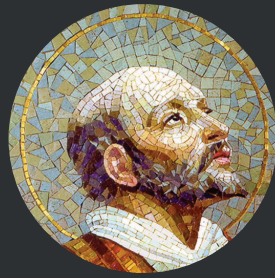


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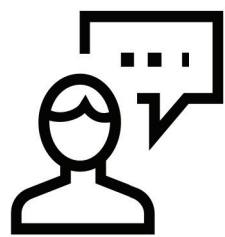


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VOLUME 01 - POST 05

**Pilgrim-Jesuit:
A Seeker, Eco-feminist
and Political Mystic**

George Pattery, SJ



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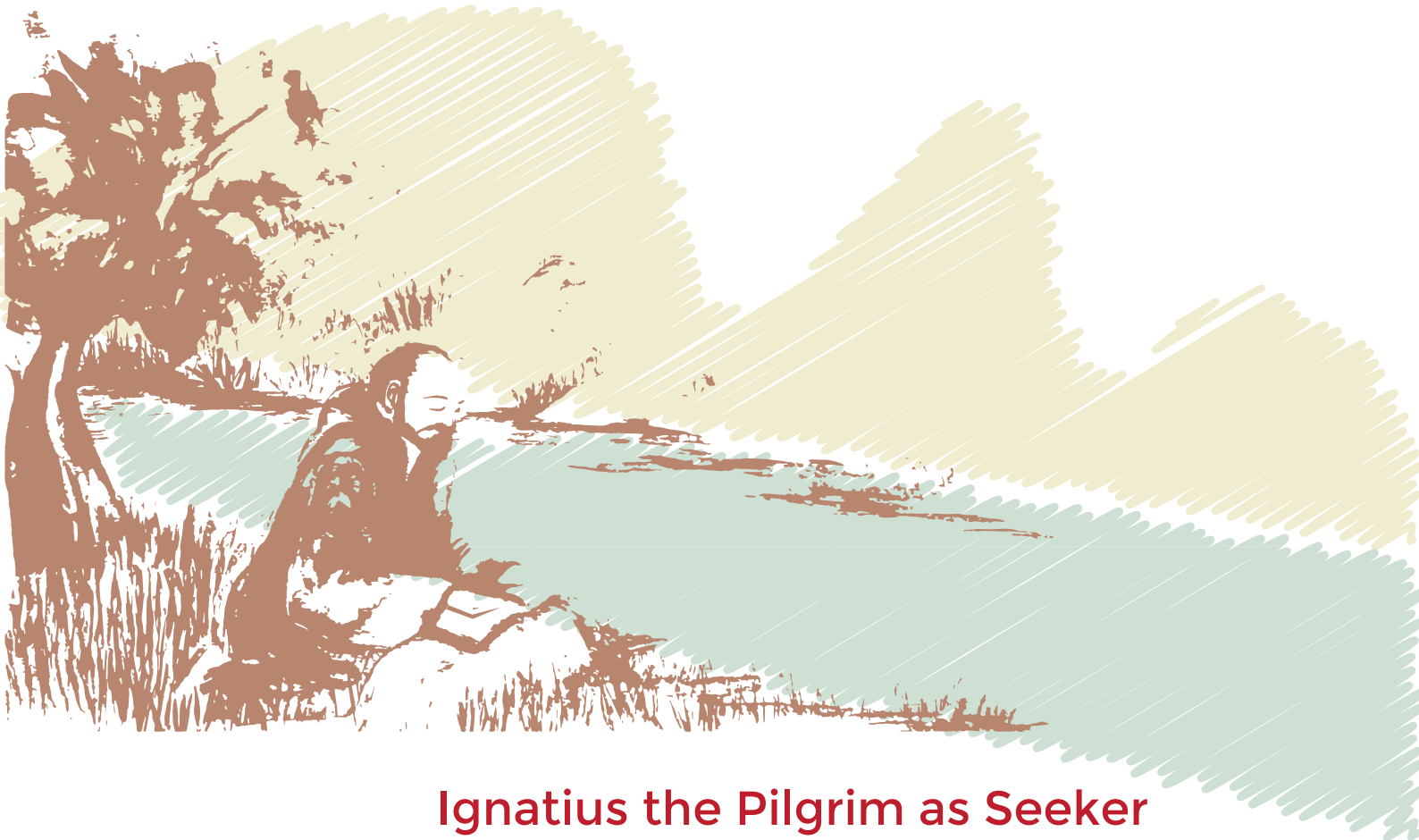
Pilgrim-Jesuit: A Seeker, Eco-feminist and Political Mystic

Pilgrim-Jesuit: A Seeker, Eco-feminist and Political Mystic

We are told (by Jerome Nadal?) that Ignatius liked to be known as a pilgrim, rather than by any other title. That is really surprising; because a very good part of his life, he spent in Rome, looking after the organizational matters, including the writing of the Constitutions. Yet he preferred to be known as 'pilgrim' than other titles of Founder of the Society; Reformer etc.

Three qualities may be attributed to any pilgrim. A pilgrim is i) a seeker of Wholeness, the Ultimate, the Absolute, ii) on the move, and often iii) to holy places / sacred space. Let me attempt to re-read Ignatius' life as a pilgrim; and then apply this to our time/context. One may discover three types of pilgrim in Ignatius: Ignatius the pilgrim as seeker; Ignatius the pilgrim as an ascetic and Ignatius the pilgrim as Contemplative in action. All three types always present, in different measures in a spiral movement. Hence my plea is that we need to integrate all three dimensions and continue the pilgrimage of Ignatius in our context today.





Ignatius the Pilgrim as Seeker

Ignatius the pilgrim as seeker is found on his journey from Pamplona-Loyola-Montserrat-Manresa-Holy Land-Rome. He was seeking God, wholeness, in such a way that it would give meaning for his life. From the Lady of his desire to a God who gave meaning to many of the heroic saints, he was seeking the Ultimate. In Manresa the search led to a foundational experience with interior knowledge of the Trinitarian God. The many layers of this Foundational Experience will be unfolded in later life. But the trait of ablaze with God remained with him always. So much so, in Gesu (Roman house), going to the terrace and looking at the sky would suffice him to recapture his line with God. In the Spiritual Exercises he developed an experience of God that is growing, unfolding and deepening with Christic colours. The key meditation on 'Finding God in all' in a way, is in part the continuation of seeking, part in relishing the divine.

Jesuit as Pilgrim Seeker Today



God-reality as the primary enterprise of Ignatian pilgrimage seems to have been neglected in Jesuit way of living today. The primacy of God-experience seems rather provisional; Mission is the task. But then we cease to become pilgrim, but managers of mission. In Asian context, pilgrim is primarily a seeker, imbued with God-experience that is to be shared with other seekers. Conversing with co-pilgrims on the perennial search for the Absolute marks the pilgrim. Do we Jesuits look upon mission projects, at the expense of God-project? Life and mission get separated. Fr. Arturo Sosa, sj our Fr. General, is fond of saying that Life-Mission should be held together. We as Jesuits will have to carry forward the God-project, wholeness-scheme of pilgrim-seeker today, in a dialogic spirit with seekers in other religious and secular traditions, with scientists, poets, thinkers and artists. Perhaps a narrowly interpreted and blindly accepted fulfillment theology precludes Jesuit seeker today, and thus miss out the richness of the ever-revealing incomprehensible mystery called God. As Karl Rahner said: in spite of all revelations that happened in Jesus Christ, God remains the incomprehensible mystery. In the immediate political climate of majoritarian fundamentalism, we should not fall into the trap of 'othering' other religious traditions, and avoid/neglect the exchange with genuine seekers.

The pandemic has brought the whole humanity in a searching mode: searching together for a vaccine, and to contain and safeguard the pandemic. Everyone and all of us are searching!

Ignatius the Ascetic Pilgrim

The journey from Pamplona-Loyola-Montserrat-Manresa-Holy Land-Rome was indeed a pilgrimage in one piece spread over a few years, marked by severe ascetical practices with a touch of Pelagian selfie. At Montserrat at night's vigil over his arms, "he would neither sit nor lie down, but stand and kneel before the altar of our Lady, ...with his pilgrim's staff in his hand". At Manresa, "the pilgrim begged from door to door, with a small wooden bowl ... the man with old sack (Dominicans said), devoted seven hours in prayer". ... Manresa also was the dark night of the soul, with scruples on managing next 70 years this way and about his sins...brink of desperation and suicide." Soon he received the light of grace streamed over his soul.

Ignatius corrected himself on asceticism; rather his enlightenments at Cardoner and at La Storta significantly changed his view of asceticism; no longer a personal feat but a generous offering to a love beyond telling. He would then devote his attention to devotion to poverty.



Pilgrim-Jesuit Today an Eco-Feminist

The kind of asceticism that Jesuit seeks today could be named as eco-feminist, in the spirit of *Laudato si*. That the whole creation is inter-connected and inter-related (91) should be the starting point of asceticism. We relate with everyone and everything, respecting the integrity and wholeness of realities. It is not unceasing consumption, but a reverential relation that matters – that is the kind of asceticism we look for today. 'Walk gently and humbly on this earth'. Respect for our common home means 'I take only what is essential, and leave the rest for others' – the tortured planet earth.

There is a feminine side in all the masculine. Feminine stands for care, looking after the earth, and connecting with all. Jesuit pilgrim today is a feminist who would nurture the feminine in him; care for the role and function of women in the Society, church and in world at large. GC 34: 14.16 says: "Above all we want to commit the Society in a more formal and explicit way to regard this solidarity with women as integral to our mission."

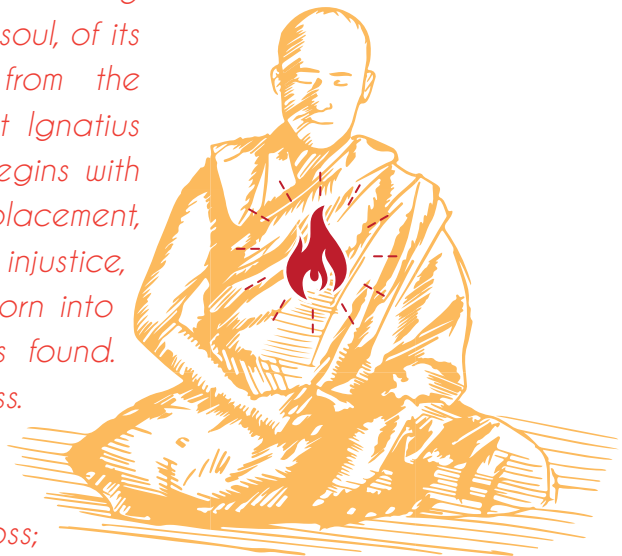
The pandemic is teaching us how to become eco-feminist; how to live with the minimum/essential; how to care for each other. That is the asceticism of a pilgrim today.



Ignatius the pilgrim as Contemplative in Action

Nadal used the term Contemplative in action, to describe the core of Ignatian spirituality; it can be attributed to Ignatius as a pilgrim contemplative. He was a busy man, founding a Religious Order, writing numerous letters, drafting the Constitution; but a man deeply in touch with his interior movements, and easily connected with God. Over the years, through Manresa experience, thru Parisian days, he developed a familiarity with God, through the interior movements, that he could be active, with a free, contemplative heart.

GC 35 highlighted this for us. D2.6 says: "The understanding that Ignatius received (at Manresa), taught him a contemplative way of standing in the world, of contemplating God at work in the depth of things, of tasting the infinite sweetness and charm of divinity, of the soul, of its virtues and of everything there. ...starting from the contemplation of the incarnation, it is clear that Ignatius does not sweeten or falsify realities. Rather he begins with them, exactly as they are—poverty, forced displacement, violence between people, abandonment, structural injustice, sin—but then he points to how God's Son was born into these realities; and it is here that sweetness is found. Tasting and seeing God in reality is a process. Ignatius had to learn this himself through many painful experiences. At La Storta he received the grace to be placed with the Son bearing the Cross; and so he and his companions were drawn into the Son's pattern of life, with its joys and with its sufferings..."



Pilgrim Jesuit today: a Political Mystic

Jesuit today is a pilgrim on the frontiers, a mystic who dwells in the sacred, and a politik who is immersed in the world. "Our way of proceeding is to trace the footprints of God everywhere, knowing that the spirit of Christ is to work in all places and situations and in all activities and mediations that seek to make him more present in the world." (GC35.2.8). The presence and activity of God in all the persons and circumstances of the world places us Jesuits at the centre of a tension pulling us both to God and to the world at the same time. We are in tension between 'rooted in God at all times, and being plunged into the heart of the world.' Ever contemplative and ever active, mysticism and service, indicate a Jesuit today. It is a creative polarity. Our lives must provoke the questions, GC 35 says, "who are you, that you do these things ... and that you do them in this way?" Jesus, in outreach, embraced difference and new horizons. His ministry transcended boundaries (Samaritan woman). His way is our way. We are pilgrims, seekers on the move, as eco-feminists, in all places removing the separation between the sacred and the profane.

Pilgrim-Jesuit is a seeker, eco-feminist and political mystic – to be on the frontiers, contemplating the centre; that is our call, to initiate processes, rather than occupying space.

The pandemic unsettles our settled minds, challenges our certainties and contests our priorities, as happened to us in the second and third weeks of the Exercises with three classes of men and three kinds of humility.

Not to be constrained by the greatest thing, but to be contained in the smallest thing, is divine (Anonymous). So too a pilgrim-Jesuit, as and when he is in tune with Ignatius.



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