

## Editor's Word

Two events have given birth to the theme and content of the Journal this year.

In February 2019, Fr. Sosa Arturo, superior general of the Society of Jesus, formally issued four universal apostolic preferences to be implemented creatively for the coming decade by Jesuits and their collaborators worldwide. This came about after he collected results of the discernment in common, which lasted about 16 months, from Jesuit communities, institutes and provinces around the world. The apostolic preferences are: A. To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment; B. To walk with the poor, the outcasts and those whose dignity has been violated around the world, in a mission of reconciliation and justice; C. To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; and D. To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

Among the four, Pope Francis, in his remarks towards this announcement, emphasized that “the first preference is crucial because it presupposes as a basic condition the Jesuit’s relationship with the Lord in a personal and communal life of prayer and discernment.” He added, “Without this prayerful attitude the other preferences will not bear fruit.” In August 9, 2019, six months after the letter was issued, we Jesuits in Hong Kong began to sponsor the Centre for Catholic Studies in Chinese University as a continuation of the good work started by Hong Kong diocese under the leadership of Fr. Louis Ha. This also symbolizes our

Jesuit attempt to establish the intellectual apostolate and service in Hong Kong.

Inspired by these two significant happenings, the management committee of the Catholic Centre has decided on the theme “Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World” for the present issue, as a common effort to draw out a deeper reflection on the first universal apostolic preference for our time. The seven invited contributors have been very generous in sharing their expertise and reflections for us in their respective articles below.

Fr. Gerard Whelan, in the first part of his article, gives us a succinct historical review of how the Jesuits, directly influenced and formed in Ignatian Spirituality, have developed over the last few centuries. Though they were the symbol of renewal and renovation in the Church in the 16th century after the Society of Jesus was founded, their living example and influence have experienced a kind of decline due to various reasons. According to Fr. Whelan, the Spiritual Exercises provide general principles to engage in the contemporary world, but they do not in themselves provide the means to achieve this.

To fill this discrepancy, he presents to us how Bernard Lonergan, a contemporary Jesuit philosopher and theologian, has provided the means and bridge through his contributions in epistemology and cosmology, his understanding of religious conversion and history of redemption, and finally in theological method. Fr. Whelan does us a service in introducing the range of Lonergan’s thought and contributions in a comprehensive and lucid way. Lonergan’s analysis of insight and cognition theory in fact lays a strong intellectual foundation for dialogue with cultures and history, overcoming the hegemony of classism which allows only one valid culture.

Lonergeran seems to be the intellectual version, or reflection, of St. Ignatius' pilgrim heart, whose eyes always focus on God. In the quoted words of Robert Doran, who draws out their parallel, "Lonergeran speaks of a transcendent object of the pure desire to know, an insight he shares with Ignatius, who is confident that exploring our deepest desires will reveal that we desire to know God and to do His will." It is also striking that the intellectual pursuit in a Lonergan trajectory empowers and endows us with Ignatian consolation in the contemporary world: "This consolation is related to an illumination that insight can effect: in fact this world is intelligible, things do hold together, we can make sense of the universe and of our lives, we can overcome the fragmentation of knowledge, we can make true judgments, we can make good decisions, we can transcend ourselves to what is and to what is good."

Presence has become a significant topic and concern in contemporary literature in spiritual direction and counselling. However, its exact meaning and application seems difficult to grasp. On the one hand, presence looks too banal to be emphasized. On the other hand, it signifies one's disposition beyond the necessary skills of listening and counselling. Here, Ms. Mickie Wing Yin Yau does us a service in delineating the multi-dimensional nature of presence. She does this by integrating the rich Ignatian tradition, Gestalt therapy and Christian theology, allowing us to appreciate and ponder deeper the reality and significance of presence.

The dictum of Ignatian Spirituality, "finding God in all things," implies in the first place the feasibility of such to be present in order to be contemplated, so that it might allow the sense of God to emerge. Thus, the fundamental capacity of a spiritual director is to let such experience or being of the counterpart be present without obstructing it.

Apart from letting be, presence involves response from both parties. Ms. Yau utilizes the model of Self, Other and Situation, and Field theory to draw our attention to the impact of the interactive and co-emergent elements during the spiritual direction process. The spiritual director has the responsibility to heighten his/her consciousness in these happenings, apart from focusing on the task itself and its evaluation.

Elaborating further on other dimensions of presence as attunement, dialogue, contemplation and healing love, Ms. Yau offers us a fuller picture of her understanding of presence and its importance, which can render spiritual direction an effective service to elicit changes, conquer shame and build up oneself in God's love.

As an experienced educator and companion to the younger ones, Dr. So Ying Lun presents an Ignatian picture and art of accompaniment in our time. There are various ways to develop or form the younger generation. In Dr. So's conviction, however, accompaniment seems to be the most effective way to draw out individuals' potential in facing an unpredictable future, considering what is happening now in Hong Kong and around the world. As the present human condition is witnessing the erosion of authority, rise in automation, and a vacuum of higher meaning, a top-down approach in conveying knowledge and instruction can no longer satisfy the mind, let alone win the heart. Only by open, respectful and honest conversation can accompaniment elicit the capacity in the younger ones to confront genuine issues, even when there are no certain answers and with the possibility of mistakes being made. In this way, the younger ones can be equipped to face their future meaningfully.

