

The Pacific School of Religion

**Gathering the Graces:**  
**Women, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and Jesuit Education**

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Pacific School of Religion  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

For the past 40 years, the *Spiritual Exercises*,<sup>1</sup> particularly 19th annotation programs,<sup>2</sup> have been promoted by the Society of Jesus as a tool for leadership formation of lay men and women at Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. As Vatican II encouraged religious congregations to return to their “founders’ spirit and special aim” to renew and adapt their mission to modern times,<sup>3</sup> the Jesuits returned to the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius (hereafter referred to as the Exercises or SE) and sought to share them more widely in their original form. In the university context, the Exercises were shared not only to help non-Jesuit colleagues better understand the history and spiritual heritage of the university’s Jesuit founders, but also to catalyze new thinking about the mission<sup>4</sup> and purpose of Jesuit education in the historical, economic and cultural reality of the time.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Spiritual Exercises* are a series of Christian prayer practices developed by Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556) designed to lead a person to greater alignment with God and their life purpose through the use of memory, imagination, contemplative and meditative prayer techniques particularly focused on the life of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> While the Exercises were originally intended to be given over a four-week retreat, in Annotation 19 (Exx. 19), Ignatius advises that the Exercises may be adapted to accommodate “a person who is involved in public affairs or pressing occupations” who can take “an hour and a half each day to perform the Exercises” rather than the originally intended four-week retreat model. This is the method by which the Exercises are typically shared in university contexts.

<sup>3</sup> See *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, Documents of Vatican II (October 28, 1965): paragraphs 2a-b, accessed December 8, 2016, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html).

<sup>4</sup> I am aware of current scholarship that critiques the problematic colonialist/orientalist undertones of the word “mission,” and the efforts to reframe Jesuit missiology according to “pilgrim-community-frontier” language by Hung Pham, SJ, Eduardo Hernandez, SJ and others. See Hung Pham, SJ and Eduardo Fernandez, “Pilgrims in Community at the Frontiers: A Contemplation on Jesuit Mission Today,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2016), 1-41, and Fredrik Heiding, *Ignatian Spirituality at*



Over this same period of time, Jesuit institutions have made a concerted effort to rigorously engage a mission of educating for justice,<sup>5</sup> while the field of feminist theology has produced ground-breaking scholarship that challenges millennia-old norms, symbols, and philosophical traditions around women, gender, and religion. This dissertation brings together these three areas of concern—the Spiritual Exercises, women, and Jesuit education—to suggest that Spiritual Exercises have the potential to open new pathways for partnership between Jesuits and women that can move Jesuit universities to a deeper engagement with social justice. While much scholarship exists on one or two of these areas, my dissertation contributes new material to the conversation by bringing the three topics together for reflection and analysis. My research focuses on the experiences of female-identified faculty and staff who have completed the Exercises in some form as employees and emerging leaders at Jesuit universities so that their experiences and insights may be fully integrated into a renewed dialogue on Jesuit institutional mission. My study will show that the Exercises are a tool for uncovering revelatory material from which to construct a feminist theology of Jesuit education that will enable Jesuit

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*Ecclesial Frontiers* (University of Oxford, Faculty of Theology: 2012). I chose to use the term “mission” throughout my dissertation to describe the institutional commitment of Jesuit universities toward linking faith and justice in all educational endeavors primarily because it is a universally applied term at this time. However, I am aware that the term “mission” connotes a shameful history of European and Christian domination over indigenous cultures, a violent past that is recognizable still in the form of male, white, Christian supremacy, empire and related ideologies, and suggest that the term mission as it is used in Jesuit educational settings may need to be reconsidered.

<sup>5</sup> The Jesuit educational commitment to social justice began in earnest in 1973 when Pedro Arrupe, SJ asked a group of Jesuit alumni at a speech in Valencia, Spain, “Have we educated you for justice? You and I know what many of your Jesuit teachers will answer to that question: We have not.” Since then, and following the commitment to promoting a “faith that does justice” in the documents of the General Congregation 32 in 1975, Jesuit education has been grappling with the question of how to align its mission with the responsibility of educating for justice. Today a national and international conversation is taking place among educators and administrators in Jesuit higher education to ascertain how best to manifest this commitment to educating men and women for and with others, an education to fashion a more just and humane world.

universities to progress toward the shared goals of Jesuit education and feminism, namely, to build more just and inclusive learning communities that promote the common good.

My dissertation builds on research of several scholars working at the intersection of feminist theology, Ignatian spirituality, Jesuits and Jesuit education. Two books and one article stand out as particularly influential. The first is *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women*, by Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert published in 2001. After more than fifteen years in print, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed* remains one of a very few studies applying an explicitly feminist hermeneutic to the Spiritual Exercises. My dissertation stands on the pioneering scholarship and pastoral praxis of this book. The second volume that influenced my research is *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century* edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino (2012). Based on a conference held at Fairfield University in 2006, the volume is a collection of papers by some of the most influential academics in Jesuit education on points of connection between feminist theory and Ignatian pedagogy. Several essays from this volume figure prominently in this dissertation. Finally, in 1999, Lisa Fullam published “Juana, S.J.: The Past (and Future?) Status of Women in the Society of Jesus” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*. I was and remain moved by Fullam’s expert and original historical analysis that brought many to be conscious of the fact that Ignatius accepted four women into Society of Jesus during his lifetime. She invited Jesuits into a discernment concerning the admission of women to membership of the Society of Jesus

today in order to better serve the “greater glory of God.”<sup>6</sup> My dissertation stems from her provocative and courageous questions.

Over the course of one year, I surveyed and interviewed women from seventeen Jesuit universities across the United States. I asked them to reflect on their experience of the Exercises, and to consider whether anything they encountered might relate to the mission of their Jesuit institution. By applying a feminist hermeneutical lens to the narratives I collected, I discovered that many women through the Exercises had prayer experiences that challenged the traditional symbols and theology of their faith. Through the Exercises, women discover Mary, Jesus, and God as liberating characters and forces which oppose and challenge traditional justifications of women’s subordinate position in clerical and patriarchal systems. Their prayer experiences provide images and words that counter what they have learned in church and the cultural mainstream. Shared reflection on the Exercises, and making these private experiences of prayer public, are among the pathways for achieving the shared goals of feminism and Jesuit education, namely to dismantle systems that alienate and oppress, causing poverty, violence and death for many in exchange for the power and privilege of some.

The Church teaches that prayer is God’s self-revelation, God’s ongoing act of self-communication to individual persons.<sup>7</sup> Prayer is a source of revelation through which God reveals God’s self in the particularities of our lived experience.<sup>8</sup> By listening to and

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from the Jesuit motto commonly referred to as AMDG, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, or “for the greater glory of God.”

<sup>7</sup> See *Dei Verbum*, Documents of Vatican II (November 18, 1965), ¶2.

<sup>8</sup> Literature on the experiential aspects of prayer is vast. Among them are three that influenced the way I understand Christian spirituality: Karl Rahner, *The Need and Blessing of Prayer*, trans. Bruce W. Gillette (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), Arthur Holder, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell: 2011), and David Perrin, *Studying Christian*

reflecting with depth and imagination on the narratives of the women surveyed, and others who experience the Exercises on the campuses of Jesuit universities, we encounter God's revelation, God's graces, which are all sources for fresh theological inquiry. At the end of the Spiritual Exercises, one is encouraged to spend some time "gathering the graces"—that is, reflecting on what was learned, experienced, and gained in knowledge and love of God.<sup>9</sup> Gathering the graces is a process of reflecting, savoring, and deepening one's commitments to new insights and levels of awareness of one's spiritual capacity. My dissertation is an attempt to gather the graces experienced by a number of women through the Spiritual Exercises and to reflect theologically on how their prayer experiences provide revelatory material from which to construct a feminist theology of Jesuit education that deepens the engagement of Jesuit education with social justice.

My project is presented in eight chapters. Firstly, I present an introduction which offers an abstract of the project as a whole. In chapter 2, I discuss the rationale for my research questions based on my ministry context, addressing the question of why the Exercises and why women's experiences are important, as well as my personal experience in this context. In chapter 3, I give an outline of the historical context out of which Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises emerged, including the social, political and religious aspects of the Renaissance and Reformation relevant to the study. I focus on three moments in the history of the Society of Jesus that illustrate particular tensions and

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*Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007). A full analysis of what constitutes a spiritual experience of prayer is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>9</sup> The Official Directory of 1599 discusses "the fruits of the Exercises" such as "peace and quiet of the soul, interior light, knowledge of how to order one's whole life aright" (Palmer, 293). Likewise, George Ganss recommends studying the Exercises (particularly the Foundation) after a retreat experience to "preserve and deepen its fruits" (Ganss, 214).

opportunities concerning the situation of women and Jesuits: Ignatius' acceptance of Isabel Roser into the Society of Jesus, the story of Mary Ward and the Institute of English Ladies, and the development and follow-up to Decree 14 at the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation. In chapter 4, I discuss the methodology of my research study and the hermeneutics applied in the theological analysis of the qualitative data. Chapter 5 is a summary of the survey results. Chapter 6 delves in greater depth into the narratives of the women surveyed and interviewed according to six theological themes that I identified. They are: (1) Mary, (2) self-worth, (3) imago Dei, (4) experience of calling, (5) crucifixion, and (6) the beloved community. Chapter 7 presents two possible applications of my theological analysis to Jesuit education. While there are many "blue sky" commentaries to which I hope my research might contribute, I focus on two topics where I see the intersection of feminist theology and the Exercises offering new insights to current questions facing Jesuit education. These are (1) reclaiming *herstory* in the history of Jesuit education and using the Exercises as a tool for building relationships across the university, and (2) using feminist methodology to adapt the Exercises for non-Christian colleagues. Chapter 8 comprises my summary comments and conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Project Rationale and Ministry Context

The Doctor of Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion is a professional degree in ministry that brings together theory and praxis rooted in the academy and the community of faith.<sup>10</sup> A successful D.Min. project/thesis should advance new understandings and competencies into a theologically coherent analysis around a specific ministry issue as well as creating new knowledge about the practice of ministry. For the completion of my D.Min. degree, this dissertation focuses on one area of ministry in Jesuit higher education, namely 19<sup>th</sup> annotation programs, looking at women's narratives through a feminist theological lens, and suggesting new ways to construct and discuss the Jesuit educational mission for justice. Two questions ground the rationale and context for my research: (1) Why focus on the Exercises?, and (2) why focus on women? In this chapter, I will lay out my rationale for focusing my research on these two topics, also describing my personal experience in this ministry context.

#### *Why the Exercises?*

The prayers and spirituality of the Exercises have always been at the root of the Jesuit apostolic mission. Ignatius' own prayer life, his spiritual conversion, and his ongoing reflection on God's activity in his life as described in the Exercises inspired and guided the foundation and early growth of the Society of Jesus. George Ganss describes

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<sup>10</sup> From PSR website, <https://psr.edu/academics/certificates-degrees/dmin/>. Accessed 9/26/17.

the Exercises as containing the “core of [Ignatius’] worldview...which shaped his own personalized way of viewing God, the created universe and the role of free human beings within God’s plan for them,” and it was the ongoing development of this worldview led by God, ‘just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching,’ that guided the development of the Society.<sup>11</sup> Ignatius relied on his direct experiences with the divine to guide his personal and corporate decisions as founder of the Society of Jesus. Ganss describes the mystical life of Ignatius as a series of “divine illuminations ... predominantly intellectual visions” that “led [Ignatius] to a better understanding of truths, experiences, or other matters previously known.”<sup>12</sup> Ganss argues that Ignatius’ mystical visions changed his worldview, leading him to see “the new course his life was to take,” and inspiring him to share his experiences with others. This example, in which Ignatius used his prayer experiences to guide the development of the Society of Jesus, provides historical precedent for linking reflection on the Exercises with corporate decision-making.

The link between the personal and the corporate that Ganss describes is recognized clearly in Ignatius’ authorship of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, the master document intended to guide the “organization, inspiration, and government” of the Jesuit order.<sup>13</sup> Andre de Jaer argues that “the Constitutions are a spiritual volume meriting as much attention as the Exercises...They are the outward expression of what is offered

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<sup>11</sup> George Ganss, “General Introduction,” in *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George Ganss (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 12–13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

and what gives life to the Society of Jesus in and for the Church.”<sup>14</sup> They are, in effect, the original mission statement of the Society of Jesus, rooted in Ignatius’ experience of the Exercises. They call for continual discernment, reflection, and examinations of conscience as a way of proceeding into the future. De Jaer makes the case that “these texts grew out of experience, enhanced by thoughtful discernment, deep reflection, and constant prayer ... They do not tell us specifically what needs to be done: they do not function primarily as a law book. What they do above all is provide sound criteria for reflection and judgment leading to action.”<sup>15</sup>

Philip Endean explains this dynamic further in that “the concern [of the Exercises and the Constitutions] is to offer ‘a way of proceeding,’ a way of handling realities as yet unforeseen.’ He goes on to suggest that “while it is indeed true that Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* has shaped the corporate rhetoric of the Jesuits, and served as an important element in the foundational myth ... the text has served these functions only because its interactive character encourages a variety of possible responses.”<sup>16</sup> There is an inherent flexibility, a dynamic and responsive process that ultimately trusts the activity of God in human history, as well as in the life of the institution itself. The Exercises have never been intended as a prescriptive or dogmatic approach to Jesuit spirituality or identity. Quite the contrary: they have been viewed instead as a process of prayer and imagining through which one can align oneself to God’s plan intended for that individual person, a

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<sup>14</sup> Andre de Jaer, *Together in Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Francis C. Brennan, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2001), 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Endean, “The Spiritual Exercises,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. Thomas Worcester. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2008), 64.



process that is therefore open to as many possible outcomes as there are human beings. The Exercises are a means through which reflection may take place on one's historical reality in light of God's activity in the world, in order to inform personal and corporate decision-making.

The practice of using the Exercises to guide institutional mission continued in modern times, a notable example being Ignacio Ellacuría's use of reflection on the Exercises to guide the response of Central American Jesuits to the Salvadoran political and economic turmoil of the 1980s. Scholars Kevin Burke and Matthew Ashley have made the case that "Ellacuría considered the Spiritual Exercises as a crucial resource for doing theology in Latin America, particularly in response to various challenges articulated at the CELAM Conference in Medellín (1968)." For Ellacuría, it was precisely because of the concrete and embodied dynamic of the Exercises, and the notion of God working directly through the retreatant, that the Exercises' "historicized theology" enabled God's salvific action to be experienced directly in human experience, rather than being relegated to a theoretical or other-worldly realm.<sup>17</sup> This effort at historicizing theological claims allowed Ellacuría, as rector of the University of Central America in San Salvador, to radically reconsider the role and purpose of the Jesuit University, arriving at the conclusion that the University should be a social project actively engaged in social transformation for the liberation of the poor—a decision which had prophetic consequences.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Matthew Ashley, "Ignacio Ellacuría and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 16–39. See also Fredrik Heiding, SJ, *Ignatian Spirituality at Ecclesial Frontiers* (University of Oxford, 2012), 143-153.

<sup>18</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría was assassinated on November 16, 1989 along with five fellow Jesuit priests and two lay women co-workers outside the Jesuit residence on the campus of the University of Central

Ignatius and later Jesuit superiors set a precedent of using prayer, discernment, and reflection on the Exercises as a way of guiding not only the broad vision of the Society, but also its operational, fiscal, personnel and strategic functions. Ignatius and the early Jesuits taught a distinct form of spirituality and prayer practices based in the Exercises among all of their members spread out across the world as a way of instilling a common sense of mission and purpose.<sup>19</sup> In effect, this is the same practice currently underway in Jesuit colleges and universities today. We have a historical and Jesuit-based rationale to turn to the Exercises as a resource for helping us understand our mission and our social context today.

### *Why women?*

I chose to focus my research on the narratives of women who have completed the Exercises for several reasons. Firstly, women played a significant role in Ignatius' life, as caregivers, benefactors, spiritual companions, and colleagues (to use a contemporary term); yet their names, voices, and contributions have been largely absent from the official history of Jesuit ministry and education. Ever since Ignatius requested of Pope Paul III that he be "freed" from the responsibility of working with women, the Society has had a complicated relationship with the other sex. The issue has remained unresolved and largely unaddressed. However, in 1995, the Society issued a decree at their 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation titled, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and

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America, San Salvador. The attack was led by a U.S.-trained paramilitary group connected to the Salvadoran military to punish the Jesuits at the university for their overt opposition to the Salvadoran civil war.

<sup>19</sup> Endean, 64.

Society,” connecting the limited rights of women in the church and civil society to disproportionate levels of poverty, discrimination, and violence affecting women and girls worldwide, and calling for a Jesuit response rooted in a faith that does justice. The Society stated its appreciation of women as partners in ministry and made a clear call for Jesuits to listen to women’s experiences as a first step toward solidarity. The document calls for practical solidarity with women, including “explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men in Jesuit ministries, especially in schools, colleges and universities,” and “genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision making in our Jesuit ministries.”<sup>20</sup> The document asks Jesuits to first of all listen to the experiences of women and take seriously what women have to say. My research agenda is inspired by this call, and I offer the suggestion that Jesuits and others look at women’s experiences with the Exercises as a potentially rich source of new theological insights and intellectual understanding, as was done by Ignatius and subsequent Jesuits in their own prayer with the Exercises.

Secondly, I am focusing my research on women because I am making the claim that when women, or any group of persons, are systematically excluded from community conversation and engagement at an institutional level, the entire human community suffers. This claim is central to feminist theology. Despite the statement to the contrary in Decree 14 referenced above, in practice, women are by and large excluded from the Jesuit processes of discernment and reflection on the mission of Jesuit institutions. Conversations take place among Jesuits alone, and among lay colleagues alone, but rarely together, and rarely in ways that take women’s experiences as a starting point for

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<sup>20</sup> *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31<sup>st</sup>-35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 618.

theological reflection. Much of this pattern has to do with the overlapping realities of clericalism and sexism within the church, which I will address below. My research is an effort to bring women's experiences into these conversations. In *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert advance the argument that when women are excluded from conversations concerning institutional mission and identity, women themselves suffer, but the society and the church suffer as well. They state, "we believe women are impoverished when their unique perspective remains invisible within some area of human discourse. But men are also poorer when women's experience has been left out of the account. Indeed, the entire church is the poorer for losing the richness of women's experience and gifts, a poverty it can ill afford."<sup>21</sup> The authors look to the past to form "right relationships for mission today," for when women are excluded, everyone loses out. I have heard Jesuits express feelings of marginalization due to what some perceive as anti-clericalism<sup>22</sup> at their own institutions, which, while not completely analogous to sexist practices against women, is still a form of hierarchical social exclusion. Integrating and amplifying the expertise and experiences of women will help us to better succeed at our shared mission for inclusion of all, and will further have a healing impact on the community at-large.

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<sup>21</sup> Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), x.

<sup>22</sup> I recognize that this statement raises the question of how clericalism plays out for good or for ill in Jesuit corporate identity, a question that is important to address yet beyond the scope of this paper. Clericalism is a subject of contemporary concern in the Catholic church. Despite the fact that church teaching has elevated the status of clerics over the laity for centuries, Pope Francis recently addressed what he calls "the evils of clericalism" as a factor in the laity's separation from the church. See Vatican Radio, Pope Francis Homilies, viewed at [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/12/13/pope\\_clericalism\\_distances\\_the\\_people\\_from\\_the\\_church/1278688](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/12/13/pope_clericalism_distances_the_people_from_the_church/1278688). Accessed 1/16/18.

A third response to the question, why women?, is answered by scholars Jocelyn Boryczka and Elizabeth Petrino, who make the case that Jesuit educators should combine feminist theory and Ignatian pedagogy in order to better respond to current social, political, and economic injustices. Jesuit education has, “since its inception, retained its vitality and relevance through its interaction with other faiths and philosophical traditions,” and feminist theory is one philosophical tradition with which there is much potential for overlap. The authors consider how a feminist framework (summarized by the phrase, “the personal is political”) and Ignatian pedagogy (summarized by a process of teaching according to context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation) can converge to transform Jesuit education. They ask:

What role do women and their issues play in the identity of a Jesuit university? How can attentiveness to female experience in society and culture enliven the authentic dialogue and practical witness that have been hallmarks of Ignatian styles of teaching for over four hundred years? How can we put feminism in dialogue with Jesuit ways of understanding the world, both informing and transforming our understanding of our mission?<sup>23</sup>

My study contributes to this effort at “attentiveness to female experience” by focusing on women’s experience with the Exercises, particularly at Jesuit universities. My study uses feminist theological methods to evaluate and reflect on women’s prayer experiences in order to critique the systems and structures that oppress women and other marginalized groups; I also attempt to reconstruct certain aspects of Jesuit education to build communities of greater justice and inclusion. Women’s experience has rarely been the

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<sup>23</sup> Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino, “‘The Personal Is Political:’ At the Intersections of Feminist and Jesuit Education,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Jocelyn Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 75–76.

starting point for theological reflection, particularly in Jesuit contexts. This study seeks to focus on women's experiences as a source of revelation and a source of theological analysis and insight for the mission of Jesuit education.

Feminist theological analysis has the opportunity to move Jesuit universities to a deeper engagement with social justice, because feminist theology focuses on the systematic analysis of the patri-kyriarchal structures of oppression that exist in the church and society.<sup>24</sup> Kyriarchy is a term coined by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to describe the interconnected, interacting, and self-extending systems of domination and submission, encompassing sexism, racism, speciesism, homophobia, classism, economic injustice, colonialism, militarism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of dominating hierarchies in which the subordination of one person or group to another is internalized and institutionalized.<sup>25</sup> Feminist scholarship attempts to critique, deconstruct, and reconstruct that system so that all people can flourish to their fullest potential. Jeannine Hill Fletcher points out that feminist theology is interested not only in drawing women's voices and experiences into theological discourse, but also in advocating for an end to the systems and institutions that oppress women and other groups of people who may not fall into particular gender, racial, and class categories; therefore, feminist theology has an advocacy agenda.

The same can be said for Jesuit education. Jesuit education is also concerned with solidarity and advocacy with the poor and marginalized for the purpose of fashioning a

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<sup>24</sup> These definitions from feminist theology are taken from Jeannine Hill Fletcher's synopsis in *Motherhood as Metaphor*, (New York: Fordham, 2013), 7.

<sup>25</sup> This definition of kyriarchy appears here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyriarchy#cite\\_note-fiorenza\\_2001-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyriarchy#cite_note-fiorenza_2001-4). Accessed 1/116/18.

more just and humane world where systems of oppression are overturned. In this way, Jesuit education and feminist theology have something in common. Jesuit education, like feminist theology, seeks to critique, dismantle and then rebuild in a more just way the systems that oppress the poor, and create opportunities throughout society where the common good and integral human development of all is the priority. Therefore, feminist theological methodology is an appropriate tool for analysis of the Spiritual Exercises as they relate to the mission and purpose of Jesuit education in the current context in which our universities are situated.

Fourth, the slogan “the personal is political” can apply to prayer. If the Exercises are being used to promote and deepen understanding of Jesuit mission and identity among faculty and staff, then there is a public or institutional purpose to these programs. Our prayer is political. Through prayer, God communicates to us as historically-situated, embodied human beings, and we experience a glimpse of the transcendent mystery of God. The church teaches that prayer is a source of God’s revelation for humanity.<sup>26</sup> For women, this reception of God’s self-communication is complicated. Women remain restricted in their social and vocational choices in most communities in the world, therefore facing disproportionate economic, political, religious, and social hardship. Women are taught and reminded over and over again through mainstream religious imagery and symbolism that the divine is male.<sup>27</sup> Symbols and images of a god who is exclusively male reinforce women’s feelings of less-than-ness, of somehow not measuring up, as being less holy, less made in the image of God than men, and perhaps

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<sup>26</sup> *Dei Verbum*, Vatican II, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Joann Wolski Conn, “Dancing in the Dark: Women’s Spirituality and Ministry,” in *Women’s Spirituality*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, (Mahwah: Paulist, 1996), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 9–16.

deserving of a lower status in social, religious and political institutions. What God reveals to women through prayer is important, because it might suggest an alternative to these social and symbolic structures. Spirituality can be feminist if women's experiences of prayer challenge and critique institutions that limit and restrict their selfhood. In the Christian churches, where God the Father is the predominant religious symbol, women are reminded over and over again of their lower standing in the hierarchy of religious symbols. Therefore, an experience of prayer that allows for new images of the divine to break through one's consciousness, and that affirms Jesus as one who treated women as co-equals, can have a liberating effect on women that allows them to break free of the yokes of oppression that limit their availability and freedom in the church and world.

Additionally, women's prayer experiences—indeed, women's experience in general—has rarely been the starting point for theological reflection historically. Through prayer, we reach new understandings of the dynamics of individual and structural sin in our world. We are led to new forms of active social and community engagement. According to the Christian faith, God calls each of us through prayer, as God called Jesus, to hear and to know God's liberating desire for the world and for all people, and to realize our own role and responsibility in bringing forth the reign of God. When women share their experiences of the divine one whom they encounter in prayer, God's liberating activity is revealed. My study seeks to highlight women's prayer experiences as a source and starting point for theological reflection on Jesuit higher education. In so doing, God's self-communication through the Exercises does not remain a private experience for a few, but rather, it has an opportunity to transform the institution.



Finally, my study focuses on women because women still lack access to power within the Jesuit universities as a whole. The axis of power in the Jesuit university lies with the president, the vice-presidents and the board of trustees, all of which are male-dominated roles. In 2018, two of the twenty-eight Jesuit universities have a female president.<sup>28</sup> Women's stories and experiences are missing from the leadership levels of Jesuit universities, even though women comprise a larger percentage of the student body than men at Jesuit universities in the U.S. Thus, my study focuses on the narratives and spiritual experiences of women as a way of integrating *herstory*, specifically women's spiritual story, into the dialogue on Jesuit educational mission today. My aim is to uncover new perspectives and creative ideas, as well as to shift the balance of power toward establishing greater mutuality in ministry between Jesuits and their female colleagues so that our institutions may become equitable and inclusive. Today, there is no Jesuit educational mission without women. My dissertation makes the argument that shared reflection on the Spiritual Exercises provides one pathway for Jesuits and women to work together more closely to advance the mission of social justice and inclusion.

### *Personal Experience in this Context*

My own experience is deeply rooted in the context about which I write. I have spent my career in Jesuit ministries, taking my first full-time job at a Jesuit parish in 1995, a few months before the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation. The challenge of Jesuit-lay

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<sup>28</sup> These are Linda LeMura, Ph.D., president of LeMoyne College and Jo Ann Rooney, JD, LL.M., Ed.D., president of Loyola University Chicago.

partnership (and in particular partnership with women) has been a focus of the California Province of Jesuits (in which I have worked, now called Jesuits West) since then. I have had the opportunity to participate in many conversations, committees, and convocations dedicated to this issue. More recently, I have served as the director of University Ministry at the University of San Francisco (USF) and one of four designated mission officers of the University. Our work, done in collaboration with many others on campus, is to foster the Jesuit and Catholic identity and distinctiveness of USF and to empower faculty and staff to “live the mission” in their various roles at the University.

My early childhood led me to this work. I grew up in a vibrant and nurturing Catholic parish community where I was given many opportunities to practice and deepen my faith, whether as an altar server, lector, or youth representative on the parish council. Not surprisingly given this supportive environment, I experienced a call to the priesthood when I was about twelve years old, receiving a clear sense that God put that idea in my head. I assumed that the Pope had just never considered ordaining women, and boy, did I have a great idea for him! While studying religious studies at the Jesuit College of the Holy Cross from 1990–1994, the hope of women’s full equality in the church was real. I was in an environment where Jesuits and their lay colleagues, whether campus ministers or professors, actively encouraged women to stay in the church and share their voices and perspectives. In very tangible ways, the Jesuits and their lay colleagues gave me formation experiences and professional opportunities that are as close to priestly ministry as a Catholic woman can get. College in particular marked a period of feminist and theological awakening for me where my desire to work in Catholic and Jesuit ministry was nurtured and honed.

My relationship to the Spiritual Exercises is ambivalent. I first encountered the Exercises on a 5-day silent retreat in college, held on the rocky shores of Narragansett, Rhode Island, which virtually every undergraduate who was serious about matters theological, spiritual, and/or religious was expected to attend during their four years at Holy Cross. It was seen as a rite of passage and presented as an intense, sometimes grueling, but ultimately deeply rewarding experience. “You’ll see God on a rock” and “Jesus appeared to me on the beach” were common testimonials of my classmates upon their return. The retreat was typically led at that time by a beloved Jesuit priest in his 70s, an institution himself who had been at the college for more than forty years. He was known for canvassing the campus at all hours, approaching students to ask, “Have you made the Exercises? Have you made the Exercises?” Indeed, at his funeral mass in 2005, the homilist remarked, “it is no exaggeration to say that, for many years, at least a third of the graduating seniors had made the Exercises with him.”<sup>29</sup> As a campus minister today, I would love to have a quarter of the number of retreatants he was able to recruit annually.

