

# A Spirituality of Synodality in the Spiritual Exercises

PAUL ROLPHY PINTO S.J.\*

## Introduction

The term synodality does not appear in the *Spiritual Exercises*<sup>1</sup>. However, a closer look at the method and dynamics of the *Exercises* promises to reveal some key aspects of a spirituality for synodality. The Synod on Synodality (2021-2024)<sup>2</sup> initiated by Pope Francis has stimulated much reflection in the Church and has led to taking a fresh look at the foundational Christian sources such as the Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers and Mothers, and Council documents. Such revisiting has revealed several insights that are contributing to a construction of a spirituality of synodality. In this article, I take a fresh look at the *Spiritual Exercises*, bearing in mind the question whether there is a spirituality of synodality emerging from it.

The title Synod on Synodality is accompanied by three terms, namely, participation, communion and mission, echoing the words of the International Theological Commission (ITC), “synodality denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together [participation] and gathering in assembly [communion], summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel [mission]” [70a]<sup>3</sup>. Synodality is an essential dimension of the Church. She is constitutively synodal and not occasionally so<sup>4</sup>. It is not only its way of proceeding but its very way of being. Synodality is the very nature of the Church. This vision was a felt reality in the early Church<sup>5</sup>, but down the centuries other

\* PAUL ROLPHY PINTO S.J. teaches Ignatian spirituality at the Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome), [pinto@unigre.it](mailto:pinto@unigre.it)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Josep Giménez Meliá, “La Sinodalidad, un Modo de Sentir con la Iglesia. La ‘Experiencia Sinodal’ de Ignacio de Loyola y sus Primeros Compañeros”, *Manresa* 94, no. 373 (2022), 324.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis extended the duration of the Synod until October 2024. This decision was announced on 16 October 2022.

<sup>3</sup> ITC, “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (2 March 2018)”, available at [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_sinodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html) [access 25.10.2022]. Here after SLMC. The numbers within square brackets refer to paragraph numbers.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Carmen Peña García, “Sinodalidad: Profundizando en la Recepción Eclesial del Concilio Vaticano II”, *Manresa* 94, no. 373 (2022), 317.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Xavier Alegre Santamaría, “Claves Para Convertirnos a La Sinodalidad”, *Manresa* 94, no. 373 (2022), 336; Nathalie Bécquart, “Synodality: A Path of Personal and Communal Conversion”, *The Way* 61, no. 3 (2022), 65.

visions have taken prominence. Vatican II, in its Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* (LG), has reinstated an ancient model of the Church, that of the pilgrim people of God.

Chapter IV of SLMC is titled, “Conversion to renew synodality”. This implies not only a legislative reform of the Church but acquiring a new consciousness. It is not enough to *know* conceptually that Church is synodal. A further and more important step needs to be taken. A Christian has to *feel* that s/he is *being* synodal<sup>6</sup>, in participating in the life the Church, in fostering communion, and in evangelising (being missionary disciple, EG<sup>7</sup> [120], SLMC [104]). Acquisition of a new consciousness needs an adequate mediation, that of a spirituality that inculcates it<sup>8</sup>. The spirituality emerging from the *Exercises* has the potential, to a large extent, to generate such a consciousness in its practitioners.

Acquisition of new consciousness is a process. I will outline this process in three sections, without pretending to be exhaustive. In the first, I will highlight the dialogical method in making the Exercises. In the second I will present the Ignatian way of recognising the personal charisms. In the last section, I will comment on some key aspects of the Rules for Thinking and Feeling within the Church (cf. *SpEx* [352-370]<sup>9</sup>).

