

Université de Montréal

An Ignatian Spirituality and a Feminist Spirituality: An Encounter

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Université de Montréal
Faculté des études supérieures

Ce mémoire intitulé :

An Ignatian Spirituality and a Feminist Spirituality : An Encounter

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Résumé

Une Spiritualité Ignatienne et une spiritualité féministe : Un lieu de rencontre

Ce mémoire de maîtrise compare une spiritualité ignatienne à une spiritualité féministe dans le but de trouver des similitudes et des différences. Les résultats sont analysés en suggérant des recommandations pour la pratique de l'accompagnement spirituel des femmes et des hommes.

Le premier chapitre résume la littérature pertinente portant sur les Exercices Spirituels de saint Ignace et les femmes. Les chapitres deux et trois définissent une spiritualité ignatienne et la spiritualité féministe de Joan Chittister selon quatre critères de la spiritualité chrétienne: l'image de Dieu, l'image du Christ, les formes de prières et le discernement. Le quatrième chapitre compare les deux spiritualités, tout en donnant des pistes de réflexion et des suggestions pour des personnes qui accompagnent des individus dans les Exercices Spirituels de St. Ignace. Les résultats démontrent qu'il y a des points de convergence et des points de divergence entre les deux spiritualités. Toutefois, un/e accompagnateur/trice averti/e peut adapter l'une ou l'autre facette des Exercices Spirituels pour faire apprécier la spiritualité féministe et pour accommoder des personnes sensibles aux valeurs féministes.

Mots clés : spiritualité, ignatienne, féministe, comparaison.

Summary

An Ignatian spirituality and a feminist spirituality : An Encounter

This thesis is a comparison of a contemporary Ignatian spirituality and of a feminist spirituality with the purpose finding the similarities and differences. The results of this comparison will be analysed so as to give suggestions for the practice of spiritual direction for women and men.

The first chapter reviews the past literature on the subject of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and women. Chapters two and three define Ignatian spirituality and the feminist spirituality of Joan Chittister utilizing four different criteria of Christian spirituality: Image of God, image of Christ, prayer forms and discernment. The fourth chapter compares the two spiritualities. The analysis that follows gives some thoughts and suggestions for spiritual directors of the Spiritual Exercises. The results show that there are some common points and some points of difference between the two spiritualities, but a director aware of these differences can appropriate Ignatian spirituality to help others appreciate feminist spirituality and to accommodate those who adhere to feminist values.

Key Words: spirituality, ignatian, feminist, comparison.

Table of Contents

Résumé -----	iii
Summary -----	iv
Table of Contents -----	v
List of Tables -----	viii
List of Abbreviations -----	ix
Dedication -----	x
Acknowledgements -----	xi
Introduction -----	1
Chapter One	
Women and the Spiritual Exercises: A Review -----	7
1.1 The Jesuit experience of Women and the Spiritual Exercises -----	7
1.2 Women's Personal Experience of Ignatian Spirituality -----	13
1.3 Adaptations of the Spiritual Exercises developed by Women -----	18
1.4 Feminist Critiques or Comments of the Spiritual Exercises -----	22
Chapter Two	
Ignatian Spirituality: A Contemporary View -----	32
2.1 What is Ignatian Spirituality? -----	34
2.2 Ignatian Spirituality and Jesuit Spirituality -----	35
2.3 Images of God -----	36
2.3.1 <i>God as loving creator</i> -----	37
2.3.2 <i>God, giver of gifts</i> -----	38
2.3.3 <i>God labours for humanity</i> -----	39
2.3.4 <i>God is merciful</i> -----	40
2.3.5 <i>God who calls the pray-er to growth</i> -----	41
2.3.6 <i>God of community</i> -----	42
2.3.7 <i>God of mystery</i> -----	43
2.3.8 <i>God in all things</i> -----	43

2.4 Images of Christ -----	44
2.4.1 <i>Christ that chose poverty and humility</i> -----	44
2.4.2 <i>Christ gives himself to others in friendship</i> -----	46
2.4.3 <i>Christ as human being</i> -----	47
2.4.4 <i>Christ as leader and king</i> -----	48
2.4.5 <i>Christ as Saviour and Redeemer</i> -----	49
2.4.6 <i>The Christ of the Resurrection</i> -----	50
2.5 Forms of Prayer -----	50
2.5.1 <i>Examen of Consciousness</i> -----	51
2.5.2 <i>Meditation</i> -----	52
2.5.3 <i>Gospel Contemplation</i> -----	53
2.5.4 <i>Application of the Senses</i> -----	55
2.6 Discernment -----	56
2.6.1 <i>What is discernment?</i> -----	56
2.6.2 <i>Rules for the Discernment of Spirits</i> -----	58
2.6.3 <i>Election</i> -----	61
2.6.4 <i>Obstacles to discernment</i> -----	62
Chapter Three	
Feminist Spirituality: One of Many Visions -----	64
3.1 What is feminist spirituality? -----	65
3.2 What is meant by feminine and feminist? -----	66
3.3 Images of God -----	67
3.3.1 <i>God is male, female and more</i> -----	68
3.3.2 <i>God the loving creator</i> -----	69
3.3.3 <i>God of vulnerability and mercy</i> -----	70
3.3.4 <i>God who calls us to wholeness and growth</i> -----	71
3.3.5 <i>The God of relationship</i> -----	72
3.3.6 <i>God present in all of creation</i> -----	73
3.3.7 <i>God of mystery</i> -----	74
3.3.8 <i>God who loves the poor</i> -----	75
3.4 Images of Christ -----	76
3.4.1 <i>Christ in solidarity with the poor</i> -----	76
3.4.2 <i>Christ, the human face of God</i> -----	77
3.4.3 <i>Christ who expresses his love for others</i> -----	78
3.4.4 <i>Christ who heals</i> -----	80
3.4.5 <i>Christ who does not follow the letter of the law</i> -----	81
3.4.6 <i>Christ who suffers</i> -----	81
3.4.7 <i>Christ the resurrected</i> -----	82

3.5 Forms of Prayer -----	83
3.5.1 <i>Prayer in Work (ora labore)</i> -----	85
3.5.2. <i>The Divine Office</i> -----	85
3.5.2.1 <i>Night Office</i> -----	85
3.5.2.2 <i>The Daily Divine Office</i> -----	86
3.6 Discernment -----	87
3.6.1 <i>What is discernment?</i> -----	88
3.6.2 <i>The process of discernment</i> -----	89
3.6.3 <i>Obstacles to discernment</i> -----	94
Chapter Four	
The Encounter between Ignatian and Feminist Spirituality -----	96
4.1 What is spiritual direction? -----	96
4.2 Images of God -----	99
4.2.1 <i>Clear similarities</i> -----	100
4.2.2 <i>Ambiguous Similarities</i> -----	101
4.2.3 <i>Differences</i> -----	102
4.3 Images of Christ -----	103
4.3.1 <i>Clear similarities</i> -----	104
4.3.2 <i>Ambiguous Similarities</i> -----	104
4.3.3 <i>Differences</i> -----	107
4.4 Forms of Prayer -----	109
4.4.1 <i>Clear similarities</i> -----	110
4.4.2 <i>Ambiguous Similarities</i> -----	111
4.4.3 <i>Differences</i> -----	111
4.5 Discernment -----	112
4.5.1 <i>Similarities</i> -----	114
4.5.2 <i>Ambiguous Similarities</i> -----	115
4.5.3 <i>Differences</i> -----	116
Conclusion -----	120
Bibliography -----	124
Appendix I-----	130
Appendix II-----	131

List of Tables

Table I----- 99

Table II----- 103

Table III----- 109

Table IV----- 113

List of Abbreviations

Sp. Exx #	Corresponding number of the Spiritual Exercises
Gen.	Book of Genesis
Ps.	Psalm
1 Cor.	First Letter of Paul to Corinthians

This thesis is dedicated to John Wickham, sj, the former director of the Ignatian Spirituality Centre. He was the first person to teach me about the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises and sensitized me to the needs of the directee.

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INTRODUCTION

In November of 1976, the Ignatian Spirituality Centre of Montreal was opened by the English Jesuits of Montreal at the invitation of the then Bishop responsible for the Anglophone Catholic community of Montreal, Msgr. Leonard Crowley. Since then, the Ignatian Centre has been serving this same community by offering spiritual direction to lay people and by training for the most part, lay spiritual directors. The centre has also welcomed people from other Christian traditions, mostly Anglicans, but also members of the United Church, the Bretheren Church and the Lutheran Church. At the present time, although the English Jesuits of Upper Canada include the Ignatian Centre among one of their apostolates and give the support that they can, the director is no longer a Jesuit. Presently, a lay woman with a team of other lay directors, has taken responsibility for the directorship of the Ignatian Spirituality Centre of Montreal.

One of the very marked characteristics of the Ignatian Centre has been the predominately female presence as directees and directors. There appears to be a strong attraction of women to the ministry of spiritual direction. In 2003, of approximately 70 requests for spiritual direction, 75 per cent were from women. Although, not all of those requesting spiritual direction will receive the Spiritual Exercises, most of them will be introduced to the different facets of Ignatian spirituality in one form or another. Of those who come for formation as spiritual directors, an over-whelming majority are women and they have all received the Spiritual Exercises and are therefore familiar with Ignatian spirituality. How can a spirituality, inspired by the writings of a man with a sixteenth century mentality, that has been further developed primarily by a group of celibate males, be so attractive to women of the twentieth century in Canada? Many of the women at the Ignatian Centre have been under the influence of the feminist movement in our society. Can they live Ignatian spirituality and still be true to themselves as women who live a Christian feminist spirituality? How does this realize itself for those directors who accompany these women in their spiritual life? This master's thesis will attempt to begin to answer some of these questions. But first, what does the word "spirituality" mean?

In our present day, "spirituality" has become a word that has developed a variety of meanings. It is the topic of many books, talk show conversations and courses. The academic milieu, in particular the faculties of theology, is unable to ignore this very popular topic and has been forced to question the validity of the discipline of spirituality as

an academic subject.¹ Sandra Schneiders, a university professor in theology, has written numerous articles discussing, defining and justifying spirituality as a subject that deserves to be treated as a valid and important academic discipline. She defines spirituality in this way, “spirituality refers to the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.”² Another author and theologian, Ron Rolhesier, defines spirituality as:

spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros. And how we do channel it, the disciplines and habits we choose to live by, will either lead to a greater integration or disintegration within our bodies, minds and souls, and to a greater integration or disintegration in the way we are related to God, others and the cosmic world.³

Both descriptions emphasize the integration of the self with an ultimate value or with God. One senses a movement of the soul, a movement that never really ends. As well, these descriptions describe the relational aspect of the self, it is not self absorbed, but related to the cosmic world. These relationships become part of the experience of the self, making spirituality very experientially oriented. It is part of the growth of the individual and accessible to everyone, not only to clergy and religious. Jean-Claude Breton also stresses the importance of life experience in the development of one’s spiritual life.⁴

If we were to identify what Christian spirituality is, Schneiders states that

“Christian spirituality is that particular actualization of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within a believing community. Thus, Christian spirituality is a trinitarian, christological and ecclesial religious experience.”⁵

As a discipline that studies spirituality, Schneiders points out that seven different elements characterize the study of spirituality. First, the discipline describes and analyzes the phenomenon of spirituality. Its approach is interdisciplinary such as historical,

¹ Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline”, *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1998) p. 1-12.

² Sandra Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality :Strangers, Rivals or Partners?” , *Horizons*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1986) p. 266.

³ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, New York, Doubleday, 1999, p. 11.

⁴ Jean-Claude Breton, « Retrouver les assises anthropologiques de la vie spirituelle », *Studies in Religion*, vol. 17 (winter 1988) p. 97-105.

⁵ Sandra Schneiders, “ Theology and Spirituality :Strangers, Rivals or Partners?” p. 266.

psychological, theological or sociological. This leads to the cross-cultural or ecumenical aspect that is common to spirituality. Spirituality includes the whole person that is the body, mind and spirit and not only the interior life. The study of spirituality is participative, in that the person studying it is often taking part in their own quest of the spiritual life. Spirituality is what Ricoeur calls the “science of the individual”⁶ in that it is often a study of a text, a person or a group. Lastly, students of spirituality have three objectives, to understand spirituality, to grow in one’s own spiritual life and to help others to grow in their own spiritual lives. This thesis touches on many of these aspects, particularly with the last three objectives.

If we look at Schneiders’ definition of Christian spirituality, she points out that it is trinitarian, christological and ecclesial. These three qualities were important when deciding what elements of spirituality to address in this study. The way in which I will try to answer my earlier questions is to try to define some elements of both Ignatian and feminist spirituality and then compare them to see if there are any similarities and /or differences and how these comparisons may be played out in a spiritual direction relationship. This may help spiritual directors to be better equipped to direct women in the Spiritual Exercises and also to help to accompany men in more balanced way.

An important element of Christian spirituality is the image of God. In a personal relationship with a relational or trinitarian God, one’s image of God determines how we encounter that God.⁷ Linn et al. also tell us that we become the God that we adore,⁸ because this is the image of God that has been integrated into spiritual life of each person and becomes a role model. Our image of God forms part of our identity; authentic images of God help each person to integrate a true human identity formed in the image of God.⁹ Our striving for transcendence to an ultimate value that is God, gravitates to the God that we know in a very intimate relational way.

The Jesus Christ from Scripture exhibits a variety of qualities, but most Christians will identify more strongly with certain parts of his life and the qualities that are exhibited. This is the second element of Christian spirituality that will be explored. For the Christian believer, the image of Christ becomes central to the way of relating to others. Within

⁶ Sandra Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals or Partners?”, p. 269.

⁷ William Barry, *God and You: Prayer as a Personal Relationship*. New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1989, p. 33.

⁸ Dennis Linn et al, *Good Goats: Healing our Image of God*, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1994, p. 7.

⁹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, 2nd ed., Chicago, Loyola Press, 1995, p.242.

different Christian spiritualities, this same phenomenon exists. Jesus as the incarnational God becomes the road by which we come to be in union with God.¹⁰

The two next elements of spirituality that will be discussed concern the ecclesial aspect of Schneider's definition. They are prayer and discernment. Prayer plays an important part in the spiritual life of an individual. It is the conversation with the transcendent and in prayer the person brings all of her or his needs and desires. Prayer is a desire to meet with the truth of ourselves and an affirmation for a need for wholeness.¹¹ It becomes that increased awareness of what we are striving for in our search for an integrated life. It is a discovery of who one is. As a conversation with God, prayer becomes an important means of communication with the God that we search. But Barry and Ann Ulanov also state that "All prayer is social. We discover this when we pray for others. When our prayers are of intercession, we enter the zone of mutuality between people, freely admitting how much we depend on others being there for us."¹² Communal prayer is the ecclesiastical element of prayer, it is not a solitary part of the spirituality of a person.

Discernment is the art of choosing different actions that will bring one to a more integrated life and to help achieve greater harmony within oneself and in relationship with the world. Lonsdale tells us that "Today we are more ready than we have been in the past to acknowledge that being a Christian is more of a search for genuine truth and love than a secure position of certainty from which to survey the world and pass judgement."¹³ This search should be at the heart of Christian living. But discernment is also done in a context of society and in relationship with others. Lonsdale states that "Christian discernment usually takes place in the setting of a community of faith. Being a Christian does not mean life in isolation; it means being a member of a community, the people of God."¹⁴

This thesis will begin by bringing us up to date on what has been already written about women and the Spiritual Exercises within various books and articles. The study will be presented in the form of a literature review. Some of the texts are from the Jesuit perspective and the more recent documentation has been written by women who have either

¹⁰ William Barry, *Seek My Face: Prayer as a Personal Relationship in Scripture*, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1989, p. 74.

¹¹ Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1982, p. 15,28.

¹² Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech*, p. 86.

¹³ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*, 2nd ed., Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2000, p. 89.

¹⁴ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 1993, p. 36.

lived the Spiritual Exercises or have accompanied others on this spiritual journey. Following will be a chapter describing Ignatian spirituality as described mainly by two Jesuits, a Canadian, John English, and a British author, David Lonsdale. The next chapter will focus on feminist spirituality, based on the works of feminist writer, Joan Chittister. The reason for choosing Joan Chittister as the reference for feminist spirituality will be explained in Chapter Three. These two chapters, will describe the images of God, of Christ, prayer and discernment of the respective spiritualities.

The last chapter refers to the title of this thesis, that is, “an encounter”. The ideal encounter implies a meeting of two different persons or entities whereby there is an exchange of ideas in a setting of mutual respect. Each side learns from the other and is therefore enriched. Chapter four attempts to create up an encounter between Ignatian and feminist spirituality by means of a comparison. The place for this encounter is the practice of spiritual direction. Suggestions will be made for those who direct women and men through the Spiritual Exercises. These directives can also be applied to the practice of spiritual direction outside of the Spiritual Exercises.

The approach outlined in the previous paragraph has been inspired by Schneider’s hermeneutical approach to the study of spirituality.¹⁵ This approach includes three steps. The first step is to describe the phenomenon to be studied. This corresponds to the description of the different spiritualities of interest in this thesis. The second step is the critical analysis. The fourth chapter of this thesis is a comparison of Ignatian and feminist spirituality. The comparison analyses the different facets of the two spiritualities. The third and final step is the constructive interpretation. What do we learn from the analysis? The directives for spiritual directors that are offered in chapter four correspond to this step. Hopefully this study will enlighten the practice of the ministry of spiritual direction.

This research topic can have many repercussions on the future of spiritual direction. A growing number of women are following the Ignatian way and many of those are also accompanying others. This practice will greatly influence a spiritual practice which up until about 30 years ago was mainly the domain of celibate men within a religious community. Women actively participating in this ministry will offer a different way of accompanying others on their spiritual journey. The practice of spiritual direction by women can only help

¹⁵ Sandra Schneiders, « A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality » *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 1994), p. 12,13.

to add to the already rich tradition of spiritual direction and may better integrate the experiences of both women and men.

Chapter 1

Women and the Spiritual Exercises: A Review

The resurrection of Christ our Lord

The first apparition

First point. He appeared to the Virgin Mary

The Second Apparition

Third point. He appeared to Mary who remained
near the tomb after the others left.

(Sp. Exx. 299,300)

Women have been praying the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola from the time when Ignatius first wrote them. This chapter reviews the literature concerning women and the Spiritual Exercises so that we may be aware of what has already been learned and experienced. The Spiritual Exercises have had a profound effect on women, encouraging them to serve God in many different ways. The first section of this chapter will introduce us to how some Jesuits have interpreted the experience of women having received the Spiritual Exercises. These Jesuits have commented on their own experience of offering the Spiritual Exercises to women and bring their own insights to this pastoral practice. The next section will deal with women who have written about their personal journey of Ignatian spirituality or have recounted their journeys to others. This part includes several foundresses of religious orders who were inspired by the Spiritual Exercises and whose spiritual paths have been recorded for us to read and reflect upon. In more recent times, some women have reflected on their experience and gone further to appropriate the Spiritual Exercises and make them more “women friendly”. Other women spiritual directors have been using the hermeneutics of feminism to analyse and comment on the content, structure and process that is inherent within the Spiritual Exercises. These texts give us an insight into women’s experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

1.1 The Jesuit Experience of Women and the Spiritual Exercises

One of the very first texts written by a Jesuit on the experience of women and the Spiritual Exercises was the German book, by Hugo Rahner, in 1956, entitled *Saint*

Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women, later translated into English in 1960.¹⁶ As the title implies, Hugo Rahner, Jesuit and theologian, undertook to collect, translate and comment what remains of the written communications that had transpired between Ignatius and the women that came into his life. Although many of the letters that Ignatius wrote are missing, Rahner has, with his historical commentary that sets the letters in context, given an extensive picture of the relationships that Ignatius had with different noblewomen, benefactresses, spiritual friends and female royalty. A good number of these women experienced the Spiritual Exercises, either under the direction of Ignatius himself or by one of the other Jesuits that had been assigned to the area where these women lived.

The Spiritual Exercises had motivated many of these women to undertake pastoral ministries such as founding different charitable organizations or founding schools for the Jesuits to teach in. Several of the richer women became staunch supporters of the Company of Jesus through their monetary and political support. Others, inspired by the Spiritual Exercises, felt called to become Jesuits themselves or to be under the obedience of Ignatius in the desire to form a feminine branch of Jesuits.

One of the most notable of these is Isabel Roser and her two companions who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience under Ignatius. They helped to organize a half-way house for prostitutes called St. Martha's house, one of the charitable works that Ignatius instituted in Rome. Conflicts arose between Ignatius and Isabel Roser and Ignatius asked the Pope to release the women from their vows of obedience to him.

Theresa Rejadell, a nun in one of the Spanish monasteries of the Clares, unhappy with the manner in which her group of sisters practiced their piety, wished to reform her community under the guidance of the Jesuits. She wished to institute a feminine community of the Company of Jesus. Ignatius refused this form of commitment, although he continued to give her spiritual guidance and encourage her to proceed with the reforms in her monastery throughout her lifetime.

Juana, the Infanta of Portugal, because of her political prestige and position, could not be refused entry into the Jesuits. Ignatius accepted her request to vows of poverty, chastity and obedience under condition that her membership be kept secret. Her code name was Mateo Sanchez and when writing to her or whenever he spoke about her with other Jesuits, this was the name he used for her. Juana used her political influence in the

¹⁶ Hugo Rahner, *St. Ignatius of Loyola: Letters to Women*, Freiburg, Germany, Herder and Herder, 1960.

Spanish court to improve the condition of the Jesuits in Spain and Portugal whenever possible. She remains the only woman to have died a Jesuit.

Through these letters, we see that Ignatius was for the most part, a man of his time in his attitudes towards women. When requested by the pope to intervene in the marital problems between Margaret of Austria and her violent spouse, Ignatius tried various ways to convince her to return to her husband, even though they both knew that her life may be at risk in doing so. Nevertheless, Ignatius felt that her marriage vows demanded that she remain with her husband. Fortunately for her, she never returned to her husband, who shortly after, died in a foreign prison.

Rahner does point out that Ignatius did not always follow the rules of the patriarchal society of the time. During his directorship, Ignatius was faced with three major questions regarding his relationships with women. The first was whether his newly formed order should form a female branch much as the Dominicans or the Franciscans had done. The second was whether the society should look after the pastoral care of female orders. The third was to offer women an alternative to the medieval society's limited life choice of "cloister or marriage". To the first two questions, Ignatius eventually gave a solid negative answer to the point that that these two questions were explicitly addressed in the Jesuit constitutions. Women were not free to travel everywhere and Ignatius intended that the Jesuits be free to travel and follow the needs of the Catholic Church as requested by the Pope. To the third question, Ignatius was definitely more flexible. There are several instances whereby women who felt called to public charitable ministry, were encouraged by Ignatius, even though this was sometimes to the disagreement of their families. The Spiritual Exercises had truly opened spiritual doors for some of these women.

In a review of the book,¹⁷ Marie-Noële Grand-Mesnil critiques Rahner's book as having been written for his Jesuit colleagues and for Habsburg specialists. She states that the book relates a lot of the intrigues and politics of the illustrious Habsburg family during the time of Ignatius. She also questions Ignatius' stand on the entry of women into the Society. It seemed logical to her that those women who had met Jesus Christ through the Spiritual Exercises and had been thoroughly introduced to Ignatian spirituality, should be drawn to a style of religious life that reflected this spirituality. It would take another

¹⁷ Marie-Noële Grand-Mesnil, « Les belles amies de saint Ignace », *Christus*, vol. 16, (Oct. 1969), p.562-574.

century before the Church would allow women to embrace an apostolate that was publicly active in the community. Nevertheless, none of these later communities ever had any official ties with the Society of Jesus, all in keeping with the Constitution rules that Ignatius had originally written up when founding his society.

In more recent times, a Jesuit named Rogelio Garcia-Mateo, wrote an article on women and the Spiritual Exercises¹⁸ in which he notes that women were the first to experience the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius had met several women in Manresa, soon after his conversion and the development of his Spiritual Exercises. Inspired by the spirituality that emanates from the Spiritual Exercises, these women became his supporters and helped the poor. Their influence on Ignatius was important as his stay in Manresa became a turning point in his life. When faced with a spiritual crisis during this time, Ignatius could find only one person to help him overcome his spiritual difficulty, and that was an elderly woman living in Manresa who predicted to him “That my Lord Jesus Christ would appear to you one day!”¹⁹

In Alcala, Ignatius came in contact with women from a different social stratum. These women were widows, crafts persons, servant girls and even some prostitutes. He shared his conversion experience with them and discussed the Gospels and discernment of spirits. Many became his followers and helped him in his pastoral work, especially helping other women in either material or moral difficulty. Ignatian spirituality attracted women from many levels of society.

One of the most important apostolic works that was instituted by women friends of Ignatius was the establishment of the organization called the *Compagnia della Grazia* which opened the house of St. Martha for prostitutes. The women coming to the house were not forced to accept religious life as was normally imposed on them in other houses that welcomed prostitutes. They were able to lead an active life and some were given dowries so that they could marry if they wished. The majority of those who worked to run the house were lay noblewomen who, after receiving the Spiritual Exercises felt called to active apostolic work. They were a true example of women aiding other women.

Much as in Rahner’s book, Garcia-Mateo discusses the women who wished to enter the Jesuit order. He mentions in particular, Isabel Roser and her group of friends, as

¹⁸ Rogelio Garcia-Matteo, « Ignatius of Loyola and Women », *Theology Digest*, vol. 45, no. 1, (Spring 1998), p. 27-32.

¹⁹ Rogelio Garcia-Matteo, « Ignatius of Loyola and Women », p. 29.

well as Leonor de Mascarenhas and Princess Juana, the only woman to die a Jesuit. We saw earlier that Juana's collaboration was of great importance in the growth of the Society of Jesus in Spain.

Several of the women that Ignatius encountered were pivotal in his life and in the establishment and growth of his Society. He called more than one woman the "Mother of the Society of Jesus". For their devotion to him and his apostolic work, Ignatius often expressed his extreme gratitude to them and to God.

James Reites, another Jesuit, in his article "Ignatius and Ministry with Women",²⁰ describes the different ways in which women who met Ignatius and received the Spiritual Exercises collaborated with Ignatius. This was done in three different ways, the first was through their patronage, that is they supported Ignatius and his fellow Jesuits through financial aid in Jesuit apostolic works or through political influence. The second support that women gave to Ignatius was through advocacy. These women would network with their families, friends and acquaintances to intercede for the Jesuits when problems arose for the Society. The third way was through ministry collaboration in the different apostolic works which Ignatius had instituted. In particular, those works that involved women, such as the prostitute houses that Ignatius founded. Reites concludes that Ignatius had the utmost respect for these women's ability to take leadership roles in apostolic works. He truly felt that women could participate fully in the Ignatian goal of the "greater glory of God".

David Lonsdale, a British Jesuit and experienced spiritual director, in his book, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*²¹, explains that Ignatian spirituality originated with a man and grew and developed within a group of men. Because of this fact, he suggests the possibility that the Spiritual Exercises may reflect images of God and encourage patterns of behaviour that may be unhelpful to women or be even unjust and oppressive by becoming another form of male dominance. But, the Spiritual Exercises, and in turn Ignatian spirituality, do appeal to women as is proven by the number of women who have been inspired by them to the point of even founding religious communities utilizing the Spiritual Exercises as their foundational spirituality.

²⁰ James Reites, « Ignatius and Ministry with Women », *The Way Supplement*, vol. 74, (summer 1992), p. 7-19.

²¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See and Ears to Hear*, p. 198-204.

Some examples of these are the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary founded by Mary Ward and the Faithful Companions of Jesus and the Irish Sisters of Charity.

Since the early seventies, many women have contributed to a revival of the Spiritual Exercises, both in receiving the Spiritual Exercises and in giving them to other women. In spite of the difficulties cited earlier, in what way do the Spiritual Exercises attract women? Lonsdale states that this question needs to be answered in a two fold manner. First, the Spiritual Exercises stresses the importance of the personal experience of the retreatant. Since Vatican II, more and more, the experience of the person is becoming a valid source of theology and therefore woman's experience came to be acknowledged. The Ignatian Exercises repeatedly turns the retreatant back to her own history and therefore to her own life experience. That experience becomes a place to discover God. Secondly, the spiritual director for the Spiritual Exercises helps to draw out the interaction between God and the person. In this way, the person may grow in spiritual freedom in a very personal way. Women's present day experience and their relationship with God often reveal the many false images of God and Church which are associated with patriarchy, male dominance and injustice to women. The Spiritual Exercises with the aid of the director, can in turn, help women to discard these realities and allow for change in themselves and in their relationship with God.

