

Ignatius in Jerusalem. Significance for the Spiritual Exercises and for Ignatian spirituality

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Riassunto

Questo saggio esplora il significato del pellegrinaggio di Ignazio di Loyola a Gerusalemme per gli Esercizi spirituali e la spiritualità ignaziana. Sebbene la storiografia privilegi Roma, Gerusalemme ebbe un ruolo formativo nello sviluppo spirituale di Ignazio. Il viaggio segna il passaggio da motivazioni penitenziali a un orientamento missionario, influenzando le meditazioni negli *Esercizi spirituali*, in particolare l'Ascensione e la "Chiamata del Re". Le esperienze in Terra Santa hanno plasmato le dimensioni apostoliche, incarnative e missionarie della spiritualità gesuitica, sottolineando la rilevanza di Gerusalemme per la missione e il dialogo interreligioso oggi.

Abstract

This essay explores the significance of Ignatius of Loyola's pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian spirituality. While historical accounts often emphasize Rome, Jerusalem played a formative role in his spiritual development. Ignatius' journey reflects a shift from penitential motives to a mission-oriented approach, influencing his methods in the *Spiritual Exercises*, particularly contemplations on the Ascension and the "Call of the King." His experiences in the Holy Land shaped the apostolic, incarnational, and missionary dimensions of Jesuit spirituality, highlighting the continued relevance of Jerusalem for contemporary Jesuit mission and interfaith dialogue.

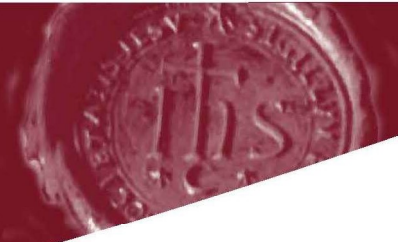
Parole chiave

Ignazio, Gerusalemme, Esercizi spirituali, pellegrinaggio, Monte degli Ulivi, spiritualità gesuitica.

Keywords

Ignatius, Jerusalem, Spiritual Exercises, pilgrimage, Mount of Olives, Jesuit spirituality.

The origins of Ignatius of Loyola's spirituality date back to his conversion at his parents' castle, and historians trace the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* back to his period of inner transformation in Manresa soon after. This period is said to have been his actual "early church." In addition,



his studies in Barcelona, Alcalá de Henares, Salamanca, and Paris, shaped the *Spiritual Exercises*. In between lies his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But historiography replaces the significance of Jerusalem quickly by Rome. His spirituality would only find its genuine nature in the structural-ecclesiological expression. Thus, his pilgrimage to the Holy Land seems to me often underestimated, and I would like to take a closer look at it. However, this essay does not reconstruct Ignatius' pilgrimage to Jerusalem historically. Paul Rolphy Pinto has done it recently.¹ Instead, I explore three questions in depth: 1. What motivated Ignatius to travel to Jerusalem? Can he even be described as a pilgrim? 2. Why did he insist on returning to the Mount of Olives on September 23, 1523, when he realized that he would have to leave the Holy Land the next day? 3. How is his pilgrimage reflected in the *Spiritual Exercises* and in his spirituality? Finally, it is important to briefly outline the significance that Jerusalem could have for Jesuits and Ignatian spirituality today.

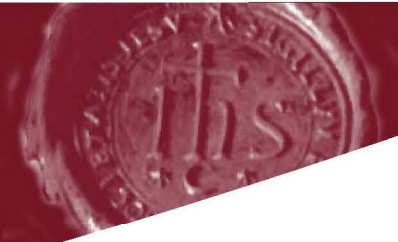
1. Ignatius in Jerusalem: More than a pilgrimage

If we ask about Ignatius' motivation for making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, we can rightly refer to his reading during his conversion.² (PJ 5f) Ludolf von Sachsen's *Vita Christi* speaks of how important it is for faith to walk spiritually with Christ through the land. The devout Christian should join Jesus, the itinerant preacher, together with his disciples.³ The *Legenda aurea* recounts the lives of the apostles and New Testament figures in the Holy Land, as well as the saints whom Ignatius wanted to emulate. For him, however, making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem means above all doing penance, a common motivation for medieval pilgrimage. When he leaves his parents' castle, leaves his donkey behind in Montserrat, hands over the sword to the Mother of God, and puts on the pilgrim's robe. (PJ 13-18) These are clear signs that he wants to go to Jerusalem not as a knight but as a penitent pilgrim.

¹ Paul Rolphy Pinto, "Ignatius' Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: A Window into his Spirituality", *Ignaziana* 39 (2025), 19–46.

² Andreas Falkner, "Was las Iñigo de Loyola auf seinem Krankenlager", *Geist und Leben* 61, no. 4 (1988), 260–261.

³ Ludolf von Sachsen, *Das Leben Jesu Christi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1994), 9-15.