## 1. Modo y orden (SpEx [2]): The Method

In the first contemplation of the Second Week, that on the Incarnation, Ignatius invites the exercitant to contemplate the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, “to hear what the Divine Persons are saying, namely: ‘Let us bring about the redemption of the human race, etc.’” (*SpEx* [107]). The dialogue between the persons of the Trinity sets the model for the method of dialogue in the *Exercises*, which will be explained shortly. Pedro Arrupe firmly established the Trinitarian inspiration of Ignatius in a talk he gave to the participants of a course conducted by the Ignatian Centre of Spirituality, Rome, in 1980<sup>10</sup>. In the talk he said, “Each of the persons is not “in itself,” nor does it

<sup>6</sup> “It is not enough to have a synod; you must be synod.” Pope Francis, Address for the Audience with the Major Archbishop, the Metropolitans, and the Permanent Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, 5 July, 2019. At <https://www.synod.va/en/highlights/towards-a-spirituality-for-synodality.html> [access 04.11.2022].

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium*: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World (24 November 2013)”, available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html#We\\_are\\_all\\_missionary\\_disciples](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#We_are_all_missionary_disciples) [access 25.10.2022].

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Commission on Spirituality Sub-Group, “Spirituality for synodality, Towards a Spirituality for Synodality”, available at <https://www.synod.va/en/highlights/towards-a-spirituality-for-synodality.html> [access 25.10.2022].

<sup>9</sup> *SpEx = Spiritual Exercises*. Text in Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> English translation Pedro Arrupe, “The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism”, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33, no. 3 (2001): 1–57.

belong to itself except inasmuch as it is simultaneously related to and gives itself completely to the other two. The being of each of the three Persons is a pure and complete *extasis*, a going-out, a self-giving, a vital impulse toward the other two”<sup>11</sup>. Though the contemplation of the Incarnation in which the exercitant contemplates the Trinity in dialogue is placed at the beginning of the Second Week, it offers the framework for dialogue to be used throughout the *Exercises*.

Following the lead of Roland Barthes<sup>12</sup> S. Arzubialde and J. García de Castro identify a dialogical structure in the *Exercises* at four levels<sup>13</sup>. The very structure of the book is a result of an interplay of four different ‘conversations’. In the first level, it is Ignatius (or his text) who is in conversation with the one “who gives to another a way and plan” (*modo y orden, SpEx* [2]) during the retreat. To a receptive giver of the Exercises Ignatius suggests what material is to be given for prayer, when and how to give it, when to move from one Week to another, and when to give different rules and instructions that are scattered in the text of the *Exercises*. Also, from the text the giver learns the right posture s/he is to adopt, that of a certain neutrality, before the exercitant.

The interlocutors of the second level of dialogue are the one giving and the one receiving the Exercises. The relationship is that of mutual trust, specified in *SpEx* [2]: “it must be presupposed that every good Christian should be readier to justify than to condemn a neighbour’s statement”. The same number further states that, when things stated are not clear, clarification has to be sought, rather than jumping into hasty conclusions or precipitated judgments. The giver of the Exercises is not an instructor or teacher but one who donates or transmits faithfully what s/he has received previously. In this sense, the one giving ‘accompanies’ the spiritual journey of the exercitant.

The third level dialogue is directed to God from the exercitant. After having received the text from the giver, s/he prays with what is received. The content of the dialogue may contain words, prayers, images, colloquies, and even silence. The exercitant addresses God and awaits a response from God.

The final level of dialogue is God “speaking” to the exercitant. God communicates through signs and interior movements. The exercitant is not the one generating them. His/her posture is rather that of active receptivity, letting the movements cause consolations or desolations, peace or disturbance, lucidity or obscurity (cf. *SpEx* [316-317]). The one giving remains, for the sake of objectivity, “in the centre like the pointer of a balance” (*SpEx* [15]) allowing freedom to the exercitant so that s/he can articulate accurately the movements experienced in his/her prayer. This allows perceiving what God may be communicating to the exercitant.

<sup>11</sup> Arrupe, “The Trinitarian Inspiration”, 39; Cf. Julia Violero, “La Conversación Espiritual Ignaciana, Experiencia Sinodal”, *Manresa* 95, no. 373 (2022), 354.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> Santiago G. Arzubialde and José García de Castro, “Introduction”, in *El ‘Autógrafo’ de Los ‘Ejercicios Espirituales’ = The ‘Autograph’ Copy of the ‘Spiritual Exercises’*, ed. Santiago G. Arzubialde and José García de Castro Valdés, trans. Barton T. Geger (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2022), 84-86.