I went on the Exercises my sophomore year, in 1991. It was a traditional-style preached retreat. The Jesuit priest sat at a small desk in the front of the room and introduced us to the major themes of the four weeks of the Exercises using personal stories and examples from current events to illustrate his points. Many stories involved former students he had known who said the Suscipe every night, or went to mass every day, and exhibited other qualities of inspiring religious discipline and piety, traits I did

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<sup>29</sup> Excerpt from funeral homily, viewed at [https://www.holycross.edu/departments/publicaffairs/hcm/summer05/in\\_memoriam/2.html](https://www.holycross.edu/departments/publicaffairs/hcm/summer05/in_memoriam/2.html). Accessed 9/15/17.

not possess sufficiently in my mind. My first area of difficulty was being faced with my perceived spiritual failings as compared to my peers.

The second challenge arose around the fact that my retreat week coincided with the Congressional testimony of Anita Hill during Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court nomination. Thomas was an alumnus of Holy Cross and personal friend of our Jesuit retreat director. We retreatants were, of course, barred from reading newspapers, but he would provide updates on the "lies that woman" was saying against Clarence Thomas, who was "a good man," each morning. He also used his pulpit to defend other "good men" he had known who had been accused of rape or sexual assault by women at our college. "Lies! Lies!" he exclaimed. For a budding feminist like myself, desperate to find points of connection between her faith and her feminist ideals, the priest's words marred my retreat experience, and they remain a painful memory.

I do not share this story to tarnish the reputation of a man who is no longer here to defend himself. The priest was a kind and loving man who introduced literally thousands of young men and women, myself included, to the Exercises and Ignatian spirituality. He was also a product of his time and generation. I share this story to illustrate that my primary experience with the Exercises was fraught with conflict and even shame. I left the experience feeling inadequate because Jesus hadn't appeared to me on a rock as he had my friends, and feeling angry with the patriarchal political and ecclesial establishment that had found its way even into the hallowed halls of our silent retreat house.

For years, the Exercises remained an enigma to me: a process that seemed to have a profoundly transformative experience on others, but not necessarily on me. I assumed I

wasn't praying well or hard enough, or that I was somehow failing to trust God completely the way my peers were able to do. Yet through my immersion in Jesuit ministries for over twenty years and generous encouragement of many Jesuits and lay colleagues, Ignatian spirituality remains my most familiar and central spiritual practice and paradigm. As an employee at a Jesuit parish in the late 1990s, I had the opportunity to learn more about Ignatian spirituality in theory and in practice. I had the opportunity to approach the Spiritual Exercises again through the 19<sup>th</sup> annotation program offered at USF in 2000, which was a much more life-giving experience for me at that time. It helped me discern a major life choice with clarity and confidence, for which I am very grateful. Thankfully, throughout my professional career, I have benefited from skilled spiritual direction concurrent with my engagement with the Exercises. My current role challenges me to apply the principles of Ignatian spirituality across multiple educational settings and communities, from student experiences to professional development retreats for faculty and staff, seeking ways to make the Exercises relevant to a diverse, multicultural, multi-religious, and multi-spiritual community. Today, I accompany women through their own experience with the Exercises through my role in University Ministry at USF.

Over the years, as I have become more and more familiar with the Exercises, I still cannot claim to have had the life-changing experience that others report. That said, the methods and dynamics of Ignatian spirituality, such as the *Suscipe*, discernment, entrance into the paschal mystery, and the contemplation with scripture constitute my daily prayer life and have for twenty years. Thus, I have approached this research with a mixture of envy and admiration for those who claim transformational experiences as a result of the Exercises, combined with a desire to know the Exercises more deeply for

myself and a critical eye based on my own experience to the ways in which the Exercises may create a certain level of disappointment or cognitive dissonance for some individuals regarding their own prayer life and their lived experience in the church and Jesuit institutions. My research attempts to shine a spotlight on this area of dissonance between women's spiritual experiences and their lived reality in the patriarchal and hierarchical culture of Jesuit education in the hopes of discovering new ways to move forward.

To this current investigation I bring deeply personal desires for women's full equality in the Catholic church and society. For me, the concerns raised by feminist scholarship are not esoteric issues for women of privilege in the West. On the contrary, issues of women's equality are directly related to poverty and death worldwide. When we—as a church, or in our educational institutions—discriminate against women, for instance on an issue as seemingly simple as banning altar girls, we are complicit in a culture that views women as “less than.” As Elizabeth Johnson puts it, “the way Christians in affluent societies live their faith has repercussions, because it either reinforces or calls into question the systems responsible for the oppression of multitudes.”<sup>30</sup> The unequal treatment of women anywhere results not only in increased violence against women in our world, but also in systemic poverty and death. Women and their children worldwide are more likely than men to be poor, undernourished, trafficked into slavery, and at risk of life-threatening disease, a phenomenon the U.S. bishops call the “feminization of poverty.”<sup>31</sup> If the Society of Jesus is going to be serious

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 86.

<sup>31</sup> See U.S. Bishops' encyclical, *Economic Justice For All*, (NCCB, 1986).

about living a faith that does justice, it must recognize that the gender-based unequal treatment of women in the church and society is a major root cause of social injustice globally.

I also bring sincere hope that the Ignatian Exercises might unlock new pathways to partnership for Jesuits and their lay colleagues. Because they are transformative for so many, and because they are widely recognized as a tool for spiritual awakening and organization development by the Jesuits themselves, there might be clues for us to put to use. As I wrote in an issue of *Conversations* magazine in 2015, “is it possible to imagine that God’s desires and our deepest desires *as women* are one in the same? Can the Exercises be a tool for all of us—women and men—to uncover passageways to partnership beyond our imaginations and current realities?”<sup>32</sup> This is the central aim of my current project: to uncover through the Exercises new pathways to partnership that honor the experiences of men and women in the shared mission of Jesuit education.

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<sup>32</sup> Julia Dowd, “Leaning In,” *Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education* 47, no. 1 (2015): 16.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Another Ignatian History**

A study of women's experiences with the Exercises requires that we understand the context from which the Exercises were written. This chapter looks at the historical context out of which Ignatius, the Exercises, and the Society of Jesus were born, with a focus on the situation and contributions of women at the time. A feminist historical analysis reveals that women provided essential scaffolding to bolster Ignatius' identity and vocation, and likewise to establish and contribute to the early establishment and pastoral work of the Society. The Spiritual Exercises were one way this happened. Throughout the history of the Society, the Spiritual Exercises were a means for collaboration and partnership between women, Ignatius, and Jesuits. The Spiritual Exercises, and shared reflection on the Exercises, freed individuals, including Ignatius, to think beyond social and ecclesial constraints based on gender and to adopt a posture of adaptability, flexibility, and openness to the Holy Spirit, despite significant social and ecclesial constraints. In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate that women have been players in Jesuit history in significant ways since the early life of Ignatius, and that the Exercises historically were a means through which this collaboration happened. This historical precedent supports my thesis that the Spiritual Exercises still have the potential to open pathways for partnership between Jesuits and women that can move Jesuit universities to a deeper engagement with social justice despite the patriarchal and clerical systems that restrict women and other marginalized groups from equal participation and leadership.



Looking to the past is complex. There is a danger of applying modern viewpoints to the effort to make sense of a completely different culture and context which can blur the truth. For example, one might assume that Ignatius shared the modern understanding of gender equity as a commonly accepted social value, as most do in the contemporary US context. To do so would be anachronistic and misleading, as gender equity was not a commonly accepted social value at his time; instead the opposite was true. Yet several scholars have attempted to pull together a version of Ignatius' life that highlights the role of women in his early life, his formation, and in the early days of the Society, mindful of avoiding anachronistic assumptions. Their historical analysis enables us to recognize that relations between genders have always been complex, that they change over time, and that the stories of women and men are connected.

Gemma Simmonds writes that, "while the Jesuits were not exempt from the social prejudices and misogynistic assumptions of their time, Ignatius himself had a wide spiritual correspondence with prominent women and never hesitated to enlist their support in promoting the welfare and apostolic ministries of his nascent order."<sup>33</sup> While several women were early and substantial benefactors of Ignatius and the early Society (in particular, Inés Pasqual and Isabel Roser), Ignatius' partnership with women went beyond the strictly financial. Elizabeth Dreyer writes, "it is safe to say that among Ignatius' earliest experiences of pastoral work, his encounters with women are prominent. He conversed with women about the things of God, directed women in the Spiritual Exercises, helped reform female convents, and engaged women of means in

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<sup>33</sup> Gemma Simmonds, "Women Jesuits?" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 120.

ministries.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Simmonds affirms that “the early generation of Jesuits offered the Spiritual Exercises to women and trained them in turn to be spiritual guides to other women, and there are many instances of fruitful apostolic collaboration between Jesuits and female friends and companions.”<sup>35</sup> Hugo Rahner, whose volume on the letters between Ignatius and women first published in German in 1956 prompted much contemporary scholarship on the topic, argues that “there is now no doubt—even though earlier lives of the saint from Ribadeneira’s on have been largely silent on the subject—that Ignatius of Loyola had his first, still uncrystallized experience of pastoral work in connection with women,” and “[women] were the first to whom Ignatius made known the ideas from which sprang the *Spiritual Exercises*.”<sup>36</sup> Given the social and ecclesial restraints of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, including strict social norms regarding appropriate interaction between men and women and official church teaching directing women religious to remain cloistered, Ignatius’ spiritual and pastoral collaboration with women begs our attention.

### *Historical Context*

Firstly, let us look at the historical and religious context in which Ignatius was living and working in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Ignatius lived from 1491 to 1556, a period of

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Dreyer, “‘Do as I do, not as I say:’ The Pedagogy of Action,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education*, edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), 28.

<sup>35</sup> Simmonds, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Hugo Rahner, S.J., *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (New York: Crossroad, 2013), 9–10.

profound social transformation. This complex historical context must be taken into consideration with any analysis of the Exercises. Jill Raitt writes, “the story of European Christian spirituality from 1450 to 1700 begins within a larger cultural history of urban development, the spreading Italian Renaissance, the European invention of the printing press, the growth of national consciousness, the stabilization of national languages, and the development of navigational tools that would send Europeans around the world.”<sup>37</sup> Thomas Worcester describes, “[Ignatius] grew up at a time when Spain was rapidly becoming the dominant power of Europe and indeed of the world.”<sup>38</sup>

Ignatius was born in 1491, the year Christopher Columbus gained permission and financial backing from the king and queen of Spain to sail the Atlantic in search of the West Indies.<sup>39</sup> Ignatius’ family of origin held significant economic, political, and religious power in northern Spain. The family Loyola had controlled the province of Guipúzcoa in the Kingdom of Navarre in the Basque region since 1387. Historian Lu Ann Homza explains that not only was the Loyola family responsible for the military defense, economic productivity, and governance of the province under the Spanish monarch, but they also held responsibility for running the churches, abbeys, and chapels of the area, including providing for the sacramental and pastoral needs of the faithful and carrying out religious reforms initiated by the church. For these contributions, the family received

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<sup>37</sup> Jill Raitt, “European Reformations of Christian Spirituality (1450–1700),” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell: 2011), 122.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Worcester, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2008), 1.

<sup>39</sup> I mention the biographical overlap between Ignatius and Columbus to point out how Ignatius’ life coincided with European and Christian expansion to the New World and the dawn of the colonial period.

a portion of all tithes to the churches as well as rental income. Therefore, argues Homza, “Ignatius ... was certainly exposed to one of the ironies of Catholicism in early modern Europe: that church offices were as valuable for their income and privileges as for any spiritual vocation.”<sup>40</sup> Ignatius was born and raised in a family that had elite access to power within the Church and the kingdom of Spain. He was groomed to share in these responsibilities and reap the benefits as an adult.<sup>41</sup> Ignatius likely developed a sense of himself as a religious and civic leader who had a special responsibility to serve society as an adult. His approach to forming and leading the Society of Jesus was likely influenced by his upbringing as a member of the noble class with all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities that entailed.

Culturally speaking, Europe was on the cusp of the Renaissance. The printing press had just been invented, which got books and religious texts including scripture into the hands of the laity. Scientists were starting to suggest that the earth might be round, not flat. In concert with the social, scientific, and geo-political developments of the time, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw significant religious tension and change. Spanish monarchs, politically aligned with the Church in Rome, expelled Muslims and Jews from the country, while the Church sought to enforce, with the help of Spanish civil authorities, centralization and uniformity in Catholic belief and practice.<sup>42</sup> Laity started to

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<sup>40</sup> Lu Ann Homza, “The Religious Milieu of the Young Ignatius,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2008), 14.

<sup>41</sup> For more commentary on the early life of Ignatius, see Jean Lacouture, *Jesuits: A Multibiography*, translated by Jeremy Leggatt, (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995), 3–34; John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 23–36; George Ganss, “General Introduction,” in *Ignatius of Loyola*, edited by George Ganss, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991), 9–63; and Ron Hansen, “The Pilgrim: Saint Ignatius of Loyola,” in *The Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, edited by George Traub, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 24–44.

<sup>42</sup> Worcester, 1.

speak out against abuses of clerical power, demanding reforms within the priesthood and beginning to take matters spiritual and religious into their own hands.<sup>43</sup> There was a growing split between spirituality (prayer and piety) and theology (doctrine and magisterial teaching), as lay men and women sought ways to live out their religious beliefs without joining religious orders under Church authority and control.<sup>44</sup> Lay spirituality and reform movements in the form of sodalities and confraternities took shape.<sup>45</sup> Popular religious devotions, particularly devotion to Marian shrines, grew; religious writing and guidelines on personal piety proliferated.<sup>46</sup>

Two major ecclesial events were underway during Ignatius' lifetime which had an impact on his religious worldview and activities: the Spanish Inquisition and the Protestant Reformation. The Spanish Inquisition began in 1478 "to prosecute Judaizing *conversos*, namely individuals of Jewish ancestry who were baptized as Christians but

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<sup>43</sup> Homza, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Raitt, 123.

<sup>45</sup> One example of these religious movements is the Beguines, groups of women who formed during the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Northern Europe, shared assets, met for prayer, and committed themselves to serving the poor; however, they did not establish monasteries or religious orders under church control. Raitt explains that "because they were not cloistered nor easily brought under close ecclesiastical supervision, they were increasingly suspected of heretical ideas and practices and in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were severely repressed. By 1500 they were practically destroyed." See Raitt, 123. I mention the Beguines as an example of lay spiritual movements preceding the Jesuits which sought to take "spirituality out of the cloister" (Raitt, 136) and into the world, which is what Ignatius aimed to continue with his early Companions.

<sup>46</sup> Lu Ann Homza explains that "biblical excerpts, saints' lives, and meditational texts in the vernacular" were published and distributed by the influential Cardinal Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros (1436–1517). Two titles particularly popular at the time were *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony and *Imitatio Christi* by Thomas à Kempis, both of which were significantly influential to Ignatius. One can see his use of both devotional texts in his development of the Exercises. George Ganss argues that the four week structure of the Exercises is based on the chapter structure in Ludolph's *Vita*, and that the *Vita* "formed his mental habits of reading and praying, his way of looking at things, his mind-set." See Homza, 18–21, and Ganss, 15–26.

who continued to practice aspects of Mosaic Law.”<sup>47</sup> The Church and the state conspired to prosecute and execute those whom it was believed were holding onto their Jewish faith traditions while claiming to be baptized Christians. Meanwhile, Church reform movements culminated in the Protestant Reformation when in 1517 Martin Luther was officially excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church for publicly challenging Rome on ninety-five points, including the practice of collecting money for sacramental purposes (known as indulgences). The target of the Inquisition then extended to anyone suspected of supporting Luther’s claims, or of challenging official church teaching, including *alambrados*, or those considered “illuminated ones” who spoke publicly about spiritual matters without church sanction.<sup>48</sup> Counter-reformation efforts to contain and suppress any initiative by Protestants—or anyone—who challenged Rome’s central authority very much defined the church at the time when Ignatius was developing the Exercises and founding the Society of Jesus.

The Crusades were ongoing during this time: a series of wars initiated by civil and church authorities since the eleventh century to defend and expand Western Christendom. Biographer Hans Wolter suggests that Ignatius internalized a “crusade spirituality” characterized by the notion of the church militant, going to battle under the banner of Christ, spreading the Christian faith, and fueled by the popular folk piety of relics, devotions, and pilgrimages. Wolter points out several aspects of crusade spirituality

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>48</sup> For more on this, and how Ignatius was accused of heresy as an *alumbrado*, see Raitt, 24, and Jean Lacouture, *Jesuits: A Multibiography*, translated by Jeremy Leggatt, (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995), 3–34. John O’Malley argues that Ignatius was “not an *alumbrado*” but had “friendly relationships with persons associated with the movement and in a few important respects his teaching resembled theirs.” (O’Malley, 27–28).

evident in Ignatius: his understanding of receiving a “call” of God, likening Christ to a temporal King and leader of the crusade or battle, the militant language, the willingness to risk death for Christ, obedience to the Pope akin to a soldier’s obedience to the king, and the desire for inner conversion to model his life on Christ.<sup>49</sup> The folk religion in which Ignatius was raised prior to his formal education, along with the militant language and symbolism of the crusades in which military conquest was fused with propagation of the Christian faith, came together for Ignatius and is evident throughout the Spiritual Exercises. The Exercises contain multiple references to the symbols and language popular in the era of the Crusades such as military banners to describe the way of Christ, receiving a call from Christ as one would a temporal authority, and battling evil spirits the way one would enter into warfare. The movements of the Exercises are informed by Crusade spirituality and must be understood and presented in this historical context in order to apply to a contemporary audience.

Women’s place in the church and society during the life of Ignatius was complex, involving “tensions [between] authority and humility, public/social and private/domestic roles, control and obedience, enclosed convents and public ministry, and fear of women’s power versus need for their contributions,” as described by Elizabeth Dreyer.<sup>50</sup> Specifically, Dreyer explains that while the period of the Reformation saw an increased commitment by religious orders to serve the poor and engage in charitable acts, as well as an increased access to religious literature, these opportunities were not available to

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<sup>49</sup> See Hans Wolter, “Elements of Crusade Spirituality in St. Ignatius,” in *St. Ignatius of Loyola His Personality and Spiritual Heritage 1556–1956*, edited by Friedrich Wulf, (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 97–134.

<sup>50</sup> Dreyer, 22.

women in equal measure. She writes, “the trend was toward limiting women to the private sphere,” and the “centralization of ecclesial power was mirrored by a strengthening of patriarchal power in emerging nation-states and within the nuclear family.”<sup>51</sup> Women’s roles were limited to maintaining the nuclear family, which supported and allowed for the independence of men in the civic, ecclesial and public spheres. Dreyer makes the point that relegating women to work exclusively within the home coincided with and was required for the centralization of ecclesial power, and the development of the nation-state model for establishing a global empire. Limiting women to the home was required for the church and state to consolidate its power and wealth. For women, the choice became marriage, prostitution,<sup>52</sup> or the convent.

Regarding the latter, there was no model for women’s active religious orders; in fact, it was not allowed under canon law. Lisa Fullam explains, “women religious of this time, even members of female branches of active male orders like the Dominicans, were cloistered, a situation that was to be set in canonical stone with the Tridentine decree in 1563 that all women under a religious rule must be enclosed.”<sup>53</sup> Fullam describes that “ministry as such was not the problem: ministerial opportunities for women, especially those wishing to work with children or other women, were readily available ... Rather, the issue was the juxtaposition of the somewhat daring, even scandalous, activities of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Dreyer notes that prostitution was “tolerated and even supported by civil and ecclesial authority as a way to keep order by channeling male libido and preserving the honor of legitimately married women,” 26.

<sup>53</sup> Lisa Fullam, “Juana, SJ: The Past (and Future?) Status of Women in the Society of Jesus.” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 31, no. 5 (November 1999), 16. See also Gemma Simmonds, “Women Jesuits?” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits* ed. Thomas Worcester (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008), 120–135.



women doing charitable work with the decorum expected of women with vows acknowledged by the Church.”<sup>54</sup> The pastoral ministry of the church was divided between men’s work and women’s work, a set of distinctions that supported and perpetuated the myth of male superiority which required female submission. Such was the context within which the Society of Jesus took shape.

Ruth Liebowitz’s influential paper, “Virgins in the Service of Christ,” points out that the efforts by women to form apostolic communities in the Counter-Reformation period had been ongoing since the Middle Ages with groups such as the Beguines; however, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were forced to be enclosed. She emphasizes that the impulse to serve the poor and help society in response to a spiritual calling was not unique to female religious groups at the time, citing the Jesuits as an example of a male order doing the same. The difference was that the male orders were “conceived of in terms of specifically *priestly* pastoral work—above all preaching and administering the sacraments. Their associations ... thus inevitably were all male, because of the traditional exclusion of women from the priesthood.”<sup>55</sup> Liebowitz argues that “the pastoral emphasis of the Counter-Reformation tended to accentuate differences in sex roles within Roman Catholicism. This emphasis also tended to accentuate the inequality between these sex roles.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Fullam, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Ruth Liebowitz, “Virgins in the Service of Christ,” in *Women of Spirit*, edited by Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 138. Church authorities had actively restricted women from preaching or publicly discussing religious matters since the Middle Ages. See also Ruether (1998), 79–111.

<sup>56</sup> Liebowitz, 138.

To illustrate the effects of this difference, we can look at Ignatius and the early Jesuits. Ignatius initially did not plan to become a priest. John O'Malley alludes several times in *The First Jesuits* that “they had no intention of founding a new religious order.”<sup>57</sup> Ignatius sought the freedom to “help souls” wherever he was needed. However, it became clear to him that anyone seeking to do apostolic work under a religious framework was required to abide by canon law, and one option available to Ignatius which was not available to his female counterparts was priestly ordination. The option of priestly ordination gave Ignatius and his early companions social credibility and standing within the church from which they could innovate and expand. They chose the priesthood for practical reasons; their female counterparts could not do the same.

The backdrop of these limitations on women was, in Dreyer's words, “a preoccupation—some would say obsession—with sexual purity ... which rested in large part on female sexual purity.”<sup>58</sup> Embedded in the obsession with female sexuality was a misogyny with deep roots in Christian theology and philosophy. Misogynistic philosophy and theology gave rise to the popular characteristic of women as witches easily coopted to serve as agents of evil. Rosemary Radford Reuther, in a discussion on renaissance feminism in her book, *Women and Redemption*, describes “a misogynistic tradition long rooted in late medieval sermons and popular stories and songs denouncing women's slippery and manipulative natures” used to justify the Church's subjugation of women.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> O'Malley, 27–28, 32.

<sup>58</sup> Dreyer, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 127. Ignatius uses female imagery to describe evil in Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: “the enemy conducts himself like a woman... [confronted by weakness...her] anger, vindictiveness, and ferocity swell almost without limit.” (Exx. 325).

*Malleus Malificarum*, a handbook on witch-hunting, was published by two Dominican monks in 1486; it put into popular and religious consciousness the suggestion that women are inherently defective, prone to demonic influence, and therefore that they should be feared, controlled, and in certain cases, jailed and executed.<sup>60</sup> Misogynist portrayals of women as prone to witchcraft and Satanic activity originated in Patristic and Thomistic writings that painted women as incomplete, defective, and inferior to men,<sup>61</sup> and these ideas were used to influence and justify the church's official ban on female apostolic orders and ecclesial leadership. A related set of ideas are captured by the strict church teaching regulating human sexuality with a focus on sexual morality in women in particular.

Ignatius was born and lived in this complex period of growth, tension, and change within the Church, in which spirituality and faith were coming out of the cloister into the world, and religious movements were proliferating under the anxious scrutiny of the Roman Church which itself was compelled by a quest for global expansion and empire. Raitt summarizes the period as the time when “religious leaders understood that the increasingly literate populace needed not only instruction by also intentional spiritual methods that they could incorporate into their lives as lay people. From the beguines to St. Ignatius to St. Vincent de Paul, retreats, spiritual direction, and books helped Catholic laity to follow spiritual paths.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See Ruether (1998), 92–97.

<sup>62</sup> Raitt, 136.

Threads of all of these historical factors can be recognized in the biography of Ignatius and the development of the Spiritual Exercises. An analysis of his relationships with women reveals evidence of the gender and sex stereotyping of the time, as well as Ignatius' impulse toward reform and innovation. We are looking at a both/and situation here. Ignatius was a product of his time and generation, and a synthesizer and innovator, who pulled together from the sources available to him and his personal experience a process in his work that remains relevant today for its adaptability and flexibility. To portray him as one or the other, as either a radical reformist or a loyal servant of the Pope, is mistaken. He was both, and as is the case with many charismatic leaders, it was his agility with nuance and ambiguity that makes him, and the educational institutions he founded, relevant today.

To illustrate my point, I will look at three moments in the life of the Society that shed light on the both/and nature of the tension and struggle between women and Jesuits, and the ways in which both groups have handled the limitations of social and ecclesial norms. I will argue that the Spiritual Exercises, as well as reflection on the Exercises, freed individuals, including Ignatius, to think beyond social and ecclesial constraints based on gender and to adopt a posture of adaptability, flexibility, and openness to the Holy Spirit. Specifically, I will discuss the experience of Isabel Roser (1523–1554), Mary Ward's Institute of English Ladies, (1609–1631), and the development of the decree, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in the Church and Civil Society," during the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1995). I chose these three moments because they each illuminate particular tensions and complexities which still exist for women and Jesuits. The three examples illustrate what happens when women are

included, what happens when they are not, and why this issue remains unresolved and still calls for our attention.

*Isabel Roser (1523–1554)*

Isabel Roser is one of four women who became a Jesuit during the life of Ignatius. She was a spiritual companion and follower of Ignatius and one of his original patrons. Isabel Roser was a Spanish noblewoman whom Ignatius met when he was staying in Barcelona from February through March 1523 waiting for passage to Rome and then to the Holy Land. The wife of a wealthy merchant, Isabel Roser had important political and ecclesiastical ties, and hers was “among the most influential families of the capital.”<sup>63</sup> Isabel met Ignatius when he was sitting on the altar steps of her church. In her words, “it seemed to me that there was a radiance about his face, and I heard in my heart a voice which said: ‘Call him, call him!’”<sup>64</sup> She invited him to her home for a meal after which he gave a spiritual talk by which she was deeply moved. As their relationship developed, Isabel became an important patron of Ignatius. She personally funded his studies and solicited donations from other noblewomen of Barcelona to do the same. In 1532, Ignatius wrote Isabel a letter of gratitude stating, “for to you I owe more than to anyone I know in this life.”<sup>65</sup> Several letters exist in which Ignatius provides spiritual counsel to

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<sup>63</sup> Hugo Rahner, S.J., *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (New York: Crossroad, 2013), 262–263.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 265–267.

Isabel, and Isabel shares information about her personal and prayer life with Ignatius.<sup>66</sup> Hugo Rahner writes, “Loyola would not have been the great spiritual director who in many of his ideas was in advance of his age, if he had not also known how to deal with all the questions, requests and projects which came to him...from women both lay and religious.”<sup>67</sup> Isabel Roser was one of these women.<sup>68</sup>

In a letter dated November 10, 1532, Ignatius sends a lengthy letter to Isabel from Paris thanking her for her financial support of his studies. He also comforts Isabel, who had written him about facing ridicule and false accusations for her support of Ignatius. He writes:

...for from the moment when you give yourself to God our Lord, desiring and striving for his glory, honour and service, you are already embarked on warfare against the world, are setting up your standards against it, and disposing yourself to struggle against what is exalted by embracing what is lowly, resolved to accept indifferently things both high and low — honour and dishonor, riches or poverty, to be loved or hated, welcomed or rejected, in short the world’s glory or its abuse.<sup>69</sup>

The use of “crusade spirituality” language is clear, as Ignatius presents the life of faith as one of facing struggle and doing battle. One might surmise that these words had a

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<sup>66</sup> Lu Ann Homza and Elizabeth Dreyer discuss the common practice of letter-writing between confessors and women in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and argue that Ignatius saw letter-writing as an important way of life, as did literate women of the time. See Dreyer, 26–28 and Homza, n. 19, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Rahner, 251.

<sup>68</sup> Correspondences between confessor and penitent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century show that the role of confessor expanded to that of a spiritual director and became more personal and significant and had an element of submission of the penitent to the spiritual director. Liebowitz gives examples in “Virgins in the Service of Christ,” 138–139.

<sup>69</sup> Rahner, 266.

different meaning for Isabel as a woman than they would have for Ignatius as a man. Given the restricted role of women in church and civil society, women were already compelled to accept what was lowly; for women, it was not a choice. Unlike many women, though, Isabel had significant economic status due to her wealth in Barcelona. What is noteworthy here is that Ignatius uses the same language he uses later with his male counterparts in offering solace and encouragement to Isabel. His advice to her is not gender-specific.