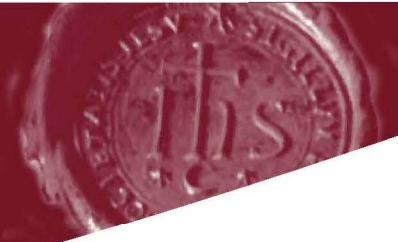
"And when he thought of going barefoot to Jerusalem and eating only herbs and performing all the other austerities, he had read about the saints performing... But all he wanted to do, as soon as he recovered his health, was to make the journey to Jerusalem, as mentioned above, with as many flagellations and abstinences as a generous mind inspired by God would demand." (PJ 8f)

During his general confession at Montserrat, he confides to his confessor that he wants to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. (PJ 17) Until then, he had not told anyone about it. After his return, he thought of perhaps entering the Carthusian monastery in Seville. (PJ 12)

However, in his reconstruction of Ignatius' motivation for pilgrimage, Paul Rolphy Pinto shows that it shifted in the following months in Manresa.⁴ Ignatius emerges from this period of prayer and fasting, which plunged him into scruples, feeling inwardly liberated. He learns from his confessor and decides to no longer confess old sins. (PJ 22f) At no point did he consider abandoning his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, his penitential motivations disappeared.

His entire pilgrimage plan changes. From Manresa onwards, it is documented that he wants to travel to Jerusalem to stay there. Ignatius conceals this intention because otherwise he will not be allowed to travel on a pilgrim ship. As a pilgrim, he wants to visit the holy sites. Then he wants to leave the pilgrim group and stay. Is he only using the pilgrim ship to get to Jerusalem, but is no longer a pilgrim himself? That would be an exaggeration. But we can call him a one-way pilgrim. In Jerusalem, he wants to be close to Jesus, visit the holy sites, and help souls. (PJ 45) In fact, this means that he wants to convert the unbelievers, the Muslims, on site. After all, his conversion experience has included a sense of mission from the very beginning. This is already evident when, on his way to Montserrat, he argues with a Muslim about the virgin birth of Mary and wants to convert him. (PJ 15f)

⁴ Pinto, "Ignatius' Pilgrimage," 19-46.

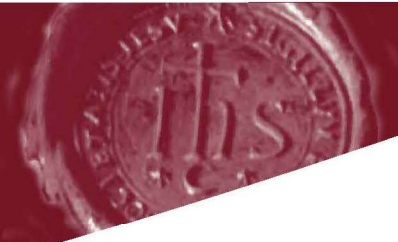


Ignatius' idea of pilgrimage is thus underpinned by a religious motivation that can be traced back to the historical and political theology of his time, Christopher Michael Staab and Paul Oberholzer have both discussed at length:⁵ At the end of the 15th century, the political theology of the House of Aragon merged with that of Castile under the Catholic Monarchs. Aragon saw itself in the tradition of the Old Testament Davidic royal dynasty and dreamed of expanding beyond the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula to North Africa and the Holy Land. Aragon claimed the right to rule in an apocalyptic Jerusalem. Castile, on the other hand, saw itself as a victorious ally in Catholic rule and mission, especially after the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the fall of Granada, which stood for Muslim-occupied Jerusalem. And even the royal house of Portugal should not be forgotten in this context. His fleet sailed around Africa and reached East Africa and Ethiopia via the Cape of Good Hope. In this way, it approached the Muslim Middle East from the south. After all, at the beginning of the 16th century, King Ferdinand II's conquest of Jerusalem was both a utopian and a realpolitik goal.

Ignatius, who had spent his years at court in Valladolid and Navarre, must have been familiar with this theological, missionary, and apocalyptic self-image of the royal houses of his time. Jerusalem played a central role in it. Even though he did not set out for Jerusalem as a knight, refused the help of the nobility, and avoided royal envoys on his way (PJ 35), he remained influenced by this theology and spirituality. This became even more apparent after his studies in Paris. In 1534, when he and his companions took their vows in Montmartre and set off for Jerusalem (PJ 85f), they were no longer pilgrims. Their goal was to be a spiritual and theological mission in the Holy Land, which, however, was not to be realized.

To describe Ignatius merely as a pilgrim to Jerusalem, even in 1523, is therefore too imprecise and narrows the view. From his journey to Jerusalem and his forced return, to his vows on Montmartre after his studies, his conviction to live and work in the Holy Land remained strong. Ignacio Tellechea rightly entitles the large middle section of his biography of Ignatius,

⁵ Christopher Michael Staab, "The Desire for Jerusalem: Historical Considerations of Ignatius of Loyola's Desire to go to the Holy Land," *Theologica Xaveriana* 72 (2022): 1–27; Paul Oberholzer, "Gerusalemme nella Spagna tardomedievale", *Ignaziana* 35 (2025): 9–16.



covering the years from 1523 to 1536, simply with the word "Jerusalem."⁶ In addition, after founding the college in Messina, Ignatius, as Superior General of the Order, considered establishing a college in the 1540s in Jerusalem as well.⁷ His intention to come to the aid of the kingdom of the priest-king John in Ethiopia against the Muslims and to unite it with the Roman Catholic Church never left him until the end of his life. Even his pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a new convert must be seen in this great theological and constant arc.