The fourfold conversation that is described above can also be described as a fourfold narrative conversation. In the first, the one giving narrates faithfully the history to be meditated or contemplated (cf. *SpEx* [2]). In prayer it is the Gospel that narrates the story of Jesus to the exercitant, and in turn the exercitant, moved by what is contemplated, narrates his/her story to Jesus and to the other actors in the Gospel scene considered. The fourth narrative takes place when the exercitant narrates to the one giving the Exercises what is experienced in his/her prayer.<sup>14</sup>

While the general Rules of Discernment are contained in the text of the *Exercises*, it does not speak of discernment in community in an explicit manner. Yet, when the early companions of Ignatius, those who had made the Exercises accompanied by him, gathered together during the Lent of 1539 in Rome to deliberate with regard to the future of the group, they practiced discernment in community<sup>15</sup>. From the making of the Exercises, they had learnt the essential elements of a spiritual conversation: attentive listening to what the Spirit was telling them in prayer, intentional speaking in conversation with the one giving Exercises, and recognising the movements of Spirit (spiritual consolation and desolation)<sup>16</sup>. All the First Companions, in the practice of spiritual conversation, *participated* in the deliberations and together discerned what God was telling them. Spiritual conversation is also the method proposed for the synodal journey of the Church<sup>17</sup>.

## 2. The Role of Charisms: Contemplation to Attain Love

One of the earliest examples of synodality in the Old Testament is to be found in Nm 11: 16-30 (cf. Ex 18: 13ff; Dt 1:5ff). The Israelites are in the desert and are complaining because they are not getting meat to eat. Moses voices this concern with YHWH. YHWH asks Moses to gather seventy elders of Israel in the tent of meeting to speak with them and to endow them with the power of the Spirit. When they gather in the tent, the Spirit

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Paul Rolphy Pinto, "Parables in the Spiritual Exercises: An Exercise in Storytelling", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 86, no. 3 (2022), 238-239.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Josep Giménez Meliá, "La Sinodalidad, un Modo de Sentir con la Iglesia. La 'Experiencia Sinodal' de Ignacio de Loyola y sus Primeros Compañeros", *Manresa* 94, no. 373 (2022), 332; Joseph F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience: 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and his Companions. An Exploration into the Spirit and Aims of the Society of Jesus as Revealed in the Founders' Proposed Papal Letter Approving the Society* (Chicago (IL): Loyola Press, 1997), 282-284; Josep M. Rambla and Josep M. Lozano, eds., *Apostolic Discernment in Common*, Guides Eides 13 (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia, 2022), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Arturo Sosa, Letter to All Major Superiors on Discerning in Common the Universal Apostolic Preferences, 20 September 2018, Available at <https://www.sjweb.info/adusum/documents/docslstLCt2.cfm> [access 30.10.2022]

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops, Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality, Appendix B [8], available at <https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html> [access 30.10.2022]; Piero Coda, *Chiesa Sinodale nell'oggi della Storia: La via del Discernimento Comunitario*, ed. Alessandro Clemenza (Roma: Città Nuova, 2022), 69.

comes down upon them and they prophesy. Just then a young man comes to Moses and reports that El'dad and Mē'dad, listed among the elders but who had remained in the camp, had also received the spirit and were prophesying. Joshua implores Moses to stop them. "But Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!'" (v. 29).

A similar episode is narrated in the Gospel of Mk 9: 38-41. John, probably presuming that they had done the right thing, reports to Jesus how they had forbidden someone who was casting out demons in His name. To this Jesus responds, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us" (vv. 39-40).

From the two examples cited, it can be affirmed that God donates special gifts to whom God wishes. Rather than for personal benefit alone, they are given more for the benefit of others, i.e., for the common good, for the building up of the community of the Church. The source of the gift, whether it is given to one or to another, in one form or another, is one and the same, the Holy Spirit. The gifts descending from the Holy Spirit with the purpose of building up the Church are generally called charisms in the doctrine of St. Paul (cf. 1Cor 7: 7; 1Cor 12: 4-11; Rom 12: 6-8; LG [12])<sup>18</sup>.