John Veltri, a Canadian Jesuit, writer and spiritual director in his book *Orientations, Vol. 2*,²² addresses the issue of gender inclusivity and expresses the need for the awareness that the Spiritual Exercises are elitist, male, patriarchal, medieval, Roman Catholic and eurocentric. Nevertheless, they have managed to transcend some of these barriers to be able to help many on their spiritual journey.

In addition, Veltri warns that in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises,²³ the director needs to be aware that women often do not experience the sin of pride, so important to Ignatius, in the same way that men do. The typical sin of women is the sin of "hiding", although in a logical sense it is a sin of pride, but in an emotional sense it is not experienced in the same way. The woman often hides her true self in order to be accepted by others or to receive status. There is a fear of acknowledging and expressing the real person. If the retreatant were to accept this First Exercise in the more traditional way, as

²² John Veltri, *Orientations, vol. 2*, Guelph, Guelph Centre of Spirituality, 1998, p. vii.

²³ John Veltri, *Orientations, p. 58*.

the sin of pride, there is a possibility that it would lead to an even greater interior slavery. And the purpose of the First Week would not be achieved.

1.2 Women's Personal Experience of Ignatian Spirituality

Throughout history, women have experienced the Spiritual Exercises and they have either written about their Ignatian experiences or other women have written about them. Some were religious, others were not, but needless to say their lives were forever changed by their being introduced to Ignatian spirituality.

Lisa Fullam,²⁴ an American doctoral student in ethics, wrote about the women in Ignatius's time who felt called to enter the Society of Jesus and how they wished to live out Ignatian spirituality. Fullam's intent in writing this article was to invite Jesuits to reflect on the admission of women to the Society today, but for the purposes of this thesis, one can see through the eyes of the women of Ignatius' era. Ignatian spirituality prompted many women to make the decision to take the vow of obedience to Ignatius and express the desire to join the Society of Jesus either as full-fledged Jesuits or as an associated group. As outlined in Rahner's book previously, Isabel Roser and two companions made vows of obedience to Ignatius (These vows were later rescinded) and Infanta Juana of Spain became a Jesuit and remained so until her death. These women and others were inspired by Ignatian spirituality to become active members in the world that they lived in and to foster an apostolic life. But, the church structures and the societal context of the time of Ignatius would not allow women religious to adopt an active apostolate. Ignatius had very definite plans for the charism of his new society, which was to make his men available for any mission that the Pope requested. He did not wish to change or adapt the rules of the Jesuit constitution to be able to accept the limitations of women religious at the time. Other women, in particular Teresa Rajadell, wished to adapt Ignatian spirituality to her convent setting and to take the vows of obedience to the Society. Again, Ignatius refused, for the same reason cited above.

Fullam concludes that for any religious order, its charism is its vocation, and this vocation is an invitation to respond to God and the needs of the world. In the time of Ignatius, the vocation of the Society of Jesus could not be fulfilled by women because of the societal and ecclesiastical constraints of the society, but not because he felt that they

²⁴ Lisa Fullam, "Juana, sj. :The Past (and Future?) Status of Women in the Society of Jesus", *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, vol. 31, no. 5, (Nov. 1999), p. 1-39.

were not suitable for membership for reasons of gender, calling or capability. These constraints no longer exist for women today and women are making requests to join the Society and to live out Ignatian spirituality as the members of the Society interpret the Spiritual Exercises. Maybe the time has come to reconsider incorporating women into the Jesuits.

Joan L. Roccasalvo, csj. wrote an article about what she calls “Ignatian Women”,²⁵ that is women who have experienced the Spiritual Exercises and through them have felt called to a specific apostolic work. The first women she writes about are some of the women that Ignatius knew. The women who were of particular help to Ignatius and his new Society were upper class women. They were well educated, ran households and had some freedom to be mobile and independent. But, they could not fulfill the needs of the mobile ministry that Ignatius envisioned for his society. In Manresa, he met Inés Pascual, an influential widow and Jeronima Clavera, who looked after a hospital for the poor. These and a few other women were called Inigas, or followers of Ignatius. They supported him financially and physically, looking after him when he became ill and supporting his studies in Paris. In Manresa, he also made the acquaintance of Isabel Roser, who was to make vows of obedience to Ignatius in Rome, fifteen years later.

Later on in Barcelona, Alcala and Salamanca, Ignatius gave his Spiritual Exercises to women, who then ministered to the poor and sick. In one case, he gave the Spiritual Exercises to a prostitute, Marie de la Flor. When she later wished to go into the desert to pray, she stated that Ignatius had been the first man to look at her as a person and not as an object. These women later on became some of his most strong defenders during his several imprisonments by the Inquisition in Spain.

In Rome, women helped him with some of his other projects, in particular St. Martha’s house. Many other houses of this kind for prostitutes were opened in Messina and Valencia as well as other cities, to counter the growing acceptance of prostitution in Italy. Other women bequeathed their homes and lands to the Jesuits in their wills for the advancement and establishment of foundations and colleges. Still others wished to receive admission into the new Society as a response to their apostolic call. It was evident that these women were instrumental in the establishment of the fledgling Jesuit Society during this time.

²⁵ Joan Roccasalvo, « Ignatian Women, Past and Future », *Review for Religious*, vol. 62, no. 1, (2003), p. 38-62.

In principle, Ignatius did support the idea of a company of women performing apostolic works much as the Society of Jesus did. It was not to be in Ignatius' time, but later, other women, such as Mary Ward, attempted to begin exactly such a company of women. In 1612, she established the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary with constitutions that resembled those of the Society of Jesus. The Church was not ready for Mary and her companions and she was imprisoned only to later have her group disbanded by the Holy See. In 1650, the French Jesuit, Jean-Pierre Médaille was able to establish the first group of women that could engage in an active apostolate inspired by the Ignatian Exercises and the Salesian *The Introduction to the Devout Life*. They became the Sisters of St. Joseph who became ready for any ministry and available for all circumstances. Two other communities founded by women inspired by the Spiritual Exercises are Madelaine Sophie Barat's Sacred Heart Sisters in 1800 and Marie Madelaine de Bonneault de d'Hoüet's Faithful Companions of Jesus in 1820.

Ignatian communities have four things in common. First, they rely on Ignatian texts to form their constitutions. Second, their foundresses were influence by Jesuits. Third, they model certain works or structures on those of the Society of Jesus and fourth, they are inspired by the Ignatian christological and apostolic vision.

In spite of the present crisis in vocations for many of these female religious communities, Roccasalvo concludes that Ignatian spirituality can become for women religious a form of renewal of their community life. The *magis* of the Spiritual Exercises is a call to a greater commitment and challenges some religious to begin new institutes that respond to the needs of today, much as Mother Theresa did when she left the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to found the Sisters of Charity. This could be the "Ignatian Way"

As mentioned before, Mary Ward became the first woman to try to establish an Ignatian company of woman in Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century. Her story is related in the book "Till God Will: Mary Ward through her Writings".²⁶ Mary Ward was an English Roman Catholic during the persecutions by the English monarchy. In 1606, she went to St. Omer, France and after adopting a Jesuit confessor, she entered the Poor Clares. It became clear to her that this was not her calling and she decided to enter the Carmelites. She returned to England for a while and there she had a vision which

²⁶ Gillian Orchard, *Till God Will: Mary Ward Through her Writings*, Berks, Vario Press, 1985.

she herself recounts, “I had a second infused light, in manner as before, but much more distinct: that the work to be done was not a monastery of Teresians, but a thing much more grateful (pleasing) to God, and so great an augmentation of his glory as I cannot declare.”²⁷ In this quote, we can see the definite influence of the Spiritual Exercises on Mary. The reference of the something more pleasing to God implies the Ignatian axiom “For the greater glory of God” that stems from the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises. In later visions and in her prayer, Mary discerned that God was calling her to found a new group, a religious community that would serve God much in the way that the Jesuits did. She felt called to found an apostolic group of women who would be active in the community. In some of her journal writings, she relates how she received strength from the words that she heard from God, to “take the same as the Society”, meaning that the constitutions of her group should resemble those of the Society of Jesus. Their charism consisted of teaching girls the subjects of religion and the liberal arts.

Mary did receive the approbation from her own Jesuit confessor, a few other Jesuits and the Bishop of St. Omer. Unfortunately, such was not the case of the Generalate of the Jesuits and of many diocesan priests in Europe and in England where some of her sisters worked. Jealousy and suspicion reigned in England among the clergy because of her close association with the Jesuits. Ironically, most of the Jesuits on the continent did not approve of her institute either. During the many attempts to have her group accepted as a religious community by the papacy, Mary always searched diligently through prayer to free herself of any spiritual attachments hindering her proper decision making. Her Ignatian roots were of great help to her throughout this process. In 1631, Mary was imprisoned in Munich, and her group was suppressed by Urban VIII. She later returned to England where she died in 1645. A few of the houses in Rome and Munich remained open under close surveillance by the local clergy, but for all intents and purposes the Institute was no longer able to grow. Much as Ignatius had, Mary remained intensely loyal to the Pope, whom she believed often received false information about her and her Institute. Her loyalty to the Holy See was another of her Ignatian attributes. To her credit, Mary’s institute was revived about one hundred years later.

²⁷ Gillian Orchard, *Till God Will*, p. xxv.

Another woman who struggled to found an Institute following the Jesuit constitution was Marie Gérin-Lajoie.²⁸ Born in 1890 in Montreal of a family of professionals and writers, she received a good education and a true sense that the elite of society had the obligation to help the poor and the less fortunate. Following in her mother's footsteps, young Marie worked for social action in Montreal, particularly for the rights of women. In her early twenties, she began to regularly consult a Jesuit confessor and was thereby introduced to Ignatian spirituality. When Marie felt the call to found the Institut du Bon Conseil, she adopted this spirituality for her community. Her Ignatian spirituality comes through in the book *Femme de désir, Femme d'action: Écrits spirituels de Marie Gérin-Lajoie*. The title alone reflects the spirituality of Ignatius. Throughout the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius introduces the graces that the retreatant should ask for as 'this is to ask for what I desire'. The desire of the retreatant becomes what God desires for them. The desire then also becomes a call to action.

Marie, in her writings, speaks often about the love of God and that this love then calls us to love others to the best of our ability, through our actions. She also believed that God reveals himself 'in all things' and that in this way he manifests his love. He is the creator of all things, and the provider of all the grace that is necessary to carry on a call of action. This call to action through love is her interpretation of the "greater glory of God" and that we should all cooperate with the works of God as in the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises.

As is often the case with the founding of new female communities, Marie had to struggle with the ecclesiastical authorities of the time due to her ideas of how her community should function. Many prejudices existed still in the 1920's about how women religious should conduct themselves. Much like Mary Ward, she wanted her community to adopt similar constitutions to the Jesuits so that her women would be able to be fairly mobile and to live directly in the social communities of the people that they worked with. Throughout this time, when she struggled to discern which was the right road to go and later on when she counselled her sisters and gave the Spiritual Exercises, Marie maintained an attitude of discernment of the will of God using the tools of discernment as taught by Ignatius. She particularly struggled with the ability to abandon herself fully to

²⁸ Marie Gérin-Lajoie, *Femme de désir, Femme d'action: Écrits spirituels de Marie Gérin-Lajoie*, Montréal, Éditions Paulines, 2003.

God. The institute that she founded on Ignatian principles still works today in Québec, working for social action, in particular for women and families.

In the book, *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey*,²⁹ Margaret Silf introduces us to her own journey through the Spiritual Exercises. As a Roman Catholic laywoman, spiritual director, married and a mother, she illustrates a feminine experience of Ignatian spirituality that would more resemble what a lay person lives today. Silf brings an interpretation that uses everyday symbols such as a garden, a compass, a boat ride, etc. Through her symbols and illustrations, she introduces an Ignatian spirituality of the everyday. She is truly able to find “God in all things”.

Drawing from her prayer experiences, she explores the question of how to see God’s workings in all the events of life. She encourages a listening of the heart for the feelings that may come from God and those that may not. This listening of the heart is then translated into symbols that help in the discernment of spirits in the Ignatian way. She shows how temptation works in the lives of people through their vulnerabilities and attachments. These attachments are obstacles to making free decisions and prevent cooperation in the full workings of God. All this is done in a contemporary language with clear illustrations that are easy to comprehend and grasp. Through it all, there is a sense of the author’s own struggle with being free of those attachments that keep her from being her true self as she was created to be.

This recounting of an Ignatian journey through symbolism so different from the symbolism that Ignatius uses, brings us to another step in Ignatian spirituality. One can sense the spirit of the Ignatian graces, prayer topics, tools for discernment and the search for the will of God, but without the hierarchical, militaristic, and patriarchal symbols that are so ingrained in the prayer exercises that Ignatius uses. It can also be used in ecumenical settings as it makes no reference to the Catholic Church. Silf’s experience reveals to us an alternative that may become a more “woman friendly” and contemporary companion to the Spiritual Exercises.

1.3 Adaptations of the Spiritual Exercises developed by women

In the last 30 years, women have become more and more active in the ministry of spiritual direction and in the accompanying of others in the Spiritual Exercises. With their

²⁹ Margaret Silf, *Landmarks: A Ignatian Journey*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998.

insights into the needs of many of the women that they have accompanied, there developed a need to make adaptations that would make the Spiritual Exercises more accessible to women. Some of these adaptations have been published.

The first of these adaptations to be published was entitled *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola: A New Translation* by Elizabeth Meier Tetlow.³⁰ In her translation, Tetlow, attempts to translate the religious classic that are the Spiritual Exercises into a language that is more accessible and understandable in our culture today. This means that some changes needed to be made from the literal translation of the Spiritual Exercises that is more commonly used. In this way, a translation becomes also a form of interpretation of what certain words, expressions or phrases that were used at the time of the Spiritual Exercises would mean today in our modern world. She notes how there is an interaction between the classic text and the interpreter.

Tetlow goes on to say that

The contemporary translator of a Christian classic must choose between preservation of past androcentric language and patriarchal imagery, or attempt to liberate the deeper meaning and truth of God's gift of self to all humankind by seeking new language forms, not limited by past patriarchal presuppositions.³¹

The Spiritual Exercises is just such a text with some strong patriarchal language and androcentric and military imagery. Her motivation for producing this new translation is to attempt to correct some of this problematic language, so that the text can be more accessible to women and validate the fact that women are also made in the image of God.

The author has taken one of the original texts, written in Latin, and translated it so that it took the more common format of the Spiritual Exercises. The two appendices contain or note some of the major changes or adaptations that she has made. Appendix A contains the Scripture passages that she suggests, as Ignatius' suggestions for Scripture passages were not always accurate. Appendix B notes the changes within the text of the Spiritual Exercises. Tetlow adds some precision to Gospel stories recounted by Ignatius, such as stating that Mary Magdalene was not the prostitute in Luke 7:36-50. She also changes such expressions as "divine majesty" for God and "captain" for "leader", as the latter does not have male connotations and is more inclusive. The most important changes

³⁰ Elizabeth M. Tetlow, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola: A New Translation*, Maryland, University Press of America, 1987.

³¹ Elizabeth M. Tetlow, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola*, p.xiii.

that she makes are in the rules for the discernment of spirits that are very derogatory for women in the original text. She has changed the word “woman” for “weaking” in Sp. Exx 325 and in Sp. Exx. 326 she uses the expression “one who is virtuous” instead of the “daughter of a good father or the wife of a good husband”. These changes and others help to include women more easily into God’s plan of love that Ignatius teaches in his Spiritual Exercises.

Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Marie Schwan,³² the two foundresses of the Centre for Christian Renewal in Minnesota wrote the “Take and Receive” series which include five volumes entitled “Love”, “Forgiveness”, “Birth”, “Surrender” and “Freedom”. Based on the Spiritual Exercises, the authors wished to make a series that rendered the richness and spiritual dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises more accessible to lay Christians. Although the authors specifically state that the books are not exactly the Spiritual Exercises, they do go through a series of scripture passages with commentaries that follow the Ignatian dynamic and the themes. The theme of each volume correlates with a segment of the Spiritual Exercises. The prayer exercises use the Ignatian method of contemplation and the authors also teach some of the different spiritual practices such as the examen of consciousness, review of prayer, repetitions, and the same structure of the prayer period that are in the Spiritual Exercises.

These volumes are “women friendly” in that the authors have not only taken out the patriarchal and androcentric language that is inherent to the Spiritual Exercises, but they have changed some of the symbols and metaphors, used reflections that correspond to the realities of women and signalled Scripture texts that have women as major players in the story line. The authors use such titles for prayer exercises for the different days such as “Pregnant with Hope” or “Birth of Joy” or “Woman of Wisdom”. The format of the series is designed so that any person, woman or man, could follow through on the prayer exercises on their own or it can be used in a faith sharing format. All of these are formats that are accessible to lay people who may not be able to have access to a spiritual director or be able to go on a month long retreat.

³² Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Marie Schwan, *Take and Receive Series: A Guide to Prayer*, Vol. 1-5, Winona, Minnesota, Saint Mary’s Press, 1987.

The Sisters of Providence have also designed an Ignatian retreat manual³³ in their desire to develop a retreat that follows the conversion dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises but also was contemporary and fulfilled the needs of women, particularly the women of their community. It was developed by an international group of about 30 sisters who worked in a retreat setting. The English manual is entitled “The Love of Christ Impels Us: Providence Retreat in Everyday Life.” The manual is to be used by the individual retreatant who meditates for about an hour period everyday, meets a spiritual director once a week in addition to partaking in a faith sharing group. The faith sharing group or “circle of companions” uses a non-hierarchical model that encourages a sense of reciprocity between the participants. Each retreatant is encouraged to affirm her prayer style so that this prayer becomes her personal response to God’s presence.

The motivating force of the authors of these Exercises is “to grow in a true sense of self, and to discover how to live in our world, so that we can make decisions in true spiritual freedom.”³⁴ There are eight values that are promoted in this manual. The ones most associated with feminist values are to respect each person’s rhythm and style and to en flesh the conversion dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises in a feminine dimension. The text has been shaped by the experience of women and although it follows the conversion dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, the authors have incorporated the Rule and the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and the charism of Emilie Gamelin, the foundress of the Sisters of Providence. The whole process is compared to a dance with the Holy Spirit.

Much as the Spiritual Exercises, the manual has five parts, first is the foundation which portrays a loving God, creator, motivator and provider for his creation. The second part, or the first movement, is the realization that we sometimes do not live fully in God. We are faced with those parts of us that are sinful. The second movement reflects on the life of Jesus before the passion and the third movement carries the retreatant through the passion and death of Jesus. The fourth movement is about the resurrection and the contemplation to attain love. These themes have direct parallels to the different weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. The different prayer patterns are Ignatian, but there are alternatives such as connections to nature or reflective activities that give a freedom of expression that

³³ Sisters of Providence, *The Love of Christ Impels Us: Providence Retreat in Everyday Life*, Spokane, Washington, Sisters of Providence, 1991.

³⁴ Sisters of Providence, *The Love of Christ Impels Us*, p. 25

is not offered in the traditional format of the Spiritual Exercises. This offers a freedom to the retreatant that respects their way of relating to God.

One last point about this retreat manual, the authors have added to the notes for the director a special note on discernment for women. For them, it is important that women become aware that the full humanity of women is redemptive and that all are called to full dignity and happiness. Women need to know that their needs are important and that these needs should be affirmed. Several very specific guidelines are outlined so that the director may become aware of any social conditioning that may hamper a woman's growth.

1.4 Feminist critiques or comments of the Spiritual Exercises

As more and more women began to direct other women in the Spiritual Exercises, they began to use the feminist hermeneutic to analyse and comment on the contents and the process of this spiritual classic. Without rewriting the whole classical text, several of these writers have written about different parts of the Spiritual Exercises with a feminist critique in mind. These articles can serve as guides or suggestions for spiritual directors who direct women through the Spiritual Exercises.

Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt in her article "Women and the Exercises: Sin, Standards and New Testament Texts"³⁵ states that women now outnumber men in seeking the Spiritual Exercises. Although Ignatius intended for the Spiritual Exercises to be offered to men and women, he does, in the First Annotation state that adjustments can be made for the frail and the elderly. There is no mention of adaptations to be made for men's or women's reality. As well, up until the last thirty years, women have been mostly directed by men, with the result that men named the terms for discernment. In the time of Ignatius, no differences in spirituality were established between men and women. Now with the new awareness of the differences between the spiritual development of men and women, there is a need to differentiate the approach to the Spiritual Exercises.

The author points out three key aspects of the Spiritual Exercises that must be addressed. The first of these is women's sense of evil and the difficulty this presents in the first week of the Spiritual Exercises. Recent studies show that women's sin most often stems from a sense of shame and self-denigration, lack of self confidence and loveableness as women. This is in sharp contrast with Ignatius's sin which is the sin of

³⁵ Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, « Women and the Exercises : Sin, Standards and New Testament Texts », *The Way Supplement*, vol. 70, (spring 1991), p. 16-32.

pride. As well, women, because of their gender, are often victims of sin such as sexual and physical abuse. The director who accompanies a woman through the Spiritual Exercises would need to be able to adapt the tone and theology of the First Week to better reflect where the woman may be coming from when she comes to terms with her sinfulness. There needs to be a different concept of repentance and forgiveness that does not perpetuate the sinful situations of the woman. Prophetic readings of hope may be helpful during the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises.

The second element of the Spiritual Exercises that needs to be looked at is the Two Standards with its dualistic good vs. evil metaphor. Women have difficulty associating with Ignatius's metaphor that puts good on the side of power, great exploits and heroism. Women's relational experiences come closer to situations of reciprocity, interdependence and connection. There is no dualism such as honor-dishonor or victory-defeat. Woman's value of everydayness challenges men's value systems that validate glory and success. Their world-view of non-dominance may not be seen as a Christ-like option in the context of the Spiritual Exercises as women align themselves more in the "little Way". A new christology of the Spiritual Exercises is called for, that liberates those who are not in power and which promotes an ethics of protection, nurturing and peace-making. The director needs to be aware of the dark side of femininity that encourages over-sacrifice and self-donation at the detriment of the development of identity. When using scripture passages it is important to choose passages that do not emphasize very traditional roles for women.

This introduces us to the third element of the Spiritual Exercises that Rosenblatt addresses. It is the choice of scripture texts for the second week. She warns that the infancy narratives often place Mary in a stereotypical role as they tend to over-emphasize her maternity. As an alternative, the director can encourage her role as a woman who used initiative and was a true disciple of Jesus. The director may choose texts that accommodate the true needs of the exercitant.

Rosenblatt concludes that women tend to prefer the fourth week dynamic over the first week dynamic. This could be because of women's more active role in the resurrection narratives and therefore do not reinforce passivity in women. She suggests that further study in Christian feminist theology will bring more light on the different needs of women in experiencing the Spiritual Exercises.

Lavinia Byrne in her article “Women and the Second Week”³⁶ states that with recent advances in feminist thought, the Spiritual Exercises need to be re-evaluated on three different levels, the text, the theology based on scripture and the practice of the director. The text in the Second Week examines our deepest desires. How do we want to follow Christ? Who are the models that inspire us? It is a time to seek what the retreatant really wants and how she/he is called to respond to this task. This can be liberating for women. But, the metaphors that Ignatius uses are very feudal and masculine. Patriarchal metaphors can hamper this important time of discernment and the beginning of the election.

The theology of the Spiritual Exercises can be a cause of difficulty because for Ignatius, men sin through pride. Feminist studies now show, that women often sin by poor self-image. This creates a difficulty for the woman who takes the wording of the First Week literally. In the Second Week, the director has the opportunity to use scripture passages that can be affirming to women, those passages that are not usually read in the lectionary. This would include the story of the woman who anoints Jesus, or Jesus, the friend of women. These passages can free women to see their full role in society. Gospel contemplation in these kinds of scripture passages allow the woman’s imagination to grow and flourish.

The director of the retreatant needs to be open to the woman’s true desires. This can be difficult for women who have often put the desires of others first. Many women see themselves as the present day poor. Is the director open to a strong feminist? What happens when a woman is called to a ministry that the Church does not permit? The Spiritual Exercises were first designed for those who had strong callings to serve God. Can a call to the priesthood happen to women too? Inclusive language is also an issue. How is God named by the director? Women are often sensitive to the names used for God.

In her article entitled “Women in the Passion and Resurrection Narratives” Marie-Louise Rosenblatt³⁷ cites the part of Sp. Exx. 236 that states ‘like a mother in childbirth.....God labours to share his life’. This is often the way women live the Third Week. Women’s experience of giving birth and working can bring new light to the

³⁶ Lavinia Byrne, « Women and the Second Week » *The Way Supplement*, vol. 74, (summer 1992), p. 31-39.

³⁷ Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, « Women in the Passion and Resurrection Narratives », *The Way Supplement*, vol. 74, (spring 1992) p. 40-53.

experience of Jesus' passion and death. Resurrection for the women who witnessed it, means getting up and being liberated.

Rosenblatt begins by stating that the more traditional Scripture passages of the Spiritual Exercises in the Third and Fourth Weeks do not affirm the importance of women's experience and their role in the larger Christian plan. It is important to encourage women to see their role as important and therefore they need graces that liberate and affirm them. The passages that are used during these weeks should be from the viewpoint of women, the betterment of their lives and aid the redefining of self that is liberating for men and women and changes the pattern of one gender that dominates another.

In the labor of love that was cited before in Sp. Exx. 236, the author takes inspiration from the works of Julian of Norwich who speaks of the suffering of Jesus as labor or work. She sees the suffering of Jesus as a suffering that should release the heart and does not burden the spirit. This allows the retreatant to truly experience the love and hard labor of Jesus in a way that is freeing to the soul. The Ignatian question of 'What haven't I done' can suggest a lack of generosity on the part of the women, when most often the opposite is true. This question may be rephrased to ask 'How is Christ pleased with what I am doing? Can I continue his work?' In this way, their everyday tasks take on a new importance.

The presence of the women during the passion narratives need to be re-evaluated. Women were present at the anointing, they were bystanders, servants that witnessed the way to the cross. Women are able to identify with Jesus and the injustices that he endured. They know what it is to be judged, helpless, suffer violence and be vulnerable. They can truly be in tune with the cross and the passion scenes. Jesus took on the suffering that women identify as their own. He is not a hero, but a victim in the eyes of women.

The resurrection through the eyes of women can be seen as a new way of evaluating the work that women often do. It was women who first cared for Jesus' body, and through this became the first witnesses to the resurrection. Their work becomes recognized as apostolic work, making them true disciples.

Rosenblatt concludes that as witnesses to the resurrection, the social status of women is changed and they move on to be evangelizers or initiators of the proclamation. But their status remains ambiguous, as there is no formal acceptance of their testimony by the men. It remains for the retreatant to go forth and proclaim and work today.

Janet Ruffing and Theresa Moser,³⁸ both spiritual directors, bring to the forefront the issue that whenever we speak of the poor, we are talking mostly about women and children as representing the majority of the poor. When giving the Spiritual Exercises, the directors must be aware that as part of the poor, women often suffer injustice, oppression, a decrease in social options, etc. Women experience the world and life differently because of these and other situations. If these women are already part of the poor, how do they face the call of solidarity with Christ who chooses poverty over riches in the Spiritual Exercises? Some of these metaphors may increase the oppression of these women. The director can choose scripture texts to help enhance and not diminish the woman's sense of self and her relationship with God.

The gospel contemplation exercises are important for women. Women need to be free to exercise their imagination freely and not to be hindered by what they are 'supposed to do'. Most of women's experience through church, scripture and society has presented a patriarchal God. They must be given the opportunity to see God in a different way, so the choice of scripture texts must reflect a non-patriarchal God. The director can help her to see if she has internalized within herself some of these messages about God.

The Spiritual Exercises, through the Principle and Foundation, the Two Standards and the Three Classes of Persons implies an ordering of a social nature that separates the good from the bad. Women have often been victims of this type of social ordering. Many women have not had the opportunity to choose their situations, it was imposed on them. The director can help the woman to situate herself in her social surroundings with a critical view of where she is. Jesus opted for the poor and the marginalized and often promoted inclusivity in discipleship. This empowers women to use their gifts for the greater glory of God. The option for women means an option to be free and spirit-filled.

Maureen Aggeler,³⁹ a specialist on metaphors and women, discusses the metaphor of inordinate attachments as used in the Spiritual Exercises and what this metaphor presents to the experience of women. The Spiritual Exercises are a way to spiritual freedom or freedom from inordinate attachments (Exx. 21). She states that,

This metaphor carries the tone of regulation, control, detachment, and striving for the distinctness and freedom of every human being made in

³⁸ Janet Ruffing and Theresa Moser, « An Option for Women? » *The Way Supplement*, vol. 74, (summer 1992), p. 89-100.