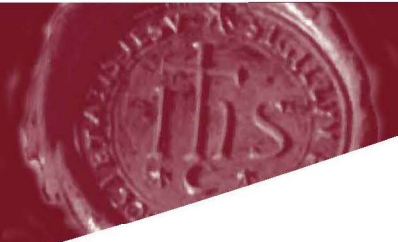
2. *A Pilgrim's Journey: A Guide to Spiritual Practice*

Ignatius recounts his journey to Jerusalem in his *A Pilgrim's Journey*. This autobiographic text covers the period from his conversion and training to the founding of the Society of Jesus. In this regard, it is important to note that the *A Pilgrim's Journey* is not a historical descriptive text.⁸ Its content focuses on Ignatius' spiritual growth and development. With regard to the journey to Jerusalem, the focus is on God's guidance and Ignatius' unshakeable trust in God. Ignatius emphasizes traveling without the help of nobles. He boards the pilgrim ship without money or supplies (PJ 35), which seemed impossible. Ignatius describes his emotions and feelings when he arrives in Jerusalem or is captured by the Franciscan friar on the Mount of Olives; he felt accompanied by Christ. (PJ 48) It is about experiences of consolation and desolation. Therefore, I read the *A Pilgrim's Journey* not only as a spiritual biography. It is neither to be reduced to an ideal spiritual portrait which should inspire the reader nor mere devotional literature. Ignatius does not only write in an edifying way. It must be read as a biographical illustration of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is entirely focused on spiritual practice and seeks to illustrate interiority.

⁶ Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Ignatius von Loyola : Allein und zu Fuss* (Zürich: Benziger, 1991), 113-298.

⁷ Oberholzer, "Gerusalemme," 6.

⁸ John W. O'Malley also notes that *A Pilgrim's Journey* cannot be read historically when he refers to Ignatius' statements about his time in Paris: "The brevity of the account of the Paris years in his *A Pilgrim's Journey* does not correspond to their significance for the future Society of Jesus; what is remarkable about these few pages is rather what they do not tell, rather than what they do tell." John W. O'Malley, *Die ersten Jesuiten* (Würzburg: Echter, 1995), 43.



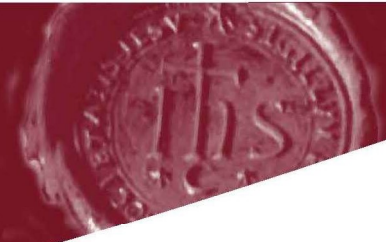
This intention, or rather, its literary genre explains the strange fact that Ignatius reports nothing at all about his stay in Jerusalem, which lasted a full three weeks, from September 3 to September 24, 1523. He only recounts his arrival and his departure.

He writes about the consolation (!) upon his arrival:

“Shortly before they reached the place where the city could be seen, they dismounted because they saw mendicant monks with a cross waiting for them. And when he saw the city, the pilgrim was overcome with great consolation. He always felt the same devotion when visiting the holy sites. He was determined to stay in Jerusalem and always visit the holy sites. In addition, he had resolved to help souls beyond this devotion. For this reason, he carried letters of recommendation with him.” (PJ 45)

Then we learn of the departure he wants to prevent and how he writes letters to give to those returning. (PJ 45f) Ignatius, who wants to be as close to Christ as possible in the Holy Land, writes about his devotion. But he does not mention the holy sites, not even the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He does not tell us how the group of pilgrims prayed there, what customs they encountered, or how the holy sites correspond to the Holy Scriptures. We do not learn that he spent three nights in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the other pilgrims, that the group traveled to Bethlehem and Jericho, or that two fellow pilgrims were knighted as Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. We only know all this from Peter Füessli from Zurich and Philippe Hagen from Strasbourg, who belonged to the pilgrim group together with Ignatius.⁹ After their return, they recount and write pilgrimage reports. Other returnees from Jerusalem also have Holy Sepulchre chapels built in Europe to vividly internalize Jesus' death and resurrection at home. We find none of this in *A Pilgrim's Journey* of Ignatius, which was only

⁹ Peter Füessli, “Jerusalemwallfahrt”, in *Ignatius von Loyola: Der Bericht des Pilgers*, ed. Peter Knauer (Würzburg: Echter, 2002), 177–191.



written at the urging of his fellow brothers in 1553-1555, some 30 years later.¹⁰ Ignatius' text differs from all the pious pilgrim accounts of its time.¹¹