In the same letter to Isabel, Ignatius shares a story about a young woman who disguised herself as a man in order to become a Franciscan friar. Hugo Rahner refers to this story as the legend commonly known from the Middle Ages of St. Marina.<sup>70</sup> In the story, a young woman goes to a Franciscan monastery dressed as a boy to ask to join as a friar. Ignatius writes, “*he* spoke so persuasively that they gave him the habit forthwith” [italics mine].<sup>71</sup> One night, while traveling, a young girl falls in love with the disguised friar, attempts to seduce him, and when rebuffed, accuses the friar of sexually attacking and impregnating her. The friar is publicly shamed and punished, but ultimately allowed to rejoin the monastery, without ever revealing his true biological gender. It wasn’t until the friar died that it was discovered he was a woman.<sup>72</sup>

Rahner suggests that Ignatius tells this story to Isabel as a way of illustrating the need for patience and constancy amid life’s struggles. However, the story begs the question of Ignatius’ suspicious view of gender limitations on religious vocations. In

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 266.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 266–267.

telling this story, Ignatius hints that for him, women are as capable as men of the spiritual and religious life. He praises the ingenuity and faithfulness of this young woman who tricked religious authorities into allowing her to do what she felt compelled to do despite her gender.<sup>73</sup>

Letter writing was an important means by which the Jesuits developed their spirituality, as well as a sense of common mission and purpose. It is clear through Ignatius' letters to women that he included women in this effort as well. In a recent article, José Garcíá de Castro argues that letter writing for the early Jesuits was a key way in which they maintained their bonds with one another, and through which they developed the Constitutions. De Castro argues that as the members of the Society were dispersed throughout the world, "letters were the principal manifestation of the 'love of God' operating as 'the chief bond for the union of the members between themselves and their head' (Constitutions VIII 1.8 [671]). For those on mission, it was letters that stirred up their memories, kept alive their mutual affection and deepened friendships."<sup>74</sup> Through letters, they reminded each other of their common experience of knowing God through prayer, and also of their shared call to serve others. Through letters, they reflected on their spiritual experiences and callings, forging a common sense of identity and purpose. Ignatius included women in this activity as well as men.

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<sup>73</sup> Gender non-conformity in medieval and renaissance spirituality and practice as a response to women's subordination has been discussed by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Ruether suggests this corresponded to a shift in gender symbolism for God and Christ during the Medieval ages to include femaleness, including in descriptions of Jesus. For example, portrayals emerged in text and art of Jesus on the cross as a nursing mother with breasts. See Ruether (1998), 5.

<sup>74</sup> José Garcíá de Castro, "Juan Alfonso de Polanco: Memory, Identity and Mission," in *The Way*, transl. Philip Endean, July 2017, vol. 56., no. 3, 48.



To be clear, in 1532, the Society of Jesus had not yet formed. Ignatius was then a student studying in Paris and was just beginning to share the Exercises with others. Isabel Roser was an early and frequent correspondent with Ignatius beginning at this time until her death in 1554. They were lifelong friends. Their relationship, including her financial support of his education and that of his companions, is a cornerstone in the foundation of the Society. The language and ideas Ignatius expressed to Isabel mirrored those shared with his male companions. Through letters, Ignatius included women in the early formation of the mission of the Society of Jesus. Dreyer discusses this mutually beneficial arrangement as such: “Letters helped Ignatius engage women in the mission of the Society, provide them support and pastoral care, and contribute to their spiritual growth. We can also surmise that he was instructed and affected in diverse ways by the relationships behind this correspondence.”<sup>75</sup> Ignatius’ correspondence with Isabel is evidence that Ignatius shared a common language and identity around the mission and purpose of the Society with women as well as with his male counterparts.

After her husband died, Isabel petitioned Ignatius to allow her to live and work in Rome under his obedience. Lisa Fullam describes her expressing to Ignatius her “desire to forget altogether my possessions, and I have no feeling of attachment to these things”<sup>76</sup>—language reflecting Ignatius’ own, and language that reflects movements of the Exercises, including detachment from worldly possessions and willingness to assume

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<sup>75</sup> Dreyer, 27.

<sup>76</sup> Fullam, 16.

poverty.<sup>77</sup> In 1543, she traveled to Rome along with two female companions, her servants and her belongings, to ask Ignatius to join him in his ministry. Ignatius, hesitant at first, eventually assigned Isabel the job of directing the house of St. Martha, a property adjacent to the Jesuit community that housed women leaving prostitution. In this act, Ignatius assigns a woman to be a director of a Jesuit work.<sup>78</sup> In 1545, Roser petitioned Paul III to be “admitted to the least Society of Jesus,” promising to take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to Ignatius: essentially asking to become a Jesuit. Her request was granted, and on December 25, 1545, she, along with her two friends, Lucrezia di Bradine and Francisca Curyllas, took a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience to Ignatius.<sup>79</sup>

Fullam, Rahner, and others generally agree that the experiment was a failure from the start. Fullam cites the reasons for the difficulties as “personal more than institutional: the same organizational energy, effusive enthusiasm and profound devotion to Ignatius that made Roser such an efficient fund-raiser and all-around advocate for the Society among the Barcelona upper class became a problem when exercised at close range.”<sup>80</sup> Other Jesuits in Rome are reported to have complained to Ignatius about the difficulties of working alongside the three women. Jerónimo Nadal is said to have been “scandalized

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<sup>77</sup> It was not uncommon at the time for women to take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the founder of a religious order as opposed to entering a convent. They became members of “third orders” of male monastic orders such as the Dominicans or Franciscans. See Homza, 19.

<sup>78</sup> I am using contemporary language of a “Jesuit work” to describe what was likely a confraternity at the time, a faith-based charitable work led by men and women in cooperation with the Society of Jesus. Despite the anachronism, I am attempting to highlight Isabel’s important role in the early Society through a specific position directing and managing a Jesuit ministry. The title “director of a work” continues to hold sway in the Society and is given to women infrequently.

<sup>79</sup> Rahner, 286–287.

<sup>80</sup> Fullam, 18.

by the fact that Sister Isabel got her food daily from the Fathers' kitchen."<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, four months after taking their vows, Ignatius petitioned the Pope to release the three women from obedience to him, thus reversing his initial decision. On October 1, 1546, Ignatius sent a letter of renunciation of vows to Isabel, in which he asked that "I should withdraw and separate myself from this care of having you as a spiritual daughter under obedience, having you rather as a good and pious mother, as you have been to me for several years now."<sup>82</sup> Isabel left Rome and eventually entered a Franciscan convent, where she died in 1554. She and Ignatius remained friends and continued to correspond in letters until her death.<sup>83</sup>

Other women in Isabel's and Ignatius' time, like Spanish noblewoman Juana de Cardona, had similar experiences of conversion and desire for becoming closer to Christ after being introduced to the Exercises. De Cardona wrote Ignatius, "I beseech and ask you to receive me into this holy Society ... for I was prevented from entering the Lord's service to the full extent of my capacity... Let not Your Reverence fear my woman's weakness, because, when the Lord sets his hand, he makes the weak strong."<sup>84</sup> Other letters exist from women speaking of profound experiences of conversion in going through the Exercises with the early Jesuits including Ignatius, Araoz, Mirón, and Faber. There is a common theme of women longing to do more, and an initial impulse on the part of Ignatius and the early Jesuits to accommodate them. As further evidence of this

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<sup>81</sup> Rahner, 287.

<sup>82</sup> Rahner, 289.

<sup>83</sup> Following Ignatius' decision, Isabel and her nephews fought the Society in court for repayment of donated gifts and property. She lost and eventually signed a letter testifying the donations were freely given. See Fullam, 18–19, Rahner, 288–291 and Dyckman, 37–38.

<sup>84</sup> Rahner, 304–305.

adaptive stance, in 1556 the Jesuits were publically accused by the Duke and Duchess of Alba for being *too* familiar with women”<sup>85</sup> [emphasis mine], a comment that points to the strict cultural mores directing male and female relationships, as well as the Jesuits’ willingness to push the boundaries of those restrictions.

Ruth Liebowitz points out that women seeking membership in active apostolic orders like the Jesuits “were highly innovative in terms of defining new spiritual vocations and institutional structures ... yet it is striking how none of them questioned basic medieval assumptions about the religious life.”<sup>86</sup> One can see women falling back on medieval stereotypes about “women’s weakness” and lowly status in the letters excerpted above. However, Isabel did see herself as worthy of membership in the Society, and Ignatius did as well for a brief time. A church law against women’s apostolic availability based on the misogynistic theology of the time gave him reason to end the experiment; however, his initial response could be understood as “why not?”

The letter from Ignatius to Paul III, asking that the Society forever “be freed from the responsibility of women,” is often referred to as a once-and-for-all decision regarding the Jesuits and women: Ignatius specifically chose not to establish a female branch, as other orders had, and therefore, the case is closed. However, Fullam points out that for Ignatius, the decision to exclude women was not about women in general; instead “he made it about mobility, citing the order’s need to be available for mission which women were not allowed to do at the time.”<sup>87</sup> Women were confined to the home or the convent,

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<sup>85</sup> John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1993), 293–294.

<sup>86</sup> Liebowitz, 133.

<sup>87</sup> See Fullam, 18–19.

and Ignatius wanted his companions to be ready at a moment's notice to go serve wherever they were needed. Given that the issue Ignatius cited was mobility for mission, Fullam suggests that the question of women's admission to the Society be reconsidered today, since opportunities available to women socially and professionally have expanded significantly since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, albeit less so in the Roman Church. Fullam's analysis that the problem was about mobility rather than women per se (i.e. their intrinsic qualities) points to the reasons the experiment failed being cultural and ecclesial rather than gender-based. Ignatius demonstrated that he recognized this circumstance in his context, and that he was willing to explore a new type of male-female partnership in his early mission.

Ignatius' acceptance of three women, and later Infanta Juana of Spain, into the Society, signal to me an adaptability, openness, and flexibility on the part of Ignatius to respond to the activity of the Holy Spirit despite the significant ecclesial restrictions at the time.<sup>88</sup> Fullam suggests that at the very least, their admission into the Society suggests that "being a woman was not an absolute bar to membership in the Society." For Isabel, the ways in which Ignatius advised her spiritually brought forth in her a strong desire to serve God more generously and fully, "to serve God our Lord better and without hindrance."<sup>89</sup> Through her relationship with Ignatius, new spiritual experiences changed her perception of herself and her perception of how God was calling her to obey and serve. Her experiences with Ignatius' nascent Spiritual Exercises compelled her to desire

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<sup>88</sup> In 1554 Ignatius accepted the vows of Juana, Princess of Portugal into the Society of Jesus under a male pseudonym, Mateo Sanchez. Mateo Sanchez joined the Society of Jesus as a scholastic. She survived Ignatius, and died in 1573 as a Jesuit. See Rahner, 56–67 and Fullam, 23–31.

<sup>89</sup>Rahner, 276.

more than what she was allowed to do in her community at the time, and she begged for an opportunity to respond to that desire. Likewise, Ignatius' relationship with her influenced his view of women's spiritual and ministerial capacities, prompting him to expand the bounds of their partnership beyond what was typical at the time.

*Mary Ward's Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Congregation of Jesus (1609–1631)*

Born in England in 1585, Mary Ward was a woman who pushed strongly against the church limitations on women and nuns in her era. This spirit of resistance was inspired by the spirituality she developed through Jesuit education and with her Jesuit confessor and trusted advisor, Richard Lee.<sup>90</sup> Itinerant Jesuits brought the Spiritual Exercises to Catholic families in Elizabethan England who were prevented legally from practicing their faith.<sup>91</sup> Mary Ward, as a member of the Poor Clares, experienced in prayer a call to establish a religious order for women modeled after the Jesuits. She writes of hearing a call from God “to take the name of the Society [of Jesus]’ — so understood as that we were to take the same both in matter and manner, that only excepted which God, by diversity of sex, hath prohibited.”<sup>92</sup> She describes her evolving sense of an apostolic vocation as such:

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<sup>90</sup> Fullam, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Simmonds, 123.

<sup>92</sup> Fullam, 11.

It seemed to me most perfect to take the most austere Order, that a soul might give herself to God not in part but altogether, since I saw not how a religious woman could do good to more than herself alone. To teach children seemed then too much distraction...nor was of that perfection and importance as therefore to hinder that quite and continual communication with God which strict enclosure afforded.<sup>93</sup>

She sought to develop an institute, based on the Society of Jesus, where women would wear the clothing of noblewomen and be engaged in a variety of ministries “such as caring for the sick and the poor and teaching in private homes.”<sup>94</sup> Fullam states that “Ward’s aim was to establish a group parallel to the Society of Jesus in organizational structure, range of ministries and commitment to mobility. Her order, for instance, was to be governed by a mother general who was directly subject to the pope.”<sup>95</sup> She sought, in similar language to Ignatius, a society whose aim was to promote the salvation of souls through education of girls, and in any way that promoted the greater glory of God and the further propagation of the Catholic Church.

Pamela Ellis suggests that “this was an extraordinarily radical ambition—no less than the taking on of the public apostolate of male religious—and went far beyond the educational aims of earlier active women’s orders. Mary described this revelation as having given her ‘so great measure of light ... so much comfort and strength,’ but in fact the path it set her on was all but impossible.”<sup>96</sup> Lisa McClain describes Mary Ward as being a fixture in the “vibrant current of experimentation in women’s spirituality and

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<sup>93</sup> Simmonds, 123–124.

<sup>94</sup> Fullam, 11.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>96</sup> Pamela Ellis, “‘They Are But Women: Mary Ward, 1585–1645,’” in *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sylvia Brown (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 251.

modifications to compulsory women's enclosure in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe."<sup>97</sup> Mary Ward fought her entire life for legitimacy of her Institute, and the right to be called the Congregation of Jesus (which they were not granted until 1909). Her desire to live out her vocation, a calling clearly arrived at through prayer, and in her experience, divinely sanctioned, clashed bitterly with social and ecclesial restrictions based on her gender.

Gemma Simmonds reports that "the Jesuits showed a marked ambivalence towards Mary Ward's 'English Ladies,' referred to by many as 'Jesuitesses.' They received support from the likes of Roger Lee and from John Gerard, who had experiences of women's apostolic potential from the English mission. From others there was implacable opposition."<sup>98</sup> Matters were made more challenging by the fact that the Jesuits at the time were already under heightened scrutiny by the secular clergy who had an "instinctive mistrust of Jesuit innovations . . . only exacerbated by the unprecedented freedoms claimed by these 'Gallopers,' whom some did not hesitate to accuse of immorality, financial irregularity, and usurping priestly functions."<sup>99</sup>

After years of conflict between church authorities and Mary Ward's English Ladies, Pope Urban VIII issued a papal bull of suppression against them in 1631. In it, he stated the "'poisonous growths in the church of God' had to be torn up by the roots . . . lest they spread themselves further."<sup>100</sup> Ellis argues that "the violence of expression is

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<sup>97</sup> Lisa McClain, "On a Mission: Priests, Jesuits, 'Jesuitesses,' and Catholic Missionary Efforts in Tudor-Stuart England," in *The Catholic Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2015), 438.

<sup>98</sup> Simmonds, 125.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.



perhaps a measure of the threat that these independent women were felt to pose to the Church; certainly they were seen as challenging the rightful order of things.”<sup>101</sup> Mary Ward never survived to see her institute established as she had envisioned it. She died in squalor, a victim of extreme social, economic, and ecclesial exclusion. Hers is a case of wanting to do simply what the male orders were permitted to do, and of dying for her cause. Christine Burke summarizes her life story as such:

Throughout her life, Mary Ward was drawn into an ever-deepening friendship with God and, as Jesus had warned, living out the implication of such a friendship led her to the cross. Central to the oppression she endured was her belief that women as well as men were called to bring God’s love to an estranged people. She died a laywoman because the church authorities had disbanded the religious institute she founded.<sup>102</sup>

Despite their suppression and the vitriolic language of the papal bull, Mary Ward’s Institute did survive and spread. Almost four hundred years later, in 2003, the Institute for the Blessed Virgin Mary officially adopted the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and took the name Congregation of Jesus, “in conformity with the directive Ward received in her 1611 vision to ‘take the name of the Society.’”<sup>103</sup> It took four centuries, but Mary Ward’s Institute survived and her prayer came to fruition.

Scholars now recognize that the English Ladies were able to support the English Catholic mission in some cases more successfully than priests because they were not in

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<sup>101</sup> Ellis, 259.

<sup>102</sup> Christine Burke, “Mary Ward: To Be or Not to Be...a Saint,” *The Way*, 56, no. 3 (July 2017): 57.

<sup>103</sup> Lisa McClain, “On a Mission: Priests, Jesuits, ‘Jesuitresses,’ and Catholic Missionary Efforts in Tudor-Stuart England,” in *The Catholic Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2015), 461–462.

identifiable Catholic garb. “Benefiting from gendered attitudes and stereotypes, Ward’s English Ladies were less likely than priests to be suspected, identified, and arrested for their work on the English Mission.”<sup>104</sup> McClain notes:

The decades-long contribution of Ward and her companions to the English Mission remain to be written into scholarship on the Mission. The English Ladies participated in the Mission in different ways than the male missionaries did, using different tactics, reaching a different demographic, and increasing the effectiveness of other groups—such as priests and recusant laywomen—whose work on the Mission is already well recognized...For more than twenty years, the English Ladies worked alongside well-known Jesuits, such as Roger Lee and John Gerard, and in so doing changed the experience, character, and effectiveness of the English Mission.<sup>105</sup>

Recent scholarship is reclaiming the vision and ministry of Mary Ward as essential to the survival of the Roman Catholic Church in England.

In the case of Mary Ward, we see what happened when a woman completed the Exercises and attempted to live out her experience of election. The Exercises are meant to inspire an internal and external response during a process of “election” during the Second Week. Dyckman et al. explain, “the methods for election and the entire dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises allow seekers to enact the belief that their deepest desire and ultimate good, and that of other persons as well, are the same. God’s preferential love grounds all finite expressions of love, making them possible and completing them. In this sense, love wants commitment because it wants to express itself as fully as it can to assure its

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 437–462.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 462.

completion.”<sup>106</sup> Much theological and pastoral scholarship is dedicated to the notion that mission and vocation are central to an individual’s ability to understand oneself, to answer the existential question, who am I?, and to overcome egocentric impulses.<sup>107</sup> What happens when one is prevented from living out his or her vocation? What does it say about human freedom, human choice? Can anyone’s vocation be authentically lived out if it isn’t freely chosen, if it is instead Plan B because their options are restricted? Is it possible to fully surrender to God if one is not permitted to externally express and live out that full obedience to that divine summons? How does one reconcile internal impulses with external expression or movement toward her ultimate horizon of meaning if one is not allowed to go there? And how is the glory of God served in these instances, or not?

The Spiritual Exercises presupposes that God is good. God is immanent, active, transcendent, and accessible—but, above all, good. If God is good, and humans are made in the image of God, then all humans are good. These realizations of the fundamental worth of women in the image and likeness of God, are fundamental to the Spiritual Exercises, and they challenge the ecclesial and social limitations on women, which are based on the assumption of women’s un-worthiness.

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<sup>106</sup> Dyckman, 295.

<sup>107</sup> See Meredith Secomb, “Responding to the Call of God: How Mission Makes the Person for Hans urs von Balthasar” in *The Way*, 54, no. 3 (July 2015), 91–92. Also Paul Crowley, “Mystagogy and Mission: The Challenge of Nonbelief and the Task of Theology,” in *Theological Studies*, 76, no. 1 (2015), 7–28, in which Crowley asserts faith is mystagogy and mission, A.J. Conyers, *The Listening Heart: Vocation and the Crisis of Modern Culture* (Waco: Baylor UP, 2009) and Susan M. Mountin, “Tilling the Soil: Preparing Women for the Vocation of Ministry—A Challenge and Call,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Elizabeth Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), 234–241.

In the cases of Isabel Roser and Mary Ward, we see examples of what happens when social and ecclesial restrictions prohibit the full expression of one's deepest desires as discovered through the Exercises. Burke puts it this way:

Changing mindsets has never been easy. Mary Ward challenged the Church to change, to recognize the potential of women to be an apostolic force. She did not allow the resistance she met to damage her relationship with God or her commitment to following God's call. Her story shows that God can bring about what is needed if we continue to work for what we know to be right, even in the face of opposition. The challenge is to do this with love and respect, committed to new possibilities yet remaining within the community of faith.<sup>108</sup>

With Isabel Roser and Mary Ward, we see gestures, albeit modest ones, toward mutual partnership between Jesuits and women, as well as an effort to work around existing church structures to accommodate and give space for the vocational and apostolic work of women in response to their call from the Exercises. Likewise, new histories are reclaiming the vision and ministry of Mary Ward as essential to the survival of the Roman Catholic Church in England. Both women are historical examples of the complex and interwoven role between Jesuits and women during the foundation and early expansion of the Society of Jesus. Both are also examples of the transformative power of the Exercises to inspire change.

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<sup>108</sup> Burke, 57.

*Decree 14, General Congregation 34 (1995)*

Fast forward to the current context of women and the Society of Jesus. In 1995 the Society of Jesus published a decree at their 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation with radical possibilities for the church and civil society, titled “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in the Church and Civil Society.” The genesis of the document, and the fact that it was put on the congregation’s agenda at all, is a testament to the long history of engagement and shared spiritual reflection between Jesuits and women since the days of Ignatius. Gerry O’Hanlon, S.J.,<sup>109</sup> a Jesuit from the Irish Province, suggested that the topic be discussed at the general assembly after having worked on two books about solidarity with women in his home province. In a telephone interview O’Hanlon recalled:

We had an initial three days of prayer [at the General Congregation]. People were divided into groups. There was a provision at an early stage for new topics to be mentioned by individuals and groups. I sought speaking time and I spoke at that time about my conviction that this topic merited inclusion, and that this wasn’t a women’s problem, this was a men’s problem. They listened to what I said and put it on the agenda. Pat Howell and Bill Urin got in touch with me and said that they would be willing to help. There was a lot of resistance to men talking about women. Some feared, ‘this will make us a laughing stock.’ There was a fair amount of incredulity and nervousness around the whole topic. A French Jesuit used to look at me and say, teasingly, ‘Ah, les femmes, les femmes.’ And I would say, “No, it’s les hommes, les hommes.” We tried to put this back on us—of course it affected women but it was largely the male part of the church that was continuing to reinforce and failed to challenge this issue.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Gerald O’Hanlon, SJ is an author and theologian currently serving at the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in Dublin Ireland. The other two authors of Decree 14 are Pat Howell, SJ, Distinguished Professor in Residence at Seattle University, and Bill Urin, SJ, Rector of Newman College at the University of Melbourne.

<sup>110</sup> Gerry O’Hanlon, S.J. December 12, 2015. Telephone interview with author.

The description above is reminiscent of Jeronimo Nadal's annoyance toward Isabel Roser's use of the Jesuit kitchen: a familiar eye-rolling exasperation over these pesky women! Perhaps issues as seemingly simple as sharing living space remain obstacles to authentic male/female partnership in religious life today. O'Hanlon's response indicates an awareness on the part of some Jesuits to recognize that the division of church roles by gender is not the women's fault; it is on the men, who set up and maintain the patriarchal structures.

The powerfully-worded decree addresses the situation of poverty, discrimination, and violence against women, and it accepts responsibility and the need for action that is tied to the Jesuit commitment to a faith that does justice. The Society states its appreciation of women as partners in ministry and makes a clear call for Jesuits to listen to women's experiences as a first step toward solidarity. The document includes the following call to conversion:

In response, we Jesuits first ask God for the grace of conversion. We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often contributed to a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation.<sup>111</sup>

In 1995, the Jesuits made a statement toward forging new pathways of partnership with women that came from their experiences of prayer, listening to women, and working alongside women. Civil society had also changed dramatically since the days of Isabel

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<sup>111</sup> *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31<sup>st</sup>-35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 617.

Roser and Mary Ward. Still, more than twenty years later, women remain limited in their vocational choices, and still disproportionately hampered by social, theological, economic, and ecclesial discrimination.

Since 1995, the Jesuits have held two general congregations, neither of which said anything more about the situation of women—but this year, the current Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, gave an address on International Women’s Day, in which he discusses and praises women’s resilience and calls for men and women to work together to bring peace to regions affected by violence and civil disturbance. Sosa does not go as far as Decree 14 in acknowledging Jesuit complicity in the diminished status of women worldwide. However, he does call for a new “theology and an ecclesiology of women” that can “change the image, the concept and the structures of the Church.” He notes that “women’s creativity can open new ways of being a Christian community of disciples, men and women together, witnesses and preachers of the Good News ... The opposite of clericalism is collaboration, working together as baptized daughters and sons of God.”<sup>112</sup> He concludes by saying the effort to include women in the core of the Church might be impossible, but that we must start. Sosa’s address is very Ignatian in that he starts with reflection on the situation in the world and then goes to theology. His is a hopeful document in that it points to a continuation of Jesuit leadership’s desire for equality for women in church and civil society.

An analysis of the historical context of Ignatius, the early Society, and the development of the Spiritual Exercises reveals points of tension and opportunity.

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<sup>112</sup> Arturo Sosa, SJ, “Stirring the Waters—Making the Impossible Possible.” [http://www.sjweb.info/documents/assj/2017.03.08\\_Voices\\_of\\_Faith\\_2017\\_Fr\\_General%27s\\_speech.pdf](http://www.sjweb.info/documents/assj/2017.03.08_Voices_of_Faith_2017_Fr_General%27s_speech.pdf). Accessed 12/1/17.

Historically, the Spiritual Exercises specifically were an instrument for male/female relationship and cooperation for Ignatius and Jesuits after him. We know that Ignatius was supported by and influenced by women in his ministry. The Spiritual Exercises were a process and a means by which that collaboration happened and by which it still continues. Through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius became free to form relationships with women that were beyond the norm of his time. It was in part through the Exercises that women responded with passionate energy and resolve to serve the church and society. The Spiritual Exercises had an effect on women and men that stirred them to challenge the gender-based social and ecclesial constraints of their era. The Exercises set a course for a radical reimagining of the spiritual and apostolic work of men and women together, fueling their attempts at collaboration. The social and ecclesial restraints against women's full and equal participation in the church and in religious orders, including the Society of Jesus, were formidable and remain so, but the Exercises provide a pathway forward that was relevant then and remains so today.



## Chapter 4

### Research Methodology

#### *Methodology*

I now turn to my research project on women's experiences with the Spiritual Exercises in the context of Jesuit education today. For my study, I sought to create a process that would allow me to gather some basic demographic and assessment data about 19<sup>th</sup> annotation programs,<sup>113</sup> which I predicted would be useful to mission officers at the Jesuit universities. I do not intend my study to be an assessment of 19<sup>th</sup> annotation programs, that is, an analysis of their success or failure in meeting predetermined learning objectives. Neither do I intend to provide a meta-analysis, in other words, a broad statistical report revealing patterns based on demographic and other factors influencing women's experience of the Exercises. Nor am I making a causal argument to suggest that if a University provides the Exercises to its employees, a certain outcome will happen. Several recent studies<sup>114</sup> have explored the question of formation for mission and have designed frameworks or programs for formation of faculty and staff. Those undertakings are not my own.

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<sup>113</sup> Annotation 19 allows for the Exercises to be adapted to accommodate "a person who is involved in public affairs or pressing occupations" who can take "an hour and a half each day to perform the Exercises" rather than the 30-day format. This is the method by which they are typically shared in University contexts.

<sup>114</sup> For example, see the dissertation *Forming Partners in Mission: Sharing the Jesuit Tradition in Education* by Edwardo Teixeira Henriques, SJ, Boston College, 2009. Accessed 9/15/17. <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/980>.

Instead, I am looking at a program that we are already doing in a widespread way throughout the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) and pulling out the threads that tie the Exercises to contemporary views on feminist theology and Jesuit educational mission. I am looking for general themes, questions, and languages that fit into a larger conversation about the purpose, mission, and theology of Jesuit higher education, based on the female faculty and staff members' experiences of doing the Exercises. While I am not designing a new mission formation program with this dissertation, I do hope that some of my conclusions may be useful to those who are. Namely, I am arguing that spiritual formation is important; people like the idea of the Exercises; there are many uses and adaptations for the Exercises; and public theological reflection on the process is important for understanding mission.

For my study, I wanted to develop a research process that would allow me to invite women to reflect in depth and share their stories about how the Spiritual Exercises affected them and how these experiences related to their understanding of the mission of Jesuit education. Therefore, I used a combination of an electronic survey and one-on-one interviews to collect data to analyze through a theological lens. My Human Subjects Research Protocol was submitted and accepted by the Pacific School of Religion in November 2016.

Firstly, I developed a set of interview questions based on conversations I had with spiritual directors and mission officers over the years about what they perceived as the benefits of the Exercises for women and for Jesuit education. The questions fell into five categories: (1) introductory, (2) personal and professional integration, (3) women's worth, (4) vocational discernment, and (5) institutional impact. I tested those questions on

four women at the University of San Francisco and ran a pilot study with the transcripts of those interviews in the fall of 2016. The pilot study allowed me to notice which questions elicited a more in-depth response and which questions did not resonate with the subjects. The pilot study also allowed me to start to formulate general theological categories that emerged from the narratives. From there, I finalized the survey and interview questions.