By virtue of baptism "God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith - *sensus fidei* - which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively" (SLMC [56]). While this is certain, Christians need to exercise this "connaturality", i.e., to learn to perceive and receive what is truly of God. It is here that the Ignatian doctrine, as outlined in the Contemplation to Attain Love (*SpEx* [230-237]), comes in handy.

The Contemplation consists in recalling to memory all the benefits received: "creation, redemption [habitual grace] and particular gifts [actual grace]"<sup>19</sup>. The remembrance leads the exercitant to recognise or acknowledge God's self-gift to him/her, how God dwells in him/her, and how God works for him/her. The exercitant is invited to seek *interior knowledge* of God's self-gift, in-dwelling, and working. S/he is to ponder these realities with deep affection. The acknowledgment leads to deep gratitude because the exercitant realises that s/he does not merit any of the above. Everything is a gift, i.e., is absolutely free. This realisation also fills the exercitant with joy and makes him/her humble. While the exercitant receives the gifts with overwhelming gratitude, s/he also becomes aware that they do not belong to him/her and that s/he cannot claim ownership of them. With heartfelt love, from the depths of the heart, there emerges this prayer:

<sup>18</sup> Toni Witwer, *I Carismi nella Chiesa e la Grazia della Vocazione* (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012), 78-79, 115.

<sup>19</sup> Ignatius does not make an explicit mention of Thomistic categories of grace, yet he seems to make a distinction implicitly. Here, for instance, the first two benefits refer to sanctifying or habitual grace (cf. *SpEx* [320], the grace that always remains) and the last to *gratia gratis data* or actual grace. This last is a charism, properly speaking. Though St Thomas does not use the term charism, *gratia gratis data* corresponds to it. Cf. Witwer, *I Carismi nella Chiesa*, 85-86.

Take Lord and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You gave it all to me; to you I return it. All is yours, dispose of it entirely according to your will. Give me only the love of you, together with your grace for that is enough for me (*SpEx* [234]).

Cultivating the sensitivity to “what is truly of God”, i.e., to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, involves these simple steps: remembering the benefits received, recognising-acknowledging them as gifts, rendering thanks, rejoicing, and giving in return. The grace that the exercitant seeks at the beginning of the contemplation is “...so that acknowledging this [good received] with gratitude, I may be able to love and serve his Divine Majesty in everything” (*SpEx* [233]). Thus, the final purpose is to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things, i.e., to use the gifts for the common good or the edification of the Church. The process of building up the Church begins with acknowledging God’s gifts to oneself in order to place them at the service of others. The grace sought is to find God “in all things”, of which humans are part. One who learns to perceive, appreciate, and receive God’s gifts to oneself also realises that God acts in a similar way with others. Others too receive God’s gifts for the benefit of the community and for the edification of the Church. The exercitant, with a heightened sensitivity to perceive the action of God in creation, would come to this realisation with a certain spontaneity and ease. Just as s/he rejoices in one’s own gifts, s/he also learns to rejoice in the gifts of others because they too are at the service of the Church (cf. Phil 4: 4-9). Jealousy of the gifts of others and competitiveness, seen in the two Scripture passages considered above, may be the initial reactions of those who fail to acknowledge and appreciate God’s gratuitous gifts. The exercise of the Contemplation to Attain Love helps to cultivate the deep sensitivity allowing one to perceive and receive God’s gifts in oneself and others and to place them joyfully at the service of others for the building up of the Church.

The fourth point of the Contemplation is of special significance while one considers the charismatic gifts or the gifts of the Spirit. It states,

To see how all that is good and every gift descends from on high. Thus, my limited power descends from the supreme and infinite power above - and similarly with justice, goodness, pity, mercy, etc. - as rays descend from the sun and waters from a fountain (*SpEx* [237]).