In genuine accompaniment, certain qualities are expected from the accompanying person, Dr. So insists. They include safeguarding security, taking the accompanied person as he/she is rather than being judgmental, being focused on reality and truth, and fostering the capacity of independence of the counterpart.

To be a good companion is like learning an art. Dr. So emphasizes the flexibility and mutual adjustment in conversation, raising questions more than giving answers, being open and at ease to the possibility of being speechless in facing difficult questions in life, and allowing space and silence for the counterpart to explore, etc. This kind of respect and granting of freedom in exploration is another façade of Christian love in the Ignatian tradition.

Fr. Peter McIssac, in his rich experience of giving the Spiritual Exercises around the world, helps us understand and appreciate better the bridge between spiritual life and rendering justice in our life and ministry. First, he affirms we are not created, as the mystics of various traditions tell us, for ourselves but given the potential to be in union with God. Second, this encounter with God in prayer and especially in the context of the Spiritual Exercises grants us the love and new vision to hold the polarity between God and human, being and doing, contemplation and action, faith and justice, etc.

The keyword here is contemplation. From the second week of the Spiritual Exercises onwards, the retreatant, by seeing, desiring and choosing Christ, learns and experiences the dynamics towards the other in his/her interiority, which leads to compassion and consolation in God. Fr. McIssac reminds us here that consolation does not necessarily imply good feelings but genuine compassion towards the Lord and others. From this love comes the foundation of discernment in which one is able

to see and authentically respond to the suffering and vulnerability of the world, and live out genuine solidarity with the poor and needy. In the process of his articulation, he clarifies for us the relationship between consolation, contemplation, discernment, compassion and solidarity.

The whole movement of the Spiritual Exercises can be summarized as a conversion of the self to truly see our neighbour as they truly are, not simply what they appear to be. It is the fruit of our union with the Lord that heals any dichotomy of the interior life and our social reality.

In his interesting but serious article, Mr. Yan-ho Lai demonstrates self-appropriation in engaging in the social and political movement as a committed Catholic, in living out the discipleship even in the midst of great tension and conflicts in the present historical time of Hong Kong. Readers might not share his political stand or affiliation, but his seriousness in collecting facts from related historical events, in applying recognized intellectual tools to do theological reflection and in integrating with his spiritual formation in Ignatian tradition offers a practical way of proceeding for any Christian believer.

Mr. Lai highlights first the three spiritual tasks that puts us in a proper disposition to begin the later exercise, namely, an experiential self-understanding of being a beloved sinner in the eyes of God, familiarity by practice in the art of discernment of spirits, and an attitude of *Agere Contra*. Afterwards, he applies the skills of doing social analysis to understand the social infrastructure, cultural superstructure and the root cause of this socio-political movement in Hong Kong. Finally, by using Fr. Whelan's articulation of theological reflection, he picks up on the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions to identify the dynamics of progress, decline and redemption, which are the three

vectors of history from Lonergan's perspective. But this is not the end. The exercise is to arrive at its very beginning, namely the threefold disposition as the Ignatian qualities mentioned above, to appropriate our own calling and mission, in which Mr. Lai recommends 12 steps for our readers to refer to and practice.

Fr. Elton Fernandes, in his familiarity with the Spiritual Exercises, points out their wisdom and richness to us in learning leadership, a path less traveled but promised to be greatly rewarding. Similar to a spiritual guide who lets the retreatant interact directly with God, a good leader is to provide space, time and trust to let others explore and find answers or solutions for their own development. Putting the priority of ends over means, an inspiration from the first principle and foundation in the Spiritual Exercises, he/she is flexible and not afraid to make changes. In facing challenges, leadership, in its very depth, is to help others discover the core issues and existing patterns. Finally, a good leader is not afraid of failure. Rather, he/she sees and takes it as an opportunity to help the group and community surrender to God and discover the deeper meaning in life.

In his expertise on Ignatian philology, Fr. José García de Castro leads us to appreciate the richness in meaning of the word "consolation." His skill in drawing out its ecological implication as our contemporary concern through Spiritual Exercise no. 316, one of Ignatius' rules on discernment, is original and profound. What is striking in his interpretation of "can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself but only in the Creator of them all" is that it actually implies the unifying nature of this love and consolation in one's creatureliness towards others in creation. Ignatius indicates the simultaneous awe towards the Creator and all the creatures, though the source comes as

prior ontologically. Consolation is not exclusive but inclusive between God and creatures.

Moreover, in the author's remark, "the Holy Spirit through consolation 'draws me' toward the world, and I feel irretrievably linked to it by the one love that grounds all being. The creation and I...we are much more alike than we might suspect." This understanding, which echoes Fr. Jose's interpretation of Spiritual Exercise no. 60, brings home to the movement of equality in God's love between human beings and other creatures. The world is the mystical and ecological support of our action where the creatures and human beings are actualizing the cycle of Spirit – consolation – ministry – world – Spirit together.

I believe our readers will share my appreciation of the many unique and original insights in these seven articles and will find them interesting and rewarding. Hopefully, their contributions will stimulate your own reflections in your prayers and daily life, giving flesh and blood to this Ignatian tradition in the contemporary world by your continual exploration and practice.

I would like to give my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Lucia Cheung, Mr. Hessler Lee and Ms. Teenie Or, who, in many ways have supported my editing of this enjoyable journal.

Fr. Stephen Tong, SJ