Next, I built an electronic survey using the Qualtrics software platform. The survey included multiple choice questions, Likert scales, and short-answer questions (see Appendix 1 for the complete survey). The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) provided a convenient starting point in identifying research subjects: the AJCU hosts email listservs for several segments of Jesuit university personnel, including mission officers and campus ministry directors. I sent an email request to both of these listservs, requesting names of five women on their campuses who met the following criteria: (1) employed full or part time at a Jesuit college or university; (2) completed the Spiritual Exercises while serving as faculty or staff at a Jesuit institution, noting that the Exercises may have been given in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup> annotation form; (3) female-identified; and (4) as far as the mission officer or campus ministry director would know, willing to spend up to one hour writing reflectively on their experience through an electronic survey. Of the twenty-eight AJCU member institutions, I received responses from nineteen. Of the nineteen, seventeen had qualified subjects. In total, I received eighty-nine names. From this list, I was able to collect eighty-four email addresses (five failed or were otherwise unavailable, in some cases because the person in question had retired). I sent my survey to these eighty-four individuals. The survey was conducted

between April 12 through November 30, 2017. Fifty people completed the survey (a response rate of 60%). Of these fifty individuals, eleven volunteered to be contacted for a one-on-one follow-up interview and sent me their contact information in response to an invitation on the final page of the survey.

My survey sample of eighty-four women from seventeen universities was random insofar as individual mission officers from across the United States identified which colleagues to refer to me. Their methods for volunteer collection were varied. Some contacted the women in advance for their permission; others simply sent me names and email addresses as a professional courtesy.

Concurrent with and following the survey outreach, I conducted in-person interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. Of the eleven who volunteered to be interviewed via the survey, I selected six, which, in addition to the four interviewed during the pilot phase, made a total of ten interviews (see Appendix 2 for interview questions). I did not know all of the interview subjects personally, although I did know some. I chose which women to interview largely based on where I was going to be traveling over the course of the year, so that I could conveniently connect in person with the interviewees.

Per my Human Subjects Research protocol, all survey and interview responses were kept confidential. I maintained this confidentiality to protect anyone who might have concerns about her comments jeopardizing her employment status or personal or professional relationships. I wanted to provide the space for women to be as open, honest, and in some cases critical of any aspect of the experience or their institution as possible. One university had a separate Institutional Review Board process which required that I

complete a four-hour online course regarding human subjects research protocol, and that I have my research study approved by their own IRB committee before releasing any names of their employees. They required additional protections guaranteeing the anonymity of their employees, which I built into the Qualtrics platform.

I transcribed the interviews and collated all of the survey responses into one report. The fifty-plus pages of survey data and one-hundred plus pages of interview transcripts served as the raw data for my study. To analyze the data, I turned to a combination of qualitative, dialogical, and hermeneutical methods.

UC Berkeley sociologist and law professor Kristin Lucker, in her influential book, *Salsa Dancing through the Social Sciences*, discusses adapting social science research methods, based in grounded theory,<sup>115</sup> in a creative and interdisciplinary way, and in particular, analyzing interviews for their deeper meaning into significant questions of human experience. She recommends a process of pursuing investigative research without a particular hypothesis in mind, but instead allowing categories to emerge from the field, then filling in said categories with theory. In this way, one uses interviews to build theory, as opposed to testing hypothetical theories through interviews. Lucker encourages researchers to listen for the “deep truth” in an interview. She explains, “the point of the interviews ... is not what is going on inside one person’s head, but what is going on inside *lots of* people’s heads. When you hear the same thing from people all over the country who don’t know one another, you can be reasonably sure that you are tapping

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<sup>115</sup> Kristin Lucker describes grounded theory as a sociological practice for doing research through which qualitative methods such as interviews are used to elucidate rather than prove a theory. See Kristin Lucker, *Salsa Dancing through the Social Sciences*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2008), 207.

into something that is reliably *social* and not just individual.”<sup>116</sup> I applied this approach of listening for the deep truth to my analysis of my interviews and survey responses.

Once all of my textual data was assembled, I read through the text multiple times. In the case of the first four interviews, I transcribed them myself, allowing for a careful listening. The remainder of the interviews were transcribed using a professional service. Next, I coded the text according to broad theological categories or topics that emerged in a careful reading of the transcripts and survey data. Coding is a qualitative research process of organizing text into broad categories in order to organize and bring meaning to the data.<sup>117</sup> Research methods scholar John Creswell, among others, recommends coding data in order to allow themes to emerge “that are surprising and that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study.”<sup>118</sup> When I began the study, I did not know what the women would identify as the most important part of the experience. Through a careful reading of the text, and the process of interviewing the ten women, categories and themes began to emerge. By coding, I could evaluate how common the themes were, and also build a system by which I could easily refer back to key passages in the text during my writing process. As Luker suggests, coding enabled me to recognize patterns in the text, allowing the data itself to illuminate the “big questions” facing Jesuit education today.

I assigned a letter or number code in the margin of the survey report and interview transcripts whenever I came across a comment or phrase that related to a particular

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>117</sup> John W. Creswell. *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009), 186.

<sup>118</sup> Creswell, 187.

theological category or topic in Jesuit education. The theological categories were the following:

- A. Mary
- B. Self-discovery, self-worth, self-care
- C. Imago Dei (including language around intimacy with God, images of God)
- D. Experience of calling (includes vocation, discernment)
- E. Beloved community (includes relationship with the world, sense of justice)
- F. Spiritual journey, prayer practice
- J. Jesus

The Jesuit education categories were:

1. Leadership development
2. Interfaith considerations
3. Jesuit mission and identity
4. Diversity/inclusion
5. Spirituality of education/pedagogy

I invited three co-researchers (two D.Min. candidates from the San Francisco Theological Seminary who are doing research in similar areas, and a theologian at the University of San Francisco) to read and code the data concurrently, after I had removed any identifying data in the text. Having three co-readers provided a check and balance

system to my own coding system, supporting its validity; it is a recommended method for doing narrative analysis to guard against bias and provide an additional level of reliability to the study. In addition, this method provided me with three dialogue partners to assist in my theological analysis of the narratives. I asked my three co-researchers (named in the acknowledgements) to read through the texts, code the text according to the categories above, and highlight whatever parts they found most important to pay attention to. I also asked them to name any theological themes or topics relating to Jesuit education that I had not named in the above categories. Through this dialogical process with peer reviewers, my ideas were fleshed out and clarified. I also had an organized way to search for quotes associated with a particular topic or theme as I began to write.

My methodological approach to this research was influenced by several sources. Firstly, I based my research process on a recent study by Bridget Burke Ravizza and Julie Donovan Massey of Marquette University.<sup>119</sup> In writing their book, *Project Holiness: Marriage as a Workshop for Everyday Saints*, Ravizza and Massey surveyed and interviewed Catholic couples at two dioceses in the Midwest to explore and describe a new Catholic theology of marriage. They distributed surveys, then followed up with interviews, reflecting deeply on the words of their research subjects in order to find six or eight general themes for understanding contemporary marriage through a Catholic theological lens. Burke and Massey state, “as we designed our research process ... we reminded ourselves often that we are not sociologists. We are not social scientists of any sort. We are a theologian and a minister seeking to ground our work in the richness of lived experience ... To that end, we developed a research process that would enable us to

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<sup>119</sup> I am indebted to Professor Kristin Heyer for bringing this book to my attention as a model for a theological study using qualitative methods.



listen attentively to the experiences of a large group of couples.”<sup>120</sup> I admired the way they borrowed research methods from the social sciences as tools for pastoral and theological practice. I structured my research process around theirs: first a survey; followed by interviews; followed by textual, narrative, and theological analysis of practical lived experience.

I use a narrative analysis in this study, seeking to tell as much of the whole story told by each woman as possible. By telling their stories, women impact theological traditions. Theologian Mary Ann Hinsdale suggests, “the lived stories of how individual women have attempted to lead Christian lives in a church and world that is constructed by patriarchal ... ideology is a neglected area.”<sup>121</sup> Yet, argues, Hinsdale, women need to tell their stories in order for the church and society to develop and respond to contemporary needs and issues. Story-telling, self-narratives, reclaiming women of historical significance, and re-telling their stories, can actually re-shape a church tradition. Story telling is a subversive and powerful way to shape our understanding of the world, our communities, and the institutions in which women live out their religious and professional vocations.

The other side of story-telling is listening. Theologian Mary Clark Moschella describes listening, including listening through interviews as was done for this study, as a form of pastoral practice. She quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer to make the point, who wrote, “the first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them.

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<sup>120</sup> Bridget Burke Ravizza and Julie Donovan Massey, *Project Holiness: Marriage as a Workshop for Everyday Saints*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 138.

<sup>121</sup> Mary Ann Hinsdale, *Women Shaping Theology, 2004 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 107.

Just as love of God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. Christians, especially ministers, often think that they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.”<sup>122</sup> Listening to women’s experiences in Jesuit education remains an underutilized technique for discovering the movements and directions of the community toward its mission.

In summary, my research methodology adapts qualitative research methods with contemplative listening and theological reflection to gather a modest range of information about 19<sup>th</sup> annotation programs at Jesuit universities and to focus in depth on the theological implications of women’s narratives of their experiences with the Exercises.

### *Hermeneutics*

Any theological project must be aware of its hermeneutics, or methods of interpretation. My hermeneutics are informed by personal experience and reflection on that experience working in Jesuit higher education. As a Catholic lay woman who has worked in Jesuit ministries for twenty-two years, I noticed particular themes that were reminiscent of my own experiences and what I have heard and observed from others over my decades in Jesuit ministry. In preparation for my study, I consulted with a number of spiritual directors and other colleagues who also gave me suggestions on themes to explore and categories that they had recognized in the course of directing women through

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<sup>122</sup> Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 144.

the Exercises. My co-researchers brought their own experience and context to bear on their reading of the text, and my dialogical conversation with them enlightened my own interpretation of the theological themes. My main hermeneutical lenses are feminist and Ignatian.

I apply a feminist hermeneutic to my analysis of each interview, looking specifically for ways in which women's reflections on their experiences of the Exercises correlate with the feminist principle of women's full equality as persons, and with the injunctions toward the necessary dismantling of systems and structures that oppress women and other marginalized groups. I pay close attention to how gender might have shaped the subject's spiritual experiences, including their image of God, their interaction with Jesus and Mary, and their appropriation of those interactions. Theologian Lisa Dahill argues that gender is a very appropriate element to bring into a hermeneutical study of spirituality: "Gender channels meaning—as much by innovated breaches or deviations from the expected norms as by conformations to them—even as each new instance stretches the genre itself".<sup>123</sup> She goes on to say, "to ignore gender as a primary category of human experience also obscures the ways each person's experience is constructed through appropriation of these basic dimensions of selfhood, and the ways social reality both forms and 'deforms' people along lines of power shaped by gender and other generic categories."<sup>124</sup> Dahill argues that gender impacts identity development at multiple levels, including the level of God-perception. Our gender can influence how we

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<sup>123</sup> Lisa E. Dahill, "The Genre of Gender: Gender and the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality" in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM*, eds. Bruce Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (New York: Paulist, 2006) 98–118.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 110.

view our ultimate identity as we imagine God perceives us. Dahill further asserts that important as gender is in particularizing spiritual experience, gender remains a hermeneutic, rather than a classificatory, framework. Any scholar must avoid generalizing the experiences of all women, or all men, and I aim to heed that caution. I apply the work of several contemporary feminist theologians to my analysis of the theological themes evident in the women's narratives.

Second, I apply an Ignatian hermeneutic to my analysis. Ignatian pedagogy, based on the *Ratio Studiorum* and later influenced by the development of the *circle of praxis* model of social analysis, suggests that learning takes place in a multistep process of context (or experience), reflection, evaluation (sometimes called analysis), and action. If the Exercises are being used as a pedagogical tool for faculty and staff formation, we must include the stages of reflection and evaluation in order to proceed to effective action. Otherwise, the process is aborted midstream. This research study is an effort to apply the reflection and evaluation steps to the process of giving the 19<sup>th</sup> annotation at Jesuit universities.

In the process of reading and reflecting on the text, my hermeneutics, or my particular lens, most certainly influenced what I chose to focus on, as well as how I assigned meaning to the women's testimonials. I cannot claim to present a purely objective summary of what these fifty-four women shared with me. Why did certain words or phrases spring from the pages and others not? There is no doubt that I was drawn to those stories that resonated with my own experience, or ones that surprised me, or ones where the phrasing struck me in a particular way. Most significantly, my interpretation of the text was influenced by my own praxis and spiritual experiences.

While I attempted to guard against any biases of my own that might cloud my analysis, there is no question that my analysis is subjective. In this process, I was aware of the power and privilege I had in choosing which narratives I would give voice to, and which I would not. I had power and privilege in listening to the women as they shared with me their most sacred stories, and in using those for my own pastoral and theological education. I had the power and privilege to assign meaning and understanding to their words and experiences. Philip Sheldrake discusses this issue of power and privilege in interpretation in a chapter in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Sheldrake notices that we must ask who interprets a text and who does not, and whose interpretations historically have been recognized as authoritative and whose have not. He mentions the Exercises specifically as a text that is now open to interpretation from many people, not just male Jesuit clergy. He argues that “within the context of Christian spirituality, the reality of power cannot be avoided in how it is defined, who merits a place in its ‘official’ history, and who is enabled to become an effective interpreter of texts and traditions.”<sup>125</sup> For this project, I am presenting myself as one effective interpreter. My job, forthcoming, will be to expand this circle of effective interpreters so that more understandings of these spiritual experiences may come to light.

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<sup>125</sup> Sheldrake, “Interpretation,” *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, Arthur Holder, Ed. West Sussex, UK: Blackwell, 2011, 474–475.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis of Survey Data

As I explained in the above chapter on methodology, my electronic survey was designed with two purposes in mind. Firstly, I sought to collect some basic demographic and assessment information about the Spiritual Exercises programs at Jesuit universities, which I hope will be useful to mission officers and others involved in Jesuit education. Secondly, I wanted to prompt women to reflect with a certain degree of depth on how the Spiritual Exercises affected them personally and influenced their understanding of the mission of Jesuit education. In this chapter, I present the answers to the first line of inquiry, namely the Likert scale survey questions. I present these findings with the caveat that mine is not a scientific survey, nor can I make the case that these results are statistically significant. Rather, my intention is that they serve as a starting point for further study and evaluation among mission officers and others at Jesuit universities regarding how the Spiritual Exercises may be used to greater effect in faculty and staff formation programs as a tool for mission integration and leadership development, as well as for placing women's experiences of God in a place of importance. Following the results of the survey questions presented below, I offer my own brief commentary on the results, which may point to new directions for future research. I evaluate the responses to the short answer questions of my survey in greater depth through a theological lens in chapter six. The original survey in its entirety may be viewed in Appendix 1. I remind the reader that I sent my survey to 84 individuals at a total of 17 universities and received 50 responses (n=50), resulting in a response rate of 60%.

*Survey Question 2: In what format did you do the Spiritual Exercises?*

	%
30-day Retreat	6%
19 <sup>th</sup> Annotation (Meeting regularly with spiritual director over course of several months)	79%
Group	4%
Other, please describe: (Answers included):	11%
○ 6-day silent retreat	
○ Weekly as a group of 8 women who met regularly with a spiritual director from September through May	
○ Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life	
○ 1 week retreat	
	100%

*Survey Question 3: How important were the following to your experience of the Exercises?*

	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Item Skipped
Book or guide	32%	28%	14%	26%
Regular, daily prayer practice	78%	18%	0%	4%
Skilled spiritual director	88%	8%	0%	4%
Silent retreat	16%	18%	10%	56%
Opportunity to discuss and share the experience with colleagues	20%	44%	22%	14%
Another resource	16%	4%	0%	80%

*Survey Question 4: Do you see yourself as a leader at your institution?*

	%
Yes	95%
No	5%

*Survey Question 5:* Did your experience of the Exercises enhance or improve any of the following leadership characteristics for you personally:

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Item Skipped</b>
Communication skills	26%	52%	10%	2%	10%
Listening skills	56%	30%	6%	0%	8%
Courage/fearlessness	38%	48%	6%	0%	8%
Vision	50%	34%	6%	2%	8%
Empathy	58%	22%	8%	0%	12%
Equanimity in times of stress	46%	42%	4%	0%	8%
Emotional intelligence	40%	44%	8%	0%	8%
Self-knowledge	66%	26%	0%	0%	8%
Ability to pause before reacting	56%	34%	4%	0%	6%
Ability to see the good in others	60%	32%	2%	0%	6%
Tolerance for ambiguity	36%	38%	16%	0%	10%
Capacity to embody the Ignatian/Jesuit mission of my institution	64%	28%	0%	0%	8%

*Survey Question 6:* Did you experience any of the following as a result of doing the Exercises?

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Item Skipped</b>
Improved the way I teach	20%	30%	6%	0%	44%
Improved my research	8%	28%	6%	2%	56%
Improved my service to the college/university	66%	24%	4%	0%	6%
Made me feel more invested in my college/university	70%	22%	4%	0%	4%
Made me feel like a better person	72%	24%	0%	0%	4%
Improved my relationships with colleagues	40%	46%	2%	0%	12%
Helped me make a personal decision of some importance	56%	32%	0%	0%	12%



Helped me make a professional decision of some importance	44%	36%	6%	2%	12%
Gave me a better understanding of the mission and purpose of Jesuit education	68%	18%	6%	2%	6%
Enhanced my understanding of the mission of my own college/university	60%	30%	4%	2%	4%
Gave me the language to speak about the mission of my college/university	60%	32%	0%	2%	6%
Inspired me to seek a promotion at my college/university	16%	16%	18%	22%	28%

### *Survey Demographics*

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
White	39	78%
Black or African American	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%
Asian	3	6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
Hispanic, Latino, or Latina <sup>126</sup>	2	4%
Other	0	0%
Item skipped	6	12%

<b>Education Level</b>	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than high school diploma	0	0%
High school diploma	0	0%
Some college	1	2%
College degree	3	6%
Master's degree	20	40%
Doctoral/professional/terminal degree	21	42%

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<sup>126</sup> I recognize that Latinx or Latin@ are the preferred gender-neutral terms here; however, these because I used “Latino or Latina” in my original survey (per the default categories provided through the Qualtrics software platform), I include them here.

Item skipped	5	10%
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Age	# Respondents	%
Under 30	2	4%
30-39	1	2%
40-49	11	22%
50-59	13	26%
60-69	7	14%
70-79	1	2%
80 and above	0	0%
Item skipped	15	30%

Years at your current institution	# Respondents	%
0-5	6	12%
5-10	13	26%
10-15	13	26%
15-20	3	6%
20-25	1	2%
More than 25	9	18%
Item skipped	5	10%

Position/Role	# Respondents	%
Staff	22	44%
Faculty	16	32%
Senior administration/leadership position (e.g. dean, VP, cabinet level)	9	18%
Community partner (e.g. member of an affiliated organization; community partner or consultant)	0	0%
Item skipped	3	6%

Faculty Position (of the 16 above)	# Respondents	%
Adjunct/affiliate faculty	4	25%
Term/clinical	2	13%
Tenure-track	0	0%
Tenured	9	56%
Other	1	6%

<b>Total number of years working in any Jesuit ministry/institution (not including your own education)</b>	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
0-5	5	10%
5-10	9	18%
10-15	14	28%
15-20	9	18%
More than 20	11	22%
Item skipped	2	4%

<b>Did you attend a Jesuit school? (Check all that apply)</b>	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Elementary	0	0%
Middle School	0	0%
High School	1	2%
College	19	38%
Graduate School	20	40%
No	14	28%
I attended some Catholic (non-Jesuit) school	5	10%

<b>Religious Identity (if any)</b>	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Atheist/Non-believer	0	0%
Buddhist	0	0%
Hindu	0	0%
Jewish	0	0%
Muslim	0	0%
Orthodox	0	0%
Protestant/Christian, non-Catholic	4	8%
Roman Catholic	38	76%
Other:	2	4%
○ brought up Catholic		
○ eclectic spiritual		
Item skipped	6	12%

## *Commentary*

A full analysis of all of the data is beyond the scope of this study; however, I publish the results here hoping that the data can be evaluated and utilized in future research. With that said, I wish to highlight a few observations that support my overall thesis, which is that the Spiritual Exercises are a tool for collaboration between women and Jesuits that can move Jesuit universities toward deeper mission integration and engagement with social justice.

Firstly, in terms of practical considerations, the majority of women responded doing the Exercises in the 19<sup>th</sup> annotation format, with the most important factors being a regular, daily prayer practice (78% “cited as extremely important”), and a skilled spiritual director (88% responded “extremely important”). Only 32% cited a book or guide as extremely important. This response surprised me, because at my own university we regularly offer guidebooks to those who are doing the Exercises. The results suggest that a book or guide may not be as important as I previously thought. The data do emphasize the value of skilled spiritual direction and a regular prayer practice, considerations that may be relevant to mission officers and those who lead these programs.

In question five, I offered twelve leadership characteristics that might have been enhanced or improved as a result of completing the Exercises. All twelve characteristics received high response rates (above 70% responding “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”); however, the top five leadership skills cited as having been enhanced or improved through the Exercises were listening skills, empathy, self-knowledge, ability to see the good in others, and capacity to embody the Ignatian/Jesuit mission of my

institution. These five categories received a response rate of above 56% in the strongly agree column. The overlap of secular leadership studies and Ignatian spirituality is an intersection that is being studied from multiple vantage points by scholars and popular writers. As Jesuit universities seek to provide leadership development programs to faculty and staff, the Spiritual Exercises can be considered one program available to serve this purpose.

In question six, I ask my sample set to report which program outcomes were achieved as a result of doing the Exercises. I gathered a list of twelve possible outcomes. The five categories that received the highest response were the following: improved my service to the college/university (90% “strongly or somewhat agree”); made me feel more invested in my college/university (92%); made me feel like a better person (96%); enhanced my understanding of the mission of my own college/university (90%); and gave me the language to speak about the mission of my college/university (92%). The remaining categories received high marks as well. Only three outcomes received responses of less than 80%. They were: improved the way I teach (50%); improved my research (36%); and inspired me to seek a promotion at my college/university (32%). The lower response rates in the teaching and research categories may be a result of the fact that some who completed the survey do not teach or do research at their universities, but instead have staff roles.

The majority of women who responded to my survey identify themselves as leaders at their institutions (95%). The majority identify as white (78%), with 6% Asian and 4% Latinx; 12% of participants did not answer this question. The majority have a master’s/doctoral/professional/terminal degree, are aged 40–60, attended a Jesuit college

or graduate school, and are Roman Catholic. Regarding religious affiliation, 84% identified as Christian (76% Roman Catholic), with 4% replying other and 12% skipping the question. A question for further analysis is how these ethnicity data match against the general employee population at the universities. I see a need for mission officers to consider whether there is racial and ethnic disparity among program participants, and whether a favorable bias toward white women over women of color may exist. The problem of white supremacy and white privilege is being raised in new and important ways by scholars in the field of Jesuit education, Bryan Massingale and Jeannine Hill Fletcher, to name but two. I contend that the issue of diversity and inclusion must be more rigorously addressed by those working in Jesuit mission and ministry offices at this point, particularly as Jesuit universities seek to meaningfully engage questions of social justice and equity.

In general, my data suggest that women seek programs in the Spiritual Exercises for spiritual grounding, to acquire a sense of well-being, to fulfill desire to know God more intimately, to develop their spirituality, and to know more about the Jesuit mission. Additionally, women want to reflect and share about this experience. My response rate of 60% indicates to me that my research subjects were eager to reflect and write about their experience with the Exercises, an opportunity that might be made available at one's home institution in the future.

## Chapter 6

### Theological Themes from Survey and Interview Data

Through a series of short answer questions in my survey and interviews, I sought to prompt the women surveyed to reflect more deeply and consciously on their experience with Exercises. I sought to collect women's narratives through which I might discover in what ways God is made known to women through their experiences with the Exercises, and what themes, images, or phrases might be useful to understanding the current reality and future opportunities in articulating the mission of Jesuit higher education. The following are the short answer questions I posed on the survey and in my interviews:

- Why did you choose to do the Exercises?
- Please describe two or three movements or aspects of the Exercises that were the most meaningful for you.
- Research suggests that for some women, the experience of the Exercises is like “coming home to oneself” or “finding one’s voice.” In what ways do these phrases describe your experience? What other phrases might you use?
- Were you discerning a particular decision when you did the Exercises? If so, did you gain clarity or insight into this decision?

- After completing the Exercises, did anything change for you in your professional or personal life?
- Through the Exercises, did you gain new insights or understanding into the Jesuit mission and identity of your college or university? Please describe.
- Is there anything you would change or add to your college or university's description of its mission as a result of doing the Exercises? If so, what?

Based on the responses to these questions, I have highlighted six themes or topics that can be developed theologically for the purpose of enlightening our approach to mission in Jesuit higher education. The themes are: (1) Mary, (2) self-worth, (3) imago Dei, (4) experience of calling, (5) crucifixion, and (6) the beloved community. In the following sections, I address each of these theological themes. I have intentionally included as many of the women's words shared with me through my survey and interviews as I can reasonably do in the scope of this study. I then apply theories from contemporary feminist theological scholarship that offer ways of interpreting the faith experiences described. In so doing, my aim is to use women's prayer experiences as a starting point for fresh theological reflection on the mission of Jesuit higher education, particularly focusing on the role of women and other marginalized groups in that enterprise, for the purpose of constructing new pathways toward collaboration, solidarity with the poor and marginalized, and building communities of justice and inclusion.



## 1) *Mary*

Mary emerges as a surprising and radical figure for several women in the Exercises who discover her as human, complex, and accessible in new ways. Some of the women I interviewed spoke to their identification with Mary, more so than Jesus, throughout the experience and her influence in the gospel narratives. For the women in my study, Mary does four things: (1) she informs Jesus' methodology and ministry, (2) she affirms female sexuality, (3) she is the first priest and, (4) she is a gateway to the full experience of the Exercises.

*Mary informs Jesus' methodology and ministry.* My first interviewee shared with me the following experience of a contemplation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, in which she witnesses Mary holding the infant Jesus on their way into the temple for his circumcision, speaking to him, an experience which, in her own words, surprised her:

[A] moment that stands out was when I was reading the story of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, when he is an infant, for the bris. I'm thinking about Mary walking up the steps carrying him, she's holding him, comforting him, and she's telling him, "in your whole life you're going to need to *pay attention to the women* because they're the ones who're going to tell you what you need to know." This was not what I expected to hear... But still it was, "you're going to run into these women, and you *need* these women and they're going to tell you what you need to know and you need to listen to that."<sup>127</sup>

In this woman's contemplation, she witnesses Mary advising Jesus, as mothers do their children. Mary influences Jesus' future methodology, pointing him toward a direction of listening to women, the marginalized, and the powerless, who will tell him what he needs

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<sup>127</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, November 10, 2016.

to know. Mary instructs Jesus to pay attention to that. I italicize the phrase, “pay attention to the women” because it is one of those phrases that is particularly applicable to Jesuit education. “Pay attention to the women” is a reminder to solicit the opinions of anyone on the margins who isn’t already empowered at their institution. Indeed, Jesus’ life and ministry are characterized by his noticing and paying attention to the women around him and using those women as examples of what faith and discipleship look like.

Elizabeth Johnson discusses the scene of Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:21-40) as evidence of their fulfilling Torah in the spirit of their Jewish faith and custom. Johnson makes a few points in the corresponding section of her book *Truly Our Sister* that support the idea of Mary’s influence over Jesus’ ministerial formation. She suggests that “no other episode better portrays Mary and Joseph of Nazareth as active parents committed to the heritage of their ancestors.”<sup>128</sup> Citing scriptural and scholarly evidence of Mary and Joseph’s commitment to parenting well in the fullness of their religious tradition, not as passive agents but as persons of active and deep faith, Johnson suggests, “it is more than likely that at least some of his understanding of God’s power to save came from his Jewish parents who, during the decisive years of his growth, taught him about the compassionate, liberating God of the Hebrew scriptures.”<sup>129</sup> Johnson presents Mary as an active and engaged mother, one who had a significant and positive influence on her son, and as a woman who grappled with her own spiritual discernment in a serious way.

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<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, (New York: Continuum, 2003), 279.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 282.

Daniel Kearney takes the idea of Mary's influence over Jesus a step further in a recent article for *The Way*. Kearney references the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1–11) as an example that “it is clear from her directive to the servants, ‘do whatever he tells you’ (2:6), that she is fully aware of who her son is and, significantly, of his divine destiny. And, more importantly, it is his mother’s faith in him, at this early stage in his ministry, that facilitates the first sign at Cana. Without her presence and faith there is no sign because, until that moment, his glory had not been seen and the disciples did not believe in him as the Messiah. Mary initiates the sign, and in doing so, she gives further impetus to her son’s public ministry.”<sup>130</sup> Mary’s presence and faith are necessary for Jesus’ ministry. She has a function in his living out of his call. She is the first disciple, and her words, witness, and encouragement launch him into his public ministry. Mary plays a part in the formation and shaping of Jesus’ visionary model of leadership.