It is not *A Pilgrim's Journey* that is the immediate memorial to his journey to Jerusalem, but the book of *Spiritual Exercises*. He does not follow the method of a Ludolf von Sachsen, who realistically traces the places where Jesus worked in order to build a bridge for meditation. Rather, he translates his experience into pure methodical instructions for spiritual practice. People doing the exercises are to be guided to analogous experiences by using their own imagination to visualize the scene of the biblical event.¹²

Paul Rolphy Pinto nevertheless wants to find concrete descriptions of Jerusalem in the *Spiritual Exercises*.¹³ As an example, he cites the second meditation of the third week, where the text gives instructions on how Jesus and the disciples descended into the Valley of Jehoshaphat after the Last Supper. (SpE 201f) The instructions for contemplating the appearance of the risen Lord before his mother, the first exercise of the fourth week, would also be based on concrete knowledge of the place. (SpE 118-121) SpE 120 states:

"Composition, seeing the space. Here it will be: seeing the arrangement of the Holy Sepulchre and the room or house of our Lady, looking at its parts in detail; likewise the room, the prayer room, etc."

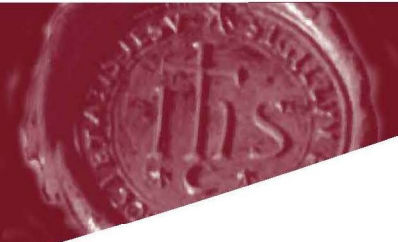
It seems to me hardly detectable whether memories from Jerusalem have found their way into this or whether oral, written, or pictorial tradition has played a role. Here, as in all instructions for the composition of the space, Ignatius wants to stimulate the imagination of the practitioner, even though he attaches importance to the story being presented truthfully to the

¹⁰ On the origins of *A Pilgrim's Journey*, see the prefaces by Jeronimo Nadal and Luis Goncalves de Câmara in Peter Knauer, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola. Gründungstexte der Gesellschaft Jesu* (Würzburg: Echter, 1998), 1-12.

¹¹ Susanne Lehmann-Brauns, *Jerusalem sehen. Reiseberichte des 12.-15. Jahrhunderts als empirische Anleitung zur geistigen Pilgerfahrt* (Freiburg im Breisgau; Berlin; Vienna: Rombach, 2010), 61-120, 245-329.

¹² Raimund Schwager, *Das dramatische Kirchenverständnis bei Ignatius von Loyola*, vol. 1 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2016), 112-120.

¹³ Pinto, "Ignatius' Pilgrimage", 38.



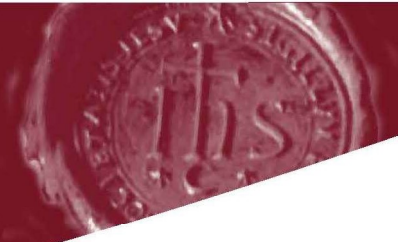
retreatant by the director of the exercises. (SpE 2) *A Pilgrim's Journey* should be read like the so-called "points" of the *Spiritual Exercises* that stimulate the retreatant.

3. The site of the Lord's Ascension: a place of consolation and benefit

Given that Ignatius does not describe the holy sites or his visit to them in *A Pilgrim's Journey*, the only exception is striking: the site of Christ's Ascension on the Mount of Olives. (PJ 47) To be precise, we learn nothing about his regular visit to the site with the pilgrim group. It is only mentioned in detail in connection with the forced return to Europe. The description is in the context of the conflict with the Provincial of the Franciscans, to whom Ignatius ultimately submits in obedience.

"After this [the conflict] was over, he returned to where he had been before. He was overcome by a great desire to visit the Mount of Olives once more before his departure, since it was not our Lord's will that he remains in these holy places. On the Mount of Olives there is a stone from which our Lord ascended into heaven, and on which you can still see the imprints of his feet today. This was what he wanted to see again. So, he separated himself from the others without saying anything or taking a guide – for those who go without a Turkish guide are in great danger – and went alone to the Mount of Olives. There, the guards did not want to let him in. He gave them a knife from the writing implements he carried with him. After he had performed his task there with deep consolation, the desire arose in him to go to Bethphage. When he was there, he remembered again that he had not looked properly on the Mount of Olives to see where the right footprint was and where the left footprint was. So, he returned there and gave the guards the scissors – I believe – so that they would let him in." (PJ 47)

Ignatius is guided by a desire that does not shy away from external danger and conflict. He is willing to give away writing materials and scissors, which underlines how important it is for him to visit the site on the Mount of Olives before departure. The visit to Bethphage at the tomb of Lazarus seems to be subordinate.



The *Legenda aurea*, which inspired the convert Ignatius, tells a miraculous story about the footplate.

