more easily discover the will of God, the *superior should have at hand able advisers and should often consult them*. He should also *use the services of experts in reaching decisions on complex matters*. This will the more easily enable members of the Society to be convinced that their superior knows how, wants, and is able, to govern them well in the Lord. Besides, since all who work together in God's service are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and His grace, it will be well in the Lord to use their ideas and advice so as to understand God's will better. Superiors in the Society should readily and often ask for and listen to the counsel of their brethren, of a few or of many, or even of all gathered together, according to the importance and nature of the matter. *Superiors should gratefully welcome suggestions which their fellow Jesuits offer spontaneously, with a single desire of greater spiritual good and the better service of God*, but the duty of the superior himself to decide and enjoin what ought to be done remains intact. (GC 31 D 17, *The Life of Obedience*, 6)
- What is the role of the superior in communitarian discernment? It is, first, to develop, as far as he can, the requisite disposition for it; second, to decide when to convoke the community for it, and clearly to define its object; third, to take active part in it as the bond of union within the community and as the link between the community and the Society as a whole; and, finally, to make the final decision in the light of the discernment, but freely, as the one to whom both the grace and the burden of authority are given. For in our Society *the discerning community is not a deliberative or capitular body but a consultative one*, whose object, clearly understood and fully accepted, is to assist the superior to determine what course of action is for God's greater glory and the service of men. (GC 32 D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 24)
- "From his privileged place at the heart of the community, the superior is also responsible, together with each member, for developing its apostolic life. Concretely, this commits the local superior to lead his community in a Jesuit common life characterized by the celebration of Eucharist, prayer, faith sharing, communal discernment, simplicity, hospitality, solidarity with the poor, and the witness that "friends in the Lord" can make to the world". (GC 35 D 5, *Governance at the Service of Universal Mission*, 34)

²¹¹ See, Kolvenbach, P.-H, "Sobre la vida comunitaria [12.3.1998]", 46.

Significant Role of a Jesuit Superior during Icd Process

A Jesuit superior occupies an important place in an Icd for the reason that “donde hay una comunidad, se necesita alguien que coordine. Si no tuviéramos comunidades no necesitaríamos superiores. Pero el superior está siempre al servicio de la comunidad, y al servicio de la voluntad de Dios”.²¹² A Jesuit community should, therefore, “tener al frente un verdadero superior, que ejerza abiertamente su oficio, aun dentro de unas relaciones fraternas, sencillas y familiares.”²¹³ Father Kolvenbach brings out more succinctly the purpose of consultation and dialogue in a community. To Father Kolvenbach, group consultation or community dialogue “cannot be anything else but that of searching together, and often with regard to the apostolate, for better means to fulfill the will of God, in conformity with our vocation, and to respond to his expectations and calls”.²¹⁴ So a superior’s openness to wider consultation in the community plays an important role to create an atmosphere of discernment in the community. Many times, as Father Adolfo Nicolas puts it: “Dios nos da señales de su voluntad de muchas maneras y nosotros conocemos su voluntad al aceptar las señales que nos da. Si no las aceptamos, estamos desobedeciendo, y por desgracia hay superiores que de hecho desobedecen”.²¹⁵ In fact, the Society of Jesus today is in dire need of superiors more than ever who could really assist a Jesuit community to discern the will of God.

Conclusion

In a fast changing, individualistic, secularised and globalized world of today, a great challenge for the Jesuits is to remain faithful to the practice of Icd so central to “our way of proceeding,” a practice rooted in the Ignatian Charism especially in the *Spiritual Exercises* and Jesuit *Constitutions*. The practice of Icd would help the Jesuits today to cultivate greater fidelity to the original charism of the Society expressed so candidly in the *Formula of the Institute* and reaffirmed in the *Constitutions*.

²¹² Nicolas, A., “Discernimiento apostólico en común”, 14.

²¹³ Arrupe, P., “Sobre el discernimiento espiritual comunitario (25.12.71)”, 257.

²¹⁴ Kolvenbach P.-H., *ARSI 19*, Roma, (1986), 728.

²¹⁵ Nicolas, A., “Discernimiento apostólico en común”, 14.

As we pointed out in this chapter that it is the practice of Icd in the Jesuit GCs that has fostered to great extent the Jesuit life and mission and nurtured the zeal to labour as one apostolic body, which was so significant for the First Jesuits. The faithfulness to the process of Icd in the personal and community living would certainly help the Jesuits today to become the true companions of Jesus and thus be effective collaborators of the Trinitarian God and the universal mission of the Church to construct God's kingdom on earth.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The universal mission undertaken by St Ignatius, his First Companions and the Jesuits today is definitely a response to the call of Jesus, the eternal king [SpEx 91-99] to construct God's kingdom on earth. In the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius presents a Christ who is constantly on the move to preach the kingdom of God. Icd is a highly valuable tool with which the Society of Jesus has discovered and continue to discern the will of God in order to collaborate effectively with the Trinitarian God and the universal Church to construct God's kingdom on earth.