It is important to note that not all scholars agree with this interpretation of Mary’s influence on Jesus. Some, such as scholars of historical exegesis, suggest that she, like the others around him, failed to understand the fullness of his divine calling, and in fact that the church’s over-emphasis on the maternal Mary takes attention away from the other Marys in Jesus’ life who were far more important to his public life.<sup>131</sup> My task is not to prove the alternative. Mindful of my methodological framework, I am suggesting that from this woman’s experience of prayer, and through my feminist interpretation of her testimony, a new actuality of Mary the mother of Jesus emerges: one that has power,

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<sup>130</sup> Daniel Kearney, “What do you want from her? Women in the Gospel of John,” *The Way* 56/3 (July 2017), 102–3.

<sup>131</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther makes this point in *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 87.

influence, and direct relevance to Jesus' ministry. This understanding of Mary's role in Jesus' life also expands our understanding of Jesus as having been formed in a relational context, which points to the significance of human community in Jesus' incarnation and ministry. Jesus emerged from a community of persons who cared for him and formed him into the person he became.

*Mary affirms female sexuality.* Returning to the wedding feast at Cana, the same interviewee shared with me another vivid story of Jesus and Mary's relationship. She told me:

Here is [another] story and it is really intense. It's the wedding at Cana. You know how Mary comes and tells Jesus they are running out of wine and you need to do something about it and he is like, 'leave me alone?' Well, in my story that happened but the other thing that happens is that Mary finds the bride in a tent all by herself. The whole party is going on and she is crying. And she is terrified. She is young, she is fourteen, and she is terrified. She doesn't know her husband. She doesn't know him because marriage is a relationship between families, it is not a love match between people. And Mary asks her what she is afraid of and she says she is afraid of having sex. And Mary says to Jesus, "you need to go get the bridegroom and you need to bring him here." And he goes and he gets the bridegroom and then Mary sits down and explains to both of them what is required for a woman to have pleasure in sex and that the husband needs to know this. And that the bride needs to know it doesn't need to be terror. It doesn't have to be fear. And Jesus is there to enforce that the conversation happens in a way because the bridegroom wouldn't have come just because Mary asked but Jesus just turned his water into wine so the groom kind of owes him.<sup>132</sup>

The interviewee told me this story with a touch of astonishment: she was not embarrassed, but was aware of how scandalous the story may sound.

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<sup>132</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, November 10, 2016.

Turning to Elizabeth Johnson again, Mary has often been seen by women and by the official church as the corrective to female sexuality. Johnson quotes novelist Mary Gordon who said, “Mary was a stick to beat smart girls with. Her example was held up constantly: an example of silence, of subordination, of pleasure taking the back seat ... For women like me, it was necessary to reject the image of Mary in order to hold onto the fragile hope of intellectual achievement, independence of identity, sexual fulfillment.”<sup>133</sup> What an alternative vision of Mary this contemplation presents! Here, Mary takes an active interest and resolve in assisting the bride in the scene with a talk (with Jesus in the room) on sexual fulfillment in marriage. And isn’t Mary a virgin?

Marina Warner, in her landmark theology of Mary, *Alone of All Her Sex*, writes:

That the mother of God should be a virgin was a matter of such importance to the men of the early Church that it overrode all other considerations, including the evidence of revelation itself. Classical metaphysics contributed to the development of the belief, but the root of it was the [Church] Father’s definition of evil. Sexuality represented to them the gravest danger and the fatal flaw; they viewed virginity as its opposite and its conqueror, sadly failing to appreciate that renunciation does not banish or overcome desire. It is almost impossible to overestimate the effect that the characteristic Christian association of sex and sin and death has had on the attitudes of our civilization.<sup>134</sup>

Referring to the Patristic period, Warner describes how Mary became a special patroness of priests as the guardians of their celibacy, the one to whom some are advised to pray when tempted by sex.<sup>135</sup> Having a theology of Mary that is sex-positive would present

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<sup>133</sup> Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 11.

<sup>134</sup> Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford, 1976), 51.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

radical shifts in perspective to the Christian view of women, of marriage, and of male/female mutuality in relationships. As Warner states above, the association of sexuality with evil is so deeply engrained in Western civilization that it cannot be overstated. For a woman or a group of women to experience through prayer Mary's positive view of human sexuality, and particularly the function of women's pleasure during sexual relations, provides a fundamental and radical challenge to a deeply-entrenched patriarchal belief that women's sexuality is for procreation not pleasure. My interviewee goes on to explain, "it was really powerful for me to see this figure that I didn't think I was going to particularly encounter or care about very much, this girl who just sort of nods and says, 'whatever you want God,' become this powerful, wise and courageous person."<sup>136</sup> Mary's sexuality is connected to her being "powerful, wise, and courageous" for this particular person.

Teresa Delgado takes this call to re-envision Mary's sexuality a step further by writing from the lens of HIV/AIDS and human trafficking—contexts in which sex and suffering are connected for many women. She points to:

A new Mariology that must challenge the presumption of obedience as a precondition for God's grace; we can no longer be obedient when faced with the defilement or negation of our own bodies...A new feminist theological anthropology must reject those binaries and transform the relationship of women to sex that is not defined by patriarchal culture centered on male pleasure or a patriarchal church centered on male holiness. Rather, sex becomes a relationship of giving/receiving pleasure as a gift to other and self. Her body, especially the sexual expression of her body, can be seen as an affirmation of God's goodness in creation, a reflection of the image of God in the flesh.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, May 15, 2017.

<sup>137</sup> Teresa Delgado, "This is my Body...Given for You," in *Shoulder to Shoulder: Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, edited by Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 45–46.

The meditation at Cana shared with me by the interviewee quoted above is a direct connection to this new Mariology. Through prayer, my interviewee experienced Mary calling her and calling Jesus to recognize the mutuality of human sexuality, and further that despite the patriarchal culture, Mary and Jesus both wanted a different type of relationship for the bride at Cana.

Another interviewee discussed this radical and counter-cultural Mary she encountered through the Exercises. She says:

I'll admit that one of the challenges for me Exercises was the constant push to identify with Jesus. I'm more pulled toward Mary and not just any Mary, but Guadalupe. I don't know why her story is so salient to me. Maybe it is because most of my scholarship is in minority literature. She's the brown Mary. She's the one who spoke to the peasants. She's the one who challenged the authorities. That phrase is so resonant to me: "what are you worried about? Your mother's with you." And I think in my struggle to be a good mother to my son, because I am a single parent, Mary became very salient to me, and the way that I could change my experience of the Exercises so that it wasn't just all about Jesus. The most powerful stories for me are Mary and Martha, the end of the crucifixion, the fact that the women stayed, and the men were the pussies. Unbelievable, right? And that was very potent for me because I've done lot of that in my life too. I've been the one that has stayed and cleaned up the messes. And that's Guadalupe. Guadalupe the domestic. She kicked ass and took care of things.<sup>138</sup>

Several of my interviewees spoke of the cognitive dissonance between the Mary they met in the Exercises versus the Mary that had been described to them as children. One woman shared with me that she wanted to connect to Mary more but struggled to hear what she

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<sup>138</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, December 2, 2016.

was saying. She said, “growing up Mary epitomized this quiet obedience and there wasn’t a lot else around her, and I sensed there is more but I think it’s harder to dig up because it’s hidden.” Indeed, this is the point of Johnson’s theology of Mary: that by reclaiming her humanity through a feminist and liberation lens, her role changes, and “the living the remembrance of this woman can function positively to inspire the struggle for God’s compassionate and liberating justice ... to promote the flourishing of women and thereby all the relationships and communities of which they are a part.”<sup>139</sup> By praying with the hidden life of Jesus, this woman shared that she learned to dig up those pieces of scripture and religious history that are not spoken of, that remain hidden, in order to learn how to ask, “what’s not in this story?”<sup>140</sup> Pay attention to the women.

*Mary as first priest.* A colleague who recently completed a 30-day retreat described a discovery through repeated contemplations on the nativity that took her by surprise. Feeling stuck in facing a call to the priesthood without a way to move forward as a Catholic woman, she went back to the nativity scene over and over again, and said, “I would pray with the nativity scene, and just this image for me, it was like, Oh my gosh, Mary is the first priest. She gives Eucharist to the world. This is very clear. Why have I never seen that before?”<sup>141</sup> The notion of Mary as the first priest has been debated through the centuries. Tina Beattie provides a brief but thorough history of the conversation in an article from 1996, in which she argues that looking at the idea of Mary as priest must go

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<sup>139</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, xiv.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with author, San Francisco, May 15, 2017.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with author, San Francisco, June 1, 2017.



beyond simply finding a place for women in the all-male hierarchy, but that it requires a reconsideration of the sacrament of the Eucharist and of community itself.<sup>142</sup>

Putting aside at the moment the question of female ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood, I would like to focus on the symbol of the Eucharist that this woman shares in her reflection. For my colleague, Eucharist is a tangible, embodied reality, given in this instance amidst the pain and terror of childbirth, as a gift to the world. Do most of us see Eucharist that way? Or, rather, have we removed it to such an extent from the concrete reality of lived human experience that it remains an esoteric symbol? My colleague, through her contemplation, opens up new possibilities for talking about Eucharist in a way that is grounded in concrete human experience, fully incarnate, and delivered in a state of poverty. Eucharist becomes a symbol of incarnation in a very real way; it is embodied, historical, and revealed by a woman giving birth.

The humanity and reality of Mary's birth experience is a point of connection for several women. One described herself in the scene:

I was there with them watching this baby and holding this baby. And at the end of the day, a breeze that went across, and it felt like God the Creator had just sighed that he's alive, and he's well, and he's delivered. It didn't occur to me that anything could go wrong with the Son of God being born. But in all reality, human beings are sometimes stillborn or sometimes hurt, you know? And especially in conditions like that. And so I just had this sense of God the Creator just sighing in relief that the incarnation actually happened. It was just mind blowing to me.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Tina Beattie, "Mary, the Virgin Priest?" *The Month*, 257 (December 1996) 485–493. <http://www.womenpriests.org/mrpriest/beattie.asp>. Accessed 10/3/17.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with author, Burlingame, CA, April 13, 2017.

Johnson also refers to the risk involved in Jesus' birth and the attempts in church history to wipe it clean of any reference to the embodiedness of it all. Johnson describes childbirth as "laboring, sweating, counting contractions, breathing deeply, crying out, dilating, pushing hard while riven to the very center of one's being with unimaginable bursts of pain, until slowly, slowly the baby's head finally appears."<sup>144</sup> The incarnation becomes real for many by witnessing Mary's birthing experience. Many women describe a power in holding the baby, in watching the labor take place, in spending time with the holy family after the birth. Women experience a closeness to the reality of the incarnation, recognizing it for some through a connection to their own birth stories; this was a real human birth, testifying to the true humanity of not only Jesus, but Mary as well.

Mary's birth story models kenosis in a way that enlightens and expands the self-giving function of the crucifixion. Mary demonstrates a self-emptying toward fullness and new life, versus a self-emptying as horrific and purposeless suffering until death. I will address this theme in more depth below.

*Ignatius wouldn't leave Mary out of anything.* For Ignatius, Mary is the gateway to the Exercises and to Jesus' life. One woman I interviewed said:

The thing that Ignatius does beautifully is he includes Mary in all of this stuff. The contemplation when Jesus meets her after the resurrection... Those are things that are just powerful and Mary doesn't have any reason to be fearful or challenged because she is a woman. She just doesn't need to be. And one can say to her, what is your image of God? ... Ignatius was brilliant and he wrote things down in a way that should never be used against women or men in any way, shape or form. It's just not to be that way. It's not meant to be that

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<sup>144</sup> Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 277.

way. ...Ignatius wants you to know that story of the women who were there. Ignatius would never leave Mary out of anything.<sup>145</sup>

My interviewee further explained that for her the Exercises affirmed her understanding of Mary as a model of faith and strength in spite of hatred and discrimination. Dyckman et al. discuss the potential of Mary's accessibility through the Exercises when they say, "some women have found rich prayer by reflecting on the many phases of Mary's life and how each reveals a special relationship with God. She is girl, child, daughter, woman, wife, mother, cousin, friend, teacher, middle-aged woman, widow."<sup>146</sup> When women encounter her in scripture and prayer with a feminist and liberationist lens, her power and agency become more real.

While it is true that Ignatius references "Our Lady" several times in the Exercises, often as a substitute for going directly to Jesus, and while it is certainly true that Ignatius himself had a strong spiritual bond with Mary, her influence remains at the periphery of Ignatian spirituality in most official accounts, a point raised by Dyckman et al., and by Margo Heydt and Sarah Melchner. Heydt and Melchner are faculty members from a Jesuit university who participated in a school-sponsored Ignatian pilgrimage to Spain and Italy in 2006. On the pilgrimage, they were struck by how many images of Mary appeared and how they learned that "the role of Mary [was] considerably more significant to Ignatius throughout his life and in the founding of the Society of Jesus than had been portrayed in the books we read ... which prompted us to begin researching the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Dyckman et al., 234.

relationships among Ignatius, the Jesuits, Mary and other women.”<sup>147</sup> They recognize Mary as a “hidden catalyst in the formation of the Society of Jesus” and emphasize “the need for greater recognition of the role of women in the formation of the Society.”<sup>148</sup> I would add to this the need to recognize how Mary still influences individuals today through their experiences with the Exercises and other prayerful practices.

A feminist reconstruction of the Exercises might understand the role of Mary in the life of Jesus to be broader than usually portrayed. Encountering Mary as the one who gives Eucharist to the world, and the one who reminds us now, as she told Jesus, “listen to the women; they’ll tell you what you need to know,” opens up possibilities for spirituality to lead to action for certain women, in a way that can transform our educational institutions. Feminist reconstruction of the Exercises inserts Mary into the centrality of the experience, not as the Virgin Queen enmeshed in medieval imagery, but as one who symbolizes the importance of women’s contributions to church and society that women’s very real and particular experiences as mothers, as sexual persons, as priests, as mediators of sacraments, and as co-creators with God in human history can resonate with.

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<sup>147</sup> Margo J. Heydt and Sarah J. Melchner, “Mary the Hidden Catalyst: Reflections from an Ignatian Pilgrimage to Spain and Rome,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Jocelyn Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 37; 40-41.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

## 2) *Self-Worth*

The concept of self-worth is fundamental to the Exercises for women, indeed for the development of one's interior life in general. Katherine Dyckman et al. discuss it in many sections throughout their book, noting how "women may listen to exterior voices saying they are inferior, not 'good enough,' or 'different,' rather than listen[ing] to the God-self and their own deepest desires."<sup>149</sup> The Exercises "can enable women to come home to themselves,"<sup>150</sup> and in so doing to know themselves as beloved and worthy because of God's mercy and love, not because of any external accomplishments or status.

In my experiences accompanying women through the Exercises, I have noticed that the sense of one's own worth comes from a very deep place, from a very deep encounter with God, and that the words, "I am worthy," can be almost unutterable, spoken in barely a whisper. A deep sense of one's own worth is both the starting point and the ending point of the Exercises—in many ways, and for many women, the first and the last step to living in freedom and finding one's voice.

One woman I interviewed, Holly Schapker, published a reflection in *Conversations* magazine on her experience with the Exercises. In it, she discusses the experience of finding her own worth as an artist by giving up her self-defeating thoughts compared to the way Ignatius relinquished his sword at Montserrat. She writes:

Comparing my skills to other artists' is a futile, masochistic habit. I relinquished these character defects to the Black Madonna just as St. Ignatius did with his sword as a statement that he would thereafter become a pilgrim for God. This is one of the best things I ever did for myself and

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 10.

my creative process, as it knocked those self-defeating thoughts out of the studio. This surrender allowed me to let go of others' expectations of me as an artist, and rather than compare myself to other talented artists I now express art in my own unique way.<sup>151</sup>

In a telephone interview, I asked Schapker to tell me more about this experience of discovering her worth. She replied:

He offered his sword to the Black Madonna to be of service to God. For me, my battle (perhaps because I'm a woman) was negative self-assessment. Enormous self-doubt. The people I admired as artists were male (Michelangelo, etc.). I kept telling myself I couldn't do it. My sword that I offered to the black Madonna was the self-defeating thoughts, the negative thinking. When I did that and I told my spiritual director he said that when you do the negative thinking the focus is on you. When I gave that up, when I became a co-creator, all of that negative thought was gone. I became focused on the work. It's a theo drama rather than an ego drama. It's right there at that center point when I am centered. I am worthy not because of me, but because I am with God.<sup>152</sup>

For Schapker, surrendering to God involved giving up self-defeating thoughts, letting go of others' expectations, and no longer comparing herself to male role models. Dyckman et al. describe this process as "internalizing the core of the Principle and Foundation ... The God of the Principle and Foundation loves women compassionately and asks them to trust themselves and act out of this deep, true sense of who they really are."<sup>153</sup> It is not because of her accomplishments or her feats that she is worthy; it is because of God that she is worthy.

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<sup>151</sup> Holly Schapker, "Available and Willing," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 47, (Spring 2015): 21–22.

<sup>152</sup> Telephone interview with Holly Schapker, 4/29/16.

<sup>153</sup> Dyckman, 103–104.

Elizabeth Johnson's work gives theological grounding to what Schapker is saying here. Johnson discusses how one's experience of self through prayer brings about new articulations of divine mystery. She uses Karl Rahner's theological anthropology to explain:

On the spectrum of historical mediations of encounter with God, the experience of oneself has a unique importance. One acute analysis of the intrinsic unity of the self and the symbol of God is offered by Karl Rahner, whose investigations in this area yield a way of appreciating the religious significance of what is going forward today in women's experience. According to Rahner's anthropological analysis, a human being is primordially 'spirit in the world,' that is, an embodied subject whose capacity for radical questioning and free and responsible action reveals that the person is structured toward an ever-receding horizon. This capacity shows that human beings are dynamically oriented toward fathomless mystery as the very condition for the possibility of acting in characteristic human ways. In other words, when caught in the act of being most personal, human beings disclose an openness toward infinite mystery as source, support, and goal of the operation of their very selves. Human beings are dynamically structured toward God.<sup>154</sup>

What Schapker discovered with her spiritual director was that her doubts about herself and her negative self-talk interrupted or blocked her "intrinsic unity" with the divine, as Johnson describes above. When she set aside those negative, destructive thoughts, she discovered herself as a co-creator with God, recognizing the intimate connection between God as infinite mystery, and her very self, "right there at that ... point when I am centered." She also discovered her humanity, her true humanity as oriented toward God, a God who was intimately connected to her through her very lived and particular human experience.

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<sup>154</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 65.

Several of the women I interviewed and surveyed for this study had powerful stories of discovering their true humanity in a new way through the experience of the Exercises. One woman described her experience of finding herself this way: “You lose yourself and you’re on a continuum with people who have been doing this for centuries and you’re with the communion of saints and of course with God. But then at the end of it you find *yourself!* So you look at her and you go, ‘Oh that’s who’s been hiding in there all that time. So nice to meet you!’ and I’m going to be sixty in March. It’s like really? It took that long? C’mon girl!”<sup>155</sup> Johnson explains that “personal development of the self also constitutes development of the experience of God; loss of self-identity is also a loss of the experience of God. They are two aspects of one and the same history experience.”<sup>156</sup> My interview subjects provide revelatory testimony to this theological claim: through their prayer they discover themselves as human beings who are “spirit in the world,” intimately connected and orientated toward God as mystery, and that is through surrender to God that they discover their true selves.

Another woman describes the experience of “coming into my own identity as a Catholic woman, and proud to be that.” She continues, “I have an image of peeling back the layers, or lifting the veil. I don’t have to be in the shadows anymore, but I have been through this incredible experience, I have done the Exercises, and I am happy and proud to say that I am a practicing Catholic lay woman, single, and I am of value and have a lot to contribute and a lot of ideas.” She continued, “I always had a sense of my self-worth,

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<sup>155</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, December 2, 2016.

<sup>156</sup> Johnson, 65.



but it was defined and refined in ways I hadn't imagined before."<sup>157</sup> For her, the process of the Exercises was one of having her gifts revealed to herself in a new way through her relationship with Jesus.

Rosemary Radford Ruether talks about this stage in the spiritual development of women as one which starts with a "self-love that opens up for us freedom and trust in God...Often learning to love this very self proves the most difficult, the most liberating part of a person's spiritual healing and growth."<sup>158</sup> Peeling back the layers, losing oneself to find oneself, and getting rid of the clutter are all ways women in my research described this process of self-discovery through the Exercises. Many women in the context of the U.S., and in the academic, upper middle class circles in which my interviewees are located, are socialized to associate their worth with their economic value and their professional and personal achievements. Beyond this context, women throughout history and the world have been and are taught and socialized to believe that their worth stems from what they contribute to the patriarchal and kyriarchal<sup>159</sup> systems that depend on their subservience and oppression. Conversely, the process of the Exercises invites women to consider their worth as fundamental to their personhood, as God-given, and not attained by success or social status, or in reference to others. One woman added to this that she was "able to greet the core of her identity rather than turn away from her." She said,

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<sup>157</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, November 21, 2016.

<sup>158</sup> Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds. *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 112–113.

<sup>159</sup> Kyriarchy is a term coined by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to describe the interconnected, interacting, and self-extending systems of domination and submission, that encompasses sexism, racism, speciesism, homophobia, classism, economic injustice, colonialism, militarism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of dominating hierarchies in which the subordination of one person or group to another is internalized and institutionalized.

“women my age, if you’ve enjoyed some beauty or athleticism in life as I have, if those things are not present anymore, you start questioning who you are. And the Exercises helped me [recognize my inherent value] when I couldn’t fall back on my usual tricks.” Another said that the Exercises made her “more aware of the unhealthy way in which I might compare myself to others.” Following are several excerpts from survey responses that point to the realization of discovering one’s sense of self-worth through unity with God:

- grace of the 1<sup>st</sup> week realizing i [sic] wasn’t the problem, i [sic] was loved.
- The Exercises helped me understand at a deeper level of my being to give myself to God and to let God’s plan for me evolve in His time. The only way for me to do this was to surrender my whole being to God. It taught me to trust and to have faith in God.
- I felt completely filled with and even overwhelmed by God’s love for me. I’ve been a Catholic and a spiritual person all my life, but I had never felt such intimacy or such deep and all-encompassing love in my relationship with God. At first, I was a bit afraid of the power of this love that I was feeling: it was almost too beautiful, more than I could imagine. I also was afraid I would lose this wonderful feeling or it would go away, but instead that love became more and more present. Sometimes I would feel it in an intense way; other times it would glide across my awareness in a simple moment or thought. But it was always there, and, thankfully, it didn’t go (and hasn’t gone) away.
- Through the Exercises I felt like I was coming home to myself because I was able to see and value my whole self anew, through God’s generous and loving gaze. I felt at peace with who I was and became more able to see my inner beauty and strength. Sometimes it can be harder to see one’s own beauty than it is to see one’s faults or weaknesses. I found that the Exercises helped me to still that overly critical voice within, and this freed me to discover more about who I truly am and how much I am beloved.
- As I came to know God more deeply, I came to know myself more deeply. The two discoveries were happening concurrently. A quote

in one of the readings my spiritual director gave me encouraged me to think of God as being the deepest grounding of my being, the inner mystery felt within the deepest part of myself. This idea helped to center me, and when I encountered that deepest grounding of my being I found that I was no longer alone. This meditation became one of the easiest and yet also one of the most powerful ways for me to encounter God.

- My experience was definitely one of finding one's voice. I went into the experience barely able to talk about what felt like a black hold in my soul...and came out able to embrace myself. I described it as an experience of "remembering" (that I was beloved) and being "re-membered" (being made whole again).
- When I consider how the Exercises changed my professional life, I realize that, in surrendering to the process, I began the process of extricating myself from an abusive relationship at work. As I began to realize that I was loved and worthy of love as experienced through the Exercises, I began to grow in my knowledge that God wanted the best for me. On a personal level, my sadness began to be replaced by a sense of self-worth and a calm rooted in my deepened relationship to God. This also opened me up to offering myself more to helping others-not to "redeem" myself, but to bring the newly recognized divine companionship into the world.
- For me, it was very much an experience of relationship with God, a grounding in God's love, seeing my life differently in light of God's love, learning to trust in God's presence, to trust that God speaks through my experiences. I would say the exercises were more about pulling me beyond myself, into relationship with God, into a deeper relationship with others out of love for God.

The narratives above illustrate what Rahner describes as "the inner self-communication of God in grace at the core of the spiritual person."<sup>160</sup> Through the act of receiving God's self-communication of love, these individuals became realigned toward their ultimate future, which is God, and for many, that realization, and that experience of discovering oneself in union with God *as women* is revolutionary, pointing to a new vision of their

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<sup>160</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, (New York: Crossroads, 1995), 172.

work, ministry, and very way of being in the world. Part of this transformation is a turning away from traditional images of God as male that are taught and reinforced through virtually all aspects of religious formation in Western culture, which I will discuss further below—but another reason I find these women’s testimonies so extraordinary is that they are distinctively counter-cultural to everything women are taught about themselves in the social, political, and religious mainstream. These experiences counter the chauvinistic and misogynistic understandings of themselves as women. These experiences remind women what they have forgotten, that is, they are created creatures, persons, and subjects, hearers of the divine message, bearers of the mystery of God, and able to experience *union* with the divine which can change their life trajectory.

Matthew Ashley describes the Exercises as “anamnestic mysticism” that enables one to “remember” what has been forgotten. He suggests that through Ignatian spirituality and the *Suscipe* in particular, human memory comes into contact with God’s memory, allowing us the vision and clarity to see the needs of the poor and suffering, a sight we typically choose to forget, the way God sees them.<sup>161</sup> For women, this healing and transformation comes through remembering their fundamental worth as subjects of divine love and grace, not separated from, but in union with the divine. This is what our inductive reasoning tells us based on women’s experience of God, but it is not what our deductive reasoning tells us based on church doctrine where male-normative expressions for God, the Holy Spirit, and other religious images codify and reinforce the notion of females as less-than men. This radical reimagining has implications for women’s lives.

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<sup>161</sup> Matthew Ashley, *Take Lord and Receive All My Memory: Toward an Anamnestic Mysticism*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette UP, 2015), 11.

By paying close attention to the revelatory experiences of women who through prayer discover themselves in union with God and as full and equal recipients of God's grace, we can begin to notice and speak out against the ways that truth is covered up and excluded, and to name the implications of that exclusion.

### 3) *Imago Dei*

Closely tied to a woman's sense of self-worth is her image of God. Katherine Dyckman et al., Elizabeth Johnson, Rosemary Radford Ruether and many others address this dilemma extensively in their scholarship. It can be very challenging for women to develop an expansive and life-giving faith and spirituality when God is limited exclusively to male images. For one, it can be difficult to see oneself as genuinely divinely created when there is no representation of one's own gender in divine imagery, symbols and language. It can be difficult to accept that one is beloved of God is one is reminded repeatedly in worship and catechesis that men more resemble God than women. Likewise, the exclusive use of male imagery for God perpetuates and reinforces the patriarchal hierarchy that requires women's oppression and subjugation. Johnson sums up the problem by quoting Mary Daly's succinct phrase, "If God is male, then the male is God."<sup>162</sup> The God=male equation can make it challenging for a woman to view her embodied self as made in the image of God if the only available images of God are male. Holly Schapker does not explicitly reference this question of divine imagery in her reflection cited above; however, she avoids all gendered pronouns for God. The reader is

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<sup>162</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 99.

left free to imagine God as male, female, or other, which suggests to me that Schapker may do the same in her own prayer life. The question of the male or female images of the divine is important to address, because it has significant ramifications for how we envision and live out mission in Jesuit institutions.

Gender plays a significant role in how one engages in any spiritual experience. Theologian Lisa Dahill suggests that gender influences our spirituality at multiple levels, from the chromosomal and biological, to social/cultural, to how our church perceives us, to our self-perception, to how God perceives us, which is our ultimate identity, certainly in Ignatian spirituality. She explains, “in order to understand a given person’s *actual* experience in its fullness, as that includes gender, we must look carefully at how the person seems to perceive herself or himself at these levels, how certain levels of perceptions may seem to contradict or illumine others and how each may contribute to a fuller appreciation of that person’s spirituality in all its complexity and particularity.”<sup>163</sup> For women, the gender experience through which they encounter God can reinforce patterns contributing to their marginalization and sense of inferiority, or their gender experience can contribute to their ability to subvert and reimagine the typical frameworks used to describe the divine and human experience.

For some women, their conscientization process as feminists brings them to reject a masculine image of God, and in so doing, to reject God completely. One interviewee shared with me her experience of rejecting a male God this way:

When I got out of college it was 1975. It was the beginning of the radical women’s movement and the movement for women’s liberation and in a lot

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<sup>163</sup> Lisa E. Dahill, “The Genre of Gender: Gender and the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality” in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM*, eds. Bruce Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (New York: Paulist, 2006), 106.

of ways it saved my life. But it left me without any language to speak about the divine for a good 25 years. Well that is not entirely true but for a good 15 years anyway and it left me very angry and what I decided was that even God really did hate women and if that was the case than I would have to be against God. And so it wasn't that I stopped believing in God but it was that God was a demon.