"About the place of the Ascension, Sulpicius, Bishop of Jerusalem, says... that when a church was later built there, the place where Christ's feet stood at the Ascension could never be covered with a floor, but the marble slabs sprang into the faces of those who wanted to lay them. He also says that proof that the Lord had walked there is the fact that the imprint of his feet can be seen there, and indeed, the floor still bears something like the imprint of feet."¹⁴

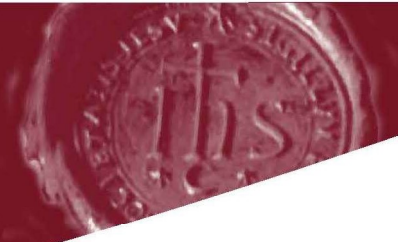
Why did Ignatius want to capture so precisely the footprint left by the ascended Christ? Did he live in the hope of one day returning to Jerusalem and being able to stand before Christ at his eschatological return? Was he concerned with the direction of his gesture of blessing? (cf. Luke 24:51) Or did he want to memorize the direction of the ascending Christ's gaze? There seems to be some evidence to support the latter, for in Spain at that time there was a widespread belief that Christ, dying on the cross, had looked towards Spain and charged it with defending the Catholic faith and reconquering Jerusalem from the Muslims. In any case, this was the message preached by the Dominican Don Martín García to King Ferdinand II around 1510, motivating him to fulfill this calling from Christ.¹⁵ Christ's last glance on the cross could have been transferred by Ignatius to the last glance of the ascending and now royal, ruling Christ.

The more fundamental question is, why did he want to see the holy site on the Mount of Olives again? Why not the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Upper Room, which was in front of his lodgings? Was he motivated by his spiritual reading? There is no specific reference to this in Ludolf of Saxony's *Vita Christi*.¹⁶ It describes the Ascension and comments on it with the Church Fathers. It emphasizes that Christ ascended by his own power—not like Enoch and

¹⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea. Goldene Legende*, trans. and comm. Bruno W. Häuptli (Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 2014), 983.

¹⁵ Staab, "Desire for Jerusalem," 8–10.

¹⁶ Ludolf von Sachsen, *Das Leben Jesu Christi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1994), 225–227.



Elijah. It explains the function of the cloud to receive the ascending Christ for the transformation of his body.

A look at the *Legenda aurea* is more revealing. It gives three reasons why the Ascension took place forty days after the Resurrection: First, this allowed for better confirmation of the Resurrection, which was more difficult to prove than the Lord's suffering. Second, it allowed the apostles to be comforted for longer. Thirdly:

"Because of the mystical meaning, so that it may be recognized that divine consolations relate to afflictions as the year relates to the day, the day to the hour, and the hour to the moment."¹⁷

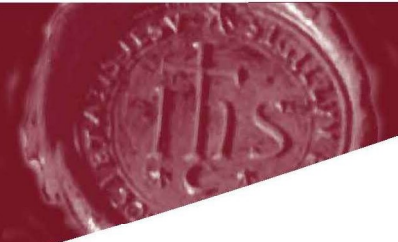
The text goes on to discuss Christ's ascension: how it took place, but also that many people were taken up with Christ, and what jubilation this was for the angels. In answer to the question of where Christ ascended, the multitude of heavens is described:

"So, Christ ascended above all these heavens to the supersubstantial heaven itself... Christ is enthroned in this empyrean heaven; this is his actual and proper dwelling place, and that of the angels and other saints, and this dwelling is exactly appropriate to its inhabitants."¹⁸

The remarks conclude with nine benefits of the Ascension: the application of divine love; greater knowledge of God; the merit of faith; the security of man; the dignity of man; the foundation of hope; the guidance of the way; the opening of the gates of heaven; the preparation of the place in heaven. Considering the spiritual significance of Christ's Ascension, the blessing associated with it, its eschatological meaning, and its potential for consolation, which far exceeds desolation, one can imagine why it must have appealed to Ignatius in particular.

¹⁷ Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 985.

¹⁸ Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 997.



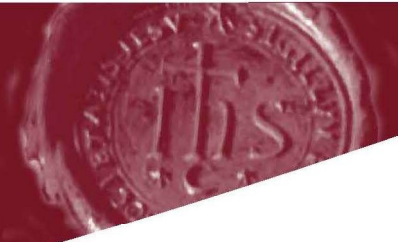
4. The Mount of Olives: Sent by the heavenly King