Ignatius is “suspiciously silent”<sup>20</sup> about the Holy Spirit in the *Exercises*. In 1527, as a prelude to the inquisitorial process in Salamanca, the subprior of the Dominicans challenged him, “You are not learned men, [...] and you speak about virtues and vices; but no one can speak about these except in one of two ways: either through learning or through the Holy Spirit. If not through learning, then through the Holy Spirit” (*Autob* [65])<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> “Apart from a few gospel citations in the Mysteries of the Life of Christ where the Spirit is expressly mentioned [*SpEx* 261-312], the Spirit is mentioned just once in the book [...] precisely in [...] [365]”. Victor Codina, *A Silent Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Ignatian Exercises*, trans. Eric Soutworth, Guides Eides 6 (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia, 2016), 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Autob* = *Autobiography*. Text in Parmananda Roque Divarkar, ed., *A Pilgrim’s Testament: The Memoirs of Ignatius of Loyola* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

The context of the question was the errors of Erasmus and the *Alumbrados*. Ignatius, on his guard, saw a trap in the question and chose to remain silent. This silence has been carried over to the text of the *Exercises*<sup>22</sup>. Yet, it would be naïve to conclude that the Holy Spirit is absent in the *Exercises*. Juan C. Chong, for example, has called the fourth point of the Contemplation to Attain love an Ignatian Pentecost<sup>23</sup>. He argues that “all that is good and every gift descends from on high” is an allusion to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the few gifts that Ignatius lists in [237] are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The method proposed by Ignatius to come to the awareness leading one to perceive and receive God’s gifts includes both gifts as habitual graces and gifts as actual graces or charismatic gifts (*gratia gratis data*). Ignatius calls these latter “particular gifts” [234] and lists a few in [237]. When the Holy Spirit wishes to bestow charismatic gifts on the faithful, the risk is that, if they have not cultivated connaturality to the divine gifts, the gifts might go unnoticed. Thus, the spirituality of the Contemplation to Attain Love can be conducive to cultivating a synodal consciousness.

### 3. Rules for Thinking and Feeling within the Church<sup>24</sup>

The *Spiritual Exercises* was composed at a time when the *Alumbrado* heresy was rife in Spain and Martin Luther was drifting apart from the Roman Church. Accusations against Ignatius, from those suspecting him of being an *alumbrado*, weren’t lacking. In fact, Ignatius’ teaching has some affinity with the core postulate of the *alumbrados*, as they claimed that they were directly and immediately inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. *SpEx* [15])<sup>25</sup>. While they bypassed the mediatory role of the Church and its sacraments, Ignatius firmly established his orthodoxy by placing the Rules for Thinking and Feeling within the Church at the end of the *Exercises*. Rules 1-13 were composed in Paris in the context of the Erasmian doctrine, while Rules 14-18 were composed in Rome in the context of Lutheran doctrine<sup>26</sup>. A major concern of these rules is the conservation of the unity of the Church<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Codina, *A Silent Presence*, 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Juan Chechon Chong, “La Contemplación para Alcanzar Amor [230-237], El Pentecostés Ignaciano”, *Manresa* 72 (2000): 233–303; Joseph Bracken, “The Contemplation to Attain Love as an Experience of Pentecost: Theological Implications”, *The Way* 52, no. 4 (2013): 71–82.

<sup>24</sup> M. Ivens translates the title as “Towards a true attitude of Mind within the Church”. cf. Ivens, *Understanding Spiritual Exercises*, 248.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Codina, *A Silent Presence*, 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Santiago G. Arzubialde, *Ejercicios Espirituales de s. Ignacio: Historia y Análisis*, 2a ed. (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal terrae, 2009), 918; Federico Lombardi, “**Le ‘Regole per avere l’autentico sentire nella Chiesa militante’**”, *Ignaziana* 25 (2018), 48 (available at [www.ignaziana.org](http://www.ignaziana.org)).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Adolfo María Chércoles, *Reglas Para El Sentido Verdadero Que En La Iglesia Militante Debemos Tener: La Convivencia Como Reto* (Centro Loyola), available at <https://www.centroloyola.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/La-convivencia-como-reto.-Reglas-para-sentir-en-la-Iglesia-Adolfo-Chercoles-SJ.pdf>, 6, 13.