Some women spoke of experiencing new names, new images, and new qualities of the divine that broke through old metaphors of male divinity and female inferiority during the Exercises. Following are some examples:

- Certainly Jesus of Nazareth was a human person, a male person in first century Palestine. And so, that's a reality. But he's also the risen Christ who walks here today and he's not limited by male or female either way and he doesn't want us to be limited. He wants us to approach God and let God reveal who God is for us. No one should or can force you to look at god in any particular way, either as male or female.
- In experiences of deep prayer, I would use the phrase 'plugging in to the current life-force of God' or 'seeing things/people/places' with the full vibrancy of God's intentions.
- I feel very comfortable going to God in a more abstract-thinking way, and reflecting on God as the ground of my being, or the experience of transcendence. Being a feminist, thinking about God, particularity, male, scripture, which is very much situated in this patriarchal context, I wasn't really drawn to that. But with the Exercises I found myself really embracing and visualizing friendship with Jesus.

Given how deeply patriarchal imagery is entrenched in the Exercises, we have to ask whether the Exercises are a suitable program through which we can reasonably hope that one's male-centric image of God might be challenged or expanded. I discussed earlier how Ignatius adopted the language and ideas for the Exercises from medieval and Reformation-era piety and devotional practices. It must be asked whether the Exercises

are simply too entrapped by this medieval worldview of the white, Western male as normative and divine to have any liberating potential for those excluded from this frame.

One woman, who is a spiritual director, said to me:

I know for some people the language can be really restrictive. For some people they can really shy away from a god that we call “father” or “He” or whatever. And so, in that sense, I really encourage women to talk to Jesus about what you call God, how you can approach God, and not make it hurtful, not let any of that stuff, you know, harm you or break your heart because you call him “Father.” I think there are other things. Women in the retreat at times tend to be observers until they’re really encouraged to go in and talk to him, because they’re thinking, at the Last Supper, that there’s not any women around. But in fact, Jesus is inviting us to join right with him in that dinner, washing feet and breaking bread.<sup>164</sup>

This person’s distinction is useful. She suggests that rather than remaining passive recipients of what the tradition tells us about God, Jesus, and the status of women—for example, that women were not invited to the last supper—we must consider what the invitation is now. The tradition, as we know, wrote women out of the text, out of the story. Rather than accepting the tradition as forever set in stone, through the Exercises, one might be invited to recognize the tradition as historically contextualized, dynamic, and open to reinterpretation. Likewise, through the Exercises, women are invited to make their relationship with Jesus their own, personal to their own experience as women. In doing this, women can come to a new realization about the limitations of traditional God-language and discover ways to move beyond it that are authentic to their experience.

One woman shared with me her understanding of Jesus as having a hybrid identity. She shared:

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with author, Burlingame, CA, April 13, 2017.



These days I try to think of Jesus as intersex. Not that I deny in any way the physical incarnation and all that, but who knows. For many years I used to talk about the Goddess. When I named the divine I named the divine as feminine and it never really worked for me. And the reality is I think about animal life on this planet and how complicated sexual dysphoria is and how in fact in some species it's way more complex than an obvious division between male and female and that's certainly true of all human beings. And then I think about this tiny little planet and this little outpost of the universe, this backwater. And I know that whatever my image is of the Divine it can't possibly approach the Divine.<sup>165</sup>

Hybridity is a term from the biological and social sciences borrowed by feminist theologians to argue against the strict categories of identity, be those identities pertaining to religion, race, class, sex and gender, and other identities. Hybridity suggest the intersectionality of human identity, that is, the idea that a person has multiple, intersecting identities all of which influence and mutually constitute their full personhood, and none of which alone tells the whole story of who they are. Additionally, hybridity allows for the recognition that we are all formed by the stories and experiences of others; others' stories intertwine with our own, and thus we are in some ways hybrids of one another. Michele Saracino explores the notion of hybridity as it relates to image of God and identity of Jesus, suggesting that through hybridity, that is, "by resisting any 'one true story' about ... what it means to be human, we become liberated and, dare I say, 'graced' to celebrate and embrace even more fully the goodness of creation, the centrality of human freedom, and right relationships with God and others in our everyday lives."<sup>166</sup> The idea of hybridity gives us a framework for thinking about God as not only father or

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with author, San Francisco, November 10, 2016.

<sup>166</sup> Michele Saracino, 24.

mother, immanent or transcendent, other or intrinsic, male or female—God becomes all of those things and none alone.

Christopher Pramuk recently published an article in *Theological Studies*, titled “Theodicy and the Feminine Divine: Thomas Merton’s ‘Hagia Sophia’ in Dialogue with Western Theology,” wherein he suggests that the figure of Wisdom-Sophia as described in the writing of Thomas Merton is a “lyric name and memory of God” that has implications on theodicy, or how we live in a world plagued by suffering. He cites a study by Jewish theologian Melissa Raphael who “joins other contemporary feminist theologians in arguing that patriarchal and exclusively male images, discourses and practices in synagogue and church have sanctioned a great deal of injustice, misogyny, and violence in society, in no small part by obscuring the female face of God: God’s nurturing, indwelling Presence known in the Hebrew Bible as Wisdom, Shekinah, Sophia, or Spirit.”<sup>167</sup> Raphael goes on to suggest that when the “masculine and feminine aspect of God have been reunited and the female half of humanity has been returned from exile, we will begin to have our tikkun. The world will be repaired.”<sup>168</sup> Pramuk argues that “to name is not primarily to identify; to name is to reveal and shape a person’s deepest relational identity.”<sup>169</sup> Pramuk suggests the name used by Thomas Merton, Wisdom-Sophia, be reclaimed as a metaphor for the divine-humanity of God, and that “her name, precisely when voiced *as Name* (e.g. in prayer) can facilitate an experience of real

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<sup>167</sup> Christopher Pramuk, “Theodicy and the Feminine Divine: Thomas Merton’s ‘Hagia Sophia’ in Dialogue with Western Theology,” *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016), 61.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

presence, communion with the hidden God who is both beyond all words *and* ever waiting to break through from within them.”<sup>170</sup> What Pramuk suggests is reclaiming an ancient name for the divine, and in the act of renaming God as Wisdom-Sophia, a new encounter with the divine breaks through one’s prayer and religious experience.

By claiming new names or by remembering ancient names for God, and by recognizing the hybrid and relational nature of identity, women participate in an act of their own liberation that frees them and leads to repair of the world, including through mission. With that said, we must examine how difficult it is to actually introduce changes in how we refer to God, moving away from patriarchal language. To give one example of the difficulty, no one in my survey described God as Wisdom-Sophia.

In my experience of ministry in Catholic parish and university settings, I have found that the resistance to feminine images and names for the divine in liturgy and prayer cannot be overstated. Rosemary Radford Ruether describes an “emotional hostility” and “phobic reaction” to anyone who mentions the idea of speaking of God in feminine terms. She argues that male monotheism is so engrained in the Judeo-Christian culture it is barely ever questioned.<sup>171</sup> Pramuk’s suggestion of using Wisdom-Sophia imagery to name God would likely be received as abject heresy and decidedly non-Christian in most Catholic communities today. However, as Ruether said over thirty years ago, exclusively male language for God only perpetuates the patriarchal-hierarchical society which oppresses women, the poor, communities of color and others at the

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<sup>170</sup> Pramuk, *Sophia*, 63.

<sup>171</sup> Ruether (1983), 53.

margins of the social and economic system. If we are going to break out of this oppressive structure, the topic of God-language must be addressed.

Teresa Delgado offers a useful way of looking at the image of God in terms of relationality and connection to community. She argues that an image of God rooted in the Trinity allows us to recognize God as relational and interconnected to our very being. She writes, “if we believe in a triune God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer who has created humanity after God’s likeness, then we are called to ‘be in relation’ as intrinsic to our very being.”<sup>172</sup> Trinitarian language for God that focuses on the relationality of the Trinity, versus the three distinct persons construct moves us toward the experience of knowing God as the center of one’s being and the horizon toward which one is oriented, pointing to Rahner’s theological anthropology referenced above. Trinitarian language for God also fits in very well with the construct of the Exercises. In approaching God as Trinity, we encounter a God who is beyond all words, who is rooted in our particular human experience yet also transcendent, encountered in moments of solitude and also discovered in community with others, and who is not constrained by the male monotheistic framework so damaging to women’s sense of self-worth. The concept of God as Trinity also leaves space for the close personal connection with Jesus that so many women describe as central to their experience of the Exercises. The key becomes reframing the canonical definition of Trinity, three persons in one, to one that is more rooted in women’s experiences of life and prayer, that is, a concept of Trinity that focuses on the connections, relationships, and interdependence of God’s many manifestations.

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<sup>172</sup> Delgado, 30.

#### 4) *Experience of Calling*

Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as “the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence ... It is the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.”<sup>173</sup> Schneiders’ definition of spirituality, including one’s “conscious involvement in the project of life,” emphasizes activity in the world as constitutive to spiritual development. This idea of mission, of lived vocation as central to spirituality, corresponds to the dynamics of the Exercises as well. Through the Exercises, one is encouraged—expected, really—to transform one’s life in some way to bring it into closer alignment with Jesus and with God, and in answer to a call.

Clearly, this calling can be a problem for some women for whom vocational choices are restricted. Dyckman et al. write, “the religious-cultural expectations restricting women to traditional roles in family and society prevented a free apostolic response to the Spiritual Exercises [for women historically].”<sup>174</sup> This problem of election for women remains an issue when a woman’s election bumps up against an ecclesial, academic, or social constraint.

Part of the genius of the Exercises, and one reason why Ignatius ran into trouble with the Spanish inquisitors, was Annotation 15, the notion that the Creator deals directly with the Creature. “The underlying issue here,” according to Philip Endean, “is that the

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<sup>173</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 16.

<sup>174</sup> Dyckman, et al., 46.

conviction of God's working directly with the creature raises at least the logical possibility that what the individual discovers in this way may go beyond what is ecclesiastically sanctioned."<sup>175</sup> In both Exx. 170 and 177, we see Ignatius attempting to handle diplomatically the potential conflict between God working directly through the retreatant and his desire to comply with official canonical guidelines. Philip Endean explains:

A full engagement with the Exercises should lead the retreatant to make some form of *election* or *decision*...The underlying issue here is that the conviction of God's working directly with the creature (Exx. 15) raises at least the logical possibility that what the individual discovers in this way may go beyond what is ecclesiastically sanctioned. It is clear that the early Jesuits, through the Exercises, sought to promote life within the Church, but they had no solution to this theological problem, and addressed the issues diplomatically rather than theoretically...The Jesuit tradition lives with the tension between a missionary commitment to life at the Church's boundaries and an allegiance to the visible, hierarchical institution.<sup>176</sup>

In this description, Endean is saying openness to hearing one's mission or calling through the Exercises and what the Church officially sanctions has been a point of tension since the time of Ignatius himself.

This tension was described in a powerful way by one woman I interviewed who had done the Exercises over a 30-day retreat. A Catholic woman, she felt called to the priesthood, a vocation not available to her because of her gender. She recalls her experience of being called by Jesus during the Exercises:

Coming in [to the Exercises] I was mad at God. I was, like, "God, how possibly could you call me to the priesthood in this church?" I was so

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<sup>175</sup> Endean, "The Spiritual Exercises," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. Thomas Worcester (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008), 62.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

angry. That all came up the first couple weeks of the retreat, and I was able to express that clearly to God. Over the 30 days you're just so intentionally connected to God that being able to express something like that really dissipates the anger. That was a huge movement. And in the fourth week, during one of the prayer periods, a question that had come up for me over and over again, was, "God where should I go?" And the whole time the answer I heard back was, "Go to my people." And my response would be, "Yeah, I'm trying to but I can't become a priest!" And so in the fourth week I prayed that again in one of the imaginative prayers with Jesus present and I just prayed, "Where should I go?" and the image that came to me was Jesus sitting with me and Jesus put his hands on my head (I get emotional every time I talk about it) and he just said, "Please let me ordain you with my love." And so I just had this sense that I had been so angry, that I thought I couldn't do what I was called to be in the church, but that so is not true. And so the most profound part of the Exercises for me was having that experience with Jesus and knowing I had to live this out and it was always going to be ambiguous and painful because there is always going to be this structural stuff that is going to come up. You're not at the pulpit. It's not going to be easy. But the sense over the experience of the Exercises, was "No, this is what I am calling you to and *I'm* calling you to it." And there was so much clarity in all of that. I had a sense of peace with that. I didn't need to grapple with it any more.<sup>177</sup>

For this woman, the Exercises clarified her call to the priesthood and opened up a new pathway for her to live out her vocation. She repeatedly described feeling no longer ashamed to admit that she had a call to the priesthood among her peers. She says, "I didn't feel like I was doing something wrong, because all that stuff is so ingrained. I came back and was so clear about who I was and who God was asking me to be in the world that everything was just different because I was much more solid in some of my identity than I had ever been before."<sup>178</sup> Her confirmation of her vocation was directly related to the process and movements of the Exercises, particularly the contemplations and colloquies with Jesus. She said, "There is something profound about sitting down

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<sup>177</sup> Interview with author, San Francisco, December 2, 2016.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

with Jesus every day like that. All the stuff about my self-worth, it was pretty cluttered, but the Exercises made it more clear. What else is going to happen when you just walk with Jesus like that?”<sup>179</sup> Her response to her call to priesthood has been to find a way to do priestly ministry within the confines of the Catholic church, as opportunities are made available to her. Yet what is subversive and transformative for herself and for the church is that she does it without apology and without shame because of her conviction that her call is from Jesus himself. That sense of courage and freedom within and despite social and ecclesial constraints is an example of a fruit of the Exercises for women that can impact our personal lives and ultimately our institutions.

Another woman, also called to the priesthood, experienced in the Exercises Jesus encouraging her to baptize. In her meditation, she describes:

So in this meditation scene I was with my colleagues and all these people who I very much admire, and we were at a river, and Jesus was there too, and Jesus was baptizing people, and I’m baptizing, and all of a sudden I catch myself and think, oh my gosh, I’m doing this, and I look to Jesus, and he just looks at me and [gestures], “go, just go, go ahead.”

The movements of the Exercises, that is, meditating on a scene from the life of Jesus, and imagining oneself in conversation with Jesus at this moment in his ministry, led this woman to believe and affirm for herself that Jesus called her to minister like him, to baptize just the way he was doing. For her, Jesus indicated that there was no reason she could not do this because of her gender. This woman had an encounter with Jesus that contradicted what ecclesial authority told her she could or couldn’t do.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



For some, the notion of calling, of being affirmed by God and Jesus in one's vocational desire, is evidence of the divine directly at work in their lives. Vocational call comes in and through community, as a summons from God. It counters the idea that we are makers of our own destinies, instead suggesting that our destinies are bound up with God's vision and dream for humanity and the church. The same woman continued:

We have to hear it. I had to listen, to really be attentive to that work of God in me, and if I trust it's also in community, in our church, then what does it look like to invite other people to name creatively how God is working in our church? We have to hear it, and until we hear it, we don't believe it's true, and we're afraid, and we just think maybe there's something wrong with me. No, it's actually a bigger dream that God has, and totally wants for our church, and for us.

Through her prayer in the Exercises, this woman experienced her call to the priesthood not as a figment of her imagination, nor something she could ignore, but a summons to build a new church, an invitation to include others in reimagining and naming how they experience God working in the church and world. Her call to vocation was experienced relationally through her community, moving beyond her individual life story to that of her church community.

About half of the women surveyed and interviewed said they were discerning a particular professional or personal choice while doing the Exercises. For some, clarity came through a closer relationship with Jesus. Some experience Jesus affirming them as mothers, as teachers, as daughters, as friends. Some report feeling a renewed sense of commitment and a desire to take on a leadership position at their institutions. Some reported acquiring a sense of calm and groundedness that made decision-making easier.

Several faculty members I interviewed discussed the impact that the Exercises had on their teaching. In particular, one woman discussed how her teaching had changed as a result of doing the Exercises. She says:

In the classroom I don't have to be the expert all the time. It's not all up to me. My own participation and other students' is something that I can trust and that is about letting go and trusting in the spirit or as they say in the 12-step program, 'let go and let God.' The very best teachers are secure enough in that they've done the work to be ready for class, and they can let go. And I think that doing the Exercises has helped me to have more trust that that education will happen without my direct intervention in quite the same way.<sup>180</sup>

Another faculty member discussed how the experience of the Exercises gave her a sense of “legitimacy” for becoming a spokesperson for Ignatian and mission matters at her school. She spoke up about adding “mission” as a category for a new faculty scholarship database which has direct mission-integration implications for the university.

The experience of calling through the Exercises applies to Jesuit education in several ways. Susan Mountin in an essay titled, *Tilling the Soil: Preparing Women for the Vocation of Ministry*, writes: “To ‘till the soil’ of women’s vocations of ministry, one must first recognize the rocky ground of the current context of Church polity. Providing a safe place for women to speak their desires may be the first step. It is rather scary to consider ministry as one’s life work when not officially sanctioned by the Church hierarchy. Yet the *sensus fidelium* speaks loudly.”<sup>181</sup> Providing a place for women to speak

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<sup>180</sup> Interview by author, San Francisco, November 10, 2016.

<sup>181</sup> Susan Mountin, “Tilling the Soil: Preparing Women for the Vocation of Ministry—A Challenge and Call,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education*, edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), 238.

their desires is a starting point for personal formation, a starting point for ecclesial transformation. Educators at Jesuit institutions have an obligation to give voice to women's experience of vocational call, including calls to the priesthood. The Spiritual Exercises, and shared reflection on the Exercises, are one modality through which this change can occur.

Another area of concern in Jesuit education is in the sacramental life of the University. Susan Ross points to the difficulty in this area in an article published in *Conversations* magazine in 1999, a reflection piece five years after Decree 14 was issued. She points out that Jesuits serve as the hosts to their colleagues and students in the liturgical life of the university, and that this separation of roles, this exclusive access that Jesuits have which their colleagues do not, is a source of immense pain for some women and women's religious communities on Jesuit campuses. She writes, "the brokenness of the Body of Christ continues to be made manifest in the brokenness of the church today; women's pain surrounding the Eucharist needs to be heard and felt."<sup>182</sup> I would add to this observation the problematic optics at University liturgies with a multi-religious congregation in attendance and an all-male clergy co-presiding. The symbolism runs counter to the language of equity and inclusion we emphasize elsewhere throughout the university.

This realization makes clear that the spiritual and religious work of the university cannot be confined to the chapels, but is imbued throughout the work of the University. Explicit connections can be made identifying the sacred work that takes place in every department, in every classroom, in every studio or lab, on every field, thus expanding the

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<sup>182</sup> Susan Ross, "The Jesuits and Women," in *Conversations*, Fall 1999, 20-28; 28.

notion of the sacramental economy at the University beyond simply what happens at chapel. One woman shared with me this experience she had as a librarian:

I think the Spiritual Exercises gave me awareness. I'm more aware not only of myself, but of others. One time when I was just doing my routine walk around to see if anybody needs help I saw a student sitting very quietly. She came in the library very early in the morning, always sat by herself very quietly. I observed her, and maybe the fourth or fifth time when I saw her that week, I saw some distress, and I just stopped and asked her, how are you doing? And she looked at me and after a few seconds she burst into tears and said, "I am overwhelmed, I cannot do it anymore." And she is crying. For me, just then, I stood there, and just put my hand on her shoulder, and just being present there for her, and listened to her, and was company for her to cry and we became friends. That was her last year, and later on she always came to see me, and we talked more about it, and I just gave her words of encouragement. She graduated last year and came back to see me once. I'm very grateful for that gift of awareness, because if I just walked by like the other days, I don't know, she might be ok, but that was my little gift to her.

Another person shared:

I came away from the Exercises with a deep sense that in the end, the mission of Jesuit education is rooted in love. We need to be committed to giving our students the experience of being loved (through our teaching, mentoring, listening, etc.) and the experience of falling in love...with an idea or a community or a text or a discipline. If they can experience both and experience how these experiences anchor one another, I believe they will be prepared to engage the world...because they will be able to remember the ways in which they have been and are loved, and will know how to respond to that with love.

Faculty and staff engage in these moments of healing and sacrament on a regular basis.

These are moments of mothering, undertaken by men, women, clergy, and lay alike, which often go overlooked—but this women's awareness of what she did as directly linked to the mission of the university points to new ways we can conceptualize the

sacramental work of the university that honor the individual vocational call of each person.

### 5) *Crucifixion*

One of my co-readers, systematic theologian Erin Brigham, pointed out to me that several women surveyed discussed their experiences in prayer at the cross during the Third Week of the Exercises as one that was comforting, edifying and transformational, rather than an experience of abject suffering and self-emptying. Brigham suggested these testimonies offered a starting point for a feminist theology of the cross, and a feminist soteriology, that are distinct from the ways the crucifixion is typically portrayed.

Following are several examples of these reflections:

- The hardest part of the Exercises was moving into and through the Crucifixion. It hit too close to home for me at that time in my life. I had heard that it is possible to get stuck at this point and I was fearful that I would, but meditating and praying through the Crucifixion helped me identify with Jesus and recognize that my pain was pain that he shared. As I was able to move into the Contemplation of Divine Love, I felt a movement toward re-birth that enveloped me in love and purpose. Coming from the torment of the Crucifixion, this movement gave me a deep hope in the meaning of my life and my integral connection with all creation through God. I really felt as though I moved through this process with Jesus and was able to come to a place where I saw a movement from depression and pain to joy. It was revelatory!
- The message I got over and over again was just be with him. So when he's on the cross, be present. You don't have to do anything else. Just presence is what God desires.
- My experience of the Third Week was intense as a whole, but I spent a good amount of time at the crucifixion trying to see Jesus' face. In multiple attempts, I'd be looking at him from the side,

from below, from above, but could not see his actual face. Eventually I did. It's hard to put into words, but that moment was significant to me.

- The meditations of the Third Week were the most important. They gave me an empathy with the sufferings of Jesus that shape my life to this day and inspired generosity and self-giving in a way I had not experienced before.
- The Exercises opened a fountain of feelings, flooding me with deep emotions of being loved and being disconsolate. When I was able to move through the crucifixion, where I saw myself stuck, into the movements of inner peace and divine love I found deep joy and serenity. I had an experience of complete and total love that swept over me, leaving me forever changed. I discovered a deeper sense of God-in-me. It was transformative! Rather than finding my voice or coming home to myself, I discovered the divine abiding within me—separate, yet co-mingled. I found comfort (I was deeply hurting at the time I came to the Exercises) and Divine Love.

Feminist Christology suggests a few different ways of looking at the cross through a feminist lens. One theory is that women are able to connect with Jesus through their own experience of suffering, and in so doing, see their suffering in a new light. Rather than uncritically accepting suffering, the experience of the cross invites women to ask, what in me must die so that I can live? Are there aspects of my suffering that are destructive or avoidable? Dyckman et al. bring this up, saying, “Pain can be a portal leading to a richer life. Situations of physical, psychological and/or spiritual pain provide occasions to discern directions...Past interpretations of spirituality and theology uncritically accepted the value of suffering. Today, however, the insights of psychology and liberation theology demand the alleviation of demeaning and unjust suffering and expose the ways people and systems legitimate this kind of oppression.”<sup>183</sup> One might be

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<sup>183</sup> Dyckman et al., 223.

able to recognize instead that not all suffering is good or holy, and that the message of the cross is one of liberation, not self-abnegation.

Another insight from feminist theology is the idea that through the cross women, who already know suffering from their lived experiences as women—for some through systematic oppression, for some through the pain of childbirth, for some through lives of service to others that require ongoing acts of self-emptying—connect deeply with Jesus’ on the cross—not as the “other” suffering for them, but as one with themselves. They know his suffering; they are in true solidarity with him. This connection can create an increase in empathy. It can also create a lived experience of the divine love that Jesus felt at that moment of his death. Women experience it too. They’ve been there on the cross. They may still be. They don’t need to imagine what it must have felt like: they know it, and thereby also know the experience of social and systematic sin, of kenosis, of rebirth, all the more powerfully. Teresa Delgado makes this point:

We must resist a theology of the cross that glorifies or exemplifies the sacrificial suffering of Jesus as a means to a salvific end. On the cross of Jesus, we are faced with multiple dimensions of human suffering and evil, kept in place by nails and swords, penetrating the body until blood and water emerge. But when viewed through the lens of Latin American and Latina women who are faced with human trafficking and the sex trade, and the compounded prevalence of HIV/AIDS, they too are wounded by nails and swords, penetrated in places where blood and water emerge. Rather than defining her body in terms of sacrifice and suffering in that moment, her body becomes the ground of resistance to evil and sin; her scars mark the territory of many acts of defiance. When we understand sacrifice and suffering in this way, we see reflected in the pool of blood at the foot of the cross of Jesus the evil structures, relationships and institutions that put him there in the first place. Therefore, any attempt to sacrifice her body is no longer viewed as a cross she is called to bear, but a cross that indicts those who would impose it upon her.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Delgado, 44–45.

Women know the pain of the cross. Above, I considered Mary's birth story a model of kenosis in a way that enlightens and expands the self-giving function of the crucifixion. Mary demonstrates a self-emptying toward fullness and new life, versus a self-emptying as horrific suffering until death. One example of this more traditional way of portraying the cross is articulated by Gerald O'Collins, who describes the crucifixion as "his utterly shameful death, after condemnation by both religious and political authorities. This 'most wretched of deaths' ...symbolized rejection by God."<sup>185</sup> Indeed, this is the common understanding of the significance of the crucifixion for Jesus' followers at the time. It is also an experience that women know already—for many, on a daily basis. Their experience of presence at the cross, therefore, is one in solidarity with Jesus, one in which the cross is not seen to glorify suffering, but to defy and transform it.

Following from this experience of women's solidarity with Jesus at the crucifixion is the important connection that feminist theology makes between the cross and political theology. Elizabeth Johnson writes that "the cross opens up a great fissure in God's own being, the Father abandoning, the Son being abandoned. In so doing, the cross not only plunges God deep into the suffering of the world. It also opens a reverse pathway on which suffering travels back into God, there to be redeemed."<sup>186</sup> Johnson continues by highlighting the political theology of Dorothee Soelle, for whom the cross requires us to enter into the suffering brought on by humanity, to critique it, to indict it, to resist it. Johnson summarizes, "And here, for Soelle, is the point: we can know God's

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<sup>185</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Some Contemporary Issues*, (Milwaukee: Marquette, 1993), 13.

<sup>186</sup> Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 61.



love only when we become a part of it ourselves. We can know the God of compassion only in committed resistance to every form of unjust suffering inflicted on others.”<sup>187</sup> Otherwise, we do not know God. When we do theology from this starting point, we are going to come up against dangerous, interruptive concepts. The cross interrupts the status quo, leaving us with unanswered, difficult questions which are at the heart of Christianity.<sup>188</sup> And no one is exempt from the poverty of the cross<sup>189</sup>—not even the university.

Shawn Copeland further develops the role of political theology in the university by arguing that theological reflection on the status quo, namely the situation of inequality in society, “can go a long way toward complementing individual and communal responses to situations of dis-grace,” namely situations of poverty, racism, social injustice in our world. Theology must accompany our acts of solidarity and social change. The object of our theological reflection, she argues, and the solution to these situations of dis-grace “can only be located in the darkly luminous mystery of the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. For if the prophetic praxis of Jesus reveals the transcendent passion of an eschatological imagination in the midst of a concrete human setup, the cross shows us its radical risk.”<sup>190</sup> Only by moving toward the radical risk of the cross, not for the sake of suffering, but for the sake of solidarity and relationship, will the eschatological promise of Jesus be made known.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 64–65.

<sup>188</sup> Class notes, lecture by Professor Julia Prinz, 3/14/16.

<sup>189</sup> Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1968), 14.

<sup>190</sup> Copeland, 138.

This understanding of the cross as an invitation to solidarity with the suffering and the portal to divine love must be at the center of the Jesuit educational enterprise. Ignacio Ellacuría proposes that the Exercises are a way of historicizing or concretizing our faith in reality. For Ellacuría, his historical reality, the violent and oppressive civil society of El Salvador, brought him to recognize “Christ” among the crucified people of his day. He asked, how do I help them to rise again? Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, and Gustavo Gutiérrez recognized the crucified people as the poor, the economically disadvantaged, the socially marginalized, and women. Both Sobrino and Gutiérrez recognized women as “the poor.”<sup>91</sup> What feminist theologians are saying goes a step further. For feminist theologians like Elizabeth Johnson, Dorothee Soelle, Teresa Delgado, Shawn Copeland and many others, the suffering are not a “they,” but an “us,” and it is in relationship with the suffering where we encounter God.

The testimonies of the women interviewed approach this notion of discovering God as redemptive through companionship with Jesus on the cross, through lived solidarity with Jesus and the suffering. Certain Jesuit universities are sometimes criticized for focusing too much on social justice rather than the Catholic faith. The contributions of feminist theology that link social justice so clearly to the cross and resurrection—indeed the crux of the Catholic faith—make clear that the criticism is not valid. Catholic faith can only be expressed through social justice; it is not an optional concern.