We have to ask further why Ignatius chose to recount his experience on the Mount of Olives thirty years after his pilgrimage. If we look at how he instructs the contemplation of the Ascension in the *Spiritual Exercises*, we see that it follows directly on from the contemplations of the appearances of the Risen One. (SpE 226; 312) It is the last exercise of the fourth week, immediately preceding the final meditation, "To Obtain Love" (SpE 230-237). It is not emphasized in any way compared to the preceding meditations. In the compilation of the "Mysteries of the Life of Jesus" (SpE 261-312) that follow towards the end of the Exercises, nothing reflects Ignatius' personal experience in Jerusalem. (EB 312) Rather, the three points of content are based precisely on the text from Acts 1:1-11: Christ's instruction to ask for the Holy Spirit; Christ's rapture on a cloud; the angels say that Christ will come again in this way. In view of the spiritual significance of the mystery of the Ascension and the fact that Ignatius asks for the Holy Spirit, it could refer to the sending of the Spirit by the exalted Christ. Ignatius stresses the consolation by the risen Christ. (SpE 224) This interpretation also fit well with reading the concluding meditation "To Obtain Love" (SpE 230-237) as a Pentecost meditation: the request for the Spirit and his sending, culmination of consolation, which transports all creatures into a holy exchange of love. This seems to be the ultimate goal of spiritual exercise.

If our thesis is correct that *A Pilgrim's Journey* is intended to be a guide to spiritual practice, without the external description of the holy sites playing an important role, we may also ask whether this experience on the Mount of Olives has found expression in the book of exercises beyond the contemplation of the Ascension. Yes, in the paradigmatic meditation opening the second week, in the "Call of the King". (SpE 91-100)

The parable of the earthly king, which opens the meditation, reflects the theological-political self-image of the royal court of Aragon, Castile, and Portugal we wrote about above. And we have to recall: Ferdinand II was seen in a special way as representative of Christ¹⁹ and was

¹⁹ Staab, "Desire for Jerusalem," 7-13.



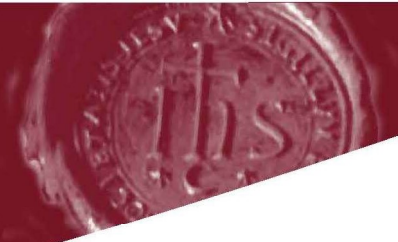
appointed King of Jerusalem by Pope Julius II in 1510.²⁰ This king in the parable says: I want to subjugate "all the territories of the infidels to my power." (SpE 93) He demands allegiance. The parable is transferred to Christ the King, as he appears at the end of Matthew's Gospel, corresponding to the Mount of Olives narrative in Luke: "My will is to conquer the whole world and all enemies and thus enter into the glory of my Father." (SpE 95) Just as in the theology of the Spanish kings, eschatological kingship emanates from Jerusalem, so the retreatant is to allow himself to be sent out into the world by the royally exalted Christ above Jerusalem. If Ignatius himself was, as it were, beaten away from Jerusalem, then in the Exercises this becomes a sending forth by the Risen One. It includes carrying the cross, as the third week of the *Spiritual Exercises* teaches. The practitioner now has Christ the King behind him, being sent out into the world. He is to attune himself to this mission by pledging allegiance. The prayer that Ignatius recommends for this purpose is offered before the heavenly court. (SpE 98)

The contemplation of the Incarnation follows immediately from the "Call of the King". (SpE 101-109) It allows Christ to step out of the Trinity. The Pantocrator humbles himself and shows how the mission is to be lived. The mission is royal, but it is to be lived in humility, just as Ignatius, as a poor pilgrim, renounced the privileges of nobility and court life. This King Christ is again found in the "Two Banners Meditation". (SpE 136-148) That means that the "Call of the King" is recalled once again immediately before the election. This time, the mission through Christ is not presented as a surpassing enhancement of the mission of the earthly king, but in contrast to the mission through Satan. Christ is explicitly seen as the King of Jerusalem:

"Composition, seeing the space. Here it will be: seeing a large camp, consisting of an entire area of Jerusalem, where the supreme commander of the good is Christ our Lord." (SpE 138)

In SpE 144, Jerusalem is typologically contrasted with terrible Babylon as a "humble, beautiful, and graceful place." With Jerusalem-Babylon, Ignatius draws on a topos of Christian piety that

²⁰ Oberholzer, "Gerusalemme", 7.



was developed extensively by Augustine and became a defining feature of tradition.²¹ However, this reference is also justified by his journey to Jerusalem and has to be contextualized in Spanish royal theology.

Ignatius' experience on the Mount of Olives could hardly be more prominent in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The "Call of the king" represents something like the second "principle and foundation" that forms the interpretative framework for the second to fourth week of the exercises. It is repeated before the election process, culmination of the second week. Neither the "Call of the King" nor the "Two Banners Meditation" can be found in any of the spiritual writings available to Ignatius. This also applies to the *Spiritual Exercises of Cardinal Cisneros*, on whose structure Ignatius based his book.²² However, Ignatius must have been aware of Cardinal Cisneros's extensive political involvement in the conquest of North African cities as milestones toward conquering Jerusalem at the royal court; he was himself present at the conquest of Oran.²³ Researchers do not know exactly when Ignatius wrote the "Call of the King" and inserted it into the text, perhaps only when Ignatius was studying in Paris. The meditation was certainly written after the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