Undoubtedly, the mission of the Society of Jesus today derives strength from our continuing experience of the crucified and Risen Christ who invites us to join him in preparing the world to become the completed kingdom of God (GC 34 D 2, 6). Thus the Complimentary Norms [CN] of the *Constitutions* introduced at the recommendation of the GC 34 too clearly states that the mission of the Society today is the "participation in the total evangelizing mission of the Church, which aims at the realization of the Kingdom of God in the whole of human society, not only in the life to come but also in this life" [CN 245§1]. I strongly believe that it is Icd that makes the Jesuits today to be creative collaborators of Christ and the universal Church.

Ignatius greatly desired that discernment of spirits (individual and communal) should be the guiding force of the members of the least Society of Jesus. Hence, in all his writings, as we have seen in the first chapter of this paper, Ignatius strongly proposed to his companions that they give prime importance to the spiritual discernment in their Jesuit life and mission. The method of communal discernment to find God's will was developed and fruitfully put it into practice by Ignatius and his companions as we studied in the second chapter. In their own communal apostolic discernment,

which eventually led to the founding of the Society, Ignatius and his companions recognized this as their unique and personal call, their charism: to choose to be with Christ as servants of his mission (GC 34, D1, 7). The First Jesuits were able to remain faithful to their Jesuit life and mission due to their constant practice of spiritual discernment both individual and communal discernment.

On 21st February 2008, in his speech to the GC 35, Pope Benedict XVI said: “Today I should like to encourage you and your confreres to go on in the fulfilment of your mission, in full fidelity to your original charism, in the ecclesial and social context that characterizes this beginning of the millennium... the Church needs you, counts on you, and continues to turn to you with confidence.”²¹⁶ Encouraged by these memorable words of Pope Benedict, the Jesuits today carry out their mission of propagation of faith and promotion of justice drawing greater inspiration from the foundational spiritual and apostolic experience of Ignatius of Loyola and his First Companions.

Icd continues to be the guiding force of Jesuit life and mission today. In the concluding chapter, I have tried to point out in the light of the post- Vatican II GCs 31-35 that the practice of Icd is nurturing the Jesuit life and mission today. The post-Vatican General Congregations 31-35 have contributed greatly for the renewal of Jesuit life and mission today by effectively making use of the Icd process to find God’s will by reading the signs of our times. However, the decrees of GCs 31-35 have strongly highlighted that the Jesuits today need to show greater faithfulness to the practice of Icd to be more fruitful in their life and mission as well as for the speedy implementation of their decrees.

I am greatly convinced that in order to be faithful to Christ’s mission, Ignatian charism as well as to effectively implement the teachings of GC 31-35, every Jesuit and Jesuit community today need to undergo an attitudinal change towards the spiritual discernment in general and more particularly towards practicing Icd as urged by the GC 31-35. In the light of the decrees of the GC 31-35, the Jesuits of

²¹⁶ Padberg, J. W., *Jesuit life and Mission Today*, 822.

today need to imbibe the spirit of Ignatius and his First Companions and undergo a radical renewal of life and attitudinal change both at a personal as well as communitarian level in order to practice Icd and thus be effective collaborators of Trinitarian God and the universal Church to usher in God's kingdom on earth.

APPENDIX 1

A Clarion call of GC 31-35 for Practicing Icd Today

General Congregation 31

- “For fraternal gatherings which, if they promote a common seeking of God’s will, bring spiritual joy, encouragement, and apostolic fruitfulness to all”. (D 8, *The Spiritual Formation of Jesuits*, 5)
- “But in order that he may more easily discover the will of God, the superior should have at hand able advisers and should often consult them. He should also use the services of experts in reaching decisions on complex matters. This will the more easily enable members of the Society to be convinced that their superior knows how, wants, and is able, to govern them well in the Lord. Besides, since all who work together in God’s service are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and His grace, it will be well in the Lord to use their ideas and advice so as to understand God’s will better. Superiors in the Society should readily and often ask for and listen to the counsel of their brethren, of a few or of many, or even of all gathered together, according to the importance and nature of the matter. Superiors should gratefully welcome suggestions which their fellow Jesuits offer spontaneously, with a single desire of greater spiritual good and the better service of God, but the duty of the superior himself to decide and enjoin what ought to be done remains intact”. (D 17, *The Life of Obedience*, 6)
- “Frequent consultation with experts, to share their insights, and frequent consultation among the members of the community, aimed at actively engaging everyone in the process of coordinating and promoting the apostolate, and in other things which pertain to the good of the community.” (D 19, *Community Life and Religious Discipline*, 5)

General Congregation 32

- “The Jesuit community is also a community of discernment. The missions on which Jesuits are sent, whether corporately or individually, do not exempt us from the need of discerning together in what manner and by what means such missions are to be accomplished. That is why we open our minds and hearts to our superiors and our superiors, in turn, take part in the discernment of our communities, always on the shared understanding that final decisions belong to those who have the burden of authority”. (D 2, *Jesuits Today*, 19)
- “What is required is not so much a research program as a process of reflection and evaluation inspired by the Ignatian tradition of spiritual discernment, in which the primary stress is on prayer and the effort to attain “indifference,” that is, an apostolic readiness for anything.” (D 4, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice*, 72)