These disruptive questions have radical implications for efforts toward diversity and inclusion as well. Catherine Dyckman et. al wrote:

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<sup>91</sup> Class notes, lecture by Professor Kevin Burke, SJ, 4/4/16.

We still encounter ranking systems by ethnicity and race, education, professional expertise, gender and socioeconomic status—the new and hidden ‘class’ structure. The contemporary challenge facing the Spiritual Exercises might be stated: Can the current practice of the Spiritual Exercises accommodate and even welcome diversity in these areas? The Spiritual Exercises continue to have the potential to reinforce the status quo or to liberate for new possibilities.<sup>192</sup>

Leaders at Jesuit universities should be asking ourselves, do we promote the white, male, Christian, Western perspective and educational model as normative, or do we challenge that?<sup>193</sup> Do we develop policies with the poorest students in mind? Do we consider the DREAMers, the first generation students, the “non-traditional” students’ needs as normative rather than exceptional? Do we exclude or devalue office support staff, faculty of color, female faculty, etc.? All these are questions that require institutional reflection and response. The Exercises are a tool for considering the internal and unexamined biases at the root of institutionalized racism and white privilege at our universities.

#### 6) *The Beloved Community*

Two of my interviewees used the phrase the “beloved community” to describe their experience and understanding of the University. I was struck by how this phrase, prophetically popularized by Martin Luther King, Jr.,<sup>194</sup> is not commonly used to describe

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<sup>192</sup> Dyckman, 46.

<sup>193</sup> See Johnson, 187; 208 and Copeland, 136–138.

<sup>194</sup> An excellent essay on the definition of the beloved community as used and imagined by Martin Luther King, Jr. is available on the website of the King Center. It states in part: “Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be

Jesuit mission and identity, nor does it come from Catholic theology; yet it provides a powerful image for spirituality in action. One person described how by recognizing the University as the beloved community, she became very focused and involved in its operational and budget-making processes, seeking mission-alignment with everything from food services to employee compensation. Another describes how it was the notion of the beloved community that led her to teaching, not so that she could stand out, but so she could be part of something larger than herself.

The concept of the “beloved community” was developed by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher Josiah Royce (d. 1916) who described the possibility of a “consciously united community ... which can offer salvation to distracted humanity and can calm the otherwise insatiable greed and longing of the natural individual man.”<sup>195</sup> While a full review of Royce’s philosophy is beyond the parameters of my dissertation, I propose that the phrase be considered for use in mission and identity discourse at Jesuit universities. One obvious application of this phrase is simply that Jesuit universities can look to the rich legacy of the civil rights movement for examples of how faith-based institutions became radical agents for social change here in the U.S.<sup>196</sup> The notion of the beloved community, as developed by King, moves us to action and love of neighbor. The beloved community moves us to integrate our personal and professional activities with our authentic call and vocation. The beloved community calls us to mission, to serve, to

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replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.” <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub4>. Accessed 12/1/17.

<sup>195</sup> Josiah Royce, *The Hope of the Great Community*, (New York: Macmillan), 1916, 45.

<sup>196</sup> See Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today*, (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

be available to one another: all hallmarks of Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit education. Looking back to the civil rights movement will provide Jesuit universities with tools for more effective social action, also centralizing and honoring the experience of communities of color in the mission and identity of the institution, thus countering the white-dominant models of education and social change that persist at Jesuit institutions.

However, on a deeper level, and using a specifically feminist lens, the idea of the beloved community pushes us to think beyond traditional institutional hierarchies that suppress women's equality. In Jesuit education, the hierarchies of the academy, patriarchy and clericalism collide diminishing women's status further. Susan Abraham's work on *ekklesia*, a theological term originally developed by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, proposes a new paradigm for Catholic institutional organization that rejects the exclusion of women, races, cultures and classes and puts justice at its center. She writes, "When liberation and justice become the primary concerns of ecclesiology, we have *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* is not the same as 'church,' but is an 'alternative' to imperial forms of church and society (keep in mind that the original meaning of the term *ekklesia* as a Greek political term denoted a democratic assembly or congress of full citizens)."<sup>197</sup> *Ekklesia* requires a critical deconstruction of the systems of power that silence and oppress women, people of color, the poor, and all who are socially and economically marginalized, as well as a reconstruction of a community with justice at its center. For Abraham, church as *ekklesia* imagines "society as a community of support and an alliance of equals." It is the antidote to empire. It "is a term for hospitality to diversity

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<sup>197</sup> Susan Abraham, "Justice as the Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology," in *Shoulder to Shoulder: Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 206.

and is not a place where social, cultural, political or class-based sameness is presumed ... The church can claim its deepest connections to its founder by being the exemplary site of just relations in the manner that Jesus already showed us.”<sup>198</sup> Abraham emphasizes the point that a community centered on justice is a uniquely and decidedly Catholic community. I would extend this logic to argue that a university centered on justice is a decidedly Catholic university. The ecclesiology of *ekklesia*, or of the beloved community, presents a new way of considering the Jesuit and Catholic identity and mission of a university.

My research gives credibility to this theology. Women long to be part of communities where their experiences, and their stature as beloved of God, is recognized and realized, not suppressed. Women express desire and longing for full equality, full participation, and full access to leadership in the institutions in which they live and serve. The theology of *ekklesia* is not simply a theology of political theory and ideas: it is a model that appears in the revelatory prayer experiences of women who go through the Spiritual Exercises and other spiritual activities and come to know a God who desires for them and for the world their full, equal flourishing as human persons in all areas of their lives. It is a model of church that reflects the revelatory prayer experiences of women who discover themselves as beloved of God, and co-creators with the divine, specifically through their lives as women.

The notion of the beloved community is also evidenced by the ways in which the women surveyed and interviewed described their process of being invited to do the Exercises at their institutions and why they agreed. For many, the invitation and

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 212.

acceptance was an act of consciously contributing to the university community. For instance, quotes to this effect include:

- I felt that the experience would enhance my integrity as a professional at a Jesuit work.
- I had just gotten promoted and a vital part of our team had left the university to move back across country. I knew I needed support in a spiritual way.
- I was encouraged to do so by my supervisor at the time.
- The number of Jesuits on our campus continues to decline and the lay members of our college community need to step up and make sure those new to the community...students, faculty, administrator, staff receive education related to our Jesuit mission and values. I wanted to be part of this.
- I was moving to a new leadership position and wanted to begin from a place of discernment. I hoped that having this experience as a touchstone, week after week, would help me stay focused and calm.
- I hoped to understand more clearly why I felt called to work at a Jesuit university.
- It was suggested to me that this would support the work I was doing.
- I became more aware, had greater opportunity to see and appreciate life's direction through the graces, and that focus on the limitlessness of our own lives and opportunities...in the community, in our work, in serving others, and in the mission of our institution, became ultimately richer.
- The Exercises have affected how I conduct some of my daily tasks at work. I've applied what I've learned about discernment to the way I run meetings and the ways I help lead the group through difficult decisions or problems. I'm more deliberate with how I talk about justice, values, and ethics in the classroom as my students and I discuss the course content. I feel an even stronger drive to give back in gratitude for all I've been given.
- I became more committed to the good of others.

The testimonials of these women who cite commitment to their community as a reason for doing the Exercises, as well as an outcome of that process, suggest to me that the terms “ekklesia” and “beloved community” are two which may provide rich sources for a new type of identity development of the Jesuit university. Rather than being about service *to* others, the identity and mission of the university is about the transformation of society and a turning upside-down of systems and structures that oppress and exclude some for the advancement of others. The identity of the institution comes from the interconnected relationality of all members of the community, with justice at its center, where hierarchies based on class, race, gender, and clerical privilege are erased. This is a new model and new approach for Jesuit Catholic identity development.



## Chapter 7

### Applications for Jesuit Higher Education

This chapter presents two practical applications of my research on some questions facing Jesuit education today. The first essay addresses the need to reinsert the stories of women who have been removed from the official history of Jesuit education, the challenges in doing so, and how shared reflection on the Exercises can move us toward greater equity and inclusion in our current educational contexts. The second essay discusses contributions from feminist theologies of interreligious dialogue that can be applied to sharing the Exercises in multi-religious contexts in ways that are appropriate, respectful and mutually beneficial to our educational communities.

#### *1) Reclaiming Herstory and Using the Spiritual Exercises as an Instrument for Relationship*

Orientation programs at Jesuit universities often include a review of the life of Ignatius. Faculty, staff and students learn about the Basque nobleman born in 1491, raised to serve as a royal knight, who suffered a near-fatal injury at the battle of Pamplona against the French, resulting in a lengthy recovery during which he had a conversion experience. We hear about his intense spiritual struggles, culminating in his decision to devote his life to serving God, his run-ins with the judges of the Inquisition who questioned his authority, his development of the Spiritual Exercises, and his

recruitment of nine fellow students at the University of Paris with whom he eventually formed the Society of Jesus. We learn that Ignatius and his male companions in 1540 founded a new apostolic order of Catholic clergy whose purpose was to serve the people of God most in need, and to “help souls,” a mission which eventually became focused on education.

What is missing from the official history of Ignatius are the stories of the women with whom he lived and worked who contributed financially, politically, and emotionally to Ignatius’ formation and that of the early Jesuits. What is also missing is a critical feminist analysis of the historical context out of which Ignatius, the Exercises and the Society of Jesus were born.

Margo Heydt and Sarah Melchner make this point in their article, “Reflections from an Ignatian Pilgrimage,” which they wrote following a trip for faculty at Xavier University to visit the historical landmarks of Ignatius’ life. They discovered during the experience how significant Mary was to Ignatius and the early Jesuits, far more so than had been portrayed in the books they had read in preparation for the journey. Heydt and Melchner reflected on the gap between the importance of Mary to Ignatius historically and how little her influence is reflected in official biographies. They extend their curiosity regarding Mary’s exclusion to the other women in the life of Ignatius whose stories are also missing.

Heydt and Melchner suggest that the stories of the women who influenced and helped establish the Society of Jesus must be reclaimed and retold in the official discourse on the history and development of Jesuit education. They turn to Decree 14 from the Jesuits’ 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation, “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in the

Church and Civil Society,” as further reason for Jesuits to take seriously the contributions of women in their historical development, that indeed, the inclusion of women’s stories and acknowledgement of their involvement is critical to making contemporary contexts of Jesuit education more inclusive. They conclude that “Jesuits and feminists can work together toward greater inclusion of women at every level, including in relating the ‘history’ of the Society of Jesus,”<sup>199</sup> and that this is how the Society of Jesus may move toward greater and more authentic solidarity with women.

Our history of Jesuit education must also take into account the historical factors that limited and suppressed women’s full equality as persons in the church and civil society systematically over the past several centuries. Be these restrictions economic, political, religious or otherwise—they have come in many forms—state and church sponsored treatises, laws, teachings and papal bulls officially codified and lent legitimacy to the unequal treatment of women and relegated women to supporting roles in the patriarchal and clerical hierarchy. Recovering herstory requires us to name and recognize the systemic decisions that awarded economic, political and other advantages to men while denying women the same, and admit that these misogynist symbols and images remain embedded in the Exercises themselves. Doing so enables us to reflect critically on the vestiges of those systematic decisions that continue to oppress women and other marginalized groups.

Not only does the history of Jesuit education need to be contextualized with a feminist lens, the Spiritual Exercises must also be presented to university faculty and staff

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<sup>199</sup> Margo J. Heydt and Sarah J. Melcher, “Reflections from an Ignatian Pilgrimage,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education*, edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), 50.

with explicit reference to this context. If presented without any nuance or explanation of the historical and theological context in which they were developed, and without a critical analysis of why the Medieval and Reformation-era theology and ideologies deserve to be challenged given what we know today, we risk perpetuating the same subjugation and oppression of women and marginalized groups we seek to end. Earlier I discussed the “both/and” approach of Ignatius that a careful reading of his life reveals. I suggest that we apply a both/and approach to discussing the history and current reality and the use of the Exercises in Jesuit education today. Rather than presenting Jesuit education and the Exercises in hagiographic or otherwise glorified terms, we should recognize the inherent flaws and injustices built into the system itself. Jesuit education and the Exercises are neither all good nor all bad. They are neither the answer to social justice nor its enemy. They are somewhere in between, and by exploring the areas of tension, particularly the tensions between Jesuit education, the Exercises, and feminism, we can engage in the work of justice more creatively and effectively.

Leaders at Jesuit universities have an opportunity to reinsert female figures and feminist critique into the official history of Jesuit education during professional development and formation programs. There are many resources available to do so.<sup>200</sup> A central aspect of the story is the role the Spiritual Exercises played in facilitating the

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<sup>200</sup> Excellent resources include Gemma Simmonds, “Women Jesuits?” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Dreyer, “‘Do as I do, not as I say:’ The Pedagogy of Action,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education*, edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka and Elizabeth A. Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), and Margo J. Heydt and Sarah J. Melcher, “Reflections from an Ignatian Pilgrimage” in the same volume; Catherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2001), 25–47; Lisa Fullam, “Juana, S.J.: The Past (and Future?) Status of Women in the Society of Jesus,” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 31, no. 5 (November 1999); and Amalee Meehan, “Partners in Ministry: The Role of Women in Jesuit Education,” in *America*, (May 12, 2008), 22–24.

collaboration between Ignatius, the later Jesuits, and women. Ignatius' shared reflection on the Exercises and other spiritual matters with women catalyzed a degree of collaboration that challenged the cultural stereotypes and gender-based limitations of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Reflection on the Exercises, and how the Exercises prompt men and women to act in certain ways, can provide clues to moving toward greater equity and inclusion in our current educational contexts.

We must also explore the reasons why this change might be difficult. Heydt and Melcher warn, "our research indicates... that when individual Jesuits take that brave step to truly align with women in solidarity, trouble tends to brew for them and the women themselves or the history of their roles is again omitted."<sup>201</sup> Given the substantial amount of information about the female actors in Ignatius' life and the early society, it is worthwhile to ask why women are still excluded from the official narrative. One response might be that while the relationship of the early male Jesuits and their female colleagues was symbiotic in certain ways, the benefits were distributed disproportionately. While some women in partnership with Ignatius had the opportunity to engage in work and ministry that they were otherwise denied, women were not permitted to join the Society as equal members, to share ownership of the Jesuit properties and institutions in which they had invested, or to establish religious orders for themselves that granted them the same apostolic freedoms as male religious. In that way they were not equal beneficiaries of the fruits of their labor. A disproportionate amount of credit goes to the Jesuits for work that was shared. The privileges and opportunities assigned to one gender or class of persons necessarily has an impact on another. Through erasure from official history,

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<sup>201</sup> Heydt and Melcher, 52.

women are denied an equal share of the credit for their investment in early Jesuit works. To correct the history would require a reallocation of the credit and benefits, which would prompt disruptive questions about women's equal access to positions of influence in church and society today. Certain groups benefit from holding a hallowed place in history. To question their autonomy and their exclusivist claims to success has the potential to unsettle their current standing in church, society, and the academy today, questions that raise fear and anxiety for those benefiting from the current oppressive system.

Additionally, as Dreyer notes, "we know that cultural and ecclesial misogyny are not only perpetrated from outside but also interiorized by women."<sup>202</sup> Women are socialized to keep silent and protect the systems that oppress them. Misogynistic myths, symbols, and stories are cemented into the foundation of the church and remain fixed in our lexicon and theological imaginations. Women are taught to question themselves from birth and rewarded as they age for their successful acquiescence to the status quo. Recognizing women's own internalized justifications for their oppression, and recognizing when these biases are blocking free choice and movement, is one element of the process of recovering herstory.

There are significant challenges to reclaiming herstory in the official history of Jesuit education. There are reasons it is not being done. However, those who have a podium from which to tell the story of the foundations of the Society have an obligation to remember, reclaim, and amplify the stories of the women who were there. Doing so is a subversive act, but one that is required if we are to be honest about our commitment to

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 33.

the stated mission of providing just, equitable, and inclusive education. One way to move through some of these obstacles could be going back to the tools provided by the Exercises.

The Spiritual Exercises specifically were an instrument for male/female relationship and cooperation for Ignatius and Jesuits after him. We know that Ignatius was supported by and influenced by women in his ministry. The Spiritual Exercises were a process and a means through which that collaboration happened and continues. Through the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius became free to form relationships with women that were beyond the norm of his time. It was in part through the Exercises that women responded with passionate energy and resolve to serve the church and society. For some women, the Exercises are an experience of remembering the ways God has spoken to them through their lives as beloved and good, before the church and society taught them otherwise. The Exercises can be a process of remembering one's worth, dignity, confidence, power, and passion, and knowing again that one is beloved of God regardless of social and ecclesial messages to the contrary.

The Spiritual Exercises historically had an effect on women and men that stirred them to challenge the gender-based social and ecclesial constraints of their era. The Exercises set a course for a radical reimagining of the spiritual and apostolic work of men and women together, further fueling their attempts at collaboration. The social and ecclesial restraints against women's full and equal participation in the church and in religious orders including the Society of Jesus remain formidable, but the Exercises provide a pathway forward that was relevant then and remains so today.

Recovering and restoring the names and stories of the women in the life and work of Ignatius changes our perception of the Society of Jesus as a whole. Inserting female figures and images into the traditional montage of all-male bodies opens up a new understanding of the complex and intertwined relationships out of which Ignatius and the early Society grew and developed. Like any person, Ignatius was a product of the love and support of many people. Like any institution, the Society of Jesus was formed within and through an organized network of political, economic, social, and religious factors in which women played a role. The benefits were mutual. Writes Elizabeth Dreyer, “women benefited from their Jesuit connections ministerially and spiritually as well as personally. Ignatius and the Jesuits benefited through conversation, friendship, and donations of money, property, and influence necessary to create the Jesuit educational empire.”<sup>203</sup> Recognizing the interconnectivity of all of the actors in the early life of Ignatius and the Society moves us beyond simplistic images of Ignatius the solitary hero to a more complex and historically accurate portrayal of a human being who worked in relationship with a community of people, including women.

Looking at the life of Ignatius through a feminist lens influences our consideration of male and female roles in church and society today. As Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert suggest, it is critical to recover the stories and influence of these women in order to form right relationships for mission today,<sup>204</sup> particularly if Jesuit universities seek to build communities of equity and inclusion. When women’s stories are excluded from official institutional history, women themselves are rendered invisible and irrelevant, an illusion

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<sup>203</sup> Dreyer, 35.

<sup>204</sup> Dyckman et al., 46.



that perpetuates the myth of male power, independence and superiority. Other minority and marginalized persons are likewise outcast and overlooked, their marginalization justified by the myth of one dominant social group operating successfully and independently throughout history. Rather, the inclusion of women in the official narrative of Jesuit history allows contemporary listeners to hear the history of the Society not as a tale about male self-determination, but as an example of what can happen when a complex community of actors consciously and actively seek to align themselves with God's call to improve their world. It becomes a tale of flourishing in community, rather than flourishing apart. It challenges conventional notions of male clerical superiority and independence. Women partner with Jesuits and Jesuit institutions today by contributing their money, labor, expertise, connections, companionship, and children to the work of the Society. Women's involvement and resources are vital to the maintenance and continuation of the Jesuit order and its institutions: indeed, its very mission. Reclaiming women's place in the history of Jesuit education is a vital step toward establishing diverse communities of inclusion and justice today.

Shared reflection on the Exercises is one pathway for achieving the goals of feminism, namely, to work against systems of alienation, oppression, poverty, violence, and death that harm many in order to place power in the hands of a few. We can see this trend historically in certain examples in the life of Ignatius when he partnered with women in unprecedented (or at least novel) ways. Reflection on the Exercises and spiritual conversation was an important way through which this happened and remains a pathway for collaboration in our current context.

## 2) *Feminist Methodology for Sharing the Exercises with Non-Christian Colleagues*

Among the significant questions for Jesuit education today is, how do we share Ignatian spirituality, and specifically the Spiritual Exercises, with faculty and staff colleagues who are from many spiritual and religious traditions other than Christianity? Jesuit universities use the SE as a tool for mission formation for faculty and staff, but we ask how should this be done in a pluralistic, multi-religious, and multi-spiritual context in a way that is appropriate, hospitable, and mutually beneficial with colleagues who are Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, spiritual, or atheist. Is it even appropriate to do so? My thesis in this dissertation is that the Spiritual Exercises have the potential to open new pathways for partnership between Jesuits and women that can move Jesuit universities to a deeper engagement with social justice. I extend that argument here to suggest that the Exercises can be likewise be used as a tool for building partnerships across faith groups by using insights gained through feminist methodologies of interfaith dialogue. While my overarching question is how to adapt the Exercises to multi-religious contexts, for this portion of my dissertation, I will focus primarily on the opportunities for sharing the Exercises with Muslim colleagues. Some of my conclusions may have applicability for other religious groups, but the majority of the examples and sources I investigate for this paper will focus on the challenges and opportunities specifically between the Exercises and Islam.

Firstly, I will discuss contributions from feminist theological scholarship including the work of Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Catherine Cornille, and M. Shawn Copeland that can be applied to the question of how to present and share the Exercises in

multi-religious contexts. They are (1) hybridity, (2) motherhood as metaphor, (3) doctrinal humility, and (4) conversation and hospitality. Second, there are aspects within the Exercises that lend themselves to sharing across religious identities. These are (1) the First Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation to Attain Love, (2) annotation 15, (3) annotation 18, and (4) the function of Mary. In conclusion, I will propose opportunities I see in using the Exercises specifically to engage in diversity and inclusion efforts at Jesuit universities today.

In 2015, the University of San Francisco hosted a national conference on the topic of “Islam at Jesuit Colleges and Universities,” initiated and organized by Aysha Hidayatullah, faculty member in the department of theology and religious studies.<sup>205</sup> Two presenters at the conference spoke about the opportunities for meaningful dialogue on faith between Muslim and Christian colleagues. Umeyye Isra Yazicioglu, associate professor of Islamic Studies at St. Joseph’s University, said that Christians and Muslims at Jesuit universities have an opportunity to “talk about God in a way that goes beyond clichés or mere claims, and to bring about what it means to be a believing human being—how belief connects to the transcendent and how it can shape our perception of ourselves, of the world and of how we act in the world.”<sup>206</sup> She notes that the Jesuit motto *ad majorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God) rings true to the Muslim call *Allahu Akbar* (God is greater). John Borelli suggested that specifically because of what he calls

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<sup>205</sup> The conference took place April 10-11, 2015 in San Francisco, CA. Conference papers have been published in *Islam at Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, edited by Aysha Hidayatullah and Erin Brigham, Volume 4 of the Lane Center Series, University of San Francisco Press, 2016.

<sup>206</sup> Isra Yazicioglu, “The Challenge and the Promise of Teaching Islam at a Jesuit University,” in *Islam at Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, eds. Aysha Hidayatullah and Erin Brigham (San Francisco: University of San Francisco Press, 2016), 33.

the “Ignatian charism for dialogue,” Jesuit universities are well positioned to be “religious interreligiously” and that a “continuing emphasis on formation in Ignatian spirituality and spiritual practice” is key to continuing this commitment.<sup>207</sup> Borelli argues that the Ignatian charism for dialogue is fostered in Jesuit universities because of the Ignatian approach to education that includes not only scholarship but also spiritual formation, pastoral practice, friendship, and communication. All of these commitments taken together enable Jesuit universities to be places of authentic progress toward interreligious understanding, justice, peace and collaboration.

The use of feminist theology for interreligious dialogue and for sharing the Spiritual Exercises serves several purposes. For one, it is practical because feminist theology does provide some very concrete and useful tools to thinking and communicating the function of the Exercises to faculty and staff from non-Christian traditions who are deeply committed to the mission of Jesuit education. But more importantly, feminist theology has the opportunity to move Jesuit universities to a deeper engagement with social justice. Feminist theology focuses on the systematic analysis of wo/men struggling to change the patri-kyriarchal structures of oppression that exist in the church and society.<sup>208</sup> Feminist scholarship attempts to critique, deconstruct, and rebuild that system so that all people can flourish to their fullest potential. As mentioned earlier, Hill Fletcher points out that feminist theology has an advocacy agenda in that it is

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<sup>207</sup> John Borelli, “Jesuit History, Mission and Identity: Jesuits and the Interreligious Commitments of Vatican II,” in *Islam at Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, eds. Aysha Hidayatullah and Erin Brigham (San Francisco: University of San Francisco Press, 2016), 19–20.

<sup>208</sup> These definitions from feminist theology are taken from Jeannine Hill Fletcher’s synopsis in *Motherhood as Metaphor*, (New York: Fordham, 2013), 7.

concerned not only with including women's experiences in theological discourse, but also in uprooting systems and institutions that oppress women and other marginalized groups.

The same is true for Jesuit education. Jesuit education is also concerned with solidarity and advocacy with the poor and marginalized for the purpose of fashioning a more just and humane world where systems of oppression are overturned. In this way, Jesuit education and feminist theology have something in common. Jesuit education, like feminist theology, seeks to critique, dismantle and rebuild the systems that oppress the poor, and create opportunities throughout society where the common good and integral human development of all is the priority. Therefore, feminist theological methodology is an appropriate source for developing an Ignatian charism for dialogue and spiritual formation.

One of the theories of feminist theology is the notion of human identity as hybrid rather than monolithic. Jeannine Hill Fletcher discusses the need to replace "container-construction" of religious identity with hybridity. She writes, "a feminist analysis of human identity, as multifaceted and intrinsically hybrid provides a framework for structuring an engagement across different religious visions that can be mutually enriching."<sup>209</sup> She continues, "the encounter with the 'other' is neither one of total sameness nor unbridgeable difference, but the encounter and exchange is quite unpredictable. The preconceptions of what "Buddhist thought" or "Christian doctrine" means are shattered by actual conversations between particular Buddhists and particular Christians whose own understanding and interpretations of the thought and doctrine of

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<sup>209</sup> Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), xi.

their tradition varies widely.<sup>210</sup> Hybridity allows one to recognize the multiple dimensions of a human person—gender, sexuality, status, etc.—and consider the ways our multiple identities interact with one another in prayer and worship, to provide nuances to our religious identities.

Such a formulation of individual identity as hybrid and intersectional moves beyond the binary categories of same or different, of either/or, to a more holistic and subjective view of the human person and human experience. This holistic and multifaceted view of the human person also moves beyond exclusivist claims of any one religion, and allows a greater openness to the many ways the sacred is experienced and shared by diverse individuals. Hill Fletcher explains that “exclusivist patterns” which come from a “container-construction” of religious identity, contribute to certain groups making objective judgments about another group, or assigning negative status to groups other than one’s one, which prevents genuine dialogue.<sup>211</sup> When sharing the Spiritual Exercises with colleagues, a good spiritual director would recognize the many interlocking identities and experiences that make up the individual seeking spiritual accompaniment. No one is defined simply as being “Catholic” or “Muslim,” nor is there simply one way to define those characterizations. Therefore, a starting point for sharing the Exercises is to recognize the hybrid and intersectional identities of colleagues and the ways in which those interlocking identities affect one’s life and spiritual experiences. One may be Muslim or Catholic, but there are myriad ways in which his or her experience as a Muslim or Catholic takes shape and is manifest in one’s religious and

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 55.

spiritual experience. One's religious experience is informed also by his or her gender, class, education level, childhood context, sexuality, race, ethnicity and many other aspects of one's identity. Letting go of any particular assumptions about a person's spiritual experiences or particular spiritual quest is a good starting point for thinking about how the Exercises might be shared with anyone on our campuses.