³⁹ Maureen Aggeler, « Women's Metaphors for Freedom » *The Way Supplement*, vol. 74, (summer 1992) p. 20-30.

God's image and likeness. To some, Ignatius' call suggests a process of separation, isolation and self-renunciation required in order to curb the tendency to possess control. To others, his call has to do with balance, intimacy and surrender.⁴⁰

In the First Week, the retreatant gradually recognizes the need to relinquish control of their lives. In the Second Week, there is a fine tuning of the mind, heart and will to be able to respond to Jesus more freely. Spiritual freedom is necessary for proper discernment, but women often use a different vocabulary and metaphors.

Aggeler points out that when men need to make moral choices and decisions, they use rules of justice and principle to help them make those decisions. Women, by contrast, use relationship and personal responsibility when they are faced with making a decision. She asks, if this is the case, do women come to spiritual freedom differently? Do they use different metaphors and how can women's experience affect the Ignatian tradition? For the author, spiritual freedom comes from the capacity of the retreatant to shape its true self in a form of internal determination, not a determination that has been set by others or society. In other words, spiritual freedom means to be one's own person.

Using the diaries of two women, Etty Hillesum and Edwina Gately, the author reveals how women can come to spiritual freedom through difficult times of suffering. Both women attain a sense of being themselves and self directed. Only then, can they truly reach out to others and sacrifice themselves. She concludes that women's way to spiritual freedom is by touching God within themselves through metaphors of spinning and connecting. They can then give birth to the compassion necessary to be present to others. Both of these women dealt with human suffering through their faith in a God who loves his creation and reaches out in love and compassion and grace.

Wolski Conn in her article "Revisioning the Ignatian Rules for Discernment",⁴¹ tells us that the Ignatian rules of discernment were not a result of direct mystical experiences that were received by Ignatius of Loyola. More recent history has shown that they were more of a creation or re-application of the wisdom of an earlier tradition. What Ignatius did do was to show that one did not need to be an ascetic or a mystic to be able to discern the spirits within, because he outlined the tools necessary for anyone to be able to discern the movements of the heart. Discernment in the Ignatian way is the ability to

⁴⁰ Maureen Aggeler, « Women's Metaphors for Freedom » p. 20.

⁴¹ Joann Wolski Conn, « Revisioning the Ignatian Rules for Discernment » *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, ed. Joan Wolski Conn, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1986.

choose between different options that are all good, but one is better or more for the glory of God. It is in the more that the true discernment is made, because Ignatius assumes that the person discerning has a choice between two already worthy options. In his rules, the evil spirit is that which is the enemy of our human nature. This gives us a positive view of human nature as being that which brings us closer to God.

Ignatius defines consolation and desolation as those trends of feelings that bring us closer or further away from God. They are affective movements that indicate where we are in our relationship with God.

What is the significance for women? These rules allow the women to confirm the value of self-direction. It encourages them to listen to their interior movements and to value them as important to discernment. There is no external authority that needs to be listened to or consulted. These rules were meant for those who work in the public sphere in an apostolic setting. As more and more women come into this setting, the rules of discernment can become even more helpful in making decisions. It may help to determine when self-sacrifice may just come under the appearance of the 'angel of light' or when acceptance and complacency can become desolation when it brings you away from God. One is encouraged to be truly honest before God and oneself. Consolation can become a trustworthy road on the way to self-transcendence.

Margaret Sheldon in her article "Discernment and Decision: Women's Experience in the Spiritual Exercises"⁴² also touches on this important element of discernment, particularly for women. She explains that women often experience blockages in discernment in five areas. They are physiological, negative attitudes to body image that can lead to over-work or self-giving; psychological, biased perceptions that can alter the awareness of reality; theological or distorted images of God that takes away the responsibility of women to act; sociological, distorted image of the essentials in life; and spiritual, a rigid or closed prayer-life. She also suggests that in the Election in the Second Week, many women experience callings to ministries that the Roman Catholic Church does not accept. This can be difficult for the retreatant and the director.

She outlines several necessary steps that women should be aware of in any mature decision-making process. First, a clear awareness of self and one's own integrity in order to be able to make choices that are consistent with self-identity. A woman must be

⁴² Margaret Sheldon, « Discernment and Decision : Women's Experience of the Spiritual Exercises » *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, vol. 85, no. 2 (1997), 56-62.

allowed to trust her intuition and imagination as well as listen to scripture, tradition, etc. She must also have an awareness of the consequences on others of the decision and a quest for alternatives to that decision. She must also consciously make the decision, because not making the decision is to not take responsibility. Lastly, she must be at peace with what is decided as anxiety or doubts can be destructive.

The “Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed”⁴³ by Dyckmann, Garvin and Liebert is at this time, probably the most comprehensive English language text on women and the Spiritual Exercises. The authors, women experienced in the ministry of spiritual direction, bring together recent studies in pastoral theology, feminism and psychology to bring out some of the difficulties that women encounter in the Spiritual Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises are a spiritual classic that has added richness to the spiritual tradition of Christianity. Dyckman et al. encourage directors to use the Spiritual Exercises, but caution them to be aware of the weaknesses of the text. The authors go deeper than simply changing some of the more masculine images that Ignatius uses in his Spiritual Exercises. They also examine the spiritual dynamic that occurs in women who experience the different prayer forms and they examine the theology that is inherent in the metaphors that Ignatius uses.

In order to aid the director who accompanies a retreatant, the book is divided into four main parts with several chapters in each part. Within each chapter, the authors outline the different possibilities and the different difficulties that the Spiritual Exercises present to women. As well, suggestions for the director are introduced under the title “wisdom for the director”. Here the director is given different modifications or alternative suggestions for the retreatant that would strengthen the woman in her spiritual journey.

The authors explain their specific concerns about women who experience the Spiritual Exercises, some of which are the use of metaphors that are destructive to women, the use of scripture that does not affirm women and the relationship between the director and the retreatant. There is also a historical account of the women who had a part in the life of Ignatius. The authors also discuss the dynamic of the different prayer forms in the Spiritual Exercises, as well as the Principle and Foundation which introduce the Exercises of Ignatius. They approach the topic of the need for any retreat guide to be well prepared. A retreat guide must have a basic knowledge of scripture, be in tune with their own

⁴³ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women*, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2001.

affectivity and prayer life and have access to supervision. The inherent theology of the Principle and Foundation needs to be re-evaluated by the director. Today, we see God in a more inter-related sense, a God who co-creates with us. The spiritual guide must be flexible and bring this out when coming to the Principle and Foundation. Ignatius also introduces many styles of prayer in his Spiritual Exercises, therefore the director is encouraged to allow the retreatant to be true to herself and allow her to pray in the way that brings her closer to God.

The third part of the book develops the different “Weeks” of the Sp. Exx. and this part can be used as a companion guide for the director. Each of these weeks provides a specific challenge to the director and the retreatant. The director must be aware of the different ways that women approach sin and evil in the First Week. They are asked to be attentive to the needs of each woman, to use scripture passages that affirm and allow the retreatant to listen closely to the movements of her heart and to validate her when there are important insights.

The topics of discernment and election are also addressed. Here the authors have made some adaptations for the rules of discernment of spirits that make us aware of some of the societal and power structures that may hinder or alter the power of women to make a decision freely. They also suggest that women need tools that would help them to focus more concretely on the issue of decision-making and not allow others to make decisions for them. They stress the importance of listening to the body and to use discernment skills that incorporate embodiment. The book also deals with the difficult “Rules for thinking with the Church”. For the authors, it is important that each individual’s integrity be recognized in these rules and that will lead to a greater integrity of the Church as well.

In this literature review, there is a true development of the relationship of women and the Spiritual Exercises. We began by reading how the Jesuits speak of women retreatants. Today, women have begun to appropriate the Spiritual Exercises and also to critique and adapt the Spiritual Exercises to begin to make them their own. This appears to coincide with Wolski-Conn’s theory of how women develop their spirituality within Christianity.⁴⁴ She states that at first women recover the stories of women as recounted by

⁴⁴ Joann Wolski Conn, « Women’s Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction », *Women’s Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1986. p. 22.

men, much as the stories of the women in the life of Ignatius. Then, they express their experience in their own words, such as the diaries of Mary Ward or Marie Gérin-Lajoie. The third phase is the task of re-interpretation through the eyes of women such as is done through the feminist hermeneutic. This is the phase that the Ignatian Exercises are now in, a phase that hopefully will continue to develop in the future.

Chapter 2

Ignatian Spirituality: A Contemporary View

For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot,
and running are bodily exercises, so we call
Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing
the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and
after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God
in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.
(Sp. Exx. 1)

This second chapter will illustrate some elements of Ignatian spirituality as lived in our contemporary society. The interpretation of Ignatian spirituality used in this thesis is drawn primarily from the writings of two Jesuit authors and experienced spiritual directors. John English, a Canadian and David Lonsdale, from Britain, are both recognized within the anglophone Ignatian community as having contributed to the development of Ignatian spirituality in the occidental world and both have worked in the second half of the twentieth century, primarily after Vatican II. I have also used a few comments from the writings of John Veltri, sj. and John Govan, sj.

Both Lonsdale and English have worked within the same time period and societal situation that I am working in. Their approach is a contemporary one, in which they have incorporated recent historical, theological and psychological scholarship in their works. These were some of the deciding factors in choosing English and Lonsdale for the present thesis. Upon the examination of the different texts on Ignatian spirituality, a few other authors filled the same criteria as Lonsdale and English. They were John Veltri, sj., who worked with John English in Guelph, Ontario and William Barry, sj. from the United States. I chose Lonsdale and English because their writings included considerable information on the topic of images of God and Christ, whereas, all authors discussed the different forms of Ignatian prayer as well as the rules of discernment. In addition, I came to realize that both Lonsdale and English, in the revised editions of their major works included some feminist thoughts in their texts. This openness to feminism and to some other issues such as ecology and social justice have also positively influenced my decision to use their works for this thesis.

The timing of their work is an important factor in the development of contemporary Ignatian spirituality, since before the 1960's, Lonsdale recounts, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola were given primarily in the form of a preached retreat. When the Jesuits, inspired by Vatican II, returned to the original directories of the Spiritual Exercises, it was discovered that they were originally offered on a one-to-one basis where the retreatant met regularly with a retreat director. The conversations between the retreat director and the retreatant were meant to help the individual discover the workings of God in his/her life.⁴⁵ This re-discovery of the format of the Spiritual Exercises completely changed the method, the emphasis and the availability of the Spiritual Exercises and heralded the introduction of offering the Spiritual Exercises again to lay people.

This second chapter will begin by explaining the origins of Ignatian spirituality, to be followed by a distinction between Ignatian and Jesuit spirituality. Following will be a description of four facets of Ignatian spirituality. These are the images of God and Christ, discernment and forms of prayer. In chapter four of this thesis, these elements of Ignatian spirituality will be compared to parallel elements of a contemporary occidental feminist spirituality.

2.1 What is Ignatian Spirituality?

English calls Ignatian spirituality an

active this-world spirituality. Ignatian spirituality acknowledges God's active presence in developing more truthful, loving, just and peaceful structures for the betterment of humanity. Those who give themselves to this spirituality are filled with the desire to take on the mind and heart of Christ and be instruments of God's grace in this world.⁴⁶

It is a spirituality developed or inspired by Ignatius of Loyola, a Basque nobleman of the sixteenth century and founder of the Society of Jesus. His spirituality is expressed through the "Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius" which were written at a time of growth in individual freedom through humanistic thought. This time period also marks the beginning of the Protestant reformation which posed a threat to the formerly unified Catholic Church.

⁴⁵ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See and Ears to Hear*, p. 18

⁴⁶ John English, *Spiritual Intimacy and Community: An Ignatian View of the Small Faith Community*, London, Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1992, p. ix.

Ignatius defines the Spiritual Exercises as

By the term “Spiritual Exercises” is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of their spiritual activities that will be mentioned later. For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.⁴⁷

What is key for Ignatius in this definition is that persons following the Spiritual Exercises be able to discern the will of God by ridding themselves of any patterns of resistance that may be blocking them from proper discernment. This definition also states that the will of God is revealed in the disposition of their life or through life experiences. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola reflect a particular spirituality that focuses on the individual who is a loved creature of God and as that loved creature, desires to seek the will of God and to act on it in the best way possible so as to return that love.

The Spiritual Exercises are very experientially based. One of Ignatius’ most well known axioms was to “find God in all things”, that is the ability to see God in the experience of daily life, in action, in others, in the world that God made. This means to be a contemplative in action.

One other noteworthy aspect of the Spiritual Exercises is the many references to military language or imagery that Ignatius uses in his prayer exercises. Ignatius of Loyola was, in his early adulthood a military nobleman. He fought under several different dukes in Spain and France before being seriously injured in a battle that forced upon him a prolonged convalescence. It was during this time of physical inactivity that he received his conversion. Following this spiritual experience, Ignatius wrote the Spiritual Exercises and later founded the Society of Jesus, more commonly known as the Jesuits.

Ignatius saw his relationship with God much as he saw the relationship between a knight or vassal and his Lord. But the words knight and Lord had a particular meaning for Ignatius. It was a relationship of mutual friendship, whereby each of the persons had a fixed role to play. The knight swore an allegiance to his Lord and offered him service, help, fidelity, courage and a willingness to suffer for his Lord. The Lord in turn gave his love, rite of homage, leadership, friendship, fidelity, protection and generosity.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1951, Sp. Exx. 1.

⁴⁸ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 39.

Lonsdale states that modern writers on Ignatian spirituality are called to interpret the text of the Spiritual Exercises in order to make them relevant to modern persons. The different images presented, the theology, the social context, and the worldview of Ignatius do not reflect today's reality. Therefore, it would be erroneous to take the text of Ignatius literally and apply it to today's world.⁴⁹ Sandra Schneiders confirms this idea when she refers to the interpretation of any classic text, such as would be considered the Spiritual Exercises. She declares,

the ongoing interpretation of the classic, which is both justified and necessary, cannot be reduced to decoding, that is deciphering the language of the ancient text... But the classic text is classic precisely because it does not merely convey information but affects existentially the life of its readers... The classic must not only be deciphered, that is, translated and exegeted, not only "replayed", that is, criticized; it must also be contextualized in the present situation and appropriated.⁵⁰

The work of the spiritual guide who journeys with a retreatant includes the ability to put the words of Ignatius in context so as to help him or her to understand the meaning.

2.2 Ignatian Spirituality and Jesuit Spirituality

For many years in the history of the church the term "Ignatian" and "Jesuit" spirituality were used interchangeably and were understood to be the same. As a follow-up to Vatican II, many religious communities were encouraged to return to the original charism of their founders and foundresses. The Jesuits did as well, and returned to their founder's original texts which are the Spiritual Exercises and the Jesuit constitutions. Lonsdale relates that "The Society of Jesus is the principal corporate form in which Ignatian spirituality has found lasting expression.....But, the Society of Jesus is not, of course, the only actual or possible embodiment of Ignatian spirituality"⁵¹ Since the founding of the Jesuits, religious communities founded on Ignatian principles and more recently, lay people, have experienced the Spiritual Exercises and become themselves, ministers of retreatants. They were inspired by Ignatian spirituality without being Jesuits. Historically, even Ignatius and his first companions were Ignatian followers as the Constitutions of the Jesuits and the rules that they implied, were not yet written. They had

⁴⁹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 22

⁵⁰ Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, San Francisco, Harper Press, 1991, p. 151.

⁵¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 155.

not yet formed a community with the formal vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. With this understanding, it can be said that followers of Ignatian spirituality are any lay people or religious who base their prayer and active lives on Ignatian principles⁵² Followers of Ignatian spirituality have mostly received the Spiritual Exercises, but they continue to practice and be inspired by the fundamental elements of the Spiritual Exercises even after having completed them.

Ignatian spirituality does have a communal dimension to it, as well. The first followers of Ignatian spirituality worked together as a community, praying and discerning together and Ignatian followers are called to do the same. English warns of the danger of an Ignatian spirituality that is individualistic when he recounts

As I accompanied individuals on their spiritual journey I became aware that many of them were approaching a dead end. For some this happened because they were only concerned about their one-on-one relationship with Christ. Some thought that they could save the world by their individualistic efforts. Some were unable to realize their desires because they were caught in dysfunctional structures.....one can fully understand Ignatian spirituality only by taking into account the communal dimension.⁵³

In addition, Ignatius, in his Spiritual Exercises no. 352-370, sets out rules for thinking with the Church. Although these rules need interpretation to take into account our modern day desire for freedom of thought and speech, there is, nevertheless, an underlying current of a need to be part of a Christian community that prays together, discerns together and works with others for the betterment of the world.

2.3 Images of God

The first facet of Ignatian spirituality illustrated in this chapter is the image of God that is portrayed in the Spiritual Exercises. The images of God in this study come primarily from the Principle and Foundation (Sp. Exx. 23) and the Contemplation to attain the love of God (Sp. Exx. 230-237) sometimes called the *Contemplatio*. English claims that the *Contemplatio*, in particular, expresses the most authentic images of God that Ignatius wanted to convey in his Spiritual Exercises.⁵⁴ The rest of the Spiritual Exercises should develop and confirm these images of God. The work of the spiritual guide is to

⁵² John Wickham, « Ignatian or Jesuit? – A New Look at the First Companions » *Magis*, Montreal, Ignatian Centre Publications, December 1999, p. 6.

⁵³ John English, *Spiritual Intimacy and Community*, p. ix.

⁵⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, 2nd ed. Chicago, Loyola Press, 1995, p. 252.

assist the praying person to let go of any inauthentic images of God that she or he may have so as to embrace the more authentic images of God of the *Contemplatio*, the culmination of the Spiritual Exercises. Following is a list and description of the more prominent images of God in the Spiritual Exercises.

2.3.1 God as loving creator

The First Principle and Foundation begins with “Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.”⁵⁵ This foundational statement which occurs in the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises introduces the God who is the creator and humans as his creatures. The creator God offers the Word and the Spirit by which to help his creatures be saved. This is one of the fundamental principals in Ignatian spirituality. But, the Principle and Foundation can imply an inauthentic image of God as a doting, demanding, or judging parent or teacher. With a jump forward in the Spiritual Exercises to the *Contemplatio*, humans become creatures that experience the love of God. Humans, made in the image of a loving God, love and reverence God in response to the infinite love that God first gives.⁵⁶ Therefore, the First Principle and Foundation must be approached with a sense of total dependence on the God who loves his creatures. The salvation of souls results when human beings choose to freely love, praise and serve God. In this process of being saved, human beings reveal their full humanity. English interprets this by saying “in a faith context we might say that embracing salvation is the equivalent of finding ourselves meaningful.”⁵⁷ This meaningfulness of life as a loved creature is part of a process to love oneself and in turn to love others and the world. The world is understood as a part of the hand of the loving creator that is God. God loves his creatures for who they are and not for what they do.

In some of the Spiritual Exercises, (ex. Sp. Exx 235) God is addressed as the Divine Majesty. This indicates one of the ways that Ignatius speaks of the Creator God, or God the Father. This image is a reflection of Ignatius’ own experience of the Lord\knight relationship, whereby the Lord or majesty loves his knight, much as God loves his creatures.

⁵⁵ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 23.

⁵⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 246.

⁵⁷ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 24.

The First Principle and Foundation stresses more the transcendence of God the loving creator, but in the *Contemplatio*, God becomes more immanent, and dwells in the person through the Holy Spirit. God asks his creatures to embrace again their creaturehood, but this time they are more active participants as people who work with God to create a world in God's image. Humanity is impelled to be co-creators with God.⁵⁸

2.3.2 God, giver of gifts

The second phrase of the First Principle and Foundation states "The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created."⁵⁹ and in the *Contemplatio*, "I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees."⁶⁰ In these phrases, God is portrayed as providential, a giver of gifts but not only gifts that are exterior to God as in material things, but also as a God that gives of himself. God communicates himself to his creatures through grace. This grace, when acknowledged and received, is a sign of the Holy Spirit at work.⁶¹ God's grace heals, strengthens, and makes whole. As creatures of God, humanity receives life, spiritual and physical, and a world to sustain and maintain its needs. These gifts are given freely, but each human being is given the choice to refuse or accept these gifts. God does not demand things of his creatures, an inauthentic image of God that is often experienced by Christian believers.

God also offers a relationship of mutual giving, as in Sp. Exx. 231 "That love consists in a mutual sharing of goods."⁶² The goods are part of creation and humanity is called to look after and respect that creation. According to English, another part of humanity's part of the relationship is to return back to God the love that is received. In this way, God becomes giver and receiver. God must not be mistaken for a God who demands that any of his gifts be returned. As was stated before, the love that God gives makes people more human, and in this humanity they feel compelled to return to God what has

⁵⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 23.

⁶⁰ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 234.

⁶¹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 61.

⁶² Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 231.

been given. This can be done by being true images of God to others, by looking after the environment, and helping to liberate the oppressed.⁶³

One of the most precious gifts that God offers is the gift of free will. This free will implies responsibility, the responsibility to be whoever one is called to be and to respond positively to God's graces. Human beings may be given rules to live by, but they are responsible for being true to themselves and to God. In addition, they become mutually responsible for bringing justice and a reign of peace to the world.

2.3.3 *God labours for humanity*

This is to consider how God works and labours for me in all creatures upon the face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labours. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc., He gives being, conserves them, confers life and sensation, etc.⁶⁴

Through these words, God is revealed as working through all avenues. God labours for and through men, women, lay, religious, Christians, non-Christians. For God, there is no distinction between different men or women, neither does God's activity know any boundaries. Human beings most often define the boundaries of where God can work, thus limiting God in image and in activity. The challenge for humans is to discover the true immanence of God who chooses to work or labour wherever there are the possibilities of doing so.

The interpretation of God's labours can affect how the approach to Christ's passion and death in the Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises. English warns us that

An inauthentic image of the suffering Christ would be that his extreme suffering is either payment to a demanding God or the evolutionary way of passing into a painless life after death - a kind of mutation of Christ's humanity. The authentic image is that Christ's suffering and death are God's labor of love for us and an example of the way we should enter lovingly into our own suffering out of love for the rest of humanity.⁶⁵

God's labor is done out of love for humanity and concern for the wholeness of the world, but to achieve wholeness, suffering is often encountered. The response to that suffering is determined by a person's openness to God's workings. God presents people and opportunities which manifest God's labor. God did not take away Jesus' suffering during

⁶³ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 256.

⁶⁴ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 236.

⁶⁵ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, pp. 255, 256.

the passion, nevertheless, God laboured by strengthening Jesus with his love and faithful presence. In the same way, God does not take away the suffering of humanity, but labours by offering presence and love.⁶⁶

2.3.4 *God is merciful*

The First Week of the Spiritual Exercises is full of images of the merciful God who loves creation and is ready to forgive the indiscretions of humanity. These exercises show a God who is on the side of the people, forgiving and healing, offering them another chance by giving enough love to relinquish the destructive force of evil. Sp. Exx. 59 reads

I will consider who God is against whom I have sinned, going through His attributes and comparing them with their contraries in me: His wisdom with my ignorance, His power with my weakness, His justice with my iniquity, His goodness with my wickedness.⁶⁷

God is not wrathful, but is a God of constant love and compassion.

The question is often asked why God has allowed sin to enter this world.⁶⁸ One answer is that God gave human beings the gift of free will that offers them the liberty to choose between good and evil. When human beings sin, God does not love less, human beings love less.⁶⁹ God is vulnerable enough to risk giving humans the freedom to love or not to love. But the choice remains with them, and God inevitably tries to draw humanity into a relationship of love. When human beings accept a relationship with God, their hearts are at peace with the love of a merciful God.⁷⁰

The meditation on hell in the Spiritual Exercises can mistakenly portray an inauthentic image of a punishing God who sends humanity to hell for their sins. Ignatius did not have this intention when he developed this meditation. Ignatius desired for humans to become aware again of their creaturehood and to see the need to rely on God for help in overcoming sinfulness. God's forgiving love heals and brings an awareness of the need for that love. To understand God's mercy is to be confronted with the negative side of human existence and to know that God is merciful in spite of that negative side. God's mercy

⁶⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 224.

⁶⁷ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx 59.

⁶⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 220.

⁶⁹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 56.

⁷⁰ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 56.

reveals what enslaves the individual, so that she or he may become aware of this enslavement and overcome it.⁷¹

2.3.5 *God who calls the pray-er to growth*

The rules for the discernment of spirits (Sp. Exx 313-336) in the Spiritual Exercises, when taken as a whole, portray a God who desires growth for the discerning person. Without going into great detail in explaining these rules (to be done later), Ignatius outlines, in a very methodical way, the workings of the different spirits. The image of God that works in the discernment of spirits is truly a God who allows and impels the discerning person to grow as a human being. Growth is often a struggle through different challenges as it seldom comes without difficulty. The discerning person is called to make a constant effort to listen to the movements of the heart in order to decipher the meaning of these different movements. The person then chooses or refuses to act on the movements of each type of spirit.

Through the consolations and desolations, God challenges human beings to possibilities of greater humanity, that is, to come closer to becoming human in the way that God created them to be. God can communicate through both the consolations and desolations. Ignatius tells us that God brings only consolations to the discerning person. But, God does allow desolations to occur so that the person may become aware of his or her weaknesses and work on them in the future. This is another sign of God present in all of life's experiences, giving wisdom and strength to grow to fullness of being. God can be relied on for courage and resilience. Growth of the human being is helped by this presence, support and love, but the answers to the questions and the difficulties that occur must come from the person and he or she need to take the time to look interiorly, reflect, evaluate and prayerfully discern the responses of the heart. These responses in turn become the combined work of the person with God. The creative and imaginative effort that is growth becomes a working together with God.⁷²

⁷¹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 72.

⁷² John English, *Choosing Life*, New York, Paulist Press, 1978, p. 26.

2.3.6 God of community

The God of community is the Trinitarian God, the three persons who create, save and sanctify. The Trinity is portrayed in the beginning of the Second Week in Sp. Exx. 102

This will consist in calling to mind the history of the subject I have to contemplate. Here it will be how the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse or circuit of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since they see that all are going to hell, They decree in Their eternity that the Second Person should become man to save the human race.⁷³

The model of the Trinity becomes a model of a community of love and goodness. The Persons of the Trinity love the world so much that they will send one of themselves to redeem the world. Their love shared between each other is so complete that they must share that love with creation and save it from itself.

In the Spiritual Exercises, each of the persons of the Trinity has a role to play. The triple colloquies in the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises reveal an image of the Father and the Son. God the Father is the creator, but there is a sense that God the Father is much like a Divine Majesty, he is the most remote of the three persons. Although he is wise and good, he is more easily approached through the intermediary of the Son. Jesus, the Son, is the Saviour, the one who is assigned to come down on earth and reveal the goodness and love of God to humanity. The Holy Spirit works in the process of discernment, giving life, consolation and wisdom. Together, the three Persons work in faithful collaboration. "We might say that the Trinity is the prime example of a contemplative in action, as the Three Persons look down on the whole earth (SE 102) and God our Creator and the Holy Spirit send the Word to labor for humanity."⁷⁴

If God is community and relationship, then God also desires to include human beings in that community and relationship.⁷⁵ The *Contemplatio* presents the *Take, Lord, Receive* prayer, whereby humans are invited to a biblical style of covenant with God. Human beings are to offer themselves to God and request only God's grace and love. The covenant becomes the relationship of love, much as between Abraham and God whereby each member offers their fidelity and love.

⁷³ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 102.

⁷⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 237.

⁷⁵ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 246.

2.3.7 *God of mystery*

The different gospel stories that are used by Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises are entitled 'The Mysteries of the Life of our Lord'. According to English, the use of the word 'mystery' is significant in referring to the different gospels stories of Jesus. As the person enters the story of Jesus as a mystery, the mystery of life is revealed. Prayer is no longer a fixed entity, it is open-ended and God is able to transform the life of the person through the mystery. God is mystery who works in imaginative and creative ways that cannot be defined.⁷⁶

2.3.8 *God in all things*

The second point of the *Contemplatio* states

This is to reflect how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me being, life, sensation, intelligence; and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty.⁷⁷

This meditation reveals a God who is in all things. That is, there are no barriers to the way that God can be found. God is not just in the Eucharist, the sacred places and symbols that the Church has created. God is in the smallest of creation and can speak through them.