- “In each province or region, or at least at the Assistancy level, there should be a definite mechanism for the review of our ministries. Now is a good time to examine critically how these arrangements are working and, if need be, to replace them by others which are more effective and allow for a wider participation” (D 4, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice*, 77)
- “It is a corporate search for the will of God by means of a shared reflection on the signs which point where the Spirit of Christ is leading,” and the method to follow in such communitarian discernment is analogous to that which St. Ignatius teaches for the making of a personal decision on a matter of importance”. (D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 21)
- “There are prerequisites for a valid communitarian discernment. On the part of the individual member of the community, a certain familiarity with the Ignatian rules for the discernment of spirits, derived from actual use; a determined resolution to find the will of God for the community whatever it may cost; and, in general, the dispositions of mind and heart called for and cultivated in the First and Second Weeks of the Exercises. On the part of the community as such, a clear definition of the matter to be discerned, sufficient information regarding it, and “a capacity to convey to one another what each one really thinks and feels.” (D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 22)
- “What is the role of the superior in communitarian discernment? It is, first, to develop, as far as he can, the requisite disposition for it; second, to decide when to convoke the community for it, and clearly to define its object; third, to take active part in it as the bond of union within the community and as the link between the community and the Society as a whole; and, finally, to make the final decision in the light of the discernment, but freely, as the one to whom both the grace and the burden of authority are given. For in our Society the discerning community is not a deliberative or capitular body but a consultative one, whose object, clearly understood and fully accepted, is to assist the superior to determine what course of action is for God’s greater glory and the service of men”. (D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 24)
- “To the extent possible, superiors should strive to build an Ignatian apostolic community in which many forms of open and friendly communication on a spiritual level are possible. Since it is a privileged way to find God’s will, the use of communal spiritual discernment is encouraged if the question at issue is of some importance and the necessary preconditions have been verified.” (D 11, *Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society*, 50)

General Congregation 33

- “If we are to fulfill our mission, we must be faithful to that practice of communal apostolic discernment so central to “our way of proceeding,” a practice rooted in the Exercises and *Constitutions*. This way of proceeding calls for a re-view of all our ministries, both traditional and new”. (D 1, *Sent into Today’s World*, 39)

- “Definitions alone cannot clarify the apostolic directions of our mission. Such clarity can only come when we are faithful to the process and conditions of communal discernment and to the lived experience of religious men striving to labor with Christ in serving the Kingdom”. (D 1, *Sent into Today’s World*, 42)

General Congregation 34

- “Laity who collaborate in Jesuit apostolates can expect from us a specific formation in Ignatian values, help in discernment of apostolic priorities and objectives, and practical strategies for their realization”. (D 13, *Cooperation with the Laity in Mission*, 11)
- “All those engaged in the work should exercise coresponsibility and be engaged in discernment and participative decision making where it is appropriate”. (D13, *Cooperation with the Laity in Mission*, 13)

General Congregation 35

- “The community is also a privileged place for the practice of apostolic discernment, whether through formally structured communal discernment or through informal conversation that has the more effective pursuit of the mission as its goal. Such discernment will help us not only accept our personal missions but also rejoice in and support the missions received by our brothers. In this way, our common mission is strengthened and the union of minds and hearts confirmed and deepened”. (D 4, *Obedience in the Life of the Society of Jesus*, 28)
- “Ongoing formation of Ignatian leadership, including the practice of apostolic discernment in common”. (D 5, *Governance at the Service of Universal Mission*, 31a)
- “From his privileged place at the heart of the community, the superior is also responsible, together with each member, for developing its apostolic life. Concretely, this commits the local superior to lead his community in a Jesuit common life characterized by the celebration of Eucharist, prayer, faith sharing, communal discernment, simplicity, hospitality, solidarity with the poor, and the witness that “friends in the Lord” can make to the world”. (D 5, *Governance at the Service of Universal Mission*, 34)

APPENDIX 2

Steps in a process of Ignatian communal discernment²¹⁷

1. Defining the question. This definition ought to be precise. And the question itself ought to be of sufficient importance to warrant such a discernment.

2. At the beginning of the process, everyone must make an effort to come to true Indifference and to place himself in the presence of God, personally and as a member of a community. Thus, at this moment in the process, personal and communal prayer is in order, to purify disordered affections

3. While individuals reflect personally, the community tries to grow in the evangelical spirit of openness to God, putting before itself the criteria outlined in the *Exercises*, especially in the Two Standards and in the Three Modes of Humility.

4. At this point begins the exchange about the question which is the object of discernment:

- The question is formulated
- Each one expresses his own “reasons” and his own “motions”. There is no debate, only mutual listening and a pervasive climate of prayer.
- Then, generally at a later time, there ought to be an exchange about the different contributions of members of the group. This too is to be carried on in a atmosphere of silence and prayer, in order to capture more accurately the sense and the scope of the various reasons and motions.

5. A time of confirmation ends the process. A decision is taken by the competent superior, attempting to integrate the process experienced in common. The community finds its unity in its acceptance of the decision taken by the superior.

²¹⁷ See Kolvenbach, P.-H., “Sobre el discernimiento apostólico en común”, 739-740.

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