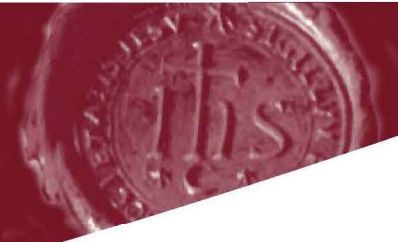
5. Mount of Olives and Zion: Apostolic renewal of the Church

When Ignatius and his companions failed to reach Jerusalem in 1536, they went to Rome and placed themselves at the disposal of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ. Ignatius placed the newly established Society of Jesus directly at the service of the Church. Indeed, Rome took the place of Jerusalem. In doing so, the Pope represented not the itinerant preacher Jesus of Galilee, but rather the Risen One. Even more than the Spanish king, the Pope has his spiritual foundation in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives – and on Zion, place of the Pentecost event. During his three-week stay in Jerusalem, Ignatius lived as a beggar in the Franciscans' convent on Zion,

²¹ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, books 11–18.

²² Johannes M. Steinke, "Hat Ignatius seine Exerzitien abgeschrieben?" *Geist und Leben* 82, no. 1 (2009): 41-46. On the structure and objectives of the *Spiritual Exercises of Cisneros*: Garcia Jimenez de Cisneros, *Exerzitien des geistlichen Lebens*, trans. Stephan Hecht (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 2021), 24-43.

²³ Staab, "Desire for Jerusalem," 13-23.



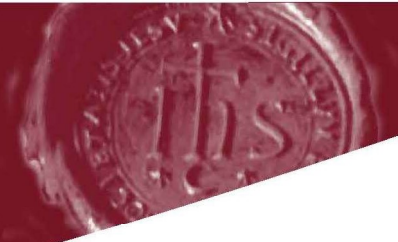
not in the pilgrim hospice of St. John near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre like his pilgrim group.²⁴ On the Mount of Olives, as on Mount Zion, the circle of the twelve apostles and the mother of Jesus are at the center, even though other women and disciples were also present (Acts 1:14). Even though Ignatius calls his time in Manresa his personal "early church," the "early church" of the Society of Jesus is in Jerusalem.

To understand this spiritual origin, two other sites in the Holy Land must be considered, which Ignatius was unable to visit, but which form a theological unity. On the one hand, there is the mountain in Galilee from which the risen Lord sends his disciples out into the world to make the disciples. (Mt 28:16-20) It has the same function in Matthew's narrative as the Mount of Olives in Luke's Gospel. On the other hand, the Gospel of John tells of the risen Christ at the Sea of Tiberias. (John 21) After the communal meal, he instructs Peter to feed the lambs, to take responsibility for the community in love, and calls him to follow. The narrative in John 21 confirms Peter's primacy among the Twelve. Ignatius links Peter's primacy with the primacy of the Pope, in line with the ecclesiastical tradition that was enshrined in monumental architecture in St. Peter's Basilica during Ignatius' lifetime. So, when Ignatius, in the 1550s and towards the end of his life, describes his experience at the site of the Ascension in such detail in *A Pilgrim's Journey*, he reminds that the mission given by the Pope is linked back to the mission given by Christ in Galilee and on the Mount of Olives. Just as the New Testament does not replace or supersede the Old Testament, so too the papal mission does not replace the mission given by Christ.

After returning from Jerusalem to Spain in 1523, Ignatius wanted to live "in the manner of the apostles," as Erasmus and other reform movements had also aspired to do.²⁵ To this end, he gathered a group of companions around him. He would have preferred to have a group of twelve in Barcelona, Alcalá de Henares, and Salamanca. Apostolic is to be understood in the sense of an ecclesiastical reform, i.e., spiritual with a kind of "episcopal claim", analogous to the bishops in succession to the apostles. With the Society of Jesus, Ignatius indeed created an order with an "episcopal", an apostolic structure. By placing it directly under the Pope and

²⁴ Pinto, "Ignatius' Pilgrimage," 33.

²⁵ Tellechea Idígoras, Ignatius von Loyola, 159–161, 173–177.



wanting to be independent of the bishops, he created a spiritual-episcopal underpinning of the Church. This gave rise to an alternative church reform to that of the Reformers, who broke with Rome on a structural level and created independent churches. The Society of Jesus, with its "apostolic" spirituality, should therefore not be seen merely as an alternative to "contemplative" orders. Rather, the structural and ecclesiological dimensions of such a spirituality must be taken into account.

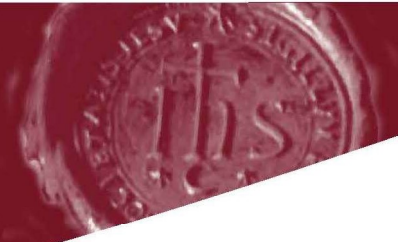
Ignatius' journey to Jerusalem and his enduring theological and spiritual relationship with the Holy Land bring three general characteristics of Ignatian spirituality into sharper focus.