In this section I will not be reflecting on all the Rules, but I will consider those elements that contribute to a spirituality of synodality. For John Chrysostom ‘Church and Synod are synonymous’ and Church is a name standing for ‘walking together’<sup>28</sup>.

He explains that the Church is actually the assembly convoked to give God thanks and glory like a choir, a harmonic reality which holds everything together (σύστημα), since, by their reciprocal and ordered relations, those who compose it converge in αγάπη and ὁμονοία (common mind) (SLMC [3]).

Was Ignatius familiar with the teaching of St. Chrysostom? The possibility cannot be ruled out, given the fact that Ignatius studied during seven years in Paris. Some synergy can be noticed between the thoughts of Chrysostom and those of Ignatius.

### **Listening**

The first section of this article dealt with a dialogical-conversational method of making the Exercises. Listening and speaking are constitutive of this method. While intratrinitarian relationships serve as a model for conversation, the First Rule [353] outlines the quality of listening. The rule speaks of ‘obeying’ the mother Church. This obeying, going by the root sense of word in Latin, *ab-audire*, implies listening. And how should one listen? By “Laying aside all judgment of our own we should keep our mind disposed and ready”. A superficial reading of this statement might mean adopting an uncritical attitude. Yet Ignatius is only asking one to lay aside one’s own judgement and to listen with an open mind. Laying aside one’s own judgment provides the key to right listening. One usually tends to have a pre-judgment of the other which could be either positive or negative. When the pre-judgment is negative, one closes one’s mind and does not listen. When the pre-judgment is positive the opposite happens. One swallows everything the other is saying. Setting aside one’s own judgment is not the same as not having a judgment, but choosing to listen without prejudice either positive or negative. This setting aside or self-emptying is the indispensable humility required to listen truly. After listening to what is said, one may apply one’s critical judgment to evaluate the worth of what is said. In this way, one does not err in listening.

Misunderstandings and misconceptions often take place due to a lack of adequate listening. When one does not understand what has been said, the right thing to do is to ask for clarification (cf. *SpEx* [22]). What should one do when one does not agree with what the other is saying or does not perceive as coming from God what the other is saying, especially the other in authority? For Ignatius, the discovery of God’s will is a dialogical process. The dialogue should be carried forward through the art of representation, i.e., of presenting again. How one should re-present is outlined succinctly in an

<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis, Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151017\\_50-anniversario-sinodo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html) [access 03.11.2022].



instruction Ignatius wrote to the members of Society on 1 December 1554. It has the title “The Method of Dealing with Superiors”<sup>29</sup>. One should draw the attention of the superior to details that he might have ignored or overlooked and should propose the matter in subjunctive mode and not in an imperative mode. In this manner, the whole process of listening and speaking becomes a *participative* process<sup>30</sup>.

### ***Praising***

Rules 2-9 begin with and Rules 11 and 18 contain the verb ‘to praise’. In the list of things to be praised there appear oral confessions, reception of the Blessed Sacrament, frequent attendance at Mass, hymns, psalms, long prayers, canonical hours, vows of religion, the relics of saints and their veneration, praying to saints, stations [of the cross], pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, crusade bulls, lighting of candles, fasts and abstinences, interior and exterior penances, church buildings and their decorations, veneration of what the images represent, precepts of the Church, decrees of those in authority, the traditions of elders, positive as well as scholastic theology, and servile fear of God.

The list is lengthy. What is the rationale behind this attitude of praising? In the list there appear things that Erasmus and the Protestants condemned and ridiculed. There appears a good many things that pertain to popular religiosity<sup>31</sup>. There appear charisms pertaining to religious orders. There appear canonical hours that were prayed in choir in the time of Ignatius. He sought for the Society exemption from praying them in choir, yet he praises that practice. Exclusion of something in one’s way of proceeding does not make it bad. The reasons of Ignatius for excluding any practice was apostolic. Basically, what Ignatius is praising is all that is good because all good descends from above (cf. Mk 9: 38-41; *SpEx* [237]). He promotes a positive attitude towards every good, both things and persons. A positive attitude does not imply the adoption of but recognition of all that is good in the Church. Recognising the good in others and praising it opens the way for dialogue and conversation, even when the other is an adversary. Beginning by perceiving and affirming the good in others is a way forward to creating communion. Beginning with a focus on the differences divides.

The oft-repeated ‘to praise’ is to be understood in line with the praise of God appearing in the Principle and Foundation (cf. *SpEx* [23]), i.e., as expressive of respect filled with gratuitous reverence. It is not mere flattery or an act of self-interest aimed at

<sup>29</sup> Text in William J. Young, ed., *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Chicago (IL): Loyola University Press, 1959), 390-392.

<sup>30</sup> What I have described in these two paragraphs is the desired way of proceeding. Yet, as Philip Endean affirms, the question of authority in the Church is a more complex issue. Treating it here is outside a scope of this article. Cf. Philip Endean, “Ignatius and Church Authority”, *Way Supplement* 70 (1990), 76-90.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Víctor Codina, *Ignacio Ayer y Hoy*, Colección Jesuitas [Mensajero] (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2020), 186.

winning the favour of influential persons (cf. Rule 12, *SpEx* [364]). The best Biblical image of such praise is David's dance before the Ark of the Covenant. Setting aside his royal attire he danced naked, i.e., in complete freedom, divesting all ego (cf. 2Sam 6: 14-22)<sup>32</sup>. Only such disinterested praise opens the way to a genuine dialogue.

Beginning with praise is the Ignatian way of creating communion in the Church. Ignatius relates all the good he perceives to one source, God. Failure to acknowledge the gifts of others and to rejoice in the good they do for the edification of the Church gives rise to jealousy, competition, and rivalry and eventually to divisions in the Church and in society at large. Ignatius recognises the same Spirit at work "between Christ our Lord, the bridegroom, and the Church, his bride [...], who governs and directs us for the good of our souls" (Rule 13, *SpEx* [365]). Applying this principle, Ignatius would see no contradiction between hierarchical gifts (received through the laying on of hands) and charismatic gifts, for they descend from the same source (cf. [1, 8, 10])<sup>33</sup>. The ministers of the Church have the responsibility of recognising the charismatic gifts of the baptised and of promoting them for the good of the Church (cf. *PO* [4,9])<sup>34</sup>.

### ***Hierarchical-Militant Church***

For Ignatius, the Church is both mother and the bride of Christ. He also employs the adjectives hierarchical [352, 365] and militant [352]. Notice that he consistently uses the term 'hierarchical Church' and not 'hierarchy of the Church'<sup>35</sup>. Hierarchy of the Church refers to the governing authority in the Church, such as is necessary in any organisation, whereas hierarchical Church includes everyone, all the people of God. Kolvenbach gives the following insightful explanation of the hierarchical Church: "The divine grace that is given to the world is *mediated* by each believer, of high and low

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Rules for Thinking, Judging, Feeling in the Post-Councilar Church", *Review of Ignatian Spirituality (CIS)* 35, no. 1 (2004), 23; Lombardi, "**Le 'Regole per avere l'autentico sentire nella Chiesa militante'**", 57.

<sup>33</sup> *IE* = Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding the Relationship Between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and the Mission of the Church (15 May 2016)", available at [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20160516\\_iuvenescit-ecclesia\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20160516_iuvenescit-ecclesia_en.html) [access 05.11.2022], Piero Coda, *Chiesa Sinodale nell'oggi della Storia: La via del Discernimento Comunitario*, ed. Alessandro Clemenza (Roma: Città Nuova, 2022), 115, 118.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *PO* = Vatican II, Decree on The Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1965, available at [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html) [access 05.11.2022]; Alegre Santamaría, "Claves para Convertirnos", 337, 344-345; Alessandro Clemenza, "Sinodalità e Discernimento Comunitario", in *La Sinodalità Nella Vita e nella Missione della Chiesa: Commento a più Voci al Documento della Commissione Teologica Internazionale*, ed. Piero Coda and Roberto Repole (Bologna: EDB-Edizioni Dehoniane, 2019), 109.

<sup>35</sup> On the preference of "hierarchical" over "hierarchy" see Lombardi, "**Le 'Regole per avere l'autentico sentire nella Chiesa militante'**", 53.

estate, according to his or her life and place [189]. Each person, as a member of the Church, exercises a responsibility in the work of salvation”<sup>36</sup>. Pope Francis interprets the Ignatian expression ‘hierarchical Church’ as the ‘holy and faithful people of God’. To think and feel within the Church is to be in the midst of this people. It is an experience of the whole people of God, pastors and faithful together<sup>37</sup>.

This hierarchical Church is also militant. The term Church Militant might evoke a militaristic image of the Church, owing to her history of participation in warfare, often causing much bloodshed and damage. Erasmus was employing the image of a *miles* (soldier) for a Christian in his work *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1501). The *miles* of Erasmus is one who engages in a spiritual combat, not a physical one, following the teaching of Apostle Paul in 2Tm 2:3 and Eph 6: 13. This interpretation was prevalent when Ignatius was composing the *Exercises*. According to Lombardi, the militant Church of the Rules is a Church that lives and walks in the world, engaged in the fight between good and evil<sup>38</sup>. Though the journey of the Exercises is a personal journey, in the contemplation the Call of the Eternal King, Christ addresses “all and [to] each one in particular” (*SpEx* [95]). All are called, together, to participate in the mission of Christ of “conquering the whole world and every enemy”. The communitarian dimension of the mission reappears in the Election. Ignatius writes, “they [matters about which we want to make an election] should engage<sup>39</sup> the person in the service of God within our holy mother, the hierarchical Church” (*SpEx* [170]). One makes an election in order to serve God *within* the Church community. In more recent times the image of Church as a pilgrim people of God has gained currency. ‘Moving forward in the world’ is a factor common both in being a *miles* and in being a pilgrim. “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature” (*AG* [2])<sup>40</sup>. To be a member of the hierarchical Church implies being an active member of the body of the Church, participating in the life of the Church, walking together with the others in fulfilling the mission of the Church<sup>41</sup>.

## Conclusion

The *Spiritual Exercises* does not give a full-fledged toolkit of a spirituality of synodality. Yet, taking a fresh look at it in the light of the Synod on Synodality one sees that the

<sup>36</sup> Kolvenbach, “The Rules for Thinking, Judging, Feeling”, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Elías Royón, “Cosa ha detto Papa Francesco ai Gesuiti?”, *Civiltà Cattolica* 3990 (2016), 513; Lombardi, “**Le ‘Regole per avere l’autentico sentire nella Chiesa militante’**”, 53-54.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Lombardi, “**Le ‘Regole per avere l’autentico sentire nella Chiesa militante’**”, 46.

<sup>39</sup> The Spanish Autograph text has the word *militen*.

<sup>40</sup> *AG = Ad Gentes*. Vatican II decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, Available at [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html) [access 03.11.2022].

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Endean, “Ignatius and Church Authority”, 82. Here Endean interprets Ignatius’ image of the Church as that of a body permanently on mission.

experience of the Exercises prompts the practitioner to discover essential elements required in order to create a synodal consciousness, a deep awareness of being a living cell of the Church. The dialogical-conversational method employed in making the Exercises creates a consciousness of being a participative member of the Church. Learning to acknowledge one's own gifts and those of others creates the consciousness of being in communion with all the baptised and the awareness that the charisms are at the service of the common good. And, finally, answering the call of Christ the King to follow Him fosters the consciousness of being on mission and of ordering all one's decisions in service of the Church for the greater glory of God.