This is one of the keys to proper discernment, because if God can be present or revealed in all things, humanity must be aware and have open minds and hearts to this reality. It is a call to consider all of life experiences as prayer because God is present in all of these experiences. Ignatian spirituality calls human beings to an attitude of openness to God in all things. This means being a 'contemplative in action', that is recognizing that God can work in so many various ways in life.⁷⁸

Another aspect of God in all things is the awareness of where God has been present, encouraging, sustaining, loving, and dwelling in past human experience. In Ignatian spirituality, the history of life is seen as the story of a relationship with God.⁷⁹ Although humans are often not aware of God's presence, God is there nevertheless.

⁷⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 137.

⁷⁷ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 235.

⁷⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 242.

⁷⁹ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 1993. p. 41.

When God speaks to humanity through the story of the past this becomes an indicator of what to do in the future. This process of seeing God in the past provides more clues to assist people towards better discernment, because God has patiently been revealed through time. Lonsdale informs,

Telling and reflecting on our faith story also helps discernment in another way. It is a process of gradually coming into possession of our true selves, of who we truly are in relation to God. It involves accepting the light and the dark in ourselves, the strong and the weak, the godly and the sinful, the wounded and the healthy.⁸⁰

When the people can look at their life from a faith perspective and see God in all things, life becomes the history of grace with God gently guiding and desiring growth in order for them to be truly spiritually free.

2.4 Images of Christ

For Ignatius, Jesus became the way to God. During his convalescence in Loyola, he read the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony and it was in reading this book that he came to know Jesus, and through Jesus, God. One can say that he saw Jesus as a mediator between God and humanity.⁸¹ Following are some of the images of Christ that Ignatius reveals in his Spiritual Exercises.

2.4.1 Christ that chose poverty and humility

The second week of the Spiritual Exercises introduces the Christ of poverty that Ignatius wished to portray. In the Call of the King, the praying person is asked to join with Christ the King in poverty and in humility. (Sp. Exx. 95) Although, the image of king is not usually symbolic of a choice for poverty and humility, this king invites all his followers to “labor with me, that by following me in suffering, he may follow me in glory.”⁸² In the Second Week, the retreatant is invited to ask for the grace of intimately knowing Christ to be better able to love him and follow him. This Christ came as a humble child, born in a stable, into a poor family. The Son of God rejected power and wealth. This image of poverty and humility is central to the mystery of the incarnation.⁸³

⁸⁰ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 43.

⁸¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 61.

⁸² Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 95.

⁸³ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 240.

The Meditation on the Two Standards is another example of the Christ of poverty. The followers of the Standard of Christ are asked in the Third Point to join in the work of Christ and to follow him.

Consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends...Hence, there will be three steps: the first, poverty as opposed to riches; the second, insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; the third, humility as opposed to pride.⁸⁴

Christ does not coerce, he invites his followers to join in his group or standard and to work with him in his labor of love. He gathers his people on a peaceful plain outside Jerusalem and speaks with confidence and peace, inspiring his followers, 'attracting them to spiritual poverty'. He uses a language of personal appeal and response.⁸⁵

Ignatius speaks of two kinds of poverty, actual poverty and spiritual poverty. Ignatius, in his own life, chose actual poverty as is the case for the other members of the Society of Jesus. English suggests that spiritual poverty means poverty of creaturehood, the kind of spiritual poverty that comes when one recognizes that every person needs God and that all comes from God. It is also a coming into the awareness of the power of sinfulness in life and that the need for God to heal. There is also poverty of vocation, a knowing that all have been called to go beyond themselves to serve with Christ through their vocation.⁸⁶ Spiritual poverty is what is portrayed in the Three Kinds of Humility. In the third and most perfect humility, Ignatius writes

in order to imitate and be in reality more like Christ the Lord, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honors; I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent.⁸⁷

The focus is on being with Christ in all that Christ is, poor and humble. It is true union with him in an affective way.

The Fourth Week meditations reinforce these traits of Jesus. In Jesus' encounter with Thomas, Thomas is approached in humility and asked to touch Jesus' hands. He does not force himself upon Thomas, he invites him to believe. The disciples on the road to Emmaus meet a humble Jesus who quietly listens to them and only in a gesture of

⁸⁴ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 146.

⁸⁵ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 63.

⁸⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 152.

⁸⁷ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 167.

humility does he reveal himself. Jesus rejects the way of self-interest and power to give himself to service and love.⁸⁸

2.4.2 *Christ gives himself to others in friendship*

In the Call of the King and the Two Standards, Ignatius uses the crusader language that was the context of Ignatius' early life in Spain. In his meditations, the Lord shares with his knights and other followers his food, his sufferings and his toils. Ignatius enhances the friendship aspect of the Lord who gives himself to his servants and followers. For Ignatius, Jesus is the King and the knight is the companion. Jesus, the Lord of the world, invites others to join him and he in turn offers his friendship, protection and support as he conquers the world for his Father. When Jesus offers his friendship, there is a humbling of the King metaphor.⁸⁹

Through the Gospel mysteries, Jesus gives himself to his friends and apostles. The miracle performed at the marriage of Cana becomes one of the examples that Ignatius uses to demonstrate how Jesus gave of himself by transforming water into wine. Ignatius tends to emphasize those mysteries of Jesus that relate to his preaching ministry.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Jesus does calm the storm when his disciples are afraid, supports the apostles in their preaching, befriends women, feeds five thousand people who came to see him and brings Lazarus back from the dead at great personal risk. In the institution of the Eucharist, Christ again gave of himself as well as giving the disciples a lasting memory of his presence. Even during the passion, which was the greatest giving of all, he was able to comfort women, forgive the repentant thief and provide for the care of Mary, his mother. Jesus becomes a model of love incarnate. He reveals his friendship as a form of emptying of himself for others.

In the resurrection, Jesus shows his love for Mary, his mother, by appearing to her first, and he offers his consoling presence and friendship to the disciples in Emmaus.⁹¹ As Jesus is revealed in all of these roles of friendship and lover, the retreatant prays for the grace to come to intimately know Jesus and to participate in the mysteries. The mystery of Jesus becomes the story of the person as he or she is called to be like Jesus in relationships.

⁸⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 230.

⁸⁹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 64.

⁹¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 69.

2.4.3 *Christ as a Human Being*

In Ignatius's mind, Jesus is the Son of God, the Word made flesh. He empties himself to take on the human condition and accepts humiliation, hardship, labor, suffering and degrading death out of love for all of humanity.⁹² In taking on human form, Jesus becomes the personification of someone who is fully human, relying on the love of God. Jesus' human experience becomes the person's own experience when he or she prays on the Gospel mysteries.

Ignatius saw Jesus as hiding his divinity in the passion and death as he reveals the fragility of his humanity.⁹³ Like all humans, Jesus knows fear, shares their limitations and suffers. He also must discern with love his own ministry. This humanness of Jesus is an example of how to come closer to God and the validity of human experience as a means to God.

The resurrection reveals another aspect of Jesus' humanity. English tells us,

What matters, however, is that the human person continues to exist after death. Moreover, because Christ is human as well as divine, we must conclude that Jesus' body and soul continue. In a new philosophy of humanity, we would not concern ourselves with body-soul division, but would emphasize the fact that in Christ's risen life, his humanity is fully realized.⁹⁴

Christ's resurrected presence is experienced by the apostles in the Gospel mysteries that form the Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises.

2.4.4 *Christ as leader and king*

The Call of the King in the Second Week is a parable that Ignatius uses to illustrate the Reign of Christ. With Christ as the Eternal King, this kingdom becomes a kingdom of love and generosity. The Eternal King invites his knights to come and join with him in his mission to conquer evil. 'Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with me, that by following me in suffering, he may follow me in glory.'⁹⁵ This King labours with his knights. What belongs to him belongs to all as they all will

⁹² David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 66.

⁹³ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p.62.

⁹⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p.230.

⁹⁵ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 93.

share in his glory. His reign is a shared reign that does not just ask his followers to do his bidding; it is an invitation to work with him and suffer with him, that is, to live as he lives in true union. It is a call to a personal relationship with Jesus. The Ignatian follower is invited to live a meaningful existence in spite of the evil that may be encountered.⁹⁶

English alerts us to the fact that this meditation may give a false image of a powerful and triumphant Lord who is sure to win, and all those who are with him will bask in his glory. There can be a feeling of security in such an image when thinking that this kind of leader will fix all the problems that may be encountered. A true image is the image of a humble leader who supports and inspires all to serve with him and calls his followers to a greater responsibility in their struggles.⁹⁷

The Two Standards, a parable of spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan, offers an additional portrait of a Christ-like style of leadership. Jesus is a leader who encourages his disciples to help others and challenges them to be open to whatever difficulty God calls them to. Christ warmly welcomes everyone in spite of their weaknesses and strengths. His way of loving his friends and servants provides motivation for his followers to serve others. As a leader, he is also ready to serve others and therefore he becomes a role model for others in his person and attitude. He calls all of his helpers to assist him in his mission, that is, the work of redemption.⁹⁸ Jesus shows that this is the way to true life. It is in sharp contrast with the leadership style of Satan who uses deception and intimidation to ensnare his followers.

The followers of Christ's standard are asked to go out into the world and "spread his Sacred Doctrine among men."⁹⁹ This is a model that Ignatius uses to describe Jesus' mission and is the model used to form his company of men, the Jesuits. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, there is a strong focus on the preaching and traveling ministry of Jesus and less on his healing ministry. At the time Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus, he envisioned that his men would evangelize Europe. The healing ministry of Jesus was not prominent in the vision of Ignatius.

2.4.5 *Christ as Saviour or Redeemer*

In the beginning of the Second Week one reads,

⁹⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 254.

⁹⁷ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 255.

⁹⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 96.

⁹⁹ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 145.

Here it will be how the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse or circuit of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since They see that all are going to hell, They decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become man to save the human race.¹⁰⁰

Ignatius introduces the salvific action of Jesus, who surrenders himself by eventually hanging on the cross for all. This image of Jesus on the cross has been interpreted in different ways over the centuries, both within the Spiritual Exercises and in other Christian theologies.

English points out how a false image of Jesus can be interpreted in the First Week exercises, when Jesus is portrayed as the one who has paid a debt to a wrathful God so that everyone may be saved from hell. This theology does not portray a loving God, but a God who demands a ransom for the sins of humanity. But, if hell becomes alienation from God and from the individual's true self, then a more authentic image is that of Jesus who hangs on the cross between humans and hell. Ignatius states that even if only one person would need saving, Christ would suffer for that person.¹⁰¹

English continues to say that the Third and Fourth Week images of Christ may also be misleading as they may be interpreted as a Christ who passes through pain in life to a painless life after death. To understand the passion of Christ through the eyes of a God of love, then the suffering and death of Jesus must be an example of lovingly entering into suffering out of love for humanity. He participates in the labor of God's love. The passion of Jesus can then bring meaning to suffering. Nevertheless, it is not a martyr complex; Jesus knew that his life was in conformity with the love of God and that this love triumphs over sin, suffering and death.¹⁰²

In the meditation of the Third Week, the retreatant is asked to pray on the passion and to "ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me."¹⁰³ Jesus suffers for all of humanity and the praying person is invited to suffer with Jesus and participate in the redemption of the world. In uniting with Jesus in his suffering, the individual is asked to love and support him, much as Jesus sought love and support from his disciples. This means that everyone is invited to help relieve the suffering of others in order that the

¹⁰⁰ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 102.

¹⁰¹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 253.

¹⁰² John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 255.

¹⁰³ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 203.

world may be made whole.¹⁰⁴ The invitation of Jesus includes everyone in the work of the Trinity that creates, redeems and labours.

2.4.6 *The Christ of the Resurrection*

The Fourth Week reveals the resurrected Jesus. The grace that is desired in the Fourth Week is “to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord.”¹⁰⁵ The resurrected Jesus demonstrates that love is greater than death. The power of Jesus resurrected gives meaning to the history of each person. Love overcoming death becomes a source of strength, motivation and understanding into the life of each individual.¹⁰⁶ Christ’s resurrection is a sign that his obedience to God brought eternal life.

The Christ of the resurrection is the Christ of wholeness and an indication that God desires all of humanity to be whole or redeemed. The resurrection stories recount how Christ attempts to bring wholeness to his friends and disciples. When he comes to console his mother after the resurrection, he wishes to share with her his joy and glory.¹⁰⁷ He brings wholeness to Mary Magdalene so that she has the courage to tell others about what she has witnessed. The disciples at Emmaus were consoled when they spoke with Jesus and broke bread with him. These apparitions reveal a Jesus who continues to desire that all of humanity be made whole.

This ends the two sections on the images of God and Christ in Ignatian spirituality. These images are integral to Ignatian spirituality as it is lived today and become the essence of the Christian faith experience in the Spiritual Exercises and for the followers of the Ignatian Way. The following paragraphs will describe the different forms of prayer in the Spiritual Exercises and the rules for discernment.

2.5. Forms of Prayer

“The main purpose of prayer is to grow in the knowledge of God’s love for us so that we may be instruments of that love in our world. This knowledge can be described as intimate, personal, unique, and experiential.”¹⁰⁸ Ignatian prayer forms help the person to

¹⁰⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁵ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 221.

¹⁰⁶ John English, *Choosing Life*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁷ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁸ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 261.

come to this more intimate, personal, unique and experiential relationship with God and a deeper knowledge of his love. This is what Ignatius intended with his Spiritual Exercises. Although, not a book about prayer, the Spiritual Exercises offer a series of guidelines or directions on different ways of praying.

The Spiritual Exercises suggest a variety of prayer forms. The four main prayer forms are the Examen of Consciousness (SP. Exx 24-43), Meditation (Principle and Foundation, First Week, The Kingdom of Christ, The Two Standards, Three Kinds of Humility, The Three Classes of Men, The Election, The Contemplation to Attain Love), Gospel Contemplation (primarily the Second and Third Weeks and part of the Fourth Week) and the Application of the Senses (Second and Third Weeks).

If we go back to the definition of prayer in the introduction, in prayer we attempt to bring our true selves to the surface. In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius gives some tools to help the person to reveal the true self in relation to God. For him, this relationship with God requires that the individual be able to see God in life experiences. Ignatius' primary focus was to bring the person to an awareness of finding God in all things. To come to this awareness is to be a contemplative in action. The whole life of the person becomes a continuous prayer as God speaks and converses through these daily life experiences. To be open to God's loving presence daily, hourly and every minute is what means to be a contemplative in action. Since being in touch with God's love is necessary for discernment, then in principle, the Ignatian way is an attempt to be constantly in the mode of discernment and prayer. Prayer involves listening of the heart, spontaneity of the spirit and a receptivity to what is heard.

2.5.1 Examen of Consciousness

The Examen of Consciousness or the Consciousness Examen as it is termed today, and the Daily Particular Examination of Conscience have been two prayers that traditionally were used to focus on the faults and transgressions of the person. To be accurate, if one was to read the Spiritual Exercises literally, a person could interpret these spiritual disciplines as an accounting of one's failures. Fortunately, the past thirty to twenty years have brought about a change in the practice of this prayer. First, George Aschenbrenner, followed by others such as John Govan, and John English, have re-interpreted the Examen. Consequently, its usage has changed dramatically. This prayer, in its newly interpreted form, is a reflection on the moments in the day when the person has

become aware of and responded positively and/or negatively to God's presence. It is a reviewing of the day through the eyes of a loving God. The Examen can be used in the retreat context, but it is most often used, with its many variations, outside the retreat setting.

John Govan, suggests the following format for the daily Examen:¹⁰⁹

1. The person places himself or herself in the presence of the loving God and/or Jesus.
2. The person requests of the Holy Spirit the gift of light and wisdom to be able to see the events of the past day through the eyes of God.
3. The person slowly reviews the events of the past day, noting feelings of being in the presence of God. For these times, he or she gives thanks for the growth in the knowledge of God's blessings. Whenever he or she feels ill at ease with an event of the day or the response to that event, then he or she expresses sorrow and asks for God's enlightenment about the experience.
4. At the end of the prayer, the person looks forward to the next day and requests a special grace to overcome any obstacle or difficulty that is anticipated.

This spiritual discipline allows the person to become aware of God working in daily life events, as well as incorporating an awareness of the person's physical and psychological obstacles to grace.¹¹⁰ Ignatius, towards the end of his life would practice the Examen hourly so as to be constantly aware of God's presence.¹¹¹ The Examen brings God to life in the experience of the person and helps to integrate prayer and action. It is a source of spiritual growth in that the person is able to discern how the movement of the different spirits is affecting the relationship with God. This is a prayer for busy people who need to be able to balance life, ministry and prayer.

2.5.2 Meditation

The Spiritual Exercises contain several different prayers called meditations. The format for these meditations is usually the same, a preparatory prayer, two or three preludes or elements of the prayer experience, several points to consider, a colloquy or

¹⁰⁹ John Govan, "The Examen : A Tool for Holistic Growth" , *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: Best of the Review-3* , David Fleming, ed., St. Louis, Missouri, Review for Religious, 1988, p. 318-325.

¹¹⁰ John English, *Discernment and the Examen*, Guelph, Ontario, Guelph Spirituality Centre, 1975, p. 22.

¹¹¹ Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits : Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, St. Louis, Missouri, The Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1986, p. 66.

dialogue with Jesus, ending with a common vocal prayer. Meditation, in the Ignatian sense, is thought of as more of a mental prayer which involves thinking and reasoning of a certain truth or situation. But, John Veltri notes that these meditations were not only for the intellect.

In meditation, the point of departure is the activity of pondering and reflection of the heart. Ignatius understood meditation to be more in the nature of pondering a love letter and thus developing the understanding of the heart...He did not intend the meditation technique to be the work of a disembodied, focused intellect found in the meditation manuals of the first half of this century.¹¹²

The meditations help the person to move out of the thinking mode to the level of deepest desires, which is to gain a deeper knowledge of the love of God. These meditations prepare the person for the contemplations of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises. Repetitions of each of the meditations are made so that the individual may, over time, focus more on a particular point that may be more fruitful or meaningful. The repetition assists the person to come to a deeper level of truth.¹¹³

The meditation of the Three Kinds of Humility in the Second Week is a meditation on the level of disposition or availability of the person to Christ. The first humility is for someone who is beginning to turn towards God and obey the commandments. The second humility is for another who desires indifference to the gifts that may be received from God. The third humility is for a person who is in the unitive stage of the spiritual life, which is to desire to experience what Christ experienced in love, but only if God so desires.¹¹⁴ This desire to truly live what Christ lived is the more or Magis of Love. The meditation of the three humilities is one example of how the Spiritual Exercises may be beneficial to beginning pray-ers or to more experienced pray-ers.

2.5.3 Gospel Contemplation

The more well-known type of Ignatian prayer is what is called gospel contemplation or the imaginative contemplation that comprises most of the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. Through the different graces that are requested in the contemplations, this spiritual practice becomes a unitive form of prayer as the person desires to be present with Christ in his missionary work, in his suffering and in his

¹¹² John Veltri, *Orientations*, p. 298.

¹¹³ John Veltri, *Orientations*, p. 299.

¹¹⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 174.

resurrection. According to English, “The unitive way is the stage of our spiritual life when we move out of ourselves toward Christ in much the same way Jesus moved out of himself all through the Passion. Jesus gives of himself for others; he forgets himself.”¹¹⁵

The person requests the grace to be in union with Christ.

To enter into the gospel contemplation, Ignatius invites the person to use the imagination. Sp. Exx. 112 reads,

This is a mental representation of the place. It will consist here in seeing in imagination the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, or through valleys and over hills. Observe also the place or cave where Christ is born; whether big or little; whether high or low; and how it is arranged.¹¹⁶

Through this type of prayer, the individual enters into the sacred events, relaxes in the presence of the different characters in the story and opens up to whatever occurs. There is less mental effort than in the meditations and a deeper union with Christ as the person gains an experiential knowledge of Christ. The individual is truly in the Gospel mystery. Contemplation heightens the person’s awareness of God in his or her life history and this history becomes part of God’s story.¹¹⁷

In using the imagination there are two movements that happen in the person. To begin, there is a remembering of the different events of the life of Jesus and the different actions that he takes. The second movement occurs when through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel mystery comes toward him or her and is present in the mystery. The individual is drawn to participate in the mystery. English tells us that

the imagination is the starting point. The second movement occurs when we find that an hour has gone by, and only during the prayer review do we notice that there has been an experience of God’s presence. When we reflect on the prayer period, we become aware that we picked up and kissed the infant Jesus, held the child in our arms, or performed some similar action.¹¹⁸

This goes beyond fantasy, it is an awareness of a relationship with Jesus in a deeply felt and personal way.

Contemplation is again, both a prayer for beginning pray-ers and experienced pray-ers as it is through the requested graces that interior knowledge of God is received. Although

¹¹⁵John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 218.

¹¹⁶Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 112.

¹¹⁷John English, *Choosing Life*, p.53.

¹¹⁸John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 138.

the instructions of the Spiritual Exercises seem detailed and rigid, they do not need to be followed step by step in every detail. They are to be used only as a guideline. If the person receives the grace after only following part of the Exercise, then that is sufficient. The imagination must be allowed to be free in order that the heart may be open to putting on the heart and mind of Christ.¹¹⁹

Some people have difficulty entering in a personal way into the Gospel mystery. English states “If a particular retreatant is unable to do this, at least to some degree, then the one who gives the Exercises should introduce the retreatant to another method of prayer. The Spirit will make God’s presence known in a manner that is suited to that individual.”¹²⁰ No one should be locked into a particular form of prayer.

2.5.4 Application of the Senses

A description of the Application of the Senses is found in Sp. Exx. 121-126. It begins with “After the preparatory prayer and three preludes, it will be profitable with the aid of the imagination to apply the five senses to the subject matter of the First and Second Contemplation in the following manner.”¹²¹ The contemplation goes on to ask the person to see with the imagination, hear what they are saying, smell the infinite fragrance, taste the infinite sweetness, and apply the sense of touch. All of this is done “to draw fruit from this.” The individual is asked to contemplate with the whole being in order to enter more deeply into the mystery. It is a prayer of deep embodiment, using each of the individual senses. In Scripture, particularly in the Psalms, the reality of God is often described through the use of senses, and invites the reader to taste, burn, sweeten, shine etc. In a similar way, the application of the senses becomes what may be called a living of the spiritual senses as in “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Ps 34.8

Lonsdale states that this form of prayer is part of the development of the gospel contemplation. He continues to say that the Spiritual Exercises follow the general development of simplification in the explanation of the prayer exercises, that is, the beginning Spiritual Exercises have many points and instructions but as the Spiritual Exercises move along they are less structured and simpler. The assumption is made that the person needs less instruction as he or she become more experienced in the prayer life.

¹¹⁹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 113.

¹²⁰ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 134.

¹²¹ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 121.

The Application of the Senses is then the simplification of the gospel contemplation, making it a prayer of the more practiced pray-er. It occurs after two repetitions of the gospel contemplation and is meant to be a deepening of the previous prayer material with an increase in passivity and a decrease in activity within the prayer time.¹²²

2.6 Discernment

Discernment is a central feature of Ignatian spirituality. During Ignatius' time of convalescence as well the period in which he wrote and developed his Spiritual Exercises in Manresa, he slowly began to listen to his deepest desire which was to be able to discern and follow the will of God. His concern for his Jesuit followers was that they could do the same, to listen to the Holy Spirit and to be able to adapt to the different circumstances of life and ministry without being rigid and uniform. In his own life, he chose to form a Society that was able to respond to the needs of the time, using the inspirations of other saints, but without conforming to a ministry that had been previously developed. Ignatius truly felt that this is what God called him to do. He took his personal experiences of sentiment and feelings, listened to them and analysed the effect these feelings had on his spiritual growth. As well, he studied some of the spiritual masters in his theological studies and consulted spiritual guides during his time in Manresa. It is known today that Ignatius did not invent anything new when he developed his rules for the discernment of spirits. He drew heavily from the previous Christian tradition, in particular the desert fathers. His genius was his ability to develop these rules in a format and structure that made discernment accessible to Christians outside a monastery, particularly those who would not always have access to a spiritual guide.

2.6.1 *What is discernment?*

In the Ignatian tradition,

discernment is the art of appreciating the gifts that God has given us and discovering how we might best respond to that love in daily life. It is a process of finding one's own way of discipleship in a particular set of circumstances; a means of responding to the call of Christian love and truth in a situation where there are often conflicting interests and values and choices to be made. It is the gift by which we are able to observe and assess the different factors in a particular situation, and to

¹²²David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 118.

choose that course of action which most authentically answers our desire to live by the gospel.”¹²³

There are two kinds of discernment that need to be made by the Christian today. One is the day to day living whereby the individual needs to make different daily decisions or respond to different circumstances within relationships and events. The second type of discernment concerns those choices that are more life-changing, such as making a decision about a vocational choice, a job or a spouse. Both types of discernment require a desire to collaborate in love with God and a need to listen to the inner promptings of the soul. Ignatius calls this the discernment of spirits.

The discernment of spirits in the Ignatian context is often associated with finding ‘the will of God’, a term often misunderstood. The will of God is often spoken of as if it were something that is outside of humanity, somewhat like a master plan that God has created on his own. His creatures are called to decipher God’s special plan and discover what his desire or will for them is within that plan. This can be very stressful for many Christians as they feel that God’s plan is foreign to them and they need to discern the plan or not be able to participate fully in God’s creation. Lonsdale suggests that this is very limiting to the personal freedom of each human being. He explains that God’s will is that human beings respond to God’s love to the best of their ability and in responding in this way they help to shape their lives with God. They become the co-creators that they are meant to be.¹²⁴ The person’s deepest attitudes, desires and values help to shape the life of that person. This gives him or her much more responsibility for decisions made, actions taken and for all that happens individually and communally in the world. This theology of God’s will implies a living relationship with God that is ever changing, communicative and participative. The will of God becomes an invitation to partnership with God and encourages all Christians to discern more responsibly their role and in the world. This is a universal call to holiness. In the universal call to holiness as promoted in the Vatican II documents, everyone is reminded of their responsibility as baptized Catholics to discern their ministries be they lay or clergy.¹²⁵

English would add that an individual’s personal history is an important element of discernment. When a person looks at the personal history through the eyes of God, she or

¹²³ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 91.

¹²⁴ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 92.

¹²⁵ Walter Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York, America Press, 1966, p. 65.

he can feel God speaking. A person's personal history includes the events and decisions that have formed the past. A discerning person can ask how past decisions have formed him or her as a person and what have been the consequences of these events and decisions. What feelings have these events and consequences evoked? These questions and the answers to them can help in proper discernment, particularly when discerning important decisions. By listening to God throughout the past the individual can be able to judge more adeptly what was good and creative and what was evil and destructive. These are some of the keys to good discernment.¹²⁶

The examen prayer can be very helpful for daily discernment as the person listens to God speaking and forming a long term personal relationship. Discernment becomes a daily dialogue with God about the past, present and future.

2.6.2 Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

The rules for the discernment of spirits (Sp. Exx 313 – 336) are useful for the spiritual guide and can later be used by the discerning person to discern outside of the Spiritual Exercises retreat context. The rules are a process that encourages the discernor to consider feelings or affective responses to God. In addition, the events of his or her life are considered to be able to interpret and discern how God may be speaking through all of these elements. It is a combination of affect and reason, so that the individual is told to 'use your head and trust your feelings'.¹²⁷ These rules, used regularly and in conjunction with the Examen, constitute the disciplines of the discerning heart. With time and practice one becomes more effective at effective discernment.

It is necessary to define two different terms that Ignatius uses in the rules for discernment. These terms are consolation and desolation. In Ignatian terminology, the words consolation and desolation are used to describe the direction of the movement of the soul either towards or away from God. Both terms are active terms in the sense that they are movements and not static states of the soul. Because they are movements of the soul, one needs to always look at the wider context of the life of the person.¹²⁸

Consolation comes from the Holy Spirit and is the movement towards God. A person is in consolation when they feel awe at the wonder of God upon the sight of a beautiful

¹²⁶ John English, *Choosing Life*, p. 146.

¹²⁷ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p.69.

¹²⁸ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 75.

sunset or joy and peace with God during prayer or an increase in faith, hope or love. Consolation can occur even if the feeling is negative such as feeling anger and indignation when one sees a true injustice, because the feeling is a movement towards God and an increase in the knowledge of God's love.

Desolation, from the evil spirit, is the opposite, that is, a movement away from or a blockage from God's love. An example would be a sense of God being distant or aloof in prayer or a resistance to the love of God. It can also mean joy at performing a vengeful act, because the person is moving away from God's love. Desolation often points to areas of needed growth.¹²⁹

Ignatius uses these terms in this way for his rules for the discernment of spirits. He stresses the importance of the individual to truly listen carefully to these movements of the heart which are like undercurrents of the soul, much as a river has undercurrents that determine the general direction of the water in the river. Although it is important to listen to one's surface feelings, emotions and desires, the key to a relationship with God remains in these undercurrents that indicate the direction that the person is going in.¹³⁰ An individual can be in deep sorrow because of the loss of a loved one, but be in consolation because they are feeling close to God through the presence of others.