Hill Fletcher's more recent book on interreligious dialogue looks at motherhood as a framework for theological anthropology that points toward the relationality and particularity of each person, as well as the common destiny of the human experience toward co-creating, with God, communities centered in justice. She argues that motherhood is a metaphor taken from women's lived experience which has applicability across all genders and roles. She writes, "if all human persons take on the role of mothering—as men and women, as lesbian, gay, and heterosexual persons, as single parents, celibate religious, or as partners in contractual and sacred partnerships—it is truly *metaphor* of the human condition in which we bring others interrelatedly to life and sustain them."<sup>212</sup> Motherhood as a metaphor for understanding human experience and the nature of the human person, recognizes the relationality of all people across genders, life experiences, communities and religious identities. Recognizing the relationality of human experience compels us to understand that "human beings are embedded in networks of relationality," where care, concern, nurturing and love are extended and expressed in multiple ways, ways as multiple and diverse as the human experience itself. Finally, motherhood as a metaphor for human experience moves us to extend our love and

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<sup>212</sup> Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Motherhood as Metaphor: Engendering Interreligious Dialogue*, (New York: Fordham, 2013), 51.

concern beyond our immediate communities to the larger human family. Hill Fletcher writes:

A theological anthropology rooted in the experience of ‘mothering’ affirms the human condition as one constituted by relationships of care and responsibility. We are not isolated subjects making our way through the world. We are dependent and depended on. And, further, we thrive and survive together. At the same time, the multiplicity inherent in the subject-position ‘mother’ indicates that ‘we’ are not all reducible to the ‘same.’ Our internal multiplicity reminds us of the dynamic and shifting ways we are constituted in a wide variety of networks of care. The metaphor of motherhood, finally brings us back to a particularity that reminds us that the ‘human condition’ is that we are irreducibly particular while inextricably relational. In our multiple and shifting relations, we find a new sense of ‘self’ and new possibilities for our common future.<sup>213</sup>

Motherhood as metaphor, and its corresponding concept of the relationality of human experience, changes the way we might approach giving the Exercises to colleagues. Rather than only an individual experience, the Exercises in the context of Jesuit educational institutions might be seen as also communal experiences, which impact the institution as a whole. Recognizing the relationality of all persons allows one to see that individuals are connected and formed in communities, and that each person discovers his or her mission and purpose through community, including through interreligious community. Motherhood as a metaphor for human experience recognizes the multiple stories that make up our lives, and points toward an attentiveness to those stories as pathways to experience the sacred through community, toward the horizon of God, who defies narrow definitions and who wills human freedom and flourishing. Hill Fletcher writes, “if we believe that our very selves are shaped in distinctive economies of

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 74.



knowledge, we see that the story of our interreligious context and the stories of our Christian heritage shape us as hybrid selves with a multiplicity of stories. We are invited to see the story of our Christian heritage as one that must be mobilized toward a creativity that resists the damaging constraints of inequality and injustice, of racial and religious discrimination and the dehumanizations that have been grounded in sexual difference. We might mobilize these stories anew toward interreligious solidarity that feeds not only our selves but all of others.”<sup>214</sup> Hill Fletcher’s work is useful for connecting the Exercises to the Jesuit educational mission for justice in interreligious contexts. The metaphor of motherhood invites new understandings of God’s love and activity for and in the world. Many persons know from the experience of being mothered, whether by our biological mothers, a mentor, a caring friend, or a partner, that love can be experienced as limitless. Mothering love points to a limitless source of love which is God. The Spiritual Exercises are about experiencing the love of God and seeing oneself as a co-creator with God. The metaphor of motherhood can help individuals engaged in the SE move beyond limited and limiting frames for God (for example, God versus Allah) and the Other (regardless of faith or religious background), and toward a stronger commitment to justice and equality.

Catherine Cornille discusses the importance of humility as a precondition for interreligious dialogue. She states:

Dialogue between religions requires humility not only toward the other religion, but also toward—or rather about—one’s own religious tradition. Openness and receptivity presupposes humble recognition of the constant limitation and therefore endless perfectibility of one’s own religious understanding of the truth. This also includes recognition of the partial and

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 213.

finite nature of the ways in which ultimate truth has been grasped and expressed in the teachings and practices of one's own tradition.<sup>215</sup>

Cornille calls this “epistemic or doctrinal” humility. Cornille names Christian humility specifically as a prerequisite for authentic dialogue, and a particular challenge, since “the Christian tradition is more likely to be associated with arrogance and triumphalism than with an attitude of humility.”<sup>216</sup> However, Cornille reminds readers that the virtue of humility has deep roots in the Christian tradition, and uses Ignatius of Loyola as an example of one whose spiritual writings highlight the centrality of this virtue. For Ignatius, humility had to do with being humble before God so that one could devote one's life entirely to service of God through Christ.<sup>217</sup> It was a necessary step before one could make an election, or significant life choice, which occurs in week two of the Exercises. The way in which Ignatius emphasizes humility in the Exercises could be extended to a posture of doctrinal humility in the way in which the Exercises are shared in multifaith contexts like US Jesuit universities today.

While it is true that Ignatius emphasizes humility before God in the Exercises, the historical context of Ignatius and the Exercises did not promote the doctrinal humility of which Cornille speaks. Ignatius and the Exercises were formed and developed in the Renaissance, Reformation, and Crusade era which perpetuated white, Western, male

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<sup>215</sup> Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, (New York: Crossroads, 2008), 10.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>217</sup> Ignatius discusses the “Three Ways of Being Humble” (Exx. 165–168) in week two of the Spiritual Exercises which comes before one makes an election. For Ignatius, the stages of humility involve one's detachment from desires of wealth or poverty, honor or dishonor, so that one may be completely reliant on God through service to Christ.

hierarchies, and systematically oppressed and excluded women, people of color, and other groups from access to equality in the name of Christianity. By acknowledging this part of the story, we can be aware of the ways in which our institutions still (in some cases unknowingly) perpetuate white and male privileged culture to the exclusion of women and other marginalized groups. We can be mindful of challenging and deconstructing this paradigm, and presenting new frames for incorporating spirituality into education. Cornille puts it this way: “integration of historical consciousness within Christian self-understanding has thus resulted in a greater humility, if not with regard to the meaning of doctrines, at least with regard to the way they are expressed in particular time and culture. Perhaps this is already an opening for genuine dialogue with other religions. Recognition of the particularity of the expression of Christian faith within Western culture entails an imperative to reformulate Christian teachings into categories and symbols integral to other cultural contexts.”<sup>218</sup> We know that the origins of empire theology in Christianity raise problems for Muslims. Mahamoud Ayoub discusses Muslim view of Christian missionaries, crusades & orientalism as enacted through education. He writes, “the attitude of Western colonizers, missionaries, and orientalist toward Muslims and their faith was one of disdain and insensitive paternalism” and that some Muslim scholars “see the real and primary aim of missionaries to be the total abolition of all religions other than Christianity.”<sup>219</sup> We have to be aware and cognizant of

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<sup>218</sup> Cornille, 34.

<sup>219</sup> Mahmoud Ayoub, “Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict,” in *A Muslim View of Christianity*, ed. Irfan Omar, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 51–52.

ways that Christian education has been misappropriated historically and used as a tool for oppression and violence rather than for liberation and inclusion.

Aysha Hidayatullah points out that this concern with indoctrination based on the historical precedent of Western Christian colonialism affects Muslim women in a particular way. Some Muslim women see Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogue as an effort of the West to co-opt Muslim women for their own purposes, and to promote the interests of the Western state and empire. Muslim women have been used as the gateway to Muslim thought and orthodoxy by both Muslims and non-Muslims. There is an awareness on the part of Muslim women of the danger of being coopted by interreligious dialogue. Hidayatullah explains, “in drawing attention to the concerns they share with Jewish and Christian women, Muslim women run the risk of being roped into neoconservative state platforms aimed at promoting the spread of so-called moderate forms of Islam deemed least likely to challenge the United States’ global ascendancy and branding all other forms of Islam as ‘fundamentalist’ and dangerous.”<sup>220</sup> In this way, Islam is viewed as either “good” Islam or “bad” Islam: good if it seems amenable to democracy and American ideals, bad if it is threatening to American ideals (which, despite their facial inclusiveness, are used to promote American hegemony and abuse of power globally). Muslim women in particular have been exploited by both sides, on the one hand, as evidence supporting a traditional Muslim way of life, and on the other hand, as a target for Western feminist ideals.

Being aware of and explicitly naming the way Christianity has been used historically to subvert and oppress other faiths, and specifically the way Muslim women

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<sup>220</sup> Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur’an*, (New York: Oxford, 2014), 60.

have been threatened and coopted by efforts at interfaith dialogue, is important to address in the context of contemporary Jesuit education and in particular when introducing the Exercises. A posture of humility is critical for this, and fundamentally necessary if Ignatian spirituality will have any long-term standing in pluralistic and multicultural institutions. I raised this point above when I argued that providing the historical context of the Exercises is necessary when presenting the program to Jesuit university personnel today. Acknowledging the context is critical for engaging, critiquing and applying the Spiritual Exercises in a pluralistic setting.

Viewing the Exercises as conversation between two persons reframes the experience of directing the Exercises from one that is about the “formation” or “conversion” of one person at the hands of another, to that of a mutually beneficial exchange between two persons both of whom are enriched by the experience. Doctrinal humility allows for genuine conversation to take place. Shawn Copeland argues that genuine conversation in Jesuit institutions (historically and today) is critical to building communities of solidarity and justice. Copeland writes:

Jesuit education draws inspiration from Ignatius’s penchant for and insistence on conversation. Conversation requires hospitality, openness, testing, revision, and discovery. Genuine conversation may lead as well to the disruption of conventional opinion, to encounter with an “other” who may change us radically. Genuine conversation lays the ground for solidarity and justice.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, “Race, Class and Gender in Jesuit and Feminist Education,” in *Jesuit and Feminist Education: Intersections in Teaching and Learning for the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Jocelyn M. Borczyk and Elizabeth A. Petrino (New York: Fordham, 2012), 130.

If presented as conversation, the SE can present opportunities for a dialogic process of shared reflection on our prayer lives and how they inform our shared mission in Jesuit education leading to stronger communities more firmly rooted in social justice. However, a stance of doctrinal humility is required for this conversation to take place, and doctrinal humility requires shedding any exclusivist claims about Christianity. This may seem challenging given the ways in which Jesuit universities are concerned with preserving their Catholic identity.

In a well-received book on the mission and identity of Ignatian education, John Haughey states that the purpose of Jesuit universities is to “make wholes” by extending hospitality to the other. Catherine Cornille likewise uses hospitality as a metaphor for interreligious dialogue. Haughey discusses the effort of “making whole” as one of integration of ideas, interdisciplinary approaches to learning and discovery, and welcoming persons of all faiths and ideological backgrounds to a table of collaboration, creativity and attention to the pressing needs of the world. Haughey argues that this effort accords with the Gospel parables, which teach that “it is through our interactions with and reactions to those different from us that we learn to see more clearly who we are, and what we believe.”<sup>222</sup> Haughey makes the point that hospitality and making wholes is the best way to understand Catholic identity. Note that this understanding of Catholic identity doesn’t make any exclusivist claims to the superiority of Christianity or Catholicism over other religions. Instead, this understanding of Catholic identity allows all perspectives in to dialogue and integration of multiple ways of knowing and learning together. In the spirit and practice of genuine hospitality, the Exercises can be shared as an invitation to

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<sup>222</sup> John Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?* (Washington, DC: Georgetown, 2009), 34.

mutual encounter with the divine that has a transformative effect on individuals and the university community by facilitating collaboration and faith sharing at a level of depth and meaning that transcends specific religious categories of singular identity.

In conclusion to this section, feminist theology of interfaith dialogue presents several methodologies that are useful to sharing the Exercises in the context of Jesuit education with colleagues of multiple faith traditions, Christian, Muslim and otherwise. I have looked at four, namely: hybridity, mother-metaphor, doctrinal humility, and hospitality/conversation. Approaching and inviting colleagues to experience the Exercises with these virtues and methodologies in mind would lead Jesuit universities closer to a mission of solidarity and justice.

Practically speaking, I acknowledge that there are several aspects of the traditional Spiritual Exercises that promote a distinctively Christian worldview and spirituality. However, the Exercises are shared today in endlessly adaptive ways. Indeed, the Exercises have always been adapted for specific individuals. John Padburg and Philip Endean have written that Ignatius never wanted directories, that is, manuals guiding spiritual directors on how to give the Exercises.<sup>233</sup> Directories developed after he died; however, questions about how to give the Exercises and what adaptations are appropriate have been ongoing for Jesuits since Ignatius' time. There are several points that can be

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<sup>233</sup> In an editor's note in an issue of "Studies in Jesuit Spirituality," John Padburg refers to the controversy surrounding the use of directories and mentions an article by Philip Endean in *The Way* in which Endean discusses the historic tension for Jesuits in being true to the text that Ignatius wrote, versus attending to the reaction the Exercises inspire in retreatants. Padburg states, "the struggle about how the Exercises should be used began early, and is not necessarily one that must be resolved; rather it is the hallmark of any Christian practice." See John Padburg, "Of all things..." in *Studies*, 31/5 (November 1999), iv and Philip Endean, "Transitions and Controls in Early Ignatian Retreats: The Legacy of the Directories", *The Way Supplement*, 95 (Summer 1999), 116–126.

used to guide the approach of sharing the Exercises non-Christian faiths, and particularly Muslims. Given the limited scope of this paper, I will briefly attend to four.

First, the First Principle and Foundation (Exx. 23) and the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx. 230–237) are, one could argue, the foundational portions of the Exercises. They are the beginning and end, the bookends, so to speak, and neither is exclusively Christian. They are broad in language, symbolism and theology of the divine and the ways in which the sacred is active in human life and experience. They go beyond most mainstream Christian concepts of the holy, and thus provide expansive and expanding opportunities for reflection that transcend specific religious affiliations.

Secondly, annotation 15 (Exx. 15) specifies that the spiritual director must remember that the Creator deals directly with the person making the Exercises, and never get in the way of that direct communication. One interpretation of annotation 15, is that for the Muslim (or Jewish, or Buddhist, or non-believing, etc.) person engaging in the Exercises, God speaks and works with that person through his or her faith and belief system regardless of what it is. Third, annotation 18 (Exx. 18) offers the possibility that the Exercises can focus entirely on the first week if that is preferable and more amenable to the directee. This is a good option for non-Christian persons as the first week focuses primarily on the individual's relationship with God, rather than getting into the person of Jesus. Finally, the person of Mary serves as a bridge between Christian and Muslim faiths. Mary is considered an "exalted figure" in the Qur'an, according to Borelli and Fitzgerald. They warn against overstating the similarities, but argue that even though there are differences in Christianity and Islam in the approach to Mary, "for Islam, Jesus and Mary are united



in the single sign of God's creative power."<sup>224</sup> The meditations on Mary may present possibilities for a Muslim person to find religious meaning through the Exercises.

Earlier in chapter 5, I note that in a survey of eighty-four female faculty and staff members at Jesuit universities across the country who have done the Exercises, none of the participants identified as Muslim. I wonder if the Exercises are being shared with our Muslim faculty and staff at all, whether our Muslim colleagues feel invited to do the Exercises, and how we can extend the invitation in a spirit of doctrinal humility, hospitality and a shared mission for doing justice in the world. To do so would enable faculty, staff and leadership at Jesuit universities to reflect more deeply on our individual and collective barriers to authentic dialogue with others, barriers which limit our ability to build inclusive communities. To put it another way, the Exercises are an instrument for Jesuit universities who wish to build more diverse and inclusive learning communities. Borrowing from feminist theology of interfaith dialogue, hybridity and intersectionality can open up new ways of using the SE to recognize excluded individuals and groups within the University community. Dialogue and conversation on individuals' diverse experiences with the Exercises can generate new and creative ideas on inclusion at the institution.

Feminist theory in interreligious dialogue complicates easy answers. Concepts like intersectionality, doctrinal humility, pluralism, and dynamic epistemology invite us into see the dissonance, the tensions inherent in the experiences, symbolism and official theological discourse of religions. At the same time, feminist theology provides us with some methodologies that can make the conversations more substantial, such has

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<sup>224</sup> Michael Fitzgerald and John Borelli. *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 158.

hybridity, using motherhood as a metaphor for human and divine activity in the world, conversation and hospitality. These same methodologies are applicable to the context of sharing the Spiritual Exercises in Jesuit educational settings with faculty and staff members of multiple religious traditions.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

My study contributes to conversations at the intersection of Ignatian spirituality, feminist theology, and the mission of Jesuit higher education by offering a theological analysis of personal narratives by female faculty and staff at US Jesuit universities on their experiences with the Spiritual Exercises to consider how these experiential movements contribute new insights to the Jesuit educational mission for social justice and inclusion. Women's experiences with the Exercises add revelatory material from which to construct a feminist theology of Jesuit education that moves universities toward deeper and more effective engagement with social justice. Theological reflection on the Exercises advances the shared goals of Jesuit education and feminism, namely to deconstruct social systems that alienate and oppress, causing poverty, violence and death for many in exchange for the power and privilege of some, and to build more just and inclusive learning communities that promote the common good.

I provide a historical analysis of the context from which Ignatius, the Exercises and the Society of Jesus emerged, paying special attention to the role of women during this Renaissance and Reformation period. I make the case that women were central to Ignatius' understanding of his life, his vocation, and the Exercises themselves. I point to three historical examples of the tension and opportunities that exist between Jesuit and women that point to new directions for partnership and collaboration today, namely Isabel Roser, Mary Ward, and Decree 14 at the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation. My dissertation proposes that a feminist historical analysis of the history of Ignatius and the

Society reveals that women provided essential scaffolding to bolster Ignatius' identity and vocation, and likewise to establish and contribute to the early establishment and pastoral work of the Society despite significant and deeply rooted social, cultural and ecclesial restraints against women at the time. Through the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius became free to form relationships with women that were beyond the norm of his time. It was in part through the Exercises that women responded with passionate energy and resolve to serve the church and society.

The Exercises have been a tool for individual and corporate decision-making in Jesuit institutions since the time of Ignatius, therefore, are a valid means for institutional reflection today. I collected data from 50 women who had done the Exercises across 17 Jesuit universities in the US through an electronic survey and in-person interviews. With a feminist and Ignatian hermeneutical lens, I analyzed and connected the experiential movements of the Exercises reported to me by my research subjects to themes from contemporary feminist theology to offer new ways to frame and engage Jesuit educational mission. I focused on the theological themes of Mary, imago Dei, self-worth, vocation, crucifixion and the beloved community. My project is feminist because I critique hierarchical and patriarchal systems of oppression that limit women's full and equal participation in the church and society. My project is Ignatian because I employ the Ignatian pedagogical tool of the *circle of praxis*, beginning with lived experience (in this case women's experience with the Exercises), reflecting on that experience, providing theological analysis, then making suggestions for concrete action in the context of Jesuit education. My study shows that women report revelatory prayer experiences through which they encounter a God who recognizes them as beloved and good, despite social,

theological and ecclesial messages to the contrary, therefore providing a starting point for critical reflection on ways in which Jesuit universities may or may not perpetuate systems and symbols of female oppression and social injustice.

Ignatian spirituality is at the root of the mission of social justice in Jesuit educational contexts, therefore attention to spiritual experience is central to understanding and actualizing mission. The Spiritual Exercises are directed toward action in the world. Likewise, mission is about movement and forward momentum; mission is not a fixed concept or identity statement. In the case of the Exercises in the context of Jesuit universities, there is the possibility of spirituality affecting individual and collective action toward justice. Individually, the Exercises may illuminate personal biases and sinfulness, as well as point to individual gifts of courage and freedom. Collectively, the Exercises may have an effect on an institution by improving teaching, community relationships, and by prompting responses to social problems that stem from the collective wisdom of the beloved community rather than from the cultural mainstream. Reflection on the Exercises, particularly focused on how women and other marginalized groups experience the Exercises, has the potential to lead Jesuit universities to new levels of effective advocacy and action for justice and inclusion.

The poorest women of the world are in my view as I complete my study. A feminist theology of Jesuit education serves not only privileged and educated women of the US. A feminist theology of Jesuit education centers its attention on the poorest people of the world, those most marginalized by hierarchical, clerical and patriarchal systems that concentrate wealth and opportunity in the hands of a few to the detriment of the many. On March 8, 2017, International Women's Day, Arturo Sosa, S.J., Superior

General of the Society of Jesus, gave an address at the Vatican, titled “Stirring the Waters: Making the Impossible Possible.” He called for a “profound theology of women ... and an ecclesiology that includes women” that includes women’s voices and participation in the church. Sosa comments:

We Jesuits are deeply aware of the roles that women play in our ministries: lay and religious women serve as presidents and headmistresses, retreat center directors, teachers, and every possible role one can think of. ...But if we are honest, we acknowledge that the fullness of women’s participation in the church has not yet arrived.<sup>225</sup>

While scores of women have gone through the Spiritual Exercises at Jesuit universities, and women have worked alongside Jesuits throughout history, women’s experiences and insights have yet to be fully integrated into a renewed dialogue on Jesuit institutional mission. This study attempts to show that the Exercises are a tool for uncovering revelatory material from which to construct a feminist theology of Jesuit education, a theology that starts from women’s experiences, includes other marginalized groups, and enables Jesuit universities to more deeply engage the challenge of social justice.

My hope is that my dissertation might stimulate robust and critical conversations at Jesuit universities today around the theological assumptions and underpinnings of our current language and understanding of mission. I claim that the Exercises are one tool available to assist Jesuit universities in challenging inequities around race, gender, privilege, and power in our institutions and society, to get closer to the root causes of social injustice and lead to social action, and to more deeply understand and uncover our

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<sup>225</sup> Arturo Sosa, SJ, *Stirring the Waters*. Address at the Vatican. Accessed 1/18/18. <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/documents/Sosa-MakingtheImpossiblePossibleAddressonWomen2.pdf>

internal and external biases. Women's experiences can fill in critical lacunae in the vision and mission of Jesuit higher education, lacunae that prevent us from achieving our fullest potential as Jesuit apostolates. Now is an opportune time to gather the graces of those spiritual encounters—the countless conversations, retreats, prayer groups and epiphanies that have occurred at Jesuit universities—in order to bring them into the light and into our communal, public, and official discourse.

## Appendix 1

### Survey

Gathering the Graces: Women, the Spiritual Exercises and Jesuit Education  
Electronic Survey

By Julie Dowd, D.Min. (Candidate), Pacific School of Religion

#### Introduction

My name is Julie Dowd and I am a doctoral (D.Min.) candidate at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. I invite you to participate in research I am doing for my dissertation. I am investigating women's experiences of doing the *Spiritual Exercises* as faculty or staff members at U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities. My dissertation will be a theological, narrative reflection on women's stories and experiences with the Exercises in order to uncover new ways of discussing and understanding the mission of Jesuit higher education.

You can help further my research by participating in this survey. I have a set of questions to ask you, but I am also very open to hearing anything you'd like to tell me about your experience with the *Exercises* and the mission of your institution. The electronic survey may take up to 1 hour to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be giving the opportunity to contact me should you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview.

I encourage you to answer frankly and honestly. All answers are confidential. I have no way of tracking who submitted which survey as the survey software (Qualtrics) is not tracking names, IP addresses or location of respondents. Any personal identifying information of myself or my institution will be omitted. Any personal identifying information you share about yourself or your institution will be omitted. If there is anything you do not wish to answer, please feel free to skip to the next question.

#### Consent

By clicking yes below I voluntarily and with understanding consent to complete this survey as a participant in Julia Dowd's doctoral dissertation research on women's experiences of the *Spiritual Exercises* in Jesuit higher education. I understand that I am free to skip any question(s) and may terminate the survey /or withdraw from the research project at any time. I understand that the reporting of my participation in this study will be entirely anonymous and confidential. I understand that my quotes may be included in her dissertation to be published on the PSR website and possibly other publications, but all personal and institutional names and identifying characteristics will be kept confidential.

- Yes
- No



### Likert Scale Questions

- 1) How important were the following to your experience of the Exercises:  
(4 levels: Extremely Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important, N/A)

A book or guide. (Please name: )

A regular, daily prayer practice

A skilled spiritual director

A silent retreat

Having the opportunity to discuss and share the experience with colleagues

Another resource: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) Did you experience any of the following as a result of doing the Exercises:  
(5 levels: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A)

Improved the way I teach

Improved my research

Improved my service to my college/university

Made me feel more invested in my college/university

Improved my relationships with colleagues

Helped me make a personal decision of some importance

Helped me make a professional decision of some importance

Gave me a better understanding of the mission and purpose of Jesuit education

Enhanced my understanding of the mission of my college/university

Gave me a language to speak about the mission of my college/university

Inspired me to seek a promotion at my college/university

- 3) Do you see yourself as a leader at your institution?

Yes

No

If Yes:

- 4) Did your experience with the Exercises enhance or improve any of the following leadership characteristics for you personally:  
(5 levels: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A)

Communication skills  
Courage/Fearlessness  
Vision  
Empathy  
Compassion  
Equanimity in times of stress  
Emotional Intelligence  
Self-knowledge  
Comfort with ambiguity  
Embodying the Ignatian/Jesuit mission of my institution

### **Short Answer Questions**

Please answer as many of the questions below that you would like. If you choose to skip a question, that is fine.

1. Why did you choose to do the *Exercises*?
2. Please describe the experiences, movements or aspects of the *Exercises* that were the most meaningful and significant for you?
3. Research suggests that for some women, the experience of the *Exercises* is like “coming home to oneself” or “finding one’s voice.” In what ways do these phrases describe your experience? What other phrases might you use?
4. Were you discerning a particular decision when you did the *Exercises*? If so, did you gain clarity or insight into this decision?
5. After completing the *Exercises*, did anything change for you in your professional or personal life?
6. Through the *Exercises*, did you gain new insights or understanding into the Jesuit mission and identity of your college or university? Please describe.
7. Is there something else you would like to add that relates to your experience of the Exercises and the mission of Jesuit education?

### **Demographic Data**

1. Race/Ethnicity (Qualtrics Categories)
2. Education Level (One answer)
  - o Less than a high school diploma

- High school diploma
  - Some college
  - College degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctoral/professional/terminal degree
3. Age (One answer)
- Under 30
  - 30-39
  - 40-49
  - 50-59
  - 60-69
  - 70-79
  - 80 and above
4. Position/Role (All that apply)
- Staff
  - Faculty
    - Adjunct (or Part-Time)
    - Term/Clinical
    - Tenure-Track
    - Tenured
  - Senior Administration/Leadership Position (e.g. dean, VP, cabinet level)
  - Affiliate (e.g. affiliated organization consultant, community partner)
5. Years at your current institution
- 0-5
  - 5-10
  - 10-15
  - 15-20
  - 20-25
  - More than 25
6. Total number of years in Jesuit higher education
- 0-5
  - 5-10
  - 10-15
  - 15-20
  - 20-25
  - More than 25
7. Total number of years working in any Jesuit ministry/institution (not including your own education)
- 0-5
  - 5-10
  - 10-15

- 15-20
  - 20-25
  - More than 25
8. Did you attend a Jesuit school? (Check all that apply.)
- Elementary
  - High School
  - College
  - Graduate School
  - No
  - I attended some Catholic (non-Jesuit) school.
9. Religious Identity (if any)
- Atheist/Non-believer
  - Buddhist
  - Hindu
  - Jewish
  - Muslim
  - Orthodox
  - Protestant/Christian, non-Catholic
    - Baptist
    - Episcopal
    - Lutheran
    - Methodist
    - Nondenominational
    - Presbyterian
    - UCC
    - UU
    - Other
  - Roman Catholic
  - Other
10. In what format did you do the Exercises?
- 30-day retreat
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation Program (meeting regularly with a spiritual director over a course of several months)
  - Group
  - Other, please describe:

**Consent to Submit**

Thank you for taking the time and care to share your reflections with me about your experiences with the Exercises. Your responses are confidential. No personal names will be used in my final report. If you used the name of your university in any of your responses, I will be removing it from my final report.

Please click one of the following statements, and hit <Submit>. Contact information on the researcher will be provided on the following screen.

- I agree that my responses may be used in their entirety by the researcher Julie Dowd for her study *Gathering the Graces: Women, the Spiritual Exercises and Jesuit Education*.
- Please do not use my responses for your study. I choose to withdraw my responses and participation at this time.

### **Contact Information**

If you are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview by phone or in person and/or

if would like to contact me for any reason, please feel free to do so at:

Julie Dowd  
[dowd@usfca.edu](mailto:dowd@usfca.edu)  
(415) 269-6972

Thank you.

## Appendix 2

### Interview Protocol

1. Introductory
  - 1.1. Do you identify as having a religion? If so, what is it?
  - 1.2. Why did you choose to do the *Exercises*?
  - 1.3. Were there 2 or 3 movements or aspects to the Exercises that stand out for you as most significant? Can you describe the moment/movement?
    - 1.3.1. Why do you think these were meaningful for you?
  - 1.4. How important was your religious/faith background/identity in going through the Exercises? In what ways?
2. Personal and Professional Integration
  - 2.1. As a result of completing the *Spiritual Exercises*, did anything change for you in your work or your personal life?
  - 2.2. Through the *Exercises*, tell me about any experiences you had in gaining clarity about an academic or professional issue.
  - 2.3. What about clarity gained into any personal issues?
3. Women's Worth
  - 3.1. Research suggests (see Dyckman, Garvin, Liebert) that for some women, the experience of the *Exercises* is like "coming home to oneself" or "finding one's voice." In what ways do these phrases describe your experience? What other phrases might you use?
  - 3.2. Some women experience new insights into their self-worth as a result of the *Exercises*. Tell me about any ways that the notion of worth or self-worth came up for you in the experience.
4. Vocational Discernment
  - 4.1. Were you discerning a particular choice whether personal, professional or otherwise as you were going through the *Exercises*?
  - 4.2. Tell me about your sense of your vocation.
  - 4.3. In what ways is your vocation aligned with your current job? With the University mission?
  - 4.4. How did your experience of the *Exercises* change anything in terms of how you view or live out your vocation?
  - 4.5. What was the experience of the Elections (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week) like for you?
5. Institutional Impact
  - 5.1. Please describe any ways this experience changed your "voice" at the University.
  - 5.2. In what ways did the *Exercises* change your understanding of your role or responsibility at your college or university?
  - 5.3. In what ways did you notice yourself acting differently in the classroom or with colleagues as a result of the *Exercises*?

- 5.4. What new insights into the mission of your college or university did you gain by doing the *Exercises*?
  - 5.5. In what ways do you see your experience of the Exercises reflected in the mission statement of your college or university? What is missing?
6. Conclusion
    - 6.1. If you had to choose three words that would summarize your experience of the *Exercises*, what would they be?

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