Firstly, Ignatius describes himself as a pilgrim and uses the term metaphorically to describe his life's journey. In doing so, he draws on a common spiritual theme that was widespread in medieval piety. The existential journey towards God continues until one's own death. This orientation is fully reflected in the "Principle and Foundation" of the Spiritual Exercises (SpE 23). However, since his spirituality is characterized in every respect by "incarnational realism," this orientation applies not only to the eternal home in the hereafter (Phil 3:20), the heavenly Jerusalem. (Rev 21f) It also applies to the earthly Jerusalem, where he wanted to spend his life. Spiritually speaking, only those who have first made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem can be sent out into the world from the Mount of Olives.²⁶

Secondly, Norbert Lohfink assumes that Ignatius' longing to preach with Jesus in the Holy Land and to live in situ like the disciples, is reflected in the rules for the professed members of the Society of Jesus.²⁷ His long inner deliberations on the form of poverty among Jesuits led to a double implementation: on the one hand, for the professed, who were to live mobile lives in greater poverty. They embodied the disciples of Jesus who traveled with him in the Holy Land. On the other hand, for the coadjutors, who were settled and worked in the colleges. This distinction in terms of poverty and the position of the Jesuits has become historically obsolete.

²⁶ Christian M. Rutishauser, *Zu Fuss nach Jerusalem. Mein Pilgerweg für Dialog und Frieden* (Ostfildern: Patmos, 2013); Josef Mario Briffa, *Ignatius in the Holy Land. A Guided Pilgrimage* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2023).

²⁷ Norbert Lohfink, "Zum Zion. Das Heilige Land und die Erkenntnis des Willens Gottes, in *Ignatius von Loyola und die Gesellschaft Jesu 1491–1556*, ed. Andreas Falkner and Paul Imhof (Würzburg: Echter, 1990), 74–75.



Lohfink therefore asks whether the Society of Jesus does not need a renewed symbolic presence of it. He proposes a presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land: "Why was it so important for Paul to bring the collections of the Gentile Christian communities to the early church in Jerusalem? Was it only because they were suffering? Or was it also because the full principle of incarnation was to be realized here, which is not diffuse but has a place and time, and whose center is called Jerusalem?"²⁸ Could the ideal of traveling around the Holy Land with Jesus not be realized in a special mission in Israel/Palestine by the Society of Jesus today? Dialogue with Muslims and Jews in the Holy Land would be a mission in keeping with this spirit.

Thirdly, Ignatius' affection for Jews and converts also testifies to his incredible spiritual realism regarding the Incarnation. His statement that he would have liked to have been born a Jew, because then he would have been related to Jesus not only in spirit but also in flesh, bears witness to this.²⁹ Of course, it should not be overlooked that Ignatius was also ambivalent toward Jews.³⁰ He was not a modern representative of dialogue. In Rome, he established a house for Jewish converts and made a point of treating them as full-fledged Christians. He also accepted them into the Society of Jesus, where they were given leadership positions and important functions, which is remarkable given the growing hostility toward converts at that time. Polanco, his secretary, was of Jewish origin, as well as Diego Lainez he sent to the Council of Trent³¹ and who was later to succeed him as Superior General. Converts had a significant influence on the Society of Jesus in the 16th century.³² In view of this history and

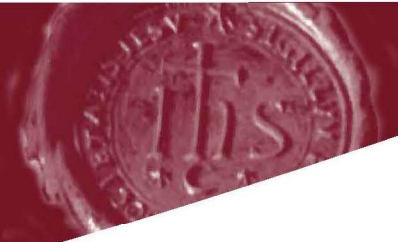
²⁸ Lohfink, "Zum Zion", 75.

²⁹ Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Dicta et Facta Sancti Ignatii*, in *Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1943), 476–477.

³⁰ James W. Reites, "Die Juden. Perspektiven ignatianischer Weltsicht", in *Ignatius von Loyola und die Gesellschaft Jesu 1491–1556*, ed. Falkner and Imhof, 418–426.

³¹ O'Malley, *Die ersten Jesuiten*, 220–224.

³² Robert Aleksander Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews. Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-Blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009).



the later anti-Judaism that also arose in the Jesuit order, there is a special obligation today for Jewish-Catholic dialogue and a spiritual bond to Jerusalem.³³

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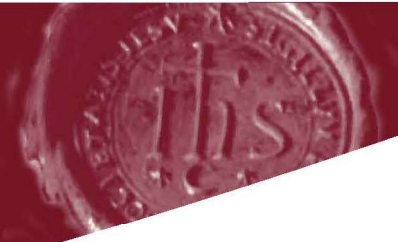
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³³ James Bernauer and Robert Aleksander Maryks, *The Tragic Couple: Encounters Between Jews and Jesuits* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014).



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