In his rule for the discernment of spirits, Ignatius speaks about three different types of people. Sp. Exx. 314 describes a person in the first group. This is someone who is not looking to be close to God and moves and acts on impulse. Here the Holy Spirit brings feelings of sadness or remorse for what has been done and the evil spirit (our personal enemy or enemy of humanity) brings joy and pleasure at any self-gratifications.

Sp. Exx. 315-327 are meant for individuals who are what is termed as in the First Week mode in their relationship with God. These are people who truly desire a relationship with God and are making an effort to change their lives to be of better service to others. Here they will receive consolation in the form of joy, peace, courage and inspiration. The opposite movement of desolation happens in the form of discouragement, anxiety and obstacles. Ignatius counsels persons who are in constant desolation not to make any changes in their lives as they may make decisions under the influence of the evil spirit. Ignatius counsels persons in desolation to pray more and to try to determine where the desolation is coming from. The cause of the desolation may be a resistance to the

¹²⁹ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 85.

¹³⁰ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 73.

promptings from God or a diminishing of the prayer life or an attachment to the consolations that they have received in the past. In order to effectively counteract the desolation, it is important to take a step back, see where the desolation began and determine what may have triggered it. In this way, the person becomes aware of her/his vulnerabilities in the spiritual life. It is helpful if this process is done with the aid of a spiritual guide or a friend who is aware of the promptings of the spirit. Ignatius reassures his followers that desolation is temporary and if they persist in their prayer, consolation will follow. When in consolation, Ignatius encourages all to enjoy the consolation, knowing that it is temporary and to keep the consolation in mind so as to be stronger whenever the desolation should occur.

In the Second Week rules for discernment (Sp. Exx. 328-336), Ignatius is speaking about different types of persons. These are people who have already developed a close relationship with God and desire to attain an even higher level of spiritual intimacy with God. These people have already made many choices in their lives that have directed them towards God. For them, the rules for discernment become more complicated. Ignatius warns that individuals in this group may fall under the influence of the evil spirit which takes the form of St. Paul's 'Angel of Light' and receive false consolation. In other words, these good people will think of actions or thoughts that are good or honourable, but which may turn out to be destructive in the end. If they fall into desolation, they are asked to look and investigate the beginning, the middle and the end of the circumstances surrounding the decision or the event to see where the 'angel of light' may have entered. Most often it is at their points of vulnerability. For example, this vulnerability may be a strong sense of generosity and this desire to be generous is abused or distorted. Sp. Exx. 335 describes the actions of the good and evil spirit as

In souls that are progressing to greater perfection, the action of the good angel is delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge. The action of the evil spirit upon such souls is violent, noisy and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone.¹³¹

One can see how God draws his people gently towards him, much as water is attracted to the sponge. Lonsdale warns that in all decision making, and particularly in times of excessive enthusiasm and consolation, all discerning persons must evaluate what is

¹³¹ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Sp. Exx. 335.

happening in the rest of their lives as to see how decisions may affect the wider context of their personal story.¹³²

2.6.3 Election

Another major element of discernment in the Spiritual Exercises is in the Second Week in the Sp. Exx. 1969-189. This part of the Spiritual Exercises is termed the Election or choice of a state of life, but it can be used in any major decision-making process that the individual may need to make. The primary purpose of the Election is that the person be free from any destructive forces inside and outside hampering good decision-making. The destructive forces are what Ignatius calls 'inordinate attachments' as described in the 'Three Classes of Men'. These attachments enslave the person and impede responding freely to God.

The different choices in the Election must be in true relationship with the identity of the person. Good discernment requires that the praying person be able to answer the questions, 'Who am I?' and 'Where did I come from?'¹³³

If this is to be a unitive experience, the decision should also be made in companionship with Christ in an atmosphere of prayer. Again one needs to listen carefully to the movements of the spirit, much as in the rules of discernment. The election is to be used at times when a choice must be made between two different options that are both in union with creation.¹³⁴ The purpose of the election is to choose what would be the better of the two options for the 'greater glory of God'.

Sometimes, through the discernment of spirits alone, the decision can be made, but if the decision is still not clear, Ignatius suggests a few other ways to further the decision making process. The first step would be to pray for indifference as to which choice would be better so that the soul would be like 'a balance at equilibrium'. The individual would then, in a prayerful mode, write down a list of the pros and cons of the different options and evaluate the results.¹³⁵

Ignatius also suggests some imaginative scenarios that could be prayed upon. One such scenario would be to imagine oneself on one's deathbed and then to see where the

¹³² David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 84.

¹³³ John English, *Spiritual Freedom* p. 177.

¹³⁴ John English, *Spiritual Freedom* p. 198.

¹³⁵ John English, *Spiritual Freedom* p. 198.

choice would lie. Another would be to imagine that he or she was counselling someone else on these options.

When the individual has finally come to a decision, but before acting on it, Ignatius suggests that the person ask God for confirmation. This confirmation is an offering to God so that there may be a true sense that this decision will be of service to God.¹³⁶

The decision-making process in the Election is a combination of the heart and reason as the individual is asked to identify and analyze facts, all the while listening to the heart in prayer. The consolations will come from God when the right decision is made. Genuine consolation brings the individual into harmony with the true self. Even in the desolations, the individual can learn much about where any vulnerabilities lie and grow from that awareness.

2.6.4 *Obstacles to discernment*¹³⁷

Lonsdale stresses the importance of being aware that there are and always will be some obstacles to good discernment. He cites five different categories of obstacles, the first being physical factors. Physical obstacles can be fatigue, ill health or lack of time to discern properly. The second category is emotional or psychological factors. This includes acute anxiety, depression or personality disorders in which the person needs some professional help. There can be emotional attachments or addictions that can cloud some people's ability to think clearly. In others, there may be a rigidity in attitude or a lack of imagination which prevents them from being open to the Spirit or listening to others. Some people are unable to identify true consolation or desolation and still others have a poor image of self in relation to God. Fear is another emotional factor that hinders true discernment.

The third group of factors are social and cultural factors. For those who are in an upper class society, they may not be able to recognize the poor in their midst. Theological factors include an inauthentic image of God as judge, lawmaker or tyrant. The image of the Church can also affect discernment. When people give undue weight to the authority of the Church, they will wait for this authority to make decisions for them, not allowing for their own proper discernment. Lastly, there are spiritual factors such as lack of ability to stay in stillness to pray or difficulty to be receptive to God's promptings.

¹³⁶ John English, *Spiritual Freedom* p. 199.

¹³⁷ David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, p. 137-157.

In order to help a person to overcome any obstacles that may occur, there must be a deep trust in God and an openness to whatever may come in the way of the discernment process. It is normal to have obstacles and they are to be expected so the person should be on the alert for them. The adage 'Know thyself' is essential. In knowing their weaknesses people can better recognize when they are experiencing obstacles to proper discernment. When they are aware of any obstacles, they should address them and try to overcome them. The simple fact of acknowledging an obstacle diminishes its power.

Discernment is a challenge that exposes many of the individual's struggles and weaknesses. It is only in perseverance and practice that he or she may become an effective discerner and able to be true to an identity as a loved creature of God.

This ends the chapter on Ignatian spirituality. The two authors that were cited in this interpretation of Ignatian spirituality used their knowledge of twentieth century theology and their own observations as spiritual directors in forming their interpretations. They are men of their times and have adapted the Spiritual Exercises so that this classic text may continue to speak to people of today.

Chapter 3

Feminist Spirituality: One of Many Visions

Our one desire and choice should be what is
more conducive to the end for which we are created.
(Sp. Exx. 23)

The third chapter of this thesis describes a specific Christian feminist spirituality, drawn from the writings of the feminist author, Joan Chittister. She is a writer, lecturer and a Benedictine nun living in the United States. She writes from the perspective of a white, well-educated, American citizen who has written many books from the 1980's to the present time. This study focuses primarily on three of her books, *Feminist Spirituality for Men and Women*, *In Search of Belief* and *The Rule of Benedict*. As well, I will draw from one chapter of the book *Scarred by Struggle*. These texts cover the time period from 1992 to 2003 and reflect the development of her thought throughout this period. Since she is still living and continues to write, it is important to note that her thoughts on feminist spirituality may change.

The time frame coincides with the writings of the two Ignatian authors, David Lonsdale and John English, who were cited in Chapter Two of this study. Chittister has been exposed to the same world view and theological thought, and comes from a similar cultural background: an Anglophone, growing up in an occidental culture of Caucasian origin. In comparing the feminist thought of Chittister and the Ignatian interpretation of English and Lonsdale, it is important that these parameters of culture and time period remain the same. I have chosen her writings for this reason, as well because she makes the point that both women and men can live out a feminist spirituality. She states "This book is about a feminist worldview, about another way of looking at life, about another set of values designed to nurture a dying globe and rescue a forgotten people. These concepts are open to men and women alike."¹³⁸ This aspect is very important to me as I believe in the value of inclusiveness and that the Church of today must be open to the view point of all sexes, male and female.

¹³⁸ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men*, Ottawa, Novalis, 1998, p. 7.

In addition, I will be using the writings of two other feminist authors specifically to complement some information that was incomplete in the writings of Chittister. They are Katherine Zappone, a feminist writer from Ireland and Kathleen Fischer a spiritual director from the United States.

This chapter will begin by defining feminist spirituality and making the distinction between feminist and feminine as these words are often used interchangeably. Then, as in the previous chapter on Ignatian spirituality, it investigates more deeply four different aspects of feminist spirituality: the image of God, the image of Christ, prayer and discernment.

3.1 What is feminist spirituality?

Feminist spirituality is a spirituality inspired by feminist thought. Feminism is a world view that challenges the present patriarchal thinking or mindset that is ingrained in most of our societies today. Many of the patriarchal values, such as dualisms, hierarchical structures of society and creation, power structures and role determination of the sexes are examined and critiqued. Feminists, rooted in the experience of women, speak from the point of view of the powerless, those who have not been the history writers, the lawmakers, nor the leaders of our governments. They value all of creation equally, accepting the differences of the other as important without making a distinction of which is better. This world view values the process of creating, not only the success of the project, as well as the relationships that were formed. They see that male and female are to be valued equally, even though they are not necessarily the same and that the relationships between men and women should be relationships of mutual respect. Only in allowing both women and men to use their gifts freely, do we begin to see the human face of God. Katherine Zappone adds that any definition of feminism should include:

- 1) a *consciousness* that patriarchal culture inhibits the full human development of all peoples-especially women, the economically resourceless, and people of color-and that it destructively exploits the natural world;
- 2) a *vision* of what life could be like so that more and more people are able to find meaning, work, a sense of dignity, and the possibility of self-determination;
- 3) a *set of activities* that challenge the present social structures of politics, education, family, religion, and the economy so that the vision becomes part of history; and
- 4) an *evolving culture* (produced by the consciousness, vision, and attitudes) that shifts

the total pattern of human behaviour toward sanctifying every individual and cleansing the earth.¹³⁹

Schneiders tells us that the term 'feminist spirituality' first began to be used in the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970's. She defines feminist spirituality as

the reclaiming by women of the reality and power designated by the term "spirit" and the effort to regain spirit and body, heaven and earth, culture and nature, eternity and time, public and private, political and personal, in short, all those hierarchized dichotomous dualisms whose root is the split between spirit and body and whose primary incarnation is the split between male and female.¹⁴⁰

One of the characteristics of both feminism and feminist spirituality is the variety of interpretations and variances encompassed by this discipline. Feminism first began in Europe and then spread to North America where it was embraced by the white culture. Since then, however, womanist spirituality of the African American women, Mujerista spirituality of the Hispanic women, Asian feminist spirituality, African feminist spirituality and other spiritualities from the different geographical areas of the world have developed. The majority of feminist writers will identify themselves as coming from a specific culture, social stance, and/or racial background. So that there may be a consistent view of feminism, this thesis will analyze primarily the work of only one Christian feminist writer, that of Joan Chittister.

3.2 What is meant by feminine and feminist?

The meaning of the two words 'feminine' and 'feminist' are sometimes used interchangeably and can therefore confuse the reader. The word 'feminine', means that which is associated with the female sex. This trait most often has strong cultural associations as the adjective that defines the kind of traits that a woman of a specific society is expected to have. For example, in some cultures, it is not very feminine to be strong physically, whereas, in other cultures, physical strength is a very desirable feminine trait. Usually, what is defined as feminine is what the ruling group in society has defined as feminine and not feminine. Most often this ruling group are not women themselves. In

¹³⁹ Katherine Zappone, *The Hope for Wholeness: A Spirituality for Feminists*, Mystic, Connecticut, Twenty-Third Publications, 1991, p. 9, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Sandra Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Church*, rev. ed., New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2004, p. 75.

itself, the word feminine sets boundaries on how women should act and feel. Chittister states,

what is most important is not whether the feminine is defined by society or endemic to the person but whether or not women themselves determine the content and the conclusions of those definitions. The feminine is not something that can be defined, determined, and decided by men. Women have far too long been assigned sex roles by male authorities, and to the detriment of both sexes.¹⁴¹

The word feminist applies more to an attitude, a way of being with certain sets of values that are particular to feminism. Some of these values have already been explained. Feminism is a world view that differs from the traditional patriarchal view that sees the world as a hierarchy of life. For feminists, humanity is formed of two genders that have traits that are possibilities in both of these genders.¹⁴²

Using this definition, it becomes evident that not all women are feminists. Many women have adopted and accepted the patriarchal world view. By the same token, some men can be feminists. Feminism can be as liberating for men as it can be for women because men are not then confined to specific roles that have been determined as masculine.¹⁴³

3.3 Images of God

One of the biggest challenges in feminist spirituality has been to confront some the patriarchal images of God. Because the image of God becomes a defining factor in a person's relationship with God, this element of feminist spirituality is of primary importance. Most people who have come into a feminist consciousness, see their image of God radically changing. Zappone relates,

The feminist shifting of sacred symbols and imagery is anchored in women's experience of self-integrity and interdependence. As women 'hope for wholeness,' all their patterns of relationship change; the shift in one affects a transformation in the others. When it comes to "God", we have seen how the search for self-integrity encourages women to re-image the divine within themselves.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p.3.

¹⁴² Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 4.

¹⁴³ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Katherine Zappone, *The Hope for Wholeness*, p. 88.

This shift can initially cause a perception of a God who is no longer there because they can no longer relate to the God of their fathers. Feminists and in particular Christian feminists have had to work through this absence to rediscover an image of God that they can relate to. In some cases they have had to rename and rediscover the God of their Christian tradition. Following are the primary images of God and of Christ as defined in the Christian feminist spirituality of Joan Chittister.

3.3.1 *God is male, female and more*

An important problem cited by feminists when speaking about God is the overwhelming male imagery that is used in Christianity when speaking about God. The creed speaks of God the Father, our liturgies are filled with male imageries of King, Lord, Master, and the use of masculine pronouns when referring to God. Chittister invites reflection on this issue when she states

The problem with the Creed for those whose belief in God is whole is not that God is father. The problem is that God is not only father. To use father-language alone to demonstrate the nature of God betrays the very God we believe in. The language limps. The language misleads. The language diminishes.¹⁴⁵

The consistent use of a male representation of God has two effects. First of all, God is limited to specific qualities that the image represents. Words such as King or Lord, represent a God that is authoritarian and distant because kings and lords in our culture are seen as people who are distant and wield power without concern for the ordinary person. These words are symbols with very heavy meaning and consequences in the imagination of Christians. The second effect is that women are seen as less God-like or as representing less the image of God. In principle, all human beings are made in the image of God. But, when men and women hear God language that presents God as predominately male, then they, as women, identify themselves less with God and the qualities that this male God has. It affects society in that men see women as less God-like and treat them as such. Their presence in Church structures is less recognized and they become invisible. Chittister cautions that “to be made ‘in the image of God’ is not to be shaped male but to be made loving, feeling, thinking.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, Ligouri, Missouri, Ligouri/Triumph Publishing, 1999, p.26,27.

¹⁴⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 64.

The debate over inclusive language in church texts demonstrates this invisibility of women. When the church authorities state that the sole use of the words “men” or “mankind” includes men and women, they do not understand that this language makes women feel excluded. Women are not identified specifically as present in the text. Inclusive language acknowledges that the two genders are present in humanity and that the Holy Spirit speaks through all of humanity.¹⁴⁷

3.3.2 *God the loving creator*

Another one of the fundamental images of the God of feminist spirituality is the God of love and goodness. The power of this love becomes the creating force that brings forth the elements of the universe. Chittister calls God “the sum total of created goodness.”¹⁴⁸ God loves creation and desires that creation come to full development. There is no hierarchy in God’s love, in other words, God loves and respects his creatures equally without preference of one over the other. In the feminist mindset, there should be no domination of one creature over another aspect of creation because God has deemed that all of creation deserves to be loved and cared for. This comes into conflict with the biblical passage where God tells humankind to “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” Gen. 1:28

Power and the use of power among the different elements of creation becomes an issue here. If God loves all of creation equally and there is no hierarchy to this love, power can no longer be used in the sense of power over someone or something else. It should be a shared power. Those who are more able are called to share their strength to empower others who are weaker in some sense so that they may also become stronger and develop fully. Chittister explains,

Power in feminist spirituality maintains the right to be, the right to the self, the sacredness of the other. The kind of power that suppresses any of these dimensions sins against the creative power of God. The God who creates us to live and thrive, to grow and develop, did not create us so that we could have those rights denied or ourselves deny the same roots to others...The right order of creation demands that each of us recognize the sacredness of the other.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁸ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 69.

Feminists believe that power exists to be shared. The creative love that is the essence of God's power is a power that is shared and that empowers the rest of creation to develop to its fullest. Love empowers the other and honors the sacred of the other. Any system of domination is a system that does not honor the sacredness of the other and therefore goes against the creative power of God and against the will of God. When human beings, made in the image of God, empower others through their love, they become co-creators with God or participants in the process that is creation.¹⁵⁰

3.3.3 God of vulnerability and mercy

Chittister reminds us of the creedal phrase, 'I believe in ... the forgiveness of sins',¹⁵¹ a phrase that unveils an image of God who is merciful to humanity. The God of creation knows its creatures and their vulnerabilities and allows these weaknesses to take effect. To be vulnerable is to let go of control and to trust in the goodness that is present in the other. God let go of control when humans were given free will. God became vulnerable and trusted in the goodness that is in humanity and continually calls individuals to give birth to the love that first emerged from God. If God did not want to be vulnerable, creation would have been made perfect without the element of evil which permits humans the option to sin. This is the human gift of free will.

But God is merciful and forgives human beings when they choose ways that are not of God. God's mercy knows no boundaries. Chittister states,

Forgiveness, perhaps the most divine of the divine attributes, ranks, as well, as the most basic of human processes, the one that really brings us to the zenith of ourselves. To forgive is to be like God. God the Forgiver stands before us, beckoning us to holiness, showing us forgiveness as the way to wholeness: to mental health, to personal growth, to independence of emotions, to freedom of soul.¹⁵²

God's mercy becomes an example for humanity of how we are to treat one another. When God is merciful to human beings and they are aware of this mercy, then they can in turn be merciful to others. Revenge and hatred, as a result of hurtful acts, take a back seat to justice that is restorative and life giving. When God asks of individuals to love the sinner, but hate the sin, then those who have been hurt must acknowledge the hurt, hold the aggressor accountable and forgive them so as to be able to go beyond the sorrow and

¹⁵⁰ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 69, 70.

¹⁵¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 184.

¹⁵² Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 187.

suffering. The wrong that has been committed does not become the person, it becomes something that the person has done and there are possibilities of restitution. Restitution is the beginning of making things whole again for the one who has been hurt and for the transgressor.¹⁵³

The image of a merciful God does not fit well with the atonement model of God. If God is merciful, how could God demand the sacrifice of a Son. Feminists question the image of a God who demands sacrifice as a way to repay the sins of humankind. This speaks too much of a feudal, masochistic or wrathful God. All of these attributes are patriarchal attributes. The God who is merciful did not require that Jesus suffer and die, it was the humans who required it because they did not want to hear the challenges of Jesus.¹⁵⁴

3.3.4 *The God who calls us to wholeness through growth*

Chittister interprets the notion of God who is almighty as the God whose almighty power of love calls us to wholeness and growth. All of humanity, women and men, are called to live out their lives to the fullest of their human potential. She explains further,

Believing that God is working with almighty love and almighty power in our own life, however painful the present, however much our need to change what must be changed, carries us beyond our dense and common selves to immersion in the energy that is God...to see the Almighty God we must wrest ourselves open to the almightiness of God in us, around us, beneath us, before us, in every possibility that impels us to be more that we are.¹⁵⁵

The call to be more than what one is in the present is a call to full potentiality, a call to wholeness. Yet, the process of growth itself, when embraced, becomes a gift, the gift of knowing that creaturehood is not a static sense of being, but an ongoing acceptance of the opportunities that God gives humankind in order to grow. God gives all of his creatures everything they truly need to grow and become more human. Even for those who do not have the basic needs to live, it is not because God did not provide for them, it the rest of humanity that takes too much for themselves so that the goods of the earth are

¹⁵³Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 189.

¹⁵⁴Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 103.

¹⁵⁵Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 37.

unequally distributed. It is full humanity that God desires for humankind. Full humanity becomes that which is divine.¹⁵⁶

Wholeness does come at a cost. It requires work and a conscious effort to challenge oneself and to be accountable for one's actions. The normal human tendency is to resist growth, but God in his love accepts these weaknesses and resistances and he waits patiently, constantly beckoning and drawing humans towards their full humanity. The Spirit of God working in humanity helps them to open themselves up to God's beckoning. The grace of conversion is when there is a turning point that directs toward God and wholeness. Each and every struggle of life is an invitation to wholeness, to a growth process that calls upon the strength to face difficulties squarely. Although the difficulties are not ones that the person in difficulty may choose, the person does choose how to react to that difficulty. In any struggle, one can choose to avoid the difficulty or to accept it and grow from it. It is through the gift of hope that one continues to persevere in anticipation of a renewed relationship with God.¹⁵⁷

3.3.5 *The God of relationship*

The feminist God is 'up close and personal', that is a God that desires relationship.¹⁵⁸ The relationship with God is not about rules that must be obeyed at the risk of being punished by a watchful Father. The God of relationship desires that there be mutual communication and love. Communication means that each person in the relationship listens to and respects the dignity of the other. In a relationship of love, each of the partners in the relationship has faith in the other, this is a faith that empowers each of them.

The relationship with God is not just limited to the image of God the Father. Feminists also relate to God the Mother, God of Wisdom, God the Midwife and many other images that Scripture and other life circumstances inspire. God desires a relationship with all of humanity, men and women included. There is no hierarchy on who represents the image of God more completely. What is necessary is the openness of the person to God in their lives.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 73,74.

¹⁵⁷ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 37,38.

¹⁵⁸ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 25.

The life of Jesus reveals the kind of relationship that God desires with us.¹⁶⁰ The relationship between God and Jesus was constant and life-giving. It was the relationship between a loving and intimate parent and a child. Each one listened to the other. Jesus revealed to us the kind of relationship that God hopes to have with his creatures. In Scripture, God welcomes the prodigal child, feeds the tiny sparrows, knows all the details of each person's life up to counting the hairs on their heads, gives bread and not stones to the hungry and does not send his Son to be killed in payment for sins.

If the image of God that a person believes in becomes a part of who he/she is,¹⁶¹ then belief in a relational God is a call to relationship of love with others. This means listening and respecting the dignity of the other. It means that humans were not meant to be solitary beings who simply co-exist without really communicating with each other. The relational God calls each person to truly give of him/herself to the depth of being all the while respecting one's own personal dignity. Relationship becomes part of the road to personal growth and becoming fully human.

3.3.6 *God present in all of creation*

"God, the Creed insists, created the earth. The earth, like us, in other words, breathes the breath of God."¹⁶² This statement by Chittister, introduces to us a fundamental concept of feminist spirituality. That is that all of creation reveals some of the qualities of God. To this, she adds "Nature carries great spiritual messages for us all. Nature and its cycles teach us lessons of balance and harmony, of fidelity and reckless giving."¹⁶³ These statements are not to be mistaken for believing that nature is God, but that God works through nature and that nature is revealed to us through the natural world. The consequence of this is that nature is to be respected, nurtured, cared for and accepted as a possible channel of God's grace. Nature is not something that should be used to serve a humanity that believes itself superior to nature. Humanity needs nature in its entirety much more than nature needs humanity. The destruction of the environment, through abuse, pollution and over consumption will destroy an important part of creation and leave human beings in a world that lacks the beauty of nature and has lost some of its sacred character.

¹⁶⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 73.

¹⁶¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief* p. 20.

¹⁶² Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 57.

¹⁶³ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 58.

Human beings are made of both body and soul. Feminist spirituality honors these two elements in humanity. There can be no separation between the two, each one affects the other. The soul is not perceived as trapped in a body that is a source of evil or temptation, to be controlled at all costs. The body and its senses are channels for receiving God's grace through sexual pleasure with someone loved, good food, listening to music, dancing, smelling flowers and touching. God created human bodies so that humans can come to know God more deeply and more intimately. All bodies are sacred, both male and female bodies. The differences between them do not mean that one is superior or should be controlled by the other. Male and female bodies should be respected and given the dignity that God give them.¹⁶⁴

It is through creation that humans come in contact with the more personal and intimate God. Creation calls us to become aware of God working in all of the events of life. God's presence can be felt in the humdrum ordinary events of the day, in awe inspiring scenes of nature, in human encounters and in the struggles that plague the everyday person. When the presence of God is felt, these moments become sacred or holy. One sees the many faced God of the here and now.

3.3.7 *God of mystery*

Chittister acknowledges that "God is the mystery that nobody wants."¹⁶⁵ Theology has for centuries tried to describe the indescribable only to acknowledge that God is a mystery. Part of the mystery comes in the believing. To believe in God is to have faith that God exists, even though there is no concrete proof of God's existence. Yet, there is a sense of something that comes from inside humanity and from the world of creation that beckons belief. To look at the larger picture of the universe, to marvel at its conception and to feel that there is a guiding hand is to accept the mystery that is God. This becomes a choice in faith.

Accepting the mystery of God opens to humanity the many possibilities of who God really is. When the qualities of God become too well defined and solid, God becomes boxed in and the mystery is forgotten. The God of the Scriptures is multi-faceted. Chittister reflects that,

¹⁶⁴ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁵ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 18.

To the psalmist, God is a midwife; to Isaiah a comforting mother; in Exodus, the ultimate being; in Haggai, a wife; in Luke, a shepherd and a woman searching for a coin; in Hebrew, a consuming fire... the spiritual life depends on our opening our minds to all the guises of God.¹⁶⁶

For many feminists, God has many female qualities. These are of the mother who gives birth, the womb of the universe, or a passionate companion. The female qualities emphasize the feminine side of God so often forgotten in traditional Christian liturgies. Accepting the mystery of God opens the heart of the believer up to the reality that God is neither male nor female but so much more.¹⁶⁷

Welcoming the God of mystery can be a source of openness to the different ways that God works in life. This God reveals the God in the other, of other religions and of unusual circumstances, because the workings of God are no longer defined by preset parameters. One can see that God is not limited to the Church, but that all is sacred. The traditional names of the Trinity are no longer Father, Son and Holy Spirit but can become creator, redeemer and sanctifier, which are active verbs that speak so much more of a living God. The mystery of God allows the believer to also see the mystery of God in the human person or him/herself that is a calling to be more than what is readily visible. It is an awakening to a new reality.¹⁶⁸

3.3.8 *God who loves the poor*

Feminist spirituality would not be complete without a mention of God who sides with the poor. Chittister reminds her readers,

Feminism assumes the inherent equality, the essential value of the other. The feminist assumes an independent other, the one who is free to be interdependent rather than defined into dependence. To the feminist everyone and everything has rights. Poor people are not here to be exploited by rich people for slave wages.¹⁶⁹

The poor are those who are marginalized for their gender, race, social status or capacity to earn a decent living.

Because feminism emerged from the stance of those who were not the winners in society, feminists know what it means to be disregarded and considered invisible for

¹⁶⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁷ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 36,37.

¹⁶⁸ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 38.

reasons that are cultural or societal. They have experienced being discredited because of gender, and have experienced a God who has been present to them in their difficulties. Psalm 69 says “The Lord hears the cry of the poor”. Things are not changed by God, they are changed by those who have opened their hearts to God and have also heard ‘the cry of the poor’. When the poor feel God’s presence, they receive their dignity back. When those who hear the cry of the poor respond to God’s call to help the poor, they assist humanity to become more fully human. To be present to the least of humanity is to help humanity grow. This is solidarity with creation and with God, an ongoing process that continues so that all may become divine someday.

3.4 Images of Christ

The feminist images of Christ are drawn from the Gospel texts and the perspective of women or the otherwise marginalized. They interpret the actions of Jesus of the gospels differently from the point of view of traditional theology based on patriarchal concepts. Feminists tend to look at the whole picture that Jesus portrays and do not only emphasize his passion and death. Chittister warns,

The cross simply cannot be understood separate from the life that preceded it. Jesus’ death is not indistinct from who he was, from what he was doing before the arrest, the mock trial, the rejection by the crowds. Jesus’ crucifixion is not other than the Nativity. Jesus suffered far greater pains than death long before death was kind enough to take him. There was more to the purpose of his life than a Roman cross. It was the life he lived that led to the cross upon he died.¹⁷⁰

Taking this into account, what follows are some of the most important images that Chittister draws from the entire life of Jesus.

3.4.1 *Christ in solidarity with the poor*

Jesus of the Scriptures was a man born into poverty, of a nation that was under the domination of the Roman Empire.¹⁷¹ He experienced the powerlessness that comes with this poverty. In his society, even among the poor, there were those who were even poorer, they were the women. They did not have material wealth, social standing nor rights of their personhood. Women were relegated to the status of a commodity, owned by their

¹⁷⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 10.

¹⁷¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 90.

fathers as children and then given to their husbands as adults. Their ideas, their feelings and their rights as human beings were not even acknowledged.

Jesus challenged this system and this power structure which gave power over women to men that was inherent in the Jewish society of Jesus and later on in the Roman patriarchal system. Chittister explains,

In feminist spirituality, power is an instrument for social good. The patriarchal mind sees power as a way to accumulate space and time and services for the self. The feminist mind understands power only as a way to mitigate the burdens of the other. To the feminist mind, power does not rule in splendid isolation; power stands in the midst of the proud poor to listen and to serve.¹⁷²

Jesus' power was not that of a military man who would overthrow the Romans. His authority was not forceful, it was an authority that promoted a respect for everyone, rich and poor and enriched the lives of whoever he met.¹⁷³

Jesus as a poor person embraced his material poverty, but did not allow it to destroy his dignity. This is what he taught the women he met. He restored their dignity when he listened to them, did not abuse them and treated them as human beings with value. He gave them tasks, such as evangelizing and preaching, that only men did before. The women he met began to realize their own self worth and full personhood. He changed their lives.¹⁷⁴

In the same way, Jesus challenges the poor to continue to try to change their lives, to make each day better than the one before. He also calls those who have power to empower those who do not. He does this through his presence to them in prayer and through the inspiration of the Scriptures.

3.4.2 *Christ, the human face of God*

For the Christian feminist, Jesus exemplifies the human face of God.¹⁷⁵ He is the divine coming to life in a very human way. He is the Way, the true road to coming to know God. All of the stories about him reveal how he took his humanity and brought the Spirit of God to life to bring the presence of God in the midst of all of those he met. The Holy Spirit worked through his humanity and through his humanity he developed a

¹⁷² Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 67.

¹⁷³ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁴ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁵ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 67.

personal relationship with God. This says a lot about the capacity of humanity. “If humanity itself birthed Godness, then all of humanity could, potentially, aspire to an intimate relationship with God.”¹⁷⁶ This is a challenge for human beings today, to develop a personal relationship with God. Everyone has that capacity and it is essential for the full development of humanity, as much as it was for Jesus. Jesus’ relationship with God becomes a sign of a God who desires a relationship with humanity, a close relationship much as in a family. He is the presence of God among the people.

The divinity of Jesus is shown through his actions, those actions that express forgiveness, love, and respect for others. It is not his maleness that expresses the divine, it is these gestures that show the face of God. For feminists, this is key, because then women and men have that potentiality for divineness. It is the divineness that shows the face of God, not the gender.¹⁷⁷

If the humanness of Jesus points to a relationship with the divine, it also points to a relationship with the flesh. Jesus uses his body to reveal the divine. His body was not seen as expendable or as an obstacle to the divine, it was the true instrument whereby the divine was revealed. In the Jesus of Scripture, there is no self inflicted bodily punishments.¹⁷⁸ The holy in Jesus came through when he touched the sick, laughed at parties, drank wine at weddings and became angry at the abuse of power in the temple. He showed his feelings of vulnerability when his friend Lazarus died and when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.¹⁷⁹

Jesus shows that the body of the human person is to be respected and looked as a Temple of the Spirit. The body needs to be looked after and cared for if it is to be the instrument for the fullness of divinity. Abusing the body in any way goes against this message of Jesus.

3.4.3 *Christ who expressed his love for others*

The Gospel stories are full of incidents whereby Jesus expresses his love for the people that he meets. He loves not only those who are on the margins, but anyone who comes to see him. He went to the home of Zaccheus, forgave the woman caught in adultery, played with children and even exchanged with Nicodemus when he was

¹⁷⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁷ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁸ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 118.

struggling with his faith. His love was expressed by touch, by being present, by listening and by accepting each person where they were at. When a crowd of five thousand people were hungry, he fed them.

Many in the crowd on the hillside in the heat of the day had been foolish, ... They had brought nothing of their own with them to eat. They had made no provisions for the future. They had not been frugal, not been responsible enough to take care of themselves. But Jesus feeds them regardless. He does not ask to see their salary statements or their bank accounts to determine a degree of acceptable destitution. He does not scold them or berate them or lecture at them. He simply gives them what he sees at that moment that they need.¹⁸⁰

Jesus expresses his love without question or judgement. His rules were the rule of love, portraying the image of a gentle and compassionate presence that forgives, and preaches mercy, and peace.¹⁸¹

When expressing his love for others, Jesus is not afraid to express his feelings. He affectionately calls his father 'Abba' or 'Daddy', laughs and has fun at the wedding of Cana, and weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. In a patriarchal society, men do not express their feelings, it is a sign of vulnerability and men are not to show that part of themselves openly. Only women show their feelings. Feminism embraces vulnerability as a sign of humanness, and feelings are part of the human experience. Feelings help identify where God is working in the life of the person.¹⁸²

Jesus' whole life was an expression of his love and that love was an emptying of himself. In expressing his love, he does what is good for the other person, giving his attention, his time and his personal gifts.¹⁸³ The power that he had was never used for self-grandization nor for attracting attention from others. His focus on otherness conflicts with humanity's natural desire to obtain things for the self and is opposed to giving to others. The giving of himself to others continues today as Jesus makes himself present in the Eucharist.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 63.

¹⁸¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 79.

¹⁸² Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 118.

¹⁸³ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 135.

¹⁸⁴ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 62.

3.4.4 *Christ who heals*

For many women and feminists, the Jesus they know is the Jesus who heals. When He walked the countryside of Judea, his name became one associated with healing powers and this attracted even more people to him. Many came not to hear what he had to say, but to ask of his healing abilities. He healed the paralyzed, the lepers, the demoniacs, the blind and raised the dead.

Chittister notes that he did not only heal those who were important in society¹⁸⁵ nor those who were needed by others such as the widow's son. He also healed those who were deemed by society as unnecessary or not particularly productive for society. One of these would be Jarius' daughter, whose importance is so insignificant that she does not even merit a name, although her father does. He heals Simon's mother-in-law, Mary Magdalene, the bent-over woman and the woman with a haemorrhage. The text gives no identification to most of them, but their healing was so significant that it warranted mention. He dared to offer his healing touch to the lepers, the ostracized of society, showing that his compassion did not know the barriers that society did.

Christ's gestures of healing indicate his desire to make humanity whole. He could see that the pain and suffering of the people he healed were blocking them from reaching their full potential. He saw in them a desire to be healed and the capacity to believe in him. In several instances, such as the woman with the haemorrhage or the Caananite woman, he tells people that it is their faith that has saved them. In pointing out that their faith has healed them Jesus shows that his healing is not a one way relationship. Those who are healed must acknowledge their need to be healed and believe that Jesus can heal them. It is this faith relationship with Jesus that allows Jesus' healing powers to work. Jesus affirms their faith and calls on them to live their lives to the fullest.

Another noteworthy characteristic of Jesus' healing ministry was that he did not use any miraculous healing on himself from the time of his praying in the Garden of Gethsemane up to his death. His healing hands were for others, so that they may be made whole. If he was wholly human, then his acceptance of suffering is a sign that wholeness does not mean any kind of a lack of suffering.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 64.

¹⁸⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 108.

3.4.5 *Christ who does not follow the letter of the Law*

Chittisters asserts,

I believe in the Jesus who cured a cripple on the Sabbath, who said, 'Take up your bed and walk' – regardless of the laws regarding the Sabbaths. I believe in the Jesus who followed the Law above the law. In a society whose religious ethic made strict demands on pious believers from sundown to sundown of every Sabbath, no excuses made, no exceptions given, Jesus required a higher standard. To Jesus, love triumphed ritual.¹⁸⁷

This Jesus believes that the human person and their needs are more important than the law. Patriarchal rules that are applied without compassion are not what God is requesting of humanity. It is not to say that rules are bad, it is only to say that when the rules become more important than the person, the actions of Jesus put this premise into question.

Jesus saw how the rules of Jewish society had been used to oppress people and to establish a hierarchy of the good at the expense of others. Some of the rules were so strict that only those who were wealthy could keep them correctly. The rules for women were even stricter, requiring regular cleansing and purification for normal female needs. These rules had become destructive and did not bring people closer to God. This speaks to people today when the institutional Church or the preservation of institutional norms becomes more important than the people of the Church. Jesus' actions are a higher call to compassion for those who do not follow all the rules.¹⁸⁸ Jesus invites all the People of God to be open to the needs of others, in particular those who feel marginalized.

3.4.6 *Christ who suffers*

One of the cornerstones of the Christian faith is that Jesus suffered. The stories of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus and the Christian symbol of the cross testify to fact. Chittister reminds us that suffering is part of being human and that Jesus as a human suffered. The question often is asked as to why Jesus suffered. The ancient church stated that Jesus died to atone for the sins of humanity. Chittister's reply to this theology is

But acceptable, logical, necessary as that model may have seemed for a society in which justice and reconciliation was a matter of balancing equals off against one another, this notion of what Jesus was about destroys Jesus' notion of God. In this explanation, the God who demands the sacrifice of Jesus is not the God Jesus described... The loving God

¹⁸⁷ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 65.

¹⁸⁸ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 65.

who, when asked for bread does not give a stone, is surely not the God who sends a son to be killed in some kind of blood sacrifice designed to appease a divine ego... Jesus does not suffer because God designed in that way. Jesus suffers because humanity designed it that way.¹⁸⁹

His suffering was caused because the people he knew abandoned him, and those that he defied could no longer allow him to keep disturbing the status quo. He suffered from disillusionment with his friends and supporters, fear of the authorities and abandonment from his God. He was crucified for his actions because the values of love, mercy, peace and justice that Jesus taught could not be tolerated in a world that was not ready to accept them. It is the sin of humanity that put Jesus on the cross. It is the sin of humanity today that continues the crucifixion of others.¹⁹⁰

The suffering of Jesus teaches us much about God and about how to suffer as human beings. If suffering is accompanied with the awareness that God is present and that each person is called to face the challenges of life in faith and strength, then Jesus becomes the model of how to suffer and in this way, he saves.¹⁹¹ Jesus teaches that all are to go beyond themselves and to be true to who they are. This brings the hope of the resurrection that transcends human suffering. In this way, it is not only Jesus' death that saves, but the sum of his whole life, lived in truth, integrity and faith. Jesus taught that life is about being whole, and not about being effective. What may seem as failure to humanity may not seem so to God. The answers to life may not come in the way expected, but salvation comes in the realization that God is present, guiding, revealing the truths of life along the way. The humanity that is transformed becomes the resurrection.

3.4.7 *Christ the resurrected*

In feminist spirituality, the resurrection of Christ is about the transformation of the suffering Jesus to a Jesus who is now somehow changed, whole and glorified. Chittister explains,

The tomb was empty'... People had known his presence again, not the same as before the crucifixion, true, but real, nevertheless. Transformed. Somehow or other Jesus had defeated death, had snatched new life from its cavernous throat. The implications were overwhelming. Death, even once transcended, could never be permanent again. In fact, life itself

¹⁸⁹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 119.

¹⁹¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 118.

could never be the same again. Jesus risen from the dead made life the stuff of eternity.¹⁹²

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, the people who had known him, his disciples, began to be transformed as well. His life, as they remembered it, took on new meaning. The events, his sayings, his gestures, all spoke to them again as they remembered him. It is as if they only then realized the full person of Jesus and who he represented. His apparitions that are recounted in the Gospels occurred at unexpected times and often they did not recognize him until he had already left. But, recognize him, they did. And when they did recognize him, they felt at peace, comforted that Jesus had not totally left and was still there to give them guidance and friendship. It was Jesus in a new way, but Jesus nevertheless.¹⁹³

Each time that Jesus is remembered in the hearts of people, he is again brought to life. The transformation does not happen just to Jesus, but also to those who 'see' him in the poor, in the marginalized, in others. To those who accept the risen Jesus, it is an openness to being personally transformed by his love. The resurrection is not only about Jesus, it is about the transformation of the people who believe in him. It is about acceptance of change and the hope that comes with new life.¹⁹⁴

This ends the section on the Images of God and Christ in the feminist spirituality of Joan Chittister. The following section will outline her writings on prayer forms and the writings of Chittister and Kathleen Fischer on feminist discernment.

3.5 Forms of Prayer

Prayer is what constitutes our connection to God. Prayer becomes what we believe.¹⁹⁵ It is a conscious turning toward God.¹⁹⁶ For Chittister, this does mean that our prayer and our spirituality should be connected to life and living and all the questions that this life brings. In this way prayer becomes the essence of life, mundane as it may be.¹⁹⁷

The function of prayer is not to establish a routine; it is to establish a relationship with the God who is in relationship with us always. The

¹⁹² Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 133.

¹⁹³ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 132.

¹⁹⁴ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 134.

¹⁹⁵ Katherine Zappone, *Hope for Wholeness*, p. 148.

¹⁹⁶ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages*, New York, Crossroad, 1992. p. 54.

¹⁹⁷ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 2.

function of times of prayer, then, is not to have to say prayers; it is to enable our lives to become a prayer outside of prayer, to become pure of heart, one with God, centered in the truth that is Truth and the power that is Power and the love that is Love. The function of prayer is to bring us into touch with ourselves, as well.¹⁹⁸

The ordinary life, nature, relationships all become a pathway to God.¹⁹⁹ When this happens and there is a connection with God in all that occurs in life, the praying person is immersed in God. Chittister calls this a form of contemplative awareness or contemplation.

Contemplation has to do with seeing life as it is, not with escaping one to find another. Contemplatives are ordinary people who are extraordinarily conscious of the impelling life of God both within them and around them. They live under the impulse of God who made them and listen to the small, deep voice within that guides them from the crucifix of Christ to concern for the vastness of a creation not made for them alone. The contemplative sees the meaning of eternity in every moment in time.²⁰⁰

Every individual is called to this way of life. Contemplation is a call to transformation of the self through failures, insights and expectations. This transformation is a living of the experience of the resurrection of Christ.²⁰¹

As a Benedictine sister, Chittister's personal experience of prayer begins with her experience of the Benedictine life of prayer. She argues that the Rule of Benedict is a discipline with a stress on feminist concepts. "By developing this new form of religious life around obedience, community, and humility, Benedict called Roman men, who had been formed in a totally patriarchal society, a society that institutionalized power, hierarchy, and dominance, to a clearly feminist spirituality."²⁰² In her book, *The Rule of Benedict*, Chittister outlines the prayer forms integral to Benedictine spirituality. They reflect many of the values of her feminist spirituality. Following are the prayer forms in Benedictine spirituality as interpreted by Joan Chittister.

¹⁹⁸ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 58.

²⁰⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 142.

²⁰¹ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 136.

²⁰² Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 97.

3.5.1. *Prayer in work (ora et labore)*

Part of the prologue to the Rule of Benedict states “First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection.”²⁰³ Here there is clear sense that all of work becomes an avenue to the presence of God. Chittister says “The person who prays for the presence of God is, ironically, already in the presence of God. The person who seeks God has already found God to some extent.”²⁰⁴ God is present in all that exists, it is up to the person to wake up to the reality that is God, present in the simple tasks in the day, in relationships and in nature. Benedict asks his followers to develop a holy attitude to all of creation. That awareness is what changes an ordinary day into an extraordinary day in the loving presence of God. God continually searches each individual out, working from within to be realized.²⁰⁵

3.5.2. *The Divine Office*

Benedictine prayer is based on the Gospels and the Psalms. It follows a series of daily Scripture readings that are read throughout the day at regular times of the day. There is a Vigil or Night Office in the middle of the night with a reading of different Psalms. In the day, there are seven different services, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sexte, None, Vespers and Compline. The service of Lauds opens the day and the Compline ends the day. Each service includes specific psalms so that all of the 150 Psalms of the Bible are sung each week.²⁰⁶ These rituals are celebrated in community, indicating a community that prays and works together. The regularity and rhythm of these services are a constant reminder of the presence of God in the community. Any personal prayer is done outside of these services.

3.5.2.1 *Night Office*

The Night office consists of the four elements, “a special versicle, the doxology, responsaries and explanations of the Scriptures.”²⁰⁷ The night office was scheduled to occur after the monks or sisters had about 8 hours rest. Awakening in the night after an early bedtime, was a reminder of the sacred being present in all of the day and night. The versicle is a request to open the participants’ hearts to God. God draws each person to the

²⁰³ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 20.

²⁰⁴ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 21.

²⁰⁵ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 64.

²⁰⁶ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 88.

²⁰⁷ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 77.

heart of God and allows the goodness of God to flow through. The doxology is a witness to the divinity of the three persons. In the responsories, all the participants become engaged in the communal prayer. The Scripture texts are the core of the Divine Office. They form the basis of reflection, witness and faith.

3.5.2.2 *The Daily Divine Office*

The Divine Office consists of seven different celebrations during the day, beginning with Lauds and ending with Compline. Through the Divine Office, the participants become aware of the continuing presence of God in their work. It was a way of praying continually. The daily life of the Benedictine becomes a life steeped in the scriptures and connected to God. Community life became a way that each individual could look after each other as they were always connected in prayer. The repetitive use of Psalms was one way to memorize them in a time when many could neither read nor write. But, it was also a way to etch these psalms on the souls of the praying person so that the psalms become part of that person. The people were given the opportunity to be changed or transformed by their prayer life.²⁰⁸

Lauds is the celebration at the beginning of the day consisting of the readings of several psalms, a reading from a specific verse of the Old Testament, an Alleluia on Sundays, an Ambrosian hymn, a versicle, a Gospel canticle and a conclusion. The choice of Psalms depends on the day of the week.²⁰⁹ The Sunday celebration of Lauds includes psalms that

model the disposition of the soul before its God. At the beginning of the week, we ask for the energy of grace to go from this Sabbath to the next, we acknowledge the struggles of the week before us and the failings of the week that is past, we remember God's eternal fidelity in good times and bad, we recognize publicly that the great desire of our life is the desire for God... we give our lives in thanksgiving.²¹⁰

The weekly Lauds continue to sustain the praying person through other psalms that are a reminder of God's continued blessings, of our need to forgive and of God's goodness and our need for God. Lauds introduces the day with a specific mindset that opens up the

²⁰⁸ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 89.

²⁰⁹ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 80.

²¹⁰ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 80.

journey of life in God. God is a healing presence that acknowledges the difficulties of communal life and heals the brokenness.²¹¹

The Compline at the end of the day was a series of psalms that brought the praying person to an awareness of the day, with its graces and pitfalls.²¹² Silence follows the Compline so that there are a few moments of interior space before bedtime. This becomes a time of giving stillness to the person so that s/he may hear God in the silence.²¹³ The Divine Office, prayed in community, is meant to help the person to be disposed to the will of God, all the while accepting the imperfections of each and every member of the community. The rituality of these prayers is a constant reminder of the presence of God in daily life. It is also scripture based so that the praying person may continually reflect and ponder on the Word of God.

3.6 Discernment

Discernment or decision-making is a very important element of anyone's life as the consequences of the choices that are made may have long-lasting repercussions. Chittister describes discernment as "learning to hear what God wants in every situation."²¹⁴ The writings of Chittister are not very detailed on the topic of discernment. For this reason, I have added some of the thoughts of the feminist writer and spiritual director Kathleen Fischer and complemented her rules for discernment with some of Chittister's thoughts. Fischer tells us that

It (discernment) is always marked by mystery and uncertainty. It is especially difficult for women today. Turning to tradition for confirmation of our decisions is problematic since that tradition has so often betrayed us... What norms are there for distinguishing true and false spiritual growth?... Discernment is more important than ever in a world where women and men are increasingly aware of the reality of oppression.²¹⁵

Fischer's proposal suggests that women need to look at the present means of discernment, but with a critical eye that searches for clues to other possibilities or ways to obtain spiritual growth. Discernment is an essential tool for the realization of this spiritual

²¹¹ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 81, 82.

²¹² Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 88.

²¹³ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 124.

²¹⁴ Joan Chittister, *Rule of Benedict*, p. 20.

²¹⁵ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1988, p. 13,114.

growth. As women look at new avenues for discernment, they come to a greater realization of their relationship to God.

3.6.1 What is discernment?

Chittister, in her book, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, tells us that “To discern is to choose between available options on the grounds that both are good but that one is more likely at this time to be preferable. It is the willingness to accept the idea that one option is more likely to result in greater growth at this particular time.”²¹⁶ In the same book she reiterates that the concept of “spiritual indifference”²¹⁷ or an “openness to the many manifestations of the will of God in life”²¹⁸ are important concepts for the spiritual seeker. The ways of finding this “holy indifference”²¹⁹ was one of the primary quests of the spiritual life. Although the different spiritualities have different ways of attaining spiritual indifference, the desire was one and the same, that is to discover where God is calling the person to the different choices of life. This detachment, although many times only achieved as a result of difficulty and struggle, is sign that there are choices in life that will lead to growth of the spirit and of the person.

Discernment and detachment are lifelines out of the pit of loss and the island of isolation to which it threatens to doom us...Discernment is based on the awareness that we cannot always have what we want, true, but also that there is enduring, something hidden, always surprising spiritual value in what we do have.²²⁰

For Chittister, detachment does not speak of denial of self or desires. Rather, it is a special awareness of the gifts that God bestows on humans and the abundance of those gifts. It is in the acknowledgement of what is possible in life and that hope and struggle are part of the human condition. The present will never satisfy the human spirit forever and all humans are called to continue to grow as persons.²²¹

Discernment always brings to the fore this desire to understand and follow the “will of God”. A false image of God for Chittister is the kind of God who has a master plan and humans are called to endure whatever the master planner has designed. This is the kind of puppeteer God who uses humanity as the puppets. To understand the concept

²¹⁶ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, Ottawa, Novalis, 2003, p. 35.

²¹⁷ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 35.

²¹⁸ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 35.

²¹⁹ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 35.

²²⁰ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 35,36.

²²¹ Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 37.

of the will of God better in feminist terms, Chittister tells us that “God is the ground of our being, the energy of life, the goodness of which all things are intended to grow to fullness.”²²² In this sense, the will of God becomes something that is a part of the person and the events of life become opportunities for growth. God wills this growth for all human beings. Growth of the person becomes a process of struggle and the realization of the gift that is received through that process.

3.6.2 *The process of discernment*

Within feminism there are no structured rules for the discernment process as exists in the text of the Spiritual Exercises. In her book, *Woman at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*, Kathleen Fischer, has formulated a sort of check list that directors can use when helping women to discern different aspects of their spiritual life and issues that are specific to them.²²³ I will use the different guidelines of this model and when possible, apply it to some of the thoughts of Joan Chittister. This model can be used for making major decisions, but can also be used for making smaller decisions that can affect the daily living out of a life in faith and truth.

Listen to your deepest self.

In order to discern properly, each woman must come to know their deepest self. Chittister states ‘God in us, bringing us to life, drawing us incessantly on to that place where we become everything we can be. The soul, that place where the human meets the divine, live to develop the God-life in us here and now.’²²⁴ Listening to our self, is part of listening to God. To listen to this self and to act on it becomes difficult for women who have been used to being told who they should be and how they should act by outside sources. As well, many women doubt their own abilities and lack a knowledge of their sense of self. It may be in the process of spiritual direction that this can begin to emerge. The woman learns to separate her true sense of self from the self that others tell her she should be.

More traditional spiritualities promote the overcoming of the self in favour of giving to others. This falls in line with the needs of men who have more difficulty with

²²² Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle*, p. 16.

²²³ Kathleen Fischer, *Woman at the Well*, p. 114-128.

²²⁴ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 89,90.

pride and control. Women have difficulty establishing a sense of self and need to find their own sense of direction.²²⁵

Affirm your own as well as other's needs

In all relationships, there is a need to balance the development of each person in the relationship. Fischer tells us that,

Woman's sense of self is so organized around making and maintaining relationships, that disruption of such relationships is perceived not just as the loss of the relationship, but closer to a total loss of self. Conflicting commitments to self and others converge in the discovery of the connection between social responsibility and self-care.²²⁶

Chittister confirms this when she compares competition and compassion, competition being part of the patriarchal mindset and compassion as being the feminist alternative.²²⁷ She goes on later to say that in coming to know who one is as a person, there develops an ability to give to the other in a fuller way. There is greater understanding of the needs of the other. Compassion comes from being able to be present to the other, to see their needs and to respond to them.²²⁸ Solidarity with the poor and less fortunate becomes a cornerstone of this interdependence between the self and others and is integral to the process of discernment in a feminist mindset.

Do not confuse passivity with conformity to God's will.

God's will says Fischer is "to be open to the presence of God in our lives"²²⁹ and "to align ourselves with God's purpose in the world."²³⁰ When God's will becomes a concept that is an external from the self as well as being something that is pre-planned and set, women often fall into the trap of passivity as they feel that they have no control over their lives. "Discernment to know God's purpose is an openness to a direction, a fullness of possibility."²³¹

To see a true God is to see a God that calls everyone to growth and change. It is to recognize God in what cannot always be seen. "God wills more for us than the world

²²⁵ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 94-96

Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 116-117.

²²⁶ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 118.

²²⁷ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 134.

²²⁸ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 138.

²²⁹ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 120.

²³⁰ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 120.

²³¹ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 121.

expects... The point is that to see the Almighty God we must wrest ourselves open to the almightiness of God in us, around us, beneath us, before us, in every possibility that impels us to be more than we are.”²³² This kind of discernment is a call to go beyond what is expected by culture, society, and gender definition. It is an active process, not a passive one whereby things just happen. The person actively takes charge of life in an ongoing course of action.

Trust the insights that come from your body, intuition, and feelings

In discernment, listening to the inner self is an important aspect to consider. Many women have difficulty doing this as they are conditioned to listening to the advice that comes from outside themselves. As well, in our rational society, feelings, intuitions and body awareness are not recognized as being reliable sources of information.²³³

Chittister argues that

Feelings lead us to the people who love us through life and satisfy our souls when nothing else about a situation can sustain us at all. Feelings, devoid of thought made only of mist, become the inner lights that lead us out of harm’s way and home to our better selves. Feeling leads us to love the God we can not see and to see the God around us whom we have yet to come to love.²³⁴

This “leading to our better selves” and “see God around us” is the key to discernment for the person who is serious about the spiritual life. She goes on later to say that feelings are “the other kind of intelligence’ as they add insight and wisdom to the decision-making process. They add a deeper dimension to discernment, a human dimension that in a rational world would see facts as the only criteria for making decisions.²³⁵

Feelings change the view point of many decisions that are based solely on economics or logic and in a decision that may affect the emotional well-being of others. To have feeling for someone is to have compassion or to care about them. Feminist thought values feeling as a component of discernment and the road to holiness.²³⁶

²³² Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 37.

²³³ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 122.

²³⁴ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 50.

²³⁵ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 52.

²³⁶ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 55.

Be aware of the social and cultural forces influencing a situation.

One the most important facets of feminism is the analysis of social and cultural factors that affect the lives of women. It would be normal that this kind of analysis would be important in discernment. Fischer stresses the importance of analysing the influences of culture and society because they affect how people feel and discern specific situations and influence the outcome of different decisions.²³⁷

In a patriarchal society or culture, men and women are assigned roles and to break open these roles can be difficult and is often met with resistance. All people are called to fulfill their destiny as God calls them. But, when in fulfilling this destiny they are called to go against the models of society, the difficulties women or men meet may cause them to feel that God is with the system or society. Feminism questions any society that thwarts the development of any individual for reasons of gender, race or social status. Chittister evens states that preventing the growth of each individual for these reasons is against the “will of God.”²³⁸ God desires the fullness of all of humanity and when a society oppresses a particular group, or does not give equal opportunity for all of its members to come to full development, then they are working against God.

Interpret your affective experiences in light of woman’s social conditioning.

Much of women’s social conditioning has directed them to a style of holiness that states that they must be gentle, kind and bring peace. This social conditioning strengthens in them a desire to avoid conflict or to do everything possible to prevent conflict from happening. When conflict does arise, they feel guilt and anxiety. Fischer finds the rules for discernment of spirits of Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises a good guide for sorting out some of the causes of anxiety. His insights on consolation and desolation can help to discern the true cause of any turmoil in the soul.²³⁹

Chittister addresses this issue when she discusses the type of mariology that was taught to her as a child in school. She says “She (Mary) was, they taught me, docile and passive, submissive and unquestioning.”²⁴⁰ This model of Mary is what many women are asked to use as a role model for their lives. This image of Mary is very difficult to imitate

²³⁷ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 123, 124.

²³⁸ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 69.

²³⁹ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 125.

²⁴⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 93.

and can cause women to feel guilty when they do not meet up to this standard. But Chittister later states that as she came to know Mary as

a woman who made up her mind outside the law, alone, independent of keepers or guides. This was the woman who risked everything to do what she knew her God required of her, whatever its cost socially, publicly, spiritually... She had a strong will, a strong faith, a strong sense of self, and deep spiritual stamina.²⁴¹

Women need to critique the old stereotypes of what women should be, and see themselves through their sense of self and their strength of character, that same strength that Mary exhibited in her own life. Docility needs to be seen for what it is, a social conditioning that can limit women and cause anxiety when they attempt to break away from what they are told is a womanly type of behaviour.

Try to generate alternatives when you feel trapped.

Many times, in situations of oppression, those who are oppressed feel trapped with no hope of ever coming out of their situations. Existing patterns of behaviour cannot bring about change. Being open to the Spirit in discernment may mean looking for alternative methods to come out of difficult situations. Help in finding alternatives can often come in the form of solidarity with others or in communal discernment.²⁴²

Chittister points out how this has happened in the non-violence movement which is supported by feminism.

Feminism offers us the opportunity to resist evil without stooping to the point where we erode what we believe in by doing evil ourselves. Feminism rejects exclusion, harm, and oppression as ways to defend ourselves from the world around us...Christian feminism offers the spirituality of non-violence to a world that uses one generation to satisfy the inability of another one to make peace.²⁴³

Non-violent resistance suggests another alternative in the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed must shed the role of the victim and concentrate on the issues of oppression. The oppressor must not be seen as the enemy, but as a potential friend. Force must never be retaliated by force. These premises of non-violence forces the oppressed individuals to create new ways of resistance that can awaken

²⁴¹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 93.

²⁴² Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 126,127.

²⁴³ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 83.

the oppressor to the evil aspects of a system that hurts others. It is a call to listen to the Jesus of the gospels who resisted in his own way the unjust systems of his time.²⁴⁴

Take account of the price of change.

Change demands a price from those who attempt to challenge systems. That can be difficult and frightening. To change a lifetime of behaviour patterns demands a leap of faith. Not everyone is able to do it. "Liberation is a conversion process and it is God's work as well as our own."²⁴⁵ In the discernment process, all persons must be aware that although good discernment will be life-giving and freeing, there needs to be a letting go of things the way they were before.

The first chapter of *In Search of Belief* addresses this issue of change in our beliefs. In former times, religion and the Creed as professed was a system of rules that reassured the believers of their ability to be on the good side of God. But believing in God has changed, it is more about a personal relationship with God than a system of rules and regulations. Opening up to God in heart and soul requires risk and life is no longer the same. It challenges a believer to look for meaning in life, to personal growth, to letting go of some ideas that once brought security, it means to look within the depths of oneself. In concluding the chapter, Chittister states "To say 'I believe' is to say yes to the mystery of life."²⁴⁶

3.6.3 *Obstacles to Discernment*²⁴⁷

Fischer's feminist model for discernment implies some definite obstacles to proper and effective discernment. The first of these is a lack of the sense of the true self. If God speaks to each and every individual through their life, their gifts and through their soul, then a lack of the sense of self can distort how one perceives one's gifts, one's role in relationship to others and the ability to listen to God in the heart. When a person sees the self only through the eyes of other individuals, through the rules of society or the culture has not developed a true sense of the self.

Another obstacle would be an overwhelming desire to meet the needs of others without recognizing one's own needs. Chittister calls this a "false humility" when a person

²⁴⁴ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 83-86.

²⁴⁵ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 128.

²⁴⁶ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 17.

²⁴⁷ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 113-128.

loses the sense of self worth in being humble.²⁴⁸ True humility leads to self development and a sense of inner peace.²⁴⁹ In the Christian tradition, humility has always been lauded as a virtue and women have been drawn to this virtue. But, women must not be drawn to a false humility. God loves each and every member of the human race and desires their full growth to humanity.

A third obstacle would be to put a lot of weight on reasoning and the authority of others without listening to the feelings and intuitions that emerge in the discernment process. The discerning person needs to be able to trust that which is not always visible and concrete. To disregard or to minimize the movements of the heart is to deny the workings of the Holy Spirit in the person.

The last obstacle to discernment that is implied in Fischer's model is the fear of change. Fear can paralyse an individual and prevent that person from acting on a decision that has been discerned to be right. Many are they who know what needs to be done to challenge a system, but who, out of fear of the consequences or changes that may be engendered in their lives, cannot follow through.

Fischer concludes that

Whatever promotes the full humanity of women as well as men is redemptive and holy, that is, it is of God. What denies and distorts that full humanity does not bear the power and authority of divine revelation... this is indeed a word of life to guide our decision-making and commitments.²⁵⁰

Discernment is about freedom in life and a call to the love of God.²⁵¹

This concludes the chapter on feminist spirituality. We have looked at the images of God and of Christ, prayer forms and discernment. The next chapter will compare the elements of chapters two and three in order to bring some insights to the ministry of spiritual direction.

²⁴⁸ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 94.

²⁴⁹ Joan Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, p. 96.

²⁵⁰ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 128.

²⁵¹ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 128.

Chapter 4

The Encounter between Ignatian and Feminist Spirituality

Therefore, the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium,
without leaning to one side or the other,
should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature,
and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.
The Spiritual Exercises must be adapted to the condition
of the one who is to engage in them.
(Sp. Exx. 15, 18)

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis compares some different elements of Ignatian spirituality and feminist spirituality through the perspective of the ministry of spiritual direction. Using the different parameters of each spirituality developed in chapters two and three, I will identify the similarities and the differences between the two spiritualities and point out any difficulties that these present for the spiritual director. This chapter will also offer guidelines for a spiritual director to assist him/her in being more attentive to the needs of a directee, either male or female, as they are accompanied through the Spiritual Exercises. The hope is that there will be a possibility of establishing an encounter between feminist spirituality and Ignatian spirituality, all the while respecting the qualities of each.

4.1 What is spiritual direction?

Before beginning this comparison and giving guidelines on spiritual direction, the expression “spiritual direction” should be defined in the context of the contemporary North American practice. The expression “spiritual direction” has, in the past, had some negative connotations for Christians, in particular Roman Catholics.²⁵² These reactions stem primarily from images of an authoritative figure (either clergy or religious) who gave directives or instructions on how to advance in the spiritual life. Although the expression ‘spiritual direction’ in the English language remains the same, the practice of spiritual

²⁵² David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 142.

direction has considerably changed.²⁵³ To illustrate this, following are a few definitions of spiritual direction from contemporary spiritual directors:

- 1) From an Ignatian point of view: “in the recent revival of Ignatian spiritual direction,...The director is there to facilitate growth through discernment. In this process and in the relationship that belongs to it the personal freedom of the individual directee is very important.”²⁵⁴
- 2) From the point of view of another Jesuit: « L’ultime démarche de ce que nous appelons la direction spirituelle c’est d’accompagner ceux qui cherchent Dieu jusqu’à cet ‘esprit’ qui est leur être le plus profond, là où ils sont image de Dieu et parfaitement eux-mêmes. »²⁵⁵
- 3) From the point of view of a feminist author: “The exchanges that comprise a spiritual direction relationship focus on awareness of a response to God in one’s life...Spiritual direction is not ‘spiritual’ in the sense that it focuses on one compartment of life divorced from everyday concerns. Nor is it ‘direction’ if that is understood as one person taking responsibility for another’s life and that person says what to do.”²⁵⁶

These three definitions indicate that the personal freedom of the person who comes for spiritual direction (The common term used for anyone requesting spiritual direction is a directee) is to be respected and the spiritual director becomes more of a guide or companion who has some knowledge of the spiritual life. Hence the use in some circles of the use of the word spiritual companion, spiritual friend or spiritual midwife to indicate this form of relationship. But, in Anglophone circles, the most common expression is still spiritual direction with all the ambiguities that come with the words.

Another common aspect of spiritual direction in contemporary North America is that it functions primarily in a psychological model.²⁵⁷ Much of the search of the contemporary individual is not only in the quest for a closer relationship with God, but also to be able to develop a better integration of his/her everyday life in relationships and

²⁵³ In the French language, the more common usage is now the expression ‘accompagnement spirituel’ or directly translated, ‘spiritual accompaniment’.

²⁵⁴ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, p. 142.

²⁵⁵ Yves Raguin, *Maître et disciple*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1985, p. 13.

²⁵⁶ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ Geoffrey B. Williams, « Models of Spiritual Direction », Conference given at the Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Nov. 2004.

roles within the world. The person searches for personal wholeness in the relationship with God.

In spiritual direction, Raguin tells us, one of the important qualities of a spiritual director is the gift of humility so as to continue to be open to the Holy Spirit and to listen to the directee with attentiveness.²⁵⁸ Listening to the directee means not only hearing what the person says, but understanding what she/he means. The director must respect the directee and the experiences that are exposed in the interview. Each story is sacred and must be cradled and nurtured. The interviews in the spiritual direction relationship become holy ground where the Spirit leads the director and the directee. No spiritual director should impose a fixed agenda on the directee.

In recent times, there have been studies on the needs of women in the different forms of pastoral care. Liebert explains that,

Spiritual care of women consists of creating or restoring the conditions in which a particular woman...may become more deeply in touch with and live out her deepest call as a human being before God. The goal in women's spiritual care is their self-transformation based on a vision of the realm of God.²⁵⁹

She goes on later to say that a woman must feel safe and not judged or criticized for what she experiences.

Another aspect of the spiritual care of women is the need to be believed. In much of the past Christian tradition, the experiences of men were what determined reality for both men and women. Now, with the advent of the feminist consciousness, women are breaking their silence and coming forth with their interpretation of reality. But, in the delicate ministry of spiritual care, women need to be believed, acknowledged and empathized with so that they can have the courage and stamina to express their feelings and break the silence of their thoughts.²⁶⁰ Breaking the silence can apply as much to the different images of God that feminists may experience as to prayer and discernment.

The next part of this chapter compares feminist concepts and thoughts with Ignatian spirituality using a grid, followed by explanations. From the grid, the elements will be divided up into three groupings. The first grouping is for those elements which are

²⁵⁸ Yves Raguin, *Maître et disciple*, p. 9.

²⁵⁹ Elizabeth Liebert, "Coming Home to Themselves: Women's Spiritual Care", in *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996, p. 265.

²⁶⁰ Riet Bons-Storm, *The Incredible Woman: Listening to Woman's Silences and Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996, p. 139, 142.

clearly similar. The second grouping is for those elements that have ambiguous similarities, that is they are somewhat similar, but not entirely. The third grouping is for those elements that are very different and most often are the points that create the most difficulty in the ministry of spiritual direction. Hints and suggestions for spiritual directors are given as they may journey through the Spiritual Exercises with different directees. These suggestions may also be useful for directors trained in the Ignatian method so that they may come to integrate some feminist concepts in their ministry.

4.2 Images of God

Images of God are critical concepts to address in spiritual direction. English writes about the importance of helping pray-ers to come to experience authentic images of God in the Spiritual Exercises.²⁶¹ John Wickham in his book, the *Prayer Companion Handbook*, also stresses the significance of positive images of God, not just for praying the Spiritual Exercises, but for the psychological health of the pray-er.²⁶² He links specific images of God with corresponding images of the self or one's identity. Wickham offers the director suggestions to guide the pray-er toward positive images of God through the use of selected Scripture passages as prayer material.²⁶³ Prayer can transform our image or images of God²⁶⁴ and by consequence our self image or identity.²⁶⁵ Prayer, images of God and images of the self are closely linked. The following chart and subsequent comments offer hints that may help directors to be aware of the difficulties often experienced by feminist directees in this area of their spirituality.

Table I - Comparison chart between Ignatian and feminist spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality	Feminist Spirituality
God as loving creator	God as loving creator

²⁶¹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 242.

²⁶² John Wickham, *The Prayer Companion Handbook*, 3rd ed., Montreal, Ignatian Centre Publications, 1991, p. 54.

²⁶³ John Wickham, *The Prayer Companion Handbook*, p. 208,209.

²⁶⁴ Carolyn Thomas, *Will the Real God Please Stand Up: Healing our Dysfunctional Images of God*, NewMahwah, Paulist Press, 1991, p. 7.

²⁶⁵ Max Oliva, *Free to Pray, Free to Love: Growing in Prayer and Compassion*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 1994, p. 15.

God, giver of gifts	
God labours for humanity	
God is merciful	God of vulnerability and mercy
God who calls the pray-er to growth	God who calls us to wholeness through growth
God of community	God of relationship
God of mystery	God of mystery
God in all things	God present in all of creation
	God is male, female and more
	God who loves the poor

4.2.1 Clear Similarities

An initial glance at this chart indicates a number of similarities between Ignatian spirituality and feminist spirituality. Part of this can be explained by the fact that both spiritualities are drawn from the Christian tradition and are primarily Scripture based. The most evident similarities between the two are the images of God portrayed as a loving creator who is also merciful to the creatures within creation. Mercy is one of the many ways that God expresses love and it is this love that initiated the creative urge of God. Part of this creative urge of God is God's desire for people to grow as human beings. Growth implies change, and change is also part of the creative process of God. Wholeness, although not a part of the vocabulary of the Spiritual Exercises itself, is one of the quests of our contemporary culture and inherent in the psychological model of spiritual direction in North America.

Another point of convergence between the two spiritualities is the image of God as mystery. God becomes that indefinable essence that cannot be fully described by any stretch of the imagination. This sense of mystery opens God up to all possibilities, those new horizons that have not yet been experienced. God also becomes apparent through the sense of awe and wonder as a person grows in the spiritual life and navigates uncharted waters in the spiritual journey.

For the spiritual director sensitive to feminist issues, these images of God do not create any difficulty, unless the directee is unable to identify with some of them. Prayer exercises from the Spiritual Exercises, scripture or contemplative activities in nature may help the directee experience God in these ways. God as loving creator and God of mystery indicate some of the principal images of the Ignatian and feminist God.

4.2.2 Ambiguous Similarities

The first images that become a little less clear in their similarities are the Ignatian God as merciful, whereas the feminist God is vulnerable and merciful. In the feminist model God's mercy stems not just from God's love but also from God's vulnerability. The merciful God in Ignatian spirituality appears to come more from a position of power and strength than from a position of vulnerability. The stance of power indicates a quality of the more patriarchal God. God's mercy is not diminished in this image, but the source of God's mercy is different and can affect the expectations of God and the self image of the praying person. The spiritual director who is aware of his/her own vulnerability and is not afraid of it, would be more at ease with a directee experiencing a God that is vulnerable.

Another ambiguous similarity is the image of the God of community in Ignatian spirituality, and the image of the God of relationship in feminist spirituality. The God of community is primarily speaking about the community of the persons of the Trinity who are in relationship with each other. In the image of God of relationship, there is more of a focus on God that relates to human beings. But the God of community also implies a relationship with humanity in that the Trinity and in particular Jesus, desire a relationship with all of humanity. These two images of God speak similarly of who God is.

The images of God in all things and God present in all of creation also have some points in common. The Ignatian God in all things indicates that God is revealed through events, nature, human history, mundane activities, etc. God in all things calls the Ignatian follower to be constantly attentive to God's presence. The feminist God in all of creation

focuses more on God in the natural environment. The natural environment includes the human body and sexuality, which in a literal reading of the Spiritual Exercises may be seen as sources of temptation or at best, not spiritual. (Sp. Exx 47-58) To stretch the Ignatian image to include God in the natural environment and the body would include the feminist image of God and help the directee to appreciate and accept the physical body as a positive aspect of being a human being. A healthy attitude towards the body can be beneficial to the self image of any person, be it man or woman.

4.2.3 Differences

Two images of the Ignatian God stand out as being different from the feminist God. They are God, giver of gifts and God labouring for humanity. These two images are closely linked with God's providence. The first is God giving all that God has for humanity and the other is God who continues to labour, a continuation of that process of giving.

To understand this God of Ignatius, one needs to go back to Ignatius' own life experience of the Knight/Lord relationship. The Lord provided for his people. In response to this providential love, his knights returned their loyalty. For the contemporary person, especially a feminist, this form of relationship is difficult to understand and associate with the spiritual life. But, nevertheless, the virtue of gratitude for what is received is a beneficial virtue to cultivate. In her book, *Radical Gratitude*, Mary Jo Leddy makes the point that gratitude is often missing in our North American society and that this lack of gratitude has led to much disillusionment in our society.²⁶⁶ Gratitude may be an opening to a healthy response for women and men to an image of a providential God. Care must be taken that this image of God does not imply a God who demands repayment for the gifts given. God gives with no strings attached. But it is the ability to receive and return to God in gratitude, that which is given, that supports the spiritual growth of the individual.

Much as the providential God is a result of Ignatius's life experience, so does the life experience of women as poor and female affect their image of God. The image of God as not only male, but female and of God who loves the poor comes from this experience. These concepts are some of the foundational ideas of feminist thought and in turn, of feminist spirituality. In an effort to introduce a person journeying through the Spiritual

²⁶⁶ Mary Jo Leddy, *Radical Gratitude*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2002, p. 3.

Exercises to these images of God, alternative passages can be used that express not only female and masculine images of God, but images in nature. In addition, the use of passages in the New Testament where women take leadership roles in evangelizing or witnessing to Jesus is important. The stories of women in the New Testament would express a more balanced picture of Jesus' relationship with his disciples and would assist both men and women to accept a more active role for women in the world.

Passages on God's and Jesus' relationship with the poor would enhance the way God is perceived to relate to the poor. God strengthens the poor and yet encourages them to resist the injustice that may cause their poverty. Poverty may not only be in a monetary sense but also in social contexts, such as patriarchal relationships that diminish those that do not have power.

4.3 Images of Christ

For the Christian believer, the image of Jesus Christ, the anointed one, has a very important role to play in the spiritual life. He is the concrete and human example of who God is. It is through the New Testament that his image is portrayed. But in different Christian spiritualities, different aspects of his life are emphasized or identified with more than others. Following is the comparison between the image of Christ in Ignatian and feminist spirituality.

Table II - Comparison chart between Ignatian and feminist spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality	Feminist Spirituality
Christ that chose poverty and humility	Christ in solidarity with the poor
Christ gives himself to others in friendship	Christ who expresses his love for others
Christ as a human being	Christ, the human face of God
Christ as leader and king	

Christ as saviour and redeemer	Christ who suffers
Christ of the resurrection	Christ the resurrected
	Christ who heals
	Christ who does not follow the letter of the law

4.3.1 Clear Similarities

The clearest similarity is the image of Christ who is resurrected. In both Ignatian and the feminist spiritualities, resurrection results from struggle and/or suffering. Resurrection can mean wholeness, transformation, new life or rebirth. But, in each case, there is a sense that what existed before exists no longer. Life has changed, but it is a positive change, a period of growth or completion. For the praying person who has experienced this transformation, it is a time of looking back, acknowledging the changes and giving thanks for the growth that has occurred. The Christ resurrected becomes a symbol of hope, of new possibilities and expectations. The feminist can identify with this image of Christ and pray with it.

4.3.2 Ambiguous similarities

At first glance, two images that may resemble each other are the Ignatian image of Christ that chose poverty and humility and the feminist Christ in solidarity with the poor. They are linked together in that both images imply a love and sensibility towards those who are poor or marginalized. Christ truly identifies with the poor and their suffering. But, the Ignatian image implies Jesus making a choice for poverty. Moser and Ruffing's article²⁶⁷ cited in Chapter one of this thesis reminds us that women or the marginalized often do not have the option to choose poverty, it is part of their everyday living. Their poverty is imposed on them. What happens to the marginalized when they attempt to come

²⁶⁷ Janet Ruffing and Theresa Moser, "An Option for Women?" p. 40.

out of their poverty? Can this be mistakenly seen as going against the Ignatian image of Christ who chose poverty and humiliation? Can a person in an abusive situation see themselves as identifying with Christ when they choose to stay in the abusive situation?

Ignatius himself came from a background of nobility and power. This power and noble background may have been experienced as an obstacle to God for him and for many of the other Jesuits who joined with him. One indication of this is that he insisted that the members of his society take the vow of poverty. The true realities of the poor are very different and need to be evaluated when directing. What kind of poverty does God call the directee to? Are they already in a form of poverty that may be destructive and does this mean that they must continually choose to remain in that form of poverty and humility?

The feminist Christ in solidarity with the poor can be reconciled with the Christ who chooses poverty when one carefully evaluates the whole social situation of the praying person. A path that destroys the integrity of the individual would go against all the principles of the Spiritual Exercises. Growing in a relationship with God implies personal growth, not personal destruction.

The next two images which have some congruence are the Ignatian image of Christ who gives himself to others in friendship and the feminist Christ who expresses his love for others. Friendship and love are closely associated as friends love each other and give of themselves to each other. A reciprocal relationship exists between friends. The feminist Christ, who expresses his love, does so inevitably for his friends as well as others.

But the feminist Christ expresses his love in many ways that are not always implied in friendship of the style of Ignatius. When the feminist Christ expresses his love, it is in an affective way, but also in a physical way, acknowledging that love given both ways is healthy and sometimes even necessary for love to be expressed fully. Affectivity is important as emotions are an important factor of the human experience. Although the Ignatian Christ of friendship indicates more a relationship of actions carried out for one another, there can be a balance in how this relationship can be lived out. Ignatius does invite the retreatant to “ask for sorrow, compassion, and shame because the Lord is going to His suffering for my sins (Sp. Exx. 193) and “Then I will begin with great effort to strive to grieve, be sad and weep” (Sp. Exx. 195) These are great demonstrations of affectivity. Love can be expressed in physical contact and in the expression of emotions or words of caring. This balance can help people to come to terms with their own physical and emotional needs in relationships and how they give and express their love to others.

The image of Christ as a human being is closely related to the image of Christ, the human face of God. The Ignatian image is a focus on the humanity of Jesus as opposed to his divinity. The purpose of this image in the Spiritual Exercises helps the praying person to realize that Christ was human and experienced life in a very human way. His experiences become more real and concrete. The feminist Christ as the human face of God, not only implies that God can be revealed in other ways, but that God can truly work through the human person that is Jesus. Both images show that the human body is a true instrument of God and that the body is not something that is expendable or serves as an obstacle to God. Jesus, as human, used his body to express all of his identity.

In terms of spiritual direction, the director can encourage the directee to accept the human body as an instrument of God and that as human beings, we are called to reveal God in the same way that Jesus did. The human being is not a soul trapped in a body that will one day disappear freeing the soul. The identity of the human person is integral, as body, mind and spirit are all interconnected and influencing each other. Therefore, it is important to take care of and respect the human body.²⁶⁸ St. Paul calls the body the temple of the Holy Spirit, something sacred and honourable.(1 Cor. 3:16) The sacredness of the body implies that a healthy spirituality includes a healthy attitude towards the body.

The Ignatian image of Christ as Saviour or Redeemer is somewhat in tension, but may be on a parallel with the feminist image of Christ who suffers. Both images are taken from the biblical texts of the passion and death of Jesus, but there is a difference in the way the text is internalized. Ivone Gebara questions the patriarchal tradition that exalts the public humiliation of Jesus and his role as a masculine saviour. She explores the possibility of another way of interpreting the life and actions of Jesus.²⁶⁹ She suggests that the image of Christ who suffers places the emphasis more on the on-going process of the passion and death. If Jesus had not died, he would still have suffered. The marginalized can identify much more with the image of suffering as their life is a constant daily suffering, with no saving action. Saving others, or being saved, belongs to the bigger picture. Ignatius, in Sp. Exx. 102 does imply that the Son's saving action begins with the Incarnation.

²⁶⁸ Ivens tells us that Ignatius encouraged moderation of penances for the members of his new society. This was countercultural for the time. Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary; a Handbook for Retreat Directors*, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, Cromwell Press, 1998, p. 71.

²⁶⁹ Ivone Gebara, *Le mal au féminin : Réflexions théologiques à partir du féminisme*, Montréal, L'Harmattan, 1999, p. 154.

Chittister interprets the saving action of Jesus to be his showing the way to God and how to bring God's reign to reality. This applies not only to Jesus' death but to all the events of his life and the way he lived out his human situation. But Jesus' saving action does not stop there. Every Christian is called to continue that saving action of Jesus by continuing his work. "When Jesus said, "Follow me," Jesus was really saying that salvation is incomplete until it lives in us."²⁷⁰

The passion and death of Jesus occurs during the Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises. Care needs to be taken to balance the images of Christ who suffers unjustly and Christ who saves the world. Dyckman et al suggests that a director be aware that a directee should not take on or accept an unjust suffering such as physical or psychological abuse with the mistaken intention that they are identifying with the passion and death of Christ. Jesus was not a passive victim, nor did he invite suffering onto himself.²⁷¹

4.3.3 Differences

The first Ignatian image of Christ that is distinctive in the list above is the image of Christ as a leader or king. The image of leader and/or king is crucial to the Spiritual Exercises as it is the basis of the two themes of the Call of the King and the Two Standards. Both parables in the Spiritual Exercises stem from Ignatius's own experience as a soldier and nobleman. For those who have difficulty with this imagery, Dyckman et al suggest that

Story and myth provide an avenue for interpreting the Call of the King not as literal history but as entry into truths that lie deep within the human spirit. Kings, queens, gods and goddesses, magicians, shamans, healers, heroes and villains dwell in the depths of the human psyche. The magnetism of special leaders continues to capture the human imagination as they touch the deep human desire for good to triumph over evil.²⁷²

For the feminist, the image of Christ as king and leader can be used to introduce the notion of the variety of leadership styles. Feminist examples of leaders who use their leadership in ways that are not authoritarian or patriarchal can be introduced. The spiritual director should be careful that the directee remain open to these opportunities to discover different types of leaders and to become aware of how she/he performs in leadership roles.

²⁷⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, p. 122.

²⁷¹ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, p. 219.

²⁷² Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, p. 193.

The two images of Christ as healer and Christ who does not follow the letter of the law are two images that belong to the feminist category of this study. The healing ministry of Jesus is definitely absent in the formal text of the Spiritual Exercises and one would ask the question as to what effect this would have had on the Jesuits as they ministered in their own fields of work. Henri Nouwen suggests that being in touch with our own woundedness makes us better ministers.²⁷³

The healing ministry in the Spiritual Exercises has only begun to be explored. Nevertheless, some Jesuits in their ministry have made some adaptations in the spiritual direction of the Spiritual Exercises to include a “healing mode” process in the Spiritual Exercises.²⁷⁴ Williams reiterates that the “healing mode” process belongs to the psychological paradigm of spiritual direction. The psychological paradigm implies that we are all broken in some way or another.²⁷⁵ If a director senses that a directee is in need of a particular healing, a change in the scripture texts may include some of the healing stories of Jesus. The director is to listen carefully to the directee, attentively responding in the way that most seems to suit the needs of the directee. These changes in Scripture texts are especially suited to the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises as this is the section when the person reflects on the public ministry of Jesus. For the Ignatian pray-er in need of healing, praying on the healing ministry of Jesus can be source of spiritual growth and maturity.

The feminist image of Jesus who does not follow the letter of the law can be very threatening for the Ignatian directee. The whole imagery, nature and format of the Spiritual Exercises, the very patriarchal mindset of Ignatius and the creation of the Society of Jesus that followed, suggest conformity to an institution at all costs. In particular, one can refer to the very difficult “Rules for thinking with the Church” (Sp. Exx 352-370). How does the feminist reconcile this image of Jesus with Ignatian spirituality? There is no easy answer to this question. Dyckman et al suggest flexibility, prayer and deep discernment when discerning a call, an action or a process that may be in conflict with specific societal or ecclesial rules. Everyone is part of a bigger picture, the individual’s desires and needs are important with the Holy Spirit working through all people. The

²⁷³ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1972, Ch. 4.

²⁷⁴ John Veltri, *Orientations*, p. 325-348.

John Wickham, class notes from the Daily Life Workshop, Ignatian Centre, 2001.

²⁷⁵ Geoffrey Williams, « Models of Spiritual Direction »

continuous struggle today is to work together for the greater good.²⁷⁶ Each decision must be evaluated individually in the context in which it is played out. The director must guide the person to listen to the Holy Spirit in her or his heart and be open to all possibilities.

This section has shown how some of the images of God and Christ in Ignatian and feminist spirituality have points of convergence and divergence. Yet, with the help of a spiritual director who desires to create an atmosphere of acceptance for feminist thought, changes can be made to incorporate both types of images into the Spiritual Exercises. We will now move on to the comparison of the different forms of prayer.

4.4 Forms of Prayer

Prayer is what the Ulanovs term our “Primary Speech” because we speak out of the deep human longing that is part of the human experience.²⁷⁷ In Ignatian and feminist spirituality, prayer is the link in the development of a relationship with God. As explained before in the section on images of God in this chapter, prayer helps the person to clarify and even transform his/her sense of identity. The praying person comes to a deeper knowledge of his or her nature in the process of relating to God. Following are the different prayer forms that are part of Ignatian and feminist spirituality.

Table III. Comparison Chart between Ignatian and feminist spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality	Feminist Spirituality
Consciousness examen	Prayer in work (ora labora), Compline
Meditation	
Gospel Contemplation	Night Office, Divine Office

²⁷⁶ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, ch.12.

²⁷⁷ Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech*, p. 1.

Application of the Senses	Night Office, Divine Office
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4.4.1 Similarities

The two prayer forms called the Consciousness examen and the Prayer in Work have similar points. Both prayer forms search to identify the presence of God in the ordinary events that occur in the day of the praying person. The main focus of the prayer material is the daily life of the person. The Ignatian consciousness examen, in typical Ignatian style, is very structured and formal, where there are a series of fixed guidelines to follow. But, as explained in Chapter 2, recently, some adaptations have been made by different authors to make this prayer form more “user friendly”. One of the more flexible adaptations have been outlined in the book *Sleeping with Bread*.²⁷⁸ In the rule of Benedict, as interpreted by Chittister, this seeking of God in daily life is less structured and annotated, but it is implied in the combination of Prayer at Work and the Compline, whereby the praying person looks at the events of the past day through the eyes of God. In both cases, God is the source of love and guidance for whatever has occurred in the day, be it work, play, or meditation. In addition, these prayer forms encourage the pray-er to hope for the future in that he/she requests God’s love and grace for the following day.

In spiritual direction, this prayer can be invaluable in helping a directee to experience God in all that he /she does. These prayer forms can help to discern where God is calling the person in work, in relationships and in life decisions. From personal experience with a directee, one danger can occur when the individual gets bogged down with too many details of the day, so that it becomes difficult to sort out where God is to be found. The Ignatian format with its different ‘points’ can encourage a person who is already prone to this difficulty to become blocked from experiencing God’s presence. Tim Gallagher, in his yet unpublished book on the examen encourages flexibility in the practice of the consciousness examen, so as to turn the focus of the examen on the important points of growth in the spiritual life of each individual.²⁷⁹ If this problem occurs, the director could suggest alternative ways of praying this important prayer such as focusing on the first point of gratitude.

²⁷⁸ Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, Matthew Linn, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding what Gives You Life*, New York, Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1995.

²⁷⁹ Timothy Gallagher, *The Practice of the Examen: Finding God in Everyday Living*, expected publishing date, 2006, Ch.9.

4.4.3 *Ambiguous similarities*

The second group of prayer forms that are similar are the Ignatian Gospel contemplation and the application of the senses versus the Benedictine Night and Divine office. Both prayers are Scripture based and encourage the pray-er to not only read and meditate the scriptures but to imbibe them in such a way that they become the person's source of life. What differs between the two prayer forms is that Ignatian spirituality uses primarily the New Testament with a strong emphasis on the life of Jesus. The Benedictine Divine Office utilises mainly the psalms with texts from the rest of the Scriptures used primarily at the Eucharistic celebrations.

Another difference occurs in the approach to the scripture passage. Ignatian prayer with scripture asks the pray-er to use her/his imagination in reconstructing the events of the Scripture passage. Some pray-ers find this relatively easy, but others either because of their personality types²⁸⁰ or because of past negative experiences have great difficulty in entering prayer using this way. The spiritual director may offer alternative methods of prayer that open the way to God.²⁸¹ God finds a way to encounter every person. The spiritual director must not block the way with too many shoulds and musts and formulas.²⁸² Many have been those who have experienced the Spiritual Exercises through alternative ways of praying.

4.4.3 *Differences*

The Ignatian prayer form that differs substantially from the feminist prayer forms is the type called meditation. In meditation, the praying person reflects and ponders on a specific scenario or subject matter. These meditations are very specific in format and in process. The rules or 'points' may be difficult for people who need more freedom in their prayer material and who search for a more affective type of prayer. Although meditating on a specific subject in itself may not be prohibitive to women, the subject matter of some of the Ignatian meditations are troublesome. The meditations that are part of this prayer form are the meditation on hell, the Call of the King, the Two Standards, the Three Classes of Persons and the Three Forms of Humility.

²⁸⁰ Charles Keating, *Who we are is How we Pray*, Connecticut, Twenty-Third Publications, 1988, Ch. 1.

²⁸¹ John English, *Spiritual Freedom*, p. 134.

²⁸² Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *Reclaiming the Spiritual Exercises*, p.132.

In all of these meditations, it is possible to make adaptations that are more “women friendly”. For example, the Call of the King can be adapted to become the call of any person or movement that the person admires or respects. The meditation on hell need not necessarily be represented as the hell of “fire and brimstone” that Ignatius describes. Each person has their own personal “hell” that can be used for the meditation. The imagery of the Two Standards can be offensive in that it speaks of good and bad in dualistic terms. As well, the implication that poverty and humility are the way of Christ may seem repugnant for women who have struggled for a long time to come out of a difficult family situation or a situation of poverty.²⁸³ The spiritual director is called to be sensitive to these issues and respect the dignity of the praying person in his/her situation.

The meditations on the Three Classes of Persons and the Three Humilities are tools towards proper discernment. What are the attachments of this world that are blocking him/her from God and true identity? Is the person always looking for the easy way of doing things or are they willing to go the extra mile for Christ? The virtue of humility also needs to be properly understood as the acceptance of oneself with weaknesses and strengths and loved by God in this condition.²⁸⁴ Humility leads to true spiritual indifference. These two meditations must not be used to compare oneself with those who are more humble or more giving. The focus must be to see how one is relating to God and what stands in the way of that relationship, be it material things or more psychological needs and dependencies. These are some of the ways that the meditations of the Spiritual Exercises can be adapted to the feminist spiritual life.

One notable difference between the Ignatian prayer and the feminist prayer as defined by Chittister is that the Ignatian prayer is more conducive to the life style of a lay person. Chittister’s Benedictine roots exhibit a prayer form that is more suited to the monastic life. This would be one of the limitations of Chittister’s writings that comes through in this study, but cannot be applied to all feminist spiritualities.

4.5 Discernment

One of the principle reasons individuals request spiritual direction is for purposes of discernment. They may have an important decision to make or are experiencing a crisis in

²⁸³ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *Reclaiming the Spiritual Exercises*, p.196.

²⁸⁴ John Wickham, *The Real Presence of the Future Kingdom*, Montreal, Ignatian Centre Publications, 1991, p. 35.

their lives. Deep down in their hearts, there is the knowledge that some elements of their lives need to be changed but they lack the ability to discern properly. In addition, a major preoccupation for many of these spiritual seekers is the desire to be in tune with the “will of God.” Proper discernment or tools for discernment are crucial for these cases, as these individuals wish to move forward in their decision-making process as well as to feel God’s presence throughout the journey. The spiritual director’s role is not to be making the decisions for the directee, but he or she can help the directee to unfold the workings of God and give the proper tools to understand some of the movements of the heart. The directee receives the skills to decide the road to take on his/her personal spiritual journey. As is consistent with the previous sections, following is a comparison chart comparing the discernment process between Ignatian and feminist spirituality.

Table IV Comparison Chart between Ignatian and feminist spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality	Feminist Spirituality
Will of God	Will of God
Rules for the Discernment of Spirits	Listen to your deepest self Trust insights that come from your body, intuition and feelings Interpret your affective experiences in light of women’s social conditioning
Election	Making choices
	(own needs vs others) Affirm your own needs as well as others Do not confuse passivity with conformity to God’s will
	(social forces) Be aware of social and cultural forces Interpret your affective experiences in light of woman’s social conditioning

	(consequences) Try to generate alternatives when you feel trapped Take account of the price of change
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4.5.1 Similarities

The first similarity that appears on the chart above is the meaning of the term “will of God”. Both Ignatian and feminist spirituality understand the will of God as coming partly from an inner authority and not as an entity that exists totally outside of the person. The true identity of the person is expressed in the will of God and is unveiled through reflection and prayer. The will of God does not stifle growth of the person, in contrast, the will of God is that the person come to his/her true self in the context of daily life. God’s will then becomes a participation of the person and God who desire to work together to bring harmony to this world.

For the praying person, discovering the will of God requires some knowledge of her/his identity. Being in tune with one’s identity can be difficult for those who have continually relied on relationships and or exterior authorities to define who they are and how they must act. Gilligan describes women participating in a study “ in all of the women’s descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care.”²⁸⁵ Women often identify themselves as the mother of..., the wife of.... , the daughter of, instead of looking into themselves and coming into touch with who they are. The spiritual director needs to be aware of this often complicated situation, be attentive to the true desires of the individual and help her to find the equilibrium between her responsibilities to care for others and the discovery and development of her own gifts. Even in the different life stages this may change as the person grows in maturity and relationships change. One key to discovering one’s identity is in finding the gifts of the person as she comes to discover her deep desires of the heart.

The rules for the discernment of spirits offer the discerning person a concise and concrete way of discerning the movements of the heart in everyday life. But, for women and especially feminists, the language and metaphors that Ignatius uses in his rules for the

²⁸⁵ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 162.

discernment of spirits can literally “turn them off”. The spiritual director is asked to be sensitive to this issue because, in spite of these drawbacks, these rules are a literal gold mine for someone trying to decipher what is happening in the spiritual life. The rules for the discernment of spirits call for a deep listening of the inner self and being in touch with one’s identity. Listening to the movements of the heart, to intuitions and to body signals are signs of this deep listening of the self. This listening assists in naming the feelings and evaluating where they originate. The directee needs to be encouraged to trust these feelings and the insights they evoke. Fischer, in her chapter on discernment asserts that the Ignatian rules for discernment are indicators for a person’s life direction and that they would help in interpreting when different affective experiences are influenced by societal norms and when they are truly emerging out the identity of the person.²⁸⁶

From a feminist mindset, the Ignatian rules of discernment offer many possibilities for insight and guidance for women today who wish to honor their inner authority and act on it. These women may be called to disagree with some more predetermined and patriarchal mindsets that wish to relegate women to specific roles in society and the church. For the spiritual director this may offer a challenge as he/she accompanies the directee in discerning what is happening in prayer and life events with an openness of mind and spirit. True openness demands an increased confidence in the praying person and in the way that God works in her/him.

4.5.2 *Ambiguous Similarities*

The Election in the Spiritual Exercises invites the praying person to another form of Ignatian discernment when the rules of discernment are not sufficient in the decision-making process. In the feminist model of discernment that was identified in Chapter 3, there is no comparable form for this method of decision-making, other than setting the stage for the praying person to make a choice. Dyckman reiterates, that for women, making choices, especially important ones requiring a strong commitment, are difficult to make. Deciding on commitments is often a struggle because many women have been betrayed by the way that society has forced them to honor those commitments gone wrong, or by the way that others have betrayed these commitments.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 125.

²⁸⁷ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, p. 293.

But the Election process can still offer possibilities for feminist decision-making. The use of the pros and cons method in an attitude of prayer encourages the use of different factual elements of the choice to be made, and, it also encourages and validates any affective or intuitive thoughts that may emerge. In addition, the use of imagination in the imaginative scenarios that Ignatius uses can aid persons to search their inner being for what may be the best choice to make. The spiritual director can invite the retreatant to imagine their own imaginative scenarios for dialoguing with God.

Again, the spiritual director must be careful not to interfere in the decision-making process. For so many women, listening to their inner authority is difficult and new to them. They become more vulnerable and susceptible to outside influences. When one is more secure in listening to the inner self, it becomes easier to be assertive in the decision-making process.

4.5.3 Differences

Using the feminist model for discernment, two elements not taken into account in Ignatian discernment are the affirmation of one's own needs as well as others and the awareness that passivity may not be in conformity with God's will. Both of these factors place the needs of the person against the needs of the other. The dilemma of their needs as opposed to the needs of others is problematic for women. Gilligan explains how men and women think differently when it comes to thinking about themselves, or thinking about others. Men have less difficulty in asserting their needs than women do.²⁸⁸ In Ignatian terms, this signals men's difficulty with pride or selflessness. Women's difficulties lie in asserting their needs when the needs of others cry out to them. In other situations, women become passive and allow others to make decisions for them which are not always in their best interest but in the interest of the decision-maker. The Christian ideal of self-sacrifice can often be a women's bane when overly emphasized. An overly developed sense of self-sacrifice may be a source of silencing of women and/or lead to depression.²⁸⁹

The spiritual director can encourage the person to find the delicate balance between the needs of all concerned. God's will should not imply that one person should sacrifice their personhood. The long term benefits of sacrificing the personhood of one

²⁸⁸ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p.35-37.

²⁸⁹ Brita L. Gill-Austern, « Love Understood as Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial » in *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996, p. 311.

person are not in the interests of anyone. "Whatever promotes the full humanity of women as well as men is redemptive and holy, that is, it is of God. What denies and distorts that full humanity does not bear the power and authority of divine revelation."²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, authentic giving of the self as taught by Christ is the most true form of love and can lead to self-transcendence and growth.²⁹¹

In feminist thought and therefore feminist spirituality, the social forces that are present in a given culture affect the lives of women and men. These forces tend to limit or define the roles of each gender. In the feminist model for discernment this issue is addressed when it states that the discerning person should be aware of the social and cultural forces influencing a situation and that one should interpret any affective experiences in light of women's social conditioning.

The Ignatian process of discernment does not address these issues. Women must, because one of the premises of feminism is validation, dignity and recognition of the potential gifts of all, male and female. Any social or cultural bias which hinders the potentiality of any individual must be analyzed in a discernment process. Other social forces that affect women and inevitably men can be forces of oppression, or poverty that limit the different choices that the directee has. These forces can be stifling and become even a source of desolation or despair.

For the spiritual director who directs someone through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius does not offer much assistance in this aspect. In the feminist model, the director is called to be flexible, to inform him/herself of those societal and cultural issues that feminists struggle with and to accompany their directee in that struggle. The director is asked to be present with the directee in all that he/she may experience. It is the sign of the true listener that attends to the experience of the other.

The last two aspects of the feminist discernment model that do not have a comparable equivalent in Ignatian discernment deal with the consequences of going against the grain, or the norms of cultural or societal behaviour. These aspects are: 1) to generate alternatives when feeling trapped and 2) to take into account the price of change. In both cases, the discerning person needs to tap into their creative energy. When initiating changes in behaviour and when imagining some of the consequences of changed behaviours, the directee may experience resistance. Discernment calls for responding to

²⁹⁰ Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well*, p. 128.

²⁹¹ Brita L. Gill-Austern, "Love Understood as Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial.", p. 315.

situations in a way that respects the true self. But, women's choices are often limited when they are in situations of injustice or dependency on another person or group of persons. Traditional ways of resisting this kind of situation may not work. The Spirit can be a source of insight in affirming the person's gifts and how these gifts can be used to alter the situation in a different way. But, the individual must be aware that some of these new behaviours may cause reactions in those relationships that have enabled the person's victimization. Many are those who are just not ready to risk changing their situation either in a family or in a workplace. The risk requires taking responsibility for one's actions and accepting the consequences.

The spiritual director needs to encourage the person to be creative, to continue to affirm the person in the struggle and not judge her/him when courage or resiliency is lacking to act on what should be done. No one can be in the shoes of the other. The director can be a source of support, information and understanding, which can strengthen the inner authority of the person so that a possibility of change may someday occur. Often as directors this requires patience and restraint as we sometimes hear in the adage "God's time is not always our time."

From the above comparisons, the two parameters from Ignatian and feminist spirituality that have the least differences are the image of God and forms of prayer. This can explain why women still are able to identify with Ignatian spirituality, since the forms of prayer that Ignatius proposes are helpful to women who wish to strengthen their prayer life. As for the image of God, the loving God that Ignatius experienced brings solace and affirmation to women. The two parameters that had many differences are the images of Christ and discernment. The differences in the image of Christ are somewhat of a surprise, but from the data collected, it appears that Ignatius and his experiences of the soldier and the aristocracy deeply colored his perception of the Christ who leads. As for discernment, so much of it concerns societal issues. They are lived by women in a way that would not have been in Ignatius' realm of awareness.

To sum up, there are some similarities and differences between Ignatian and feminist spirituality, but many of the differences are not irreconcilable. Much work has been done by some very conscientious spiritual directors to help women through the Spiritual Exercises while also respecting their personhood. Furthermore, as feminist authors research and reflect on the pastoral needs of women, this knowledge will help to better respond to women as they journey through the Spiritual Exercises. The suggestions

in this chapter can aid directors to be conscious of the needs of women and of men in developing an authentic and healthy relationship with God.

Conclusion

The questions that were initially posed in the introduction need to be looked at again in this conclusion. Can feminist Christians live out Ignatian spirituality and still be true to themselves as individuals who live a Christian feminist spirituality? How does this work out for those spiritual directors who accompany these people in their spiritual life? I believe that through this thesis some of these questions have obtained some clarification.

It began with a review of some of the work that has already been done in the study of Ignatian spirituality and the spiritual lives of women. The next two chapters followed the hermeneutical approach in the study of spirituality as developed by Sandra Schneiders. The second and third chapters described Ignatian spirituality and feminist spirituality as defined by specific contemporary authors. Four parameters were used to describe the two spiritualities, they were: images of God, images of Christ, forms of prayer and discernment. Chapter four is a comparison between the two spiritualities with suggestions for spiritual directors who wish to apply some of the principles of feminism in the direction of the Spiritual Exercises.

The methodological approach in this thesis was a combination of two ideas from the writings of Sandra Schneiders. These two ideas are the definition of Christian spirituality and her hermeneutical approach to the study of spirituality, both outlined in the introduction. Her definition of Christian spirituality inspired me to use the following four parameters to define Ignatian and feminist spirituality. They are: images of God, images of Christ, prayer and discernment. Her hermeneutical approach for the study of spirituality was used to create the different chapter topics. Chapters two and three are the definitions of the specific spiritual phenomenon. Chapter four by critically comparing the two spiritualities and developing a constructive interpretation of the data for spiritual directors implements steps two and three of Schneider's hermeneutical approach.

In identifying some of the differences and similarities between Ignatian spirituality and feminist spirituality, one observes that there is much in common. The question of why women are drawn to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and can find them as a source of spiritual growth is answered in part. The differences point towards places where there are problems for feminists and where work continues to be done. The literature has shown that in more recent times many spiritual directors have been making efforts to adjust the Spiritual Exercises for women. But, adapting the Spiritual Exercises for women continues

to be a challenge for spiritual directors as they attempt to be sensitive to the specific issues that women face in their culture and society. Ignatius himself encourages directors to make adaptations for all their directees. This concept is explained in the beginning annotations of the Spiritual Exercises. (Sp Exx. 15, 18.) He considers this to be part of the skill of the director.

Some questions still remain unanswered. In this thesis, only four parameters of the spiritual life were studied. There are many more. One parameter that would have been interesting, considering the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises themselves, is the dimension of sin. Some articles have been written on the sin of women²⁹² and the sin of women as related to the Spiritual Exercises.²⁹³ But, the literature has certainly not exhausted the topic.

For the purposes of this thesis, I chose to consider primarily the feminist writings of Joan Chittister. This limits the vast repertoire of feminist spirituality to one author and although she does represent well the feminist thought of her time and context, some of the criteria that were chosen to describe feminist spirituality could have been more complete through the writings of other authors. In particular, the criteria of 'forms of prayer' were limited to Chittister's Benedictine roots, which is not the context for most feminist thought.

Another issue that has not been discussed is the whole process of the Spiritual Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises begin with the short Principle and Foundation depicting a loving creator. The process continues to the First Week that focuses on sin and then to the next few weeks that bring the person through the life of Christ as depicted in Scripture. Is this process helpful to women?

Interestingly enough, a Benedictine nun of the thirteenth century by the name of Gertrude of Helfta also devised a series of spiritual exercises²⁹⁴ with the purpose of discovering God's love and the riches of the grace of Baptism. The process reads somewhat like the life of the Christian soul. It begins with a meditation on Baptism, then spiritual conversion, continuing with nuptials and consecration of the self to God, divine

²⁹² Valerie Saiving, « The Human Situation : The Feminine View », in *Womanspirit Rising: A feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, San Fransisco, harper Collins, 1992.

Susan Nelson Dunfee, "The Sin of Hiding: A Feminist Critique of Reinhold Neibuhr's Account of Sin and Pride" *Soundings*, vol. 65 (3), fall 1982, p. 316-327.

²⁹³ Elizabeth Koessler, « Le péché de femme au cœur de l'accompagnement spirituelle », *Cahiers de Spiritualité Ignatienne*, vol. 27, (avril-juin 2003) p. 83-95.

²⁹⁴ Gertrude d'Helfta, *Exercices*. Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1993.

love, adoration and thanksgiving. These spiritual exercises end with a section on the reparation of sins and death. The language is one of love and sensuous feelings, in sharp contrast with the Ignatian military metaphors. Personal life experience distinctively marks the process of the spiritual journey. Would the process of Gertrude's Spiritual Exercises be more "feminist friendly"?

The process of spiritual care of women, especially spiritual direction of women is slowly changing. Elizabeth Liebert mentions that women need to develop a process of spiritual care for and by themselves. Men can use this process and adapt it for their own spiritual care.²⁹⁵ The possibility exists that some of these processes may also be of help in the spiritual care of different marginalized groups such as the aged, homosexuals, etc. Brackely suggests that those who are marginalized suffer some of the same spiritual difficulties that women do.²⁹⁶

The Spiritual Exercises, as mentioned before, were written by a European nobleman of the Reformation era. His worldview is clearly evident in the Spiritual Exercises. Feminist thought has alerted us to the dangers of thinking that any worldview is universal. Spiritual directors are called to recognize the specificity of the different culture, social status, gender or marginality that a directee may come from and be conscious that this may be a stumbling block for that directee to be able to experience the full dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises. This is a daunting, but necessary task to be made for the "greater glory of God".

Spiritual Direction and the Magis

My Ignatian roots most often bring me back to the last phrase of the Principle and Foundation which reads as follows "Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created" (Sp. Exx 23) This phrase, called the *Magis*²⁹⁷ is most often understood to mean that the retreatant should try to be free of any attachments that may hinder them from responding freely to God. It is closely linked to the Ignatian adage "for the greater glory of God" (Sp. Exx 155) indicating that the retreatant attempt to adopt the best of all possible attitudes and actions so that God's glory

²⁹⁵ Elizabeth Liebert, « Coming Home to Themselves », p.258.

²⁹⁶ Dean Brackley, "Expanding the Shrunken Soul: False Humility, Ressentiment, and Magnanimity", *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, vol. 34, no. 4 (Sept. 2002) p. 3,4.

²⁹⁷ The original Latin and Spanish manuscripts of the Spiritual Exercises include the adverb *magis* or *major* to mean 'more' as in more conducive in Sp. Exx. 23. Candido de Dalmases, *Ejercicios Espirituales: Introduccion, texto, notas y vocabulario*. 3rd ed. Santander, Sal terae, 1990, p.58.

may be realized. To speak of God's greater glory is also to speak of the greater glory of each and every person in God's creation and therefore of the individual making the retreat.²⁹⁸

My own interpretation of these expressions, or the "magis", has been to look at my ministry as a spiritual director. Working for God's greater glory challenges my degree of openness to allowing God to work in and through me. The ministry of spiritual direction is a call to avail myself of all the possible tools or skills necessary to be truly present to the directee throughout the journey that is the Spiritual Exercises. The spiritual director assists the directee to be able to experience God and to discern how God is working. To be most helpful to the directee may mean appropriating the Spiritual Exercises so that they may be more conducive to the life experience, the personality or the culture of the person. The directee should not have to adapt to the Spiritual Exercises nor to the needs or the preconceived ideas of the director. The vulnerability of the directee is too sacred during the process of the Spiritual Exercises. In order that the greater glory of the directee may become reality, the directee needs to be permitted to let the true self emerge. This concept applies not only to the spiritual direction as experienced in the Spiritual Exercises, but may well apply to other classical spiritualities as well.²⁹⁹

The Spiritual Exercises are a gift from Ignatius, a gift to the Christian community that needs to be unwrapped and subsequently re-wrapped and unwrapped again many times so that all may benefit fully. Unwrapping and re-wrapping may mean to adapt them to the needs of the directee. The Spiritual Exercises were meant so that all may find in themselves the "Greater Glory of God"

AMDG (Ad majorem Dei gloriam)

²⁹⁸ Jules Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making*, St. Louis, Missouri, St. Louis Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1991, p. 22.

²⁹⁹ Wendy Wright, « The Practice of Spiritual Direction in Classical and Contemporary Modes », *Theoforum*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2002, p. 141-153.

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APPENDIX I

Glossary of Terms used in the Spiritual Exercises

In order to clarify some of the terms used in this chapter, following is a glossary of some words that are commonly used in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. These definitions are inspired by the text by Michael Ivens, sj. entitled *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors*.

Contemplatio: Latin term commonly used to indicate the prayer that terminates the Fourth Week. It is entitled 'The Contemplation to Attain Love'.

Consolations and Desolations: Movements of the heart or feelings and thoughts that are influenced by the good and bad spirits.

Election: Part of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, whereby the pray-er identifies and brings to prayer an important life choice to be made.

Grace: The desire of the Spirit in the heart of every believer

Humility as in the Three Humilities: This humility is to love God in an other-centred way. It is the ability to freely trust and give oneself to God.

Indifference: In the positive sense, this is an affective state whereby the person is paying attention to the movements of the Spirit or listening unconditionally to God. This state is a state of silence of the soul.

Magis: Latin term that indicates one of the graces of the Second Week (Sp. Exx 152) This grace is a request to choose what is more pleasing to God between three ways of being. The importance is placed on the *more* 'For the greater glory of God'.

Spirits: The different positive and negative spiritual influences that the pray-er experiences. The good spirit for Ignatius may be an angel for today's pray-er, or the Holy Spirit. The bad spirit is that what endangers or jeopardizes the good spirit. It may also be called the enemy of our human nature.

Triple Colloquoy: Prayer of petition requesting a specific grace. The pray-er begins by praying imaginatively to Mary, the mother of Jesus, then to Jesus himself, ending with a request to God the Father, accompanied by Mary and Jesus.

APPENDIX II

Following is an outline of the basic sections or “Weeks” of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Each Spiritual Exercise is annotated and these annotations will be bracketed in the outline below.

Annotations (1-22)

This section is primarily a series of instructions for the spiritual director.

The First Week

The First Principle and Foundation (23)

Examen (24-44)

Five Exercises on sin and hell (45-71)

Aids for Prayer (72-90)

The Second Week

Parable of The Call of the King (91-100)

First, Second and Third Day Contemplations on the Infancy narratives (101-135)

Parable of the Two Standards (136-148)

Three Classes of Persons (149-157)

Fifth to Twelfth Day Contemplations on the Preaching ministry of Jesus (158-164)

Three Humilities (165-168)

Election on a State of Life (169-189)

The Third Week

Contemplations on the Passion and Death of Christ (190-217)

The Fourth Week

Contemplations on the Apparitions of the Resurrected Christ (218-229)

Contemplation to Attain Love (230-237)

A series of instructions or aids for the spiritual director, this includes

Three Ways of Praying (238-260), The Mysteries of the Life of Christ (261-312), Rules for Discernment (312-336), Rules for Almsgiving (337-344), Notes on Scruples (345-351) and Guidelines on Thinking with the Church